PROBLEM VERIFICATION AMONG EXPERIENCED SUPERINTENDENTS IN NORTHEAST OHIO

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ABSTRACT

PROBLEM VERIFICATION AMONG EXPERIENCED SUPERINTENDENTS IN NORTHWEST OHIO

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The primary purposes of this non-experimental, ex post facto, descriptive study were (a) to develop a demographic profile of 111 superintendents employed in northwest Ohio, (b) to determine the frequency and difficulty of 10 work-embedded and 3 work-induced problems as perceived by these superintendents, (c) to determine levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level), and (d) to determine the extent to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variability in the criterion variable.

The modal superintendent in northwest Ohio had 10 years of teaching experience, between 12 and 13 years of administrative experience (excluding the superintendency), and 8 years of experience as a superintendent. She or he did not have an earned doctorate, was employed in a district with less than 1,000 students, and in a district with a taxable wealth base below the state average. Thirty-four of the respondents (33%) had been a superintendent in more than one district. The primary findings indicate that the
demographic profile of the respondents was typical of national profiles, except in two areas: enrollment of the employing district and percentage having a doctoral degree.

Findings from this study support previous research with respect to the most prevalent problems. Relative consistency existed with respect to the frequency of the following problems: (a) unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, (b) inadequate funds for district programs/operations, (c) excessive job related stress, (d) inadequate time to spend with family or friends, (e) loss of privacy, and (f) feelings of isolation and loneliness. Several problems were found to be less frequent and less difficult here than in earlier studies. They included (a) inadequate opportunities for professional growth, (b) inadequate job security, (c) negative relations with district employees or employee groups, and (d) negative relations with one or more board members. The fact that these were not reported to be more frequent or more difficult in this study may be explained by the nature of personal relationships and the social climates common in small communities and small-enrollment districts, conditions prevalent in northwest Ohio.

Last, findings revealed that each predictor variable had only a small level of association with the criterion variable, and the five predictor variables collectively accounted for only a small percentage of the variance on reported problem frequency. Implications of these findings for the profession and policy are presented.

Recommendations for additional research include (a) replicating the study in other regions of Ohio or states in the United States to determine the extent to which the population is typical of other superintendents, (b) conducting comparative studies of superintendent preparation programs across states to determine the efficacy of pre-service
education in relation to problems of practice, (c) conducting longitudinal studies of cohort groups of Ohio superintendents to determine how superintendent perceptions of their practice and problems change over time, (d) utilizing similar study methods for different populations including alternatively licensed, community school, and ESC superintendents, (e) utilizing other possible predictor variables such as gender, age, race, and district type, and (f) conducting qualitative studies to gain a deeper understanding of superintendent problems, especially those that are work-induced.
I dedicate this work to my mother Doris, who was always my inspiration and guiding light throughout my life. To my dad, Woody, my role model and voice of reason.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

School district superintendents face a myriad of challenges in an age of increasing accountability and reform as state licensure and university preparation programs have become less stringent (Adams & Copland, 2007; Feistritzer, 2003). Two federal laws provide examples. *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) and more recently *Race to the Top* (Ohio Department of Education, 2009), placed pressure on states to enact more specific accountability measures. Even though teachers, principals, and other educators are deemed responsible, school superintendents face the most scrutiny, and are held to the highest level of accountability (Kowalski (2006, 2013). In Ohio, for example, district superintendents have had to implement a number of new initiatives such as college and career readiness programs, Common Core Standards, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, and statewide performance evaluation systems for teachers and principals (Ohio Department of Education, 2015).

In relation to school reform, during the 1980s and 1990s, district superintendents were primarily responsible for implementing federal and state mandates. When this strategy failed to live up to its promise, policymakers shifted to a form of directed autonomy; specifically, they set broad goals, gave educators leeway to determine how they would be met, and then held local officials accountable for outcomes (Weiler, 1990). Incrementally, the federal government has pressured state officials to increase sanctions
for noncompliance or poor performance (Björk, Ferrigno, & Kowalski, 2014). Arguably, these tactics have made the superintendency more challenging and stressful.

Many superintendents discovered that their own professional preparation had not adequately provided them with the background knowledge and skills needed to meet the requirements and expectations of such initiatives. Instead of intensifying efforts to improve administrator preparation and licensure requirements, many state lawmakers have been reevaluating the need for a superintendent to be licensed. According to Kowalski (2004), such political decision-making is occurring without the use of empirical evidence. Licensure ensures that school administrators are prepared for a multitude of complex responsibilities. Before changing licensing criteria, state policymakers should be aware of the common problems that frame the scope of requisite knowledge, experiences, and skills. The research intended to produce this information has been sparse.

This research and a study by Michael Moore are parallel studies focusing on work-induced and work-embedded problems validated by superintendents. The two studies were conducted independently, one with a defined population of novice superintendents and one with a defined population of experienced superintendents in northwest Ohio. Professor Theodore J. Kowalski was the adviser for both studies. As is common in parallel studies, the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methods are similar.

**Statement of the Problem**

Since 2000, many states have revised licensing criteria for school district superintendents. More often than not, these policy decisions have been political and not
professional; that is, they have been made by legislative groups and based on preferences and pressures and not by professional standards’ boards based on empirical data (Kowalski, 2004). For example, some states either have eliminated superintendent licensing or have made it voluntary (Feistritzer, 2003) and this decision has been based largely on anecdotal evidence coming from very large urban districts with 25,000 or more students. Little or no consideration has been given to the effects of deregulation on much smaller districts, a major oversight considering that two-thirds of the nation’s school systems enroll less than 1,500 students.

Although the complexity and difficulty of being a school district superintendent is widely recognized by educators, surprisingly little is known about the frequency and difficulty of problems associated with the position. This lack of data is partially explained by demographic, geographic, and legal dissimilarities among the nation’s school systems. For example, districts range in size from less than 100 students to more than 100,000 students; they are located in rural areas, small towns, cities, and large urban areas; each state has its own constitutional provisions. Two general conclusions can be made about problems in the superintendency. First, certain challenges, such as insufficient fiscal resources (Glass & Franceschini, 2007) and relationships with school board members (Cuban, 1985), are rather common. Second, the difficulty of problems, more so than the frequency of problems, depends on contextual variables such as community diversity, district enrollment, district wealth, and human and material resources (Daresh & Aplin, 2001). As a result, research on superintendents remains less comprehensive than research on principals.
The dearth of empirical data on superintendents’ problems is disconcerting because future decisions on academic preparation, state licensing, and continuing education may continue to go unchallenged. For example, advocates for deregulating superintendent licensing assert that persons with managerial skills in business, the military, and government can be successful superintendents even though they have no compelling data to support this assertion (Kowalski, 2004, 2009). In order to influence future policy decisions that may be detrimental, the education profession needs to produce compelling evidence demonstrating why rigorous academic preparation and state licensing criteria are in society’s best interest.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study was intended to determine the frequency and difficulty of problems reported by experienced school district superintendents in a 20 county region of northwest Ohio. The overall lack of evidence regarding the frequency and difficulty of problems reported by superintendents provided an impetus for this research. Members of the study population are representative of a large portion of superintendents in the United States and Ohio; that is, a majority is employed in relatively small, rural districts (Kowalski, et al., 2011). As such, they typically deal with a wide range of leadership and managerial responsibilities personally because they are the only professionally licensed administrator at the district level. The study had the following objectives:

1. To develop a demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population. Novice superintendents were not included in the study population because the first year of practice is
often atypical; that is, some problems reported by novices dissipate after the induction year (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006).

2. To determine the frequency of problems reported by experienced school superintendents comprising the study population.

3. To determine which problems were perceived to be most difficult by superintendents comprising the study population.

4. To determine the levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and selected institutional and personal variables. The institutional variables include (a) district enrollment (average daily membership), and (b) district wealth (assessed valuation per pupil); the personal variables include (a) teaching experience, (b) superintendent experience, and (c) degree level. Predictor variables chosen for this study were common in the literature and have been linked to superintendent performance (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Bredeson & Kose, 2007). The variables are commonly used in research on district and school administrators because they have been found to affect what is expected and actual behavior. For example, district enrollment may influence superintendent responsibilities and district resources.

5. To determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variability in the criterion variable (problem frequency).

**Significance of the Study**

Findings and conclusions from this study have value for both the profession and society for at least four reasons. First, policymakers may consider the information when making future decisions affecting professional licensing and education. Second,
professional administrator organizations, such as the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), may determine the results to be beneficial to creating ongoing and relevant professional development for its members. Third, university administrators and professors may utilize the data when both modifying and evaluating instructional practices and curricula. Last, results contribute to extant literature on district superintendents.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What was the demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population?

2. With what frequency did superintendents comprising the study population encounter problems commonly identified in extant literature?

3. What commonly identified problems did superintendents comprising the study population perceive to be most difficult?

4. What were the levels of association between the criterion variable (*problem frequency*) and each of the predictor variables (*district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level*)?

5. To what degree did the predictor variables collectively account for variability in the criterion variable?
Summary of Methods

Study Population

Members of the defined population met the following three criteria.

1. They were school district superintendents employed in the northwest region of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year. As defined here, the northwest region is one of five state regions determined by the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). The other four are northeast, southwest, southeast, and central. The 20 counties comprising the northwest region include Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot.

2. They were employed in a district with an average daily membership (ADM) between 100 and 10,000 ($N = 111$). Superintendents in Kelleys Island, Middle Bass, North Bass, Put-in-Bay, and Toledo City were excluded from the study due to district size (enrollment). The position of superintendent in these very small (<100 students) and very large (10,001>) districts was considered atypical because of factors such as position responsibilities (e.g., transporting students in a very small district) and human resources (e.g., having a large number of professional support staff in a very large district).

3. They had at least 1 year of experience as a school district superintendent prior to the 2014-15 term.
Data Collection

Two data sources were utilized for this study.

1. Survey responses regarding the frequency and difficulty of superintendent problems and self-reported demographic information

2. District enrollment (average daily membership), and district wealth (assessed valuation per pupil) data accessed from the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS), the Education Management Information System (EMIS) linked to the unique school building Information Retrieval Number (IRN) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE)

Items for the superintendent survey were derived from extant literature, primarily journal articles, books, dissertations, and two of the most recent American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) decennial studies (Glass, et al., 2000; Kowalski, et al., 2011). The researcher initially identified 25 potential problems to use for the survey, with that number eventually reduced during the literature review to 13. The final items used for the survey were those that recurred in the literature. Problems were categorized as being work-induced or work-embedded, both which will be defined later in this chapter.

Population members were invited to complete a survey via an email sent to individual superintendent district email addresses. Each respondent’s survey was coded to track returns. The invitation included the following information:

- an explanation of the research,
- an explanation of the study population,
- an assurance of confidentiality, and
- contact information for the researcher and the professor directing the research.
The researcher used the commercial product, Survey Monkey, to administer the survey. Follow-up emails were sent to initial non-responders, and telephone calls were made to those not completing the survey via the electronic prompt. Respondents were not compensated for their participation in the research. Data gathered from State of Ohio databases and the survey were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 software program for analysis.

**Data Analysis**

This study was conducted with a defined population and as such, statistics were commonly calculated to determine findings. Correlations, however, were calculated to determine levels of association between the criterion and predictor variables; the correlations were applied descriptively with no intent to determine causal relationships. Problem frequency was chosen as the criterion variable in these correlations since it is more generalizable than difficulty across districts (e.g., difficulty is often influenced by human and material resources). More specific information about methods is included in Chapter III.

The superintendent and demographic data were analyzed in several ways. Research question 1 was answered using personal and district demographic data. Mean scores were determined for the respondents’ *teaching experience* and *superintendent experience*. *Degree level* was assigned categories of *Doctorate* and *Not Doctorate* for purposes of analysis in SPSS. Means were calculated for district enrollment and wealth. Additional demographic questions were used as part of the descriptive statistics for the superintendent profile, but not for analysis.
Descriptive statistics

Primary data analysis consisted of a descriptive analysis and ranking of resulting means and sum totals to ascertain what respondents reported to be their most frequent and difficult problems. Research question 2 was answered by calculating and ranking mean scores for each problem listed in Part A of the survey (questions 1-13). Frequency responses were determined using a five-point semantic differential scale (never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always). Responses were assigned a numeric value (1 through 5 in ascending order) to determine calculations. The higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of frequency. The 13 problems were then ranked in descending order of frequency (highest to lowest) based on item mean scores.

Research question 3 was answered by calculating mean scores for each problem listed in Part B of the survey (questions 14-26). Difficulty was determined using a 5-point semantic differential scale (not at all difficult, slightly difficult, moderately difficult, very difficult, and extremely difficult). Responses were assigned a numeric value (1 through 5 in ascending order). The higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of difficulty. The 13 problems were then ranked in descending order of difficulty (highest to lowest) based on item mean scores.

Research question 4 was answered by calculating a mean problem frequency score for each respondent and determining the requisite demographic data in relation to the five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level). Each respondent’s mean problem frequency score was determined by calculating his or her average response score for survey questions in Part A (1-13). A respondent’s mean frequency score was then
correlated (Pearson product-moment, \( r \)) with data for each of the five predictor variables. According to Heiman (2010), “The Pearson correlation coefficient describes the linear relationship between the two interval variables, two ratio variables, or one interval and one ratio variable” (p. 155). This specific procedure was utilized to determine the association between each respondent’s average problem frequency score and each of the five selected district and individual demographic variables. Kachigan (1991) also states that conclusions about causality cannot safely be made using the coefficients in this fashion. The levels of association were determined by applying the coefficients as descriptive statistics as specified by Cohen (1988):

- **small** associations were identified by correlation coefficients with absolute values from .01 to .29
- **medium** associations were identified by correlation coefficients with absolute values from .30 to .49
- **large** associations were identified by correlation coefficients with absolute values of .50 or greater.

Research question 5 was answered by calculating a multiple correlation coefficient \( (R) \) to determine the association between the criterion variable and the predictor variables collectively. The resulting coefficient was squared to establish the coefficient of determination \( (R^2) \), which is a statistic that identifies the proportion of common variance that is produced by the predictor variables.
Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in all sections of this study:

**Anti-professionists.** These are identified by Kowalski (2004) as a special interest group that "consists primarily of persons not readily identified with school administration; they are corporate executives, current or former political officeholders, foundation officials, and would-be school reformers. They seek to deregulate the practice of school administration, an action that would eliminate preparation and licensing requirements and thus allow local school boards to determine independently the appropriate credentials of superintendents and principals" (p.1).

**Assessed Valuation Per Pupil (AVPP).** This is the total unadjusted assessed property valuation of a school district divided by the total average daily membership (ADM).

**Demographic variables.** These are variables that identify characteristics of segments of human populations such as age, gender, or income. In this study, the demographic variables are district enrollment as measured by average daily membership, district wealth as measured by assessed valuation per pupil, years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience, and degree level.

**District enrollment.** This is the total number of students officially enrolled; in this study, the metric was district ADM.

**District wealth.** This is determined by the total unadjusted property valuation of a school district divided by the district’s ADM. In this study, the metric was AVPP.

**EMIS.** The Education Management Information System is a statewide data collection system for Ohio’s primary and secondary education. Staff, student,
district/building, and financial data are collected in this system and submitted to the Ohio Department of Education.

**Experienced superintendent.** This term is defined as any superintendent who is not a novice (i.e., a person having at least 1 year of experience in the position).

**Fiscal year.** This is a period used for calculating annual financial statements in school districts. In Ohio, the fiscal year begins on the first day of July of each calendar year and ends at the close of the thirtieth day of June of the succeeding calendar year.

**OEDS.** The Ohio Educational Directory System is a database system for the collection of directory information for educational institutions and individuals and is used for both updating and information retrieval.

**ODE.** The Ohio Department of Education oversees the state’s public education system.

**Problem difficulty.** Difficulty is defined as the degree of challenge presented by a problem as measured on a five-point semantic differential scale.

**Problem frequency.** Frequency is defined as the rate of recurrence of a problem. In this research, problem frequency determined how often a problem occurred as measured on a five-point semantic differential scale.

**Professional preparation.** This is defined as a structured college or university program completed in order to qualify for a superintendent’s license. This includes instructional staff (professors) and academic coursework.

**School district.** This is a public school system; in this study, private schools, community schools, charter schools, career/technical districts, joint vocational districts,
virtual learning academies, educational service centers, and districts limited to special populations (e.g., special education confederations) are excluded.

**Superintendent.** This is defined as an individual who holds the position of chief executive in a school system.

**Superintendent license.** This is a document issued by the state attesting that a person has met all requirements to be employed in this position.

**Superintendent problem.** This is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.

**Total Average Daily Membership (ADM).** This is the total number of public school students residing within a school district’s boundaries or non-resident students who are eligible to attend the district.

**Work-embedded problem.** This is a difficulty or challenge endemic to the workplace or the position. Work-embedded problems are indicative of organizational conditions and a person’s knowledge and skills (e.g., dealing with inadequate fiscal resources).

**Work-induced problem.** This is a difficulty or challenge that is initiated by or associated with one’s employment that affects his or her personal life (e.g., lack of time devoted to family matters).

**Limitations**

The study population was limited to superintendents in 20 counties all located in northwest Ohio; therefore, generalizations to all superintendents, nationally or in Ohio, are not appropriate. The study results also relied primarily on the accuracy of self-
reported information pertaining to problem frequency and difficulty, and self-reported personal demographic information. Finally, this study examined levels of association between predictor and criterion variables without an intent to determine causation.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations include both the selection of only 13 superintendent problems from extant literature and the subsequent classification (*work-induced, work-embedded*). Another delimitation was not including additional predictor variables that may have been relevant to this study.

**Overview of the Chapters**

Chapter II contains a literature review relevant to problems encountered by school superintendents. Chapter III describes the research methods used to gather and collect data and how the data were analyzed. Chapter IV describes the results of the study. Chapter V includes a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter includes a summary of the literature relevant to problems experienced by school superintendents across states and districts. Specifically, content pertains to problems that are work-embedded and work-induced. Included in this review are (a) a summary of the superintendent position, (b) a demographic profile of superintendents, and (c) a summary of problems commonly identified by district superintendents.

An extensive review of Proquest Dissertations & Theses, OhioLINK, Electronic Journal Center, and Infohio databases revealed relatively few studies related specifically to problems identified by superintendents. Research is especially sparse regarding the frequency and difficulty of problems and their levels of association with individual and school district demographic variables.

Position of Superintendent

Historical overview

Since the infancy of the superintendency, influential education scholars have written about the importance of the position. Callahan (1966) posited that the superintendent, “more than anyone else, influences the climate in which teaching and learning must go on” (p. 1), and described the superintendent as “the most important person in any school system in terms of potential for influencing the quality of work that
An older generation of superintendents, Cubberly (1916) described the superintendent as almost superhuman, stating that the office holder was organizer, director, executive officer, supervisor of instruction, leader, inspirer, adviser, and friend. In addition to the research regarding the position’s importance, some studies have documented problems experienced by superintendents. Recognizing the challenges of the job, Sarason described the superintendency as “a thankless role in which one survives, if one survives at all, for only five years or so in one district and is forced to go elsewhere to learn what one already knows: you cannot win…and you can do little more than nothing” (as cited in Blumberg, 1985, p. xi). Crowson (1987) wrote, “…the superintendency is a position strangely awash in contradictions and anomalies and, frankly, a distinct puzzle to those who seek to make a bit of conceptual sense out of this intriguing job” (p. 49-50).

Buffalo, New York is the home to the nation’s first school superintendent, hired by the city’s Common Council (Brunner, Grogan, & Björk, 2002). Since that time, the superintendent’s position has undergone significant changes and has been continually evolving (Brunner et al., 2002; Cuban & Usdan, 2002; Katz, 1993; Kowalski & Brunner 2011; Murphy, 2003; Young, Fuller, Brewer, Carpenter, & Mansfield, 2007). In recent decades, the cry for education reform has been spurred by such studies as A Nation at Risk, and increased accountability measures and performance expectations for superintendents by federal initiatives such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Hoyle, 2004; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006). In addition, superintendent scrutiny and criticism have also increased as demands to improve student achievement have intensified (Mazzeo, 2001).
Evolution of Role Conceptualizations

The evolution of the position of district superintendent has evolved over the past 150 years. This formative process has included five distinct role conceptualizations that describe ideal and real behavior. None of these roles has become irrelevant and therefore, they constitute a framework for understanding problems of practice.

The superintendent is the chief executive officer of a school district and is accountable for a variety of duties and responsibilities (Chance & Capps, 1992; Cuban, 1998; Glass, 2001; Kowalski, 2006; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004). Today, superintendents must be experts in human resource management, curriculum and instruction, financial planning, and visionary leadership (Callan & Levinson, 2011; Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2006; Dipaola & Stronge, 2003; Hoyle, Björk, Collier & Glass, 2005; Kowalski, 2006; Owings & Kaplan, 2006; Young, 2008). Wilson (2006) stated that the success of a school system depends on a superintendent’s leadership skills in areas of responsibility set by a board of education.

To understand the contemporary context of the superintendency, one needs to know how and why the position has evolved over the decades. Griffiths (1966) stated, “American education existed for 200 years before the first superintendent was appointed, and it was another 60 years before any appreciable number of cities saw fit to follow the lead of pioneers in the development of the superintendency” (p. 1). Since that time, the position has passed through several stages (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Jackson (1995) posits that the evolution of the role paralleled the growth of the nation and reflected changing political, social, and economic conditions. As the United States evolved from an agrarian to an industrialized society, more students entered the
educational system, and the number of schools increased. With this growth came complexity, a condition requiring management and eventually leadership.

Callahan (1966) summarized the evolution of the superintendency in the context of four role conceptualizations, which included *teacher-scholar, manager, democratic statesman*, and *applied social scientist*. Since then, Kowalski (2001, 2003, 2005, 2006) has added the conceptualization of *effective communicator*.

**Teacher-scholar.** The conceptualization of superintendent as a teacher-scholar was dominant from approximately 1865 to 1910. Callahan (1962) stated that during this period superintendents were viewed as master teachers, and their primary duties were supervising teachers and ensuring that the state curriculum was implemented. The superintendent was considered an instructional leader, and teacher of teachers (Björk, 1993; Bredeson, 1996). During this time, neither academic preparation courses nor academic degrees in educational administration existed. Cuban (1976) summarized the characterization of teacher-scholar as it existed in 1890:

> It must be made his recognized duty to train teachers and inspire them with high ideals; to revise the course of study when new light shows that improvement is possible; to see that pupils and teachers are supplied with needed appliances for the best possible work; to devise rational methods of promoting pupils (p. 16).

**Manager.** The conceptualization of superintendent as manager emerged after 1900. Some of the first superintendents of city school systems performed duties similar to those of a clerk or business manager (Cubberly, 1922), although some of those duties were delegated to clerical staff or became the responsibility of local school board members (Glass, 2001). School maintenance, building construction, and matters relating to finances did not become normal duties for the superintendent until the early twentieth century (Moehlman, 1940). The role entailed managing personnel, facilities, school
operations, district budgets, and other financial transactions. The emergence of the role coincided with our country’s transition from an agrarian-based to an industrial-based economy and the growth of school districts and cities. Griffiths (1966) claimed that the superintendency transitioned from a primarily instructional position to primarily a managerial position. In the role of manager, operations were expected to be improved when superintendents focused on time and efficiency (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). This role transition was influenced by classical theories and the emergence of scientific management (Callahan, 1966). The latter, largely developed by Frederick Taylor, promoted scientific methods, such as production lines to improve worker efficiency in factories (Shafritz & Hyde, 1978). Well-known educational scholars, including Franklin Bobbitt, George Strayer, and Elwood Cubberly, insisted that school administrators learn and apply these managerial principles in their work (Cuban, 1976). Growing emphasis on management prompted university faculty to create graduate courses and degree programs in educational administration (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Concurrently, school systems created hierarchies of authority emphasizing centralized management; as a result, the superintendent’s role changed from being primarily collaborative and collegial to being primarily managerial (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

According to Cubberly (1916), in context of superintendent as manager, schools were to function like factories, and children were viewed as raw materials. By recasting themselves as proficient managers, superintendents separated themselves from teachers and reduced expectations that superintendents function primarily as instructional leaders (Callahan, 1966; Cuban, 1976; Kowalski, 1995; Murphy, 2003). Eventually, boards of education hired university-educated superintendents who had completed courses in
education management; Harvard University’s 1927 catalogue listed the superintendent of schools as the professional general manager of the entire school system (Callahan, 1962).

Schneider (1994) described the culture produced by the managerial role as impersonal, authoritative, and reliant on task-oriented values and beliefs. Shafritz and Hyde (1978) concluded that the principles of scientific management did not necessarily increase workplace efficiency, but instead they appeared to have had adverse effects on institutional effectiveness and educator morale.

**Democratic statesman.** The conceptualization of superintendent as a democratic statesman emerged following the 1929 stock market crash and continued to be popular through the 1940s. The transition was fueled by three conditions.

1. The 1929 stock market crash and Great Economic Depression that followed eroded much of the mystique surrounding classical theories and scientific management (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). As a result, social reconstructionists such as George Sylvester Counts (1932), urged citizens to retake control of their public schools. One outcome was a revival of democratic localism, a process in which stakeholders seek to influence public policies directly rather than relying on board members and superintendents to make important decisions in relative isolation (Levin, 1987).

2. Due to an increased competition for scarce resources, superintendents were urged to assume a political role (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Previously, the public had viewed political activity by a superintendent, such as lobbying, as being unprofessional (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). However, when it became
apparent that school systems had to compete with other public agencies for limited fiscal resources, negative connotations about political action faded.

3. The human relations movement, influenced by Elton Mayo’s research on worker motivation, also contributed to the rise of democratic leadership (Kowalski, 2013). Specifically, the movement emphasized the social aspects of the work environment as opposed to functional organizational structures (Robbins, Waters-Marsh, & Millett, 2004). Thus, in order to have an effective organization, administrators needed to consider the feelings and attitudes of work groups and individual employees so that their informal needs could be met (Nicholson, 2005). Emphasis was placed on job satisfaction, worker motivation, and social relationships.

Superintendents, especially in larger school systems, began lobbying state legislatures and taking an active role in trying to persuade district stakeholders to support local schools. Although this political role diminished emphasis on management, it did not eradicate the importance of organizational efficiency (Glass, 2001). As a democratic statesman, job security was linked to a superintendent’s ability to deal with conflict, secure resources, and maintain positive relationships with board members and other stakeholders (Kowalski, 1995, 2005). At the same time, local school board members also became more involved in political action, resulting in superintendents focusing more on board relations (Lupini, 1983).

**Applied social scientist.** After World War II, the nation was adjusting to demographic and social changes, such as the creation of new school districts, the emergence of complex social and economic problems, and the emphasis of the social
sciences in academe. By the mid-1950s, a fourth role conceptualization, applied social scientist, became apparent. According to Kowalski et al. (2011), an applied social scientist relies on both research and tacit knowledge to inform important decisions. This conceptualization remained popular through the 1970s.

In the role of scientist, superintendents were expected to confront issues such as changing demographics, racism, poverty and other societal problems by applying knowledge and evidence that had been developed in the social sciences, such as political science, sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Simply put, superintendents were expected to become more reliant on empiricism, predictability, and scientific certainty (Cooper & Boyd, 1987).

Also during this time, many district residents and boards of education believed the schools were not meeting community expectations. School superintendents became targets for criticism and eventual blame when they could not respond to numerous demands. In a 1970 survey, the issue of increasing attacks on the superintendent was the number one personal career concern for those in the position (Knezevich, 1971). Disenchantment with American schools as a whole continued into the next 2 decades. By its nature, the conceptualization of applied scientist reaffirmed that superintendents were more knowledgeable and competent than others to deal with social and political problems. Much like the conceptualization of manager, the role gave superintendents more legitimate authority (granted by position) and power (ability to influence others outside of legitimate authority), often at the expense of district employees and other stakeholders (Björk, et al., 2014).
**Effective communicator.** Prior to the 1980s, communication was regarded as a skill instead of an administrative role. Superintendents either followed a pragmatic approach whereby they inconsistently exchanged information based on contextual variables (i.e., they communicated unevenly based on their perceptions of a given situation), or they followed the classical communication model used extensively in business management (i.e., a top-down, one-way, need-to-know approach). Recognizing the deficiencies of both options, Kowalski (2002, 2005, 2009) argued that in an information-based, democratic society, and especially in public-sector institutions, both types of communication were counterproductive. When effective communicator was added as a fifth role conceptualization, Kowalski presented a definition of communication competence that spans three domains: cognitive (knowledge), psychomotor (skills), and affective (dispositions). When the domains are used as an evaluative framework, competence is determined by an administrator’s ability to apply relational communication, a process in which differences in power are diminished in order to produce and sustain positive associations with others (Burgoon & Hale, 1984).

In essence, an effective communicator possesses requisite knowledge, skills, and dispositions for engaging in relational communication consistently. In this vein, it reestablishes the importance of democratic leadership, collaboration, and school-community relationships that are integral to the role of democratic statesman (Kowalski, 2005).

**Summary of Role Conceptualizations**

Clearly, since its creation, the position of superintendent has evolved. Although the relative importance of the five role conceptualizations has both increased and
decreased, none has become irrelevant (Cuban, 1976). This is especially true in small-enrollment districts (i.e., those with less than 1,500 students), where superintendents are expected to assume a variety of roles for varying durations and at different times. As examples, instructional leadership to pursue reform at the local level (Petersen & Barnett, 2005), competent management of human and fiscal resources (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005), facilitation of democratic discourse (Björk & Gurley, 2005), consideration of data and empirical evidence for decision-making (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005), and information exchanges that are both timely and relevant so that trust among stakeholders can be established and sustained (Kowalski & Keedy, 2005).

Kowalski and associates (2011) reported how superintendents ranked the importance of these roles in the American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) most recent decennial study. The ranking from most to least important includes effective communicator, manager, instructional leader, statesman or political leader, and applied social scientist (Björk, Ferrigno, & Kowalski, 2014, p. 452).

**Position Requirements**

Rather than becoming more homogenous with passing time, superintendent licensing requirements have become less consistent nationally. In professions such as medicine, members “took it upon themselves to eradicate detrimental conditions by first developing a defensible national curriculum and then adopting institutional accreditation standards” (Kowalski, 2004, p. 15). However, in the education profession, policymakers have been ambivalent toward treating teachers and administrators as true professionals. These attitudes became quite apparent circa 2000 as critics of school administrators
lobbied to deregulate state licensing and academic preparation. Kowalski (2004) referred to these lobbyists as “anti-professionists”, contending that their case was void of empirical evidence, which was critical to licensing. Studying state licensing requirements for administrators in 2003, Feistritzer found that only 41 states had a requirement for superintendent preparation and licensure, and 54% of those states issued emergency licenses or granted waivers. In addition, 37% of the states had consented to providing alternative routes to the traditional university-based licensing programs. State standard boards, state legislatures, or other appointed bodies have typically determined licensure criteria for superintendents, with or without superintendent representation. Among efforts to counteract deregulation, standards have been created to outline and define best practices for the profession and to convince state policymakers to base licensing requirements and superintendent preparation on them.

**Professional standards.** The creation of standards for school superintendents resulted primarily from the threat of deregulation and the growing demands for school reform and accountability. Even with professional standards, there are still individual states that differ dramatically from others in regards to specific criteria requirements for state licensing and academic preparation (Kowalski, 2008). Normative standards have been used to guide and evaluate university-based programs and licensure efforts, and to provide duties, expectations, and skill sets for superintendents. Examples include the *Professional Standards of the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993), the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), the *Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards* (ELCC) (Wilmore, 2002), and the *Ohio Standards for Superintendents* (Ohio Department of Education, 2008).
The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) standards were developed in 1993 and subsequently published as the *Professional Standards for the Superintendency*. The topics of the eight standards are listed below.

1. Leadership and district culture.
2. Policy and governance.
3. Communications and community relations.
4. Organizational management.
5. Curriculum planning and development.
6. Instructional management.
7. Human resources management.
8. Values and ethics of leadership.

These standards were developed after conducting reviews of the literature and gathering input from practicing superintendents, board members, business and education leaders, and university professors of educational administration. According to Hoyle (1994), the standards were created to assist in superintendent selection, preparation and development.

In the mid 1990’s, ISLLC, a consortium of the CCSSO, collaborated with other professional organizations and state agencies to develop professional standards for district and school leaders. Forty-three states have used these standards in their entirety or as a template for developing their own standards. The standards were updated in 2015 and are now referred to as the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*. The standards are listed below.
1. MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student.

2. ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL NORMS

Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

3. EQUITY AND CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

4. CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT

Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

5. COMMUNITY OF CARE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

6. PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
7. **PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF**

   Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

8. **MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT OF FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY**

   Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

9. **OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT**

   Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

10. **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

    Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student’s academic success and well-being (p. 27).

The independent Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) was created to develop administrator standards that would assist in maximizing student learning (Wilmore, 2002). ELCC includes the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the American Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (Wilmore, 2002). ELCC standards were created utilizing the ISLLC standards, and were updated in 2011 and are listed below.
1. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared district vision of learning through the collection and use of data to identify district goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement district plans to achieve district goals; promotion of continual and sustainable district improvement; and evaluation of district progress and revision of district plans supported by district stakeholders (p. 6).

2. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by sustaining a district culture conducive to collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students; creating and evaluating a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional district program; developing and supervising the instructional and leadership capacity across the district; and promoting the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning within the district (p. 9).

3. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by ensuring the management of the district’s organization, operation, and resources through monitoring and evaluating district management and operational systems; efficiently using human, fiscal, and technological resources within the district; promoting district-level policies and procedures that protect the welfare and safety of students and staff across the district; developing district capacity for distributed leadership; and
ensuring that district time focuses on high-quality instruction and student learning (p. 13).

4. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources for the district by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to improvement of the district’s educational environment; promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources throughout the district; building and sustaining positive district relationships with families and caregivers; and cultivating productive district relationships with community partners (p. 16).

5. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner to ensure a district system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success by modeling district principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the district; safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity within the district; evaluating the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the district; and promoting social justice within the district to ensure individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling (p. 18).

6. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context within the district
through advocating for district students, families, and caregivers; acting to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning; and anticipating and assessing emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt district-level leadership strategies (p. 22).

7. A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student in a substantial and sustained educational leadership internship experience that has district-based field experiences and clinical practice within a district setting and is monitored by a qualified, on-site mentor (p. 24).

The Ohio Standards for Superintendents were developed in 2009 to provide a focus on the roles, responsibilities, skills, and clear expectations for effective leaders, and to be used as part of a voluntary system to evaluate the performance of superintendents. The members of the superintendent evaluation system writing team was comprised of leaders from the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), Ohio superintendents representing districts statewide, Ohio school district board members, representatives from the Ohio Department of Education, and from Ohio’s higher education educational leadership programs.

Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between student achievement and five specific district-level leadership responsibilities:

1. Engaging in a collaborative goal-setting process;
2. Setting non-negotiable goals for teaching and learning;
3. Engaging the board in support of these goals;
4. Monitoring the success of these goals;
5. Allocating resources effectively to support the goals (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

The *Ohio Standards for Superintendents* mirror the findings from the research. The standards are listed below:

1. Superintendents establish a vision, expect continuous improvement, and develop a focused plan for achieving district goals.

2. Superintendents establish processes to communicate and collaborate effectively.

3. Superintendents work with the board of education to identify, prioritize, and set policies and governance procedures to maximize the success of all students.

4. Superintendents lead the creation of instructional systems designed for high student achievement.

5. Superintendents manage and organize the district’s resources (human, fiscal, operational, and material) to accomplish district goals (p. 10).

The intent of the professional standards is to serve as an overview of the expectations for Ohio superintendents, a tool to guide professional development programs for practicing superintendents, and a map for university and higher education programs to develop the requirements of educational leadership programs in Ohio and criteria for state license requirements (ODE, 2008). Many Ohio school districts also use specific superintendent job descriptions for evaluation purposes, opting out from using the voluntary Ohio Superintendent Evaluation System.
Table 1 illustrates how the AASA, NPBEA, ELCC, and ODE standards align with the five role conceptualizations of the superintendency.

Table 1

**Role Conceptualization and Superintendent Standards' Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Conceptualization</th>
<th>AASA</th>
<th>NPBEA</th>
<th>ELCC</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-scholar</td>
<td>1, 5, 6, 8</td>
<td>2, 4, 10</td>
<td>1, 2, 5</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2, 4, 7</td>
<td>6, 9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic statesman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied social scientist</td>
<td>1, 4, 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>2, 4, 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communicator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1, 2, 8</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Licensing.** School superintendent licensure requirements are determined independently by each state (Cooper, Fusarelli, Jackson & Poster, 2002; Kowalski, 2005) and as a result, there are substantial differences in required professional education among the states (Björk & Kowalski, 2005). Data from the 2010 AASA decennial study (Kowalski, et al., 2011) revealed that the vast majority of superintendents (94.7%) held a valid state license or endorsement for their position. Further, 85% had completed an accredited university program designed to prepare superintendents.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) provides more than one pathway for candidates to obtain a superintendent license. The traditional pathway includes "earn a master's degree from an accredited university, complete an approved preparation program, receive a recommendation from a dean or the head of teacher education at the institution where he or she has completed the preparation program, complete the Ohio
Assessment for Educators licensure exam and a superintendent must have three years of experience in a position that requires a principal or administrative specialist license” (Ohio Department of Education, 2015a, para. 4). ODE also provides a nontraditional pathway to an alternative superintendent license. The initial requirements for a renewable 2-year, alternative superintendent license include a "master's degree from an accredited institution, a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, five or more years of documented successful work experience in teaching, administration, education or management, and a position appropriate to the license and a board resolution of appointment to the position” (Ohio Department of Education, 2015b, para. 1). In years 1 and 2 of the alternative license, the candidate must be "assigned a mentor, complete the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium self-assessment, develop a personal learning plan based on the ISLLC self-assessment, participate in a structured mentoring program consisting of 70 clock hours during the initial two-year license and the completion of a minimum of nine hours from an accredited university or 135 clock hours of professional development based on the personal learning plan during the initial 2-year license” (Ohio Department of Education, 2015b, para. 2). Non-educators may also participate in the alternative licensure program but they must develop a plan that includes observing classroom instruction across grade levels and subject areas within the employing district (Ohio Department of Education, 2015b, para. 3). If the person makes successful progress under their first 2 years of an alternative license, they are then able to apply for an additional 2-year alternative license. The requirements for a Professional Superintendent License include “4 years of successful experience under the alternative professional development based on the personal learning plan during the second 2-year
license, participate in a structured mentoring program and successful completion of the Ohio Assessments for Educators Educational Leadership Exam” (Ohio Department of Education, 2015b, para. 5).

**Academic preparation.** According to Murphy and Vriesenga (2004), from 1975 to 2002, more than 2,000 articles about leadership preparation were published in educational journals. Of those articles, fewer than 3% involved empirical studies, and superintendent leadership was the focus in an even smaller percentage. Educational reform initiatives have made it especially important that superintendents have the requisite skills essential to be effective leaders. The majority of empirical research, however, has focused on principal preparation programs and not directly on superintendents and the problems they have experienced (Cooper et al., 2002; Levine, 2005). In fact, the quality of superintendent preparation programs has often been determined by generalizations gathered from principal preparation studies (Cooper et al., 2002). With relatively few advanced graduate-level courses devoted to district administration, most administration doctoral programs almost always accommodate superintendent preparation, but this accommodation is not the sole mission of the vast majority of Ph.D. and Ed.D. programs (Andrews & Grogan, 2002).

It is still a requirement in most states that an individual complete a university-based, approved program leading to a superintendent license; however, Björk, Kowalski, and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) concluded that the history of preparation for educational administration remains brief and less defined when compared to professions such as law and medicine. They state that university-based programs can also vary in overall quality
curriculum, and size; for example, internships at some universities may not be required or be very demanding (Björk, et al., 2005).

**Demographic Profile of Superintendents**

For every decade since 1923, AASA has commissioned decennial studies that include demographic profiles of superintendents in the United States. Research data from the most recent study (Kowalski et al., 2011) revealed the following information that is relevant to a national profile or the specific profile generated in this study.

- The modal superintendent was a married, White male between the ages of 56 and 60. The modal age range in the 2000 study was 51 to 55 (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000). The percentage of both younger and older superintendents increased between 2000 and 2010 (50% increase below age 46, and 126% increase above age 60). There was a 1.3% decline in married superintendents from 2000 to 2010.

- Males, on average, became novice superintendents at an earlier age than did females (4 times as more likely before the age of 36).

- Nearly one in four (24.1%) superintendents was a female. This compares to 6.6% in 1992, and 13.2% in 2000 (Glass, et al., 2000). Females were older and had more teaching experience than males.

- Six percent identified themselves as non-White (2% Black or African American, 2% Hispanic or Latino, 1.5% American Indian or Alaska Native, .3% Asian, and .2% Other). This is 0.9% higher than in 2000 AASA study.
• Respondents identified their political affiliation as 37.3% Democrat, 28.4% Republican, and 24.6% Independent; political philosophy was 55.3% Moderate, 30% Conservative, and 14.6% Liberal.

• Only about 3% were employed in very large districts (i.e., 25,000 or more students), and about 9% were employed in very small districts (i.e., less than 300 students).

• Nearly half were employed in low-diversity districts (i.e., fewer than 5% minority residents) and about 15% were employed in high-diversity districts (i.e., more than 51% minority residents).

• Most respondents followed the traditional career path of having prior experience as a teacher and a principal.

• The modal teaching experience range was 6 to 10 years.

• Over half (54.3%) had between 2 and 8 years of experience as a superintendent.

• Over 59% had served as superintendent in one school district.

• The most common administrative entry position was high school assistant principal (19.1%).

• Slightly less than half (45.3%) possessed an earned doctoral degree, which is identical to results from the 2000 study.

Demographic information concerning Ohio superintendents specifically is not available through the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio School Boards Association, or the Buckeye Association of School Administrators. Thus, a state profile could not be provided by these organizations.
Superintendent Problems

Many scholars concur that the superintendency has been and remains a complex and demanding position. Superintendents are confronted with numerous problems, and the most recent initiatives focused on accountability and reform have only made the job more challenging. In this literature review, a superintendent problem is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position. Work-embedded problems are specifically endemic to the workplace or the position and indicative of organizational conditions and a person’s knowledge and skills. Work-induced problems are initiated by or associated with one’s employment that affects his or her personal life. Limited research was found in relation to the frequency and difficulty of the problems addressed.

Work-Embedded Problems

Specific work-embedded problems described here include board members being involved in administration, unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, negative relations with one or more board members, excessive conflict stemming from philosophical dissonance, excessive job-related stress, excessive political conflict, inadequate job security, inadequate funds for district programs/operations, negative relationships with district employees, and inadequate professional growth opportunities.

Negative relations with one or more board members. Negative relations may exist between a superintendent and one or more board members and the condition may be due to a variety of reasons. Cuban (1985) studied over a century of superintendent and board conflict and found that problems developed when there were differences in shared beliefs or opinion between the superintendent, who was a trained educational
professional, and appointed or elected officials who had little training for their position. According to Cuban (1985), negative relations often have affected the tenure of superintendents. Conflict resulting from power struggles between superintendents and board members frequently has been a factor in a superintendent’s voluntary departure or termination (Norton, Webb, & Sybouts, 1996). Byrd, Drews, and Johnson (2006) studied Texas superintendents and found that (a) strained relationships with the board president, (b) not being able to get a decision made at the board level, and (c) communication between the board and superintendent were significant factors in determining superintendent tenure.

In an Indiana study by Rausch (2001), strained relationships with school board members were cited as the most common reason that superintendents exited their jobs as district leaders. Fifteen percent of the superintendents who responded in the 2010 AASA decennial study reported that they had left their previous position due to conflict with the board of education (Kowalski et al., 2011). Carter and Cunningham (1997) stated that the top reasons most superintendents were dismissed or ended up resigning were a lack of board of education support and overall poor relations with individual board members.

McMaster (1986) studied 366 Michigan superintendents between 1972 and 1984 and found that negative relations with board members was one of the main reasons that led to position turnover. In a study of North Carolina superintendents, Wheeler (2012) found that the quality of relationship between the superintendent and the school board was statistically significant in terms of the impact on superintendent turnover. Other studies producing near identical findings include Allen (1998), McKay and Grady (1994), Metzger (1997), Rasmussen (2013), and Payne (2010).
Negative relations with school board members not only can lead to leadership instability, it also contributes to (a) low morale (Renschler, 1992), (b) roadblocks which stifle collaboration (Kowalski, 2006), (c) a loss of superintendent credibility and trust (Petersen & Short, 2002; Petersen & Williams, 2005), (d) restricted school reforms (Dantzenberger, Kirst & Usdan, 1992), and (e) organizational instability (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Renschler, 1992; Kowalski et al., 2011). Glass and Franceschini (2007) reported that 50% of superintendents in their national survey identified poor relations with school board members as a disincentive for considering a career as a district superintendent. According to Glass et al., (2000), if a school district has a history of board-superintendent conflict and relatively short superintendent tenure, applicant pools for administrative vacancies are apt to be unusually small.

Researchers also have found that relations between a superintendent and board members become strained when superintendents experience role conflict (Bundy, 2003; Peterson & Klotz, 1999). A common example is the expectation of achieving efficiency and effectiveness concurrently. In fact, allocating resources to increase effectiveness almost always has a negative effect on efficiency, and as Kowalski (1995) concluded, superintendents usually learn that they will be held more accountable for managing resources and disputes than for focusing on long-term educational initiatives.

Pursuing managerial, educational, and political roles simultaneously requires a balanced approach to administration. Johnson (1996) found that effective superintendents were able to deal with these three roles, albeit in varying proportions. Orr (2006) added that although contemporary problems cited by superintendents do not fit neatly within these three roles, knowing how to negotiate a variety of competing
priorities and problems is pivotal to effectiveness. Flexibility and adaptability are
difficult, however, when board member expectations and superintendent initiatives are
dissimilar (Coleman, 2003).

It is understood by most superintendents that their success is enhanced when they
have strong relationships with board of education members (Carter & Cunningham,
1997). “Pivotal to the success of any school district is a positive relationship between
school boards and their superintendents” (Kowalski et al., 2011, p. 65). According to
Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), an effective leadership team requires that the board
members and the superintendent establish and maintain a constructive working
relationship.

In spite of considerable evidence of conflict with board members, superintendents
in general are satisfied with their boards of education. Data from the 2010 AASA
decennial study by Kowalski and associates (2011) revealed that over 90% of the
superintendents felt either moderately satisfied or very satisfied with their school board.
In addition, 90% perceived school boards as either a minor asset or a major asset.

**Board members being involved in administration.** Kowalski (2006) concluded
that board of education members overstepped their roles “due to the increasing political
nature of elected school boards” (p. 11). In many communities, board members are
elected with the expectation that they will accurately represent community views. Yet
many communities are quite diverse, philosophically and politically. For example,
teachers’ unions have often played an influential role in electing board members whose
views are rejected by many district residents (Sharp & Walter, 1997).
According to Glass et al., (2000), conflict in many school districts also occurred when there was no clear delineation between legislative and administrative roles. Harvey (2003) reported that two-thirds of superintendents were frustrated with board members who had interfered in administrative responsibilities. In large measure, board members have involved themselves in administration because they too faced community pressures related to finances, mandates, and demands for school improvement (Hattar, 2013; Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla & Ghosh, 2003; Simpson, 2013).

Anecdotal evidence regarding school board member micromanagement is abundant (e.g., Reeves, 2002; Conley, 2003; Fuller et al, 2003; Ehrensal & First, 2008; Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Caruso (2004) stated that a superintendent’s ability to lead was impacted by some board members who acted as “Lone Rangers” (p. 8), or individuals who interfered in the day-to-day school operations of the district. Not respecting the separation of legislation and administration has been a primary factor in superintendent turnover (Grissom, 2010; Prezas, 2013).

**Excessive political conflict.** School district leaders must be able to navigate a political climate that is influenced by many stakeholders, including special interest groups, individuals at all levels of government, and other community members. Specific examples include local and state elected officials, employee unions, parent organizations, and disgruntled stakeholders (Blumberg, 1985; Jackson, 1995; Johnson, 1996). More precisely, a special interest group is “any association of individuals, whether formally organized or not, that attempts to influence public policy” (Thomas & Hrebenar, 1991, p. 153). In political systems such as public schools, individuals and groups with dissimilar values and preferences have attempted to influence policies and administrative decisions,
especially those relating to ideology and resources (Blase & Björk, 2010). In a study by Glass et al., (2000), over 90% of superintendents in districts larger than 25,000 students identified the existence of special interest groups attempting to influence district policies and operations. Kowalski et al., (2011) reported that 44.9% of respondents in the 2010 decennial study perceived the level of influence of special interest groups in the larger districts as considerable or moderate. The same study revealed that levels of political pressures increased as the size of the district increased.

More recently, there have been attempts by reform advocates to influence superintendents. Those same advocates have competing politics and ideologies. A prime example is the conflict that exists between stakeholders who seek equity and stakeholders who emphasize liberty; the former emphasize centralized government control whereas the latter seek to limit government control (Kowalski & Björk, 2005). Countless educational reforms have focused on improved student achievement and reinforced the idea that the superintendent’s primary role should be instructional leadership (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Hoyle, 2004; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006). At the same time, however, the superintendent maintains the responsibility to operate efficient, stable, and safe schools. The resulting conflict has prompted many superintendents to believe “that regardless of what they do, they are wrong” (Kowalski, 2006, p. 311).

**Excessive job-related stress.** Generally, the district superintendent is considered to be in a high stress position (e.g., Gmelch & Swent, 1982; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Koch, Tung, Gmelch, & Swent, 1982; Sharp and Walter, 1997). This conclusion has been
supported by a number of studies (e.g., Blair, 2010; Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Eastman & Mirochnik, 1991).

Many studies have focused on superintendents’ perception of stress. In their national study, Glass and Franceschini (2007), for example, found that slightly more than 59% of the responding superintendents said they were under considerable or great stress. Yet, superintendents also tend to report an overall satisfaction with their chosen profession (Björk, Keedy, & Gurley, 2003; Cooper et al., 2000; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Clearly, superintendents encounter multiple stressors that vary in nature and intensity. In both a national study (Glass et al., 2000) and a Missouri study (Hawk & Martin, 2011), superintendents identified state-mandated reforms, fiscal resources, and stakeholder demands as highly stressful factors. Additional examples include attempting to secure approval for tax increases (Richardson, 1998), superintendent-board relations (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson 2006; Richardson, 1998; Welch, 2004), inadequate funding (Kowalski et al., 2011; Welch, 2004), dealing with controversial issues (Eastman & Mirochnik, 1991), bureaucracy and paperwork (Harris, Lowery, Hopson & Marshall, 2004), demands on superintendent time (Richardson, 1998; Yvarra & Gomez, 1995), locating qualified teachers (Trevino, Braley, Brown & Slate, 2008; Welch, 2004), preparing and allocating budget resources (Blair, 2010), and increased accountability (Blair, 2010).

Research by Dykiel (2003) of 195 randomly selected Indiana superintendents found that two of the top reasons superintendents left their positions were stress and time commitment. Over 34% of novice superintendents in a 2006 study by Kowalski,
Petersen and Fusarelli indicated that job-related stress was a *moderate* or *major* problem. In a national study of new superintendents, Welch (2004) indicated that 80.5% of the respondents perceived the superintendency to be *considerably* or *greatly* stressful. According to Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003), of the 1,006 superintendents they surveyed, 98% reported that they were in a high stress position.

Excessive stress can result when superintendents have to move their families to another community due to a job change (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). There also is anecdotal evidence (Carr, 2012; Robinson, 2013) that excessive stress contributes to family problems (e.g., divorce) and job dissatisfaction.

In summary, authors have disagreed about whether stress for superintendents is inherently excessive. Wiggins (1988), for example, posited that the job is only mildly stressful. Milstein (1992) also questioned whether administrator burnout has been exaggerated, noting that studies making this claim were poorly designed. Kowalski (2013) indicated that although superintendent stress is inevitable, the effects are not consistently detrimental to either the person or the organization. He supports this contention by pointing out that individuals differ in stress tolerance and coping mechanisms. Inappropriate coping mechanisms are usually counterproductive, such as drinking alcohol in excess or overeating (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A superintendent’s physical and mental health can certainly be affected if not managed effectively (Caroll, 2010; Fealton & Diamond, 1998).

**Inadequate job security.** Superintendents are hired and evaluated by board members, and they can be influenced considerably by these individuals (Sharp & Walter, 1997). By their nature, boards are subject to politically motivated initiatives, especially
the approximately 95% who are elected to office. Moreover, member turnover on elected boards in most communities is relatively high. In diverse communities, members of the same board frequently express different needs, values, and goals.

Sharp and Walter (1997) described the superintendency as having a “nomadic existence” (p. 178), because many expect to move before they feel secure in their position. Campbell and Carlson (1972) stated that superintendents have more opportunities to make enemies than friends, and as a result, they do not ordinarily last long in one position. A study by Heller and Conway (1987) found that 39% of the superintendents reported feeling only somewhat secure in their jobs, and 9% reported little or no job security. In a nationwide study of superintendents by Heller, Woodworth, Jacobson, Stephen, and Conway (1991), 40% of the respondents felt they had adequate job security. Although these studies are dated, inadequate job security is considered a problem for many superintendents (Unzicker, 2012; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franeschinni, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011). Even though Ohio superintendents receive contracts up to 5 years in duration, boards of education only need to give written notice of its intention not to reemploy. In addition, there are no legal provisions preventing a board from making this decision (Ohio Revised Code, 2015).

To counteract what could be a quick departure, many superintendents seek multi-year contracts. The American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 2007) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA, 2009) define the superintendent’s contract as only a resource document for both parties.

**Inadequate funds for district programs/operations.** A consistent major concern identified by superintendents over the years has been inadequate school funds.
In a mid-decade AASA superintendent study, Glass and Franceschini (2007) reported that inadequate fiscal resources were identified as being the most serious superintendent challenge in nearly all of the decennial studies conducted since 1923. This finding was also confirmed by the most recent decennial study (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Many additional studies have found inadequate fiscal resources to be a prevalent problem for superintendents (e.g., Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Williams, 1984). Research has also revealed that inadequate resources contribute to other problems. For example, Kelley (1983) found that superintendents in Pennsylvania believed insufficient state and federal funding and an inadequate tax base contributed to stakeholder dissatisfaction in relation to school district tax rates. Unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates have more recently increased concerns about inadequate funding. In a study of Kansas superintendents, Clark (2006) reported that most respondents believed that mandates and regular district programs were underfunded by the state. State-level studies have also established a nexus between superintendent turnover and the problem of inadequate fiscal resources. Examples include California (Domene, 2012), Indiana (Rausch, 2001), Missouri (Mansfield, 2005), and North Carolina (Wheeler, 2012). Several national studies have also confirmed the link between these conditions (e.g., Hall & Difford, 1992; Kowalski, 1995).

Novice superintendents have also identified inadequate fiscal resources as a major challenge. Two examples are a four-state study (California, Missouri, North Carolina, and Ohio) by Kowalski and associates (2008) and a study of 20 novices by Sutton (2012).

The issue of inadequate resources is often confused with another possible problem, managing fiscal resources. Whereas the former is a capital issue, the latter is a
knowledge/skills issue. Distinguishing between the two problems is often difficult. Research conducted by Ornstein (1991), for example, revealed that 3 of the top 5 problems of practice identified by superintendents pertained to fiscal management, either in terms of inadequate capital or in terms of inadequate expertise.

**Excessive conflict stemming from philosophical dissonance.** Communities are comprised of stakeholders who have dissimilar philosophies that lead them to disagree about the purposes of education and effective schooling. As an example, stakeholders may express competing preferences about priorities and the role the superintendent should assume in pursuing them. Philosophical dissonance often produces a “collision between professionalism and democracy” (Kowalski, 2009, p. 1). According to Gutmann (1987), a superintendent with the support of the board of education should provide professional leadership to determine curriculum. At the same time, many parents and other stakeholders believe that they should determine which beliefs and values are expressed in public schools. In essence, superintendents are expected to provide professional leadership while remaining subservient to the will of the people (Wirt & Kirst, 2009). Consequently, highly effective superintendents are able to collaborate with this broad spectrum of stakeholders to reach consensus about educational philosophy, curriculum, and the future of the district (Kowalski, 2013).

Philosophical dissonance frequently divides stakeholders into political factions, a problem previously described here. Expectedly, philosophical dissonance is most prevalent in large urban districts where reform efforts are commonly opposed by one or more political factions (Wirt & Kirst, 2009).
**Negative relationships with district employees.** According to Barth (2003), relationships are intertwined in leadership:

Very little in our lives is more important and more persuasive than our relationships with those we care about and with whom we work. And very little is more inscrutable and problematic. Relationships can be as taxing and toxic as they can be replenishing and fulfilling (p. xi).

Studies (e.g., Blumberg, 1985; Jackson, 1995; Johnson, 1996) have shown the importance of superintendent-employee associations. Kowalski et al., (2011), for example, found that 46.7% of respondents in the AASA decennial study reported that influence exerted by employee groups was either considerable or moderate. Results also indicated that the larger the district, the greater the reported influence.

Since superintendents interact with district employees daily, negative relationships may develop for a variety of reasons. The causes may be general such as disliking the superintendent’s leadership style or resenting persons with legitimate power (Paolo, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Other reasons may be specific and related to a single decision, such as denying requests for additional materials, resources, or professional development. Zeehandelaar (2012) found that tensions between superintendents and teachers’ unions are magnified when superintendents cut budgets and expenditures.

Superintendents are affected either directly or indirectly by employee unions and the process of collective bargaining. A direct effect has been more likely in smaller districts in which the superintendent is often required to be the board’s spokesperson or at least a member of the collective bargaining team (Kowalski, 2013; Lamkin, 2006). Even when a formal union does not exist, a superintendent often must deal with an employee association that represents the interests of employees (Young, 2008).
Leading or being involved in collective bargaining usually affects superintendent-employee relationships negatively (Sharp & Walter, 1997). In a study of superintendents of 100 of the country’s largest districts, 47% felt that their relationship with the teachers’ unions was a barrier to progress (Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2003). Respondents felt that unions had focused more on efficiency (e.g., financial issues) than on school effectiveness. Moreover, superintendent relationships have been affected by disputes resulting from managing the master contract produced through collective bargaining; grievances and arbitration hearings are examples.

In a study of California superintendents, Riley (1999) found that superintendents did not view collective bargaining as a productive process; as examples, they thought the board had made too many concessions and that the process had consumed too much of their time. Kiess (1992) also found that superintendents believed they had been negatively affected by the collective bargaining process. Other authors, for example, LeBlanc (1986) and Nuccio (1998), found that collective bargaining diverted superintendents from more important responsibilities, such as curriculum development, personnel administration, fiscal management, time management, decision-making, discretionary judgment, and planning. Similarly, Briggs (2008) reported that collective bargaining could force superintendents to devote inadequate time to other responsibilities.

Inadequate professional growth opportunities. Superintendents often feel overwhelmed by the demands of their position, believing that they cannot take the needed time to grow professionally. Kowalski et al., (2011) stated that both research and practice make it clear that ongoing professional development is crucial to enhancing
leadership capacity. When available, such opportunities enable a superintendent to explore and examine personal leadership style and to remain current with respect to educational administration issues.

In Ohio, to renew a license, superintendents must participate in professional development (ODE, 2015a). In addition, some boards of education expect superintendents to engage in professional development and they evaluate performance accordingly (Hazel, 2002). However, it has been common to find both limited information concerning professional development (Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2011), and inadequate opportunities for continuing education for superintendents (Nelson, 2010).

Several studies have identified the need for continuing education for superintendents. Examples include:

- Assessment and accountability (Spanneut, Tobin, & Ayers, 2011)
- Comprehension and interpretation of data (Bowmaster, 2007)
- Collective bargaining (Hazel, 2002)
- Communication and interpersonal skills (Evangelista-Moskal, 1981; Miller, 2004)
- Evaluation related to instructional leadership, planning and assessment, and safety and organizational management for learning (Armbruster, 2011).

In a study of superintendents by Wyks (2004), respondents expressed the importance of specific training to address identified needs that may not have been covered in university preparation programs. In this same study, conventions, conferences, local roundtables, and professional meetings were identified as the
experiences that contributed most to effectiveness. Lamkin (2003) discovered that superintendents from seven focus groups in rural schools in 3 states felt that ongoing professional development could help fill the gaps between their actual preparation and problems of practice.

Daresh and Aplin (2001) posited that current professional development for superintendents has been focused on the refinement and application of existing managerial skills in the context of their practice. They posited that professional development should be more balanced, especially in terms of placing greater emphasis on instructional leadership. Other researchers have found that professional development topics identified by superintendents as being relevant were usually technical in nature, addressing everyday responsibilities and demands (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan, 1990; Willower & Fraser, 1980).

Superintendents often have commented that professional development has been impractical and unfocused (Public Agenda, 2001). As a result, mentoring and networking have become more popular because they provide more individualized learning opportunities. Some research (e.g., Blumberg, 1985; Jackson, 1995; Johnson, 1996) supports the notion of networking for ongoing support. Other existing literature specifically advocates networking among superintendents in small rural school districts (e.g., Holmes, 1991; Jacobson, 1988a; Keeney & Devaney, 1982; Leach, 1991; Tagg, 1982; Tift, 1990).

Data from the 2010 AASA decennial study revealed superintendents were most likely to have attended continuing education provided by AASA, state government, and by state superintendent associations, with over 83% rating their experiences as useful or
very useful. Targeted topics identified as having the greatest value were law/legal issues, school-community relations, superintendent-board relations, school reform/improvement, personnel management law/legal issues, and finance (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates. According to Brimley and Garfield (2005), superintendents are expected to implement underfunded or unfunded state and federal mandates. Such demands are linked to accountability, a broad concept in education that involves holding schools and educators responsible for a multitude of factors (e.g., academic achievement, financial efficiency, decision-making, safety). Through accountability, citizens can scrutinize their schools and the educational system in general. This includes the expectation of transparency, with residents demanding that district leaders conduct business in the open, especially concerning financial matters.

Studies by Lamkin (2006), Mentzer (2008), Lane (2002), and Montgomery (2010) identified state and federal government mandates as major challenges. In a study by Farkas, et al., (2003), 93% of superintendents indicated that their responsibilities were increased due to mandates, and 86% reported that much of their time was devoted to mandate compliance. In a study of Michigan superintendents by Peters (1997), respondents reported that the organizational structure of their school district and the role of superintendent had both been altered by state mandates. In addition, the superintendent’s desire to remain in the position had been reduced and their job dissatisfaction had increased.

Today, additional challenges face the superintendent with the implementation of Common Core, Race to the Top legislation, new rigorous graduation requirements, and high stakes testing that have created conflict within school communities. Teitel (2009)
suggested that such initiatives linked to accountability are enormous challenges for superintendents who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring academic achievement for all students, with the required learning being job-embedded. Superintendents cannot simply take the leadership theory that was learned from graduate school classes and solve our current educational challenges and demands (Furin, 2004). Kowalski (2000) posited that as society continues to demand accountability, superintendents must involve all shareholders in the educational process to facilitate ownership of education.

The landscape of school leadership has changed, as well as how we define leadership roles, due to demands for increased accountability (Hoyle, Björk, Collier, & Glass, 2005). Bredeson and Kose (2007) conducted research over a 10-year period that revealed the impact of school reform and accountability in relation to the changing role of the superintendent. They concluded that the superintendency is “likely to remain a dynamic and malleable leadership role shaped by both internal and external environments” (p. 17), and posited that effective superintendents are dynamic change agents.

Kowalski and associates (2011) found in a recent national study that state mandates and accountability measures were viewed as a minor or major liability by 62.8% of the respondents. Federal mandates and accountability standards were perceived as a minor or major liability by 74.5% of the respondents. State departments of education were seen as a major or minor asset by 35.5% of the respondents and 43.6% viewed these agencies as a minor or major liability (Kowalski et al., 2011). Under one-
fourth (21.2%) viewed state departments of education as being neither an asset nor a liability (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Work-Induced Problems

Specific work-induced problems described in this chapter include inadequate time to spend with family or friends, feelings of isolation and loneliness, and loss of personal privacy.

Loss of personal privacy. Lamkin (2003) reported that superintendents of 3 rural school districts he studied faced a critical lack of privacy both in the community and at school. Another study by Lamkin (2006) found that superintendents expressed that they were too visible in their roles, which precluded opportunities for privacy or confidentiality. Ramsey (1999) posited that superintendents often feel that they live in a glass box, with all facets of their personal lives under scrutiny. This includes performance, salaries, family lives, and all of their social interactions.

Kowalski (2013) stated that personal privacy is sacrificed for both the superintendent and their family upon entry to the position. It is not uncommon for the superintendent or even family members to be questioned in public places (Bruno, 2002). According to Carr (2002), the problem has become even more severe as an increased number of people now have access to social media (e.g., Twitter, blogs, YouTube, Facebook). Gossip or misinformation can affect not only superintendents, but also spouses and children (Bruno, 2002; Carr, 2012).

In a study of rural, female superintendents, Haar, Palladino, Perry, and Grady (2005) found a loss of privacy to be a common problem. Participants handled the issues of maintaining a private life while holding a public position by using such strategies as
intentionally shopping in another town, and scheduling time to spend with their families. In his study of urban superintendents, Kowalski (1995) posited that it is unclear what personal characteristics contribute most to the ability of a superintendent to adapt to the personal challenges of the superintendency. Examples of possible factors are stress tolerance, personal health, personal finances, self-esteem, and marital problems.

**Feelings of isolation and loneliness.** According to Sharp and Walter (1997), “being the superintendent can be one of the loneliest jobs in the world” (p. 153). The authors posited that a superintendent is lonelier than a principal because only one such position exists in a district. Therefore, superintendents must seek out other superintendents or persons who understand the complexities of the position for counsel.

To avoid any impression of favoritism, many superintendents purposefully isolate themselves from subordinates and avoid fraternization (Kowalski, 2013). In a study conducted by Jones (1994), some superintendents were found to have experienced loneliness even when surrounded by people. Case study findings also revealed that feelings of professional isolation could contribute to rural superintendents’ decisions to leave a district (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). The 2001 Public Agenda Survey revealed that 63% of superintendents viewed the superintendency as an isolating professional position, providing limited opportunities for networking with colleagues.

Superintendents may feel even more isolated when they perceive they are being blamed for political, economic, and social problems (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). Superintendents in smaller, rural districts are especially prone to isolationism due to their education level and higher salaries (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). Ceglarek (2004) indicated that he did not feel lonely as a teacher or principal, but did experience loneliness when he
became a superintendent. Additional studies have identified isolation as a problem for rural superintendents (Barker, 1985; Beckner, 1983; DeYoung, 1994; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977; Stephens & Turner, 1988). Wyks (2004) found that superintendents supported networking opportunities as a strategy to combat isolation associated with the position.

**Inadequate time to spend with family or friends.** Numerous meetings, attending district events, and trying to be in all places at all times result in long hours and hinders attempts at achieving a balance between work and family obligations. Time spent away from home can affect family relationships and connections with friends. Burbank (1969) described a superintendent’s time commitments by saying, “The hours flow into days, and the days into weeks and months, in an endless round of official duties, small and large. No hour of the day can be counted free of work” (p. 91). A study by Kowalski (1995) established that the average work week for urban superintendents was 73 hours. A 2001 study of the 50 Superintendents of the Year for 2000 (Chan, Pool, & Strickland) found that none worked a standard 40 hours a week or less; instead, 85% reported working 50 or more hours a week and 40% worked more than 60 hours a week. Domenech (1996) noted that 12-hour days are the rule and superintendents are expected to be at their best during board meetings after already putting in a full day of work. Superintendent spouses are expected to understand and encourage, whereas superintendents are expected to recognize the limits to which the position can affect their personal lives (Goldman, 2012).

In a study conducted in 2004, McKay described a condition known as *workaholism*, where an individual both over indulges in work and is unable to regulate work habits. Eventually, job commitments exclude normal life activities. Myopically,
workaholism has often been looked upon as an asset for superintendents. In a survey of superintendents and principals, McKay (2002) found that 43% of 800 respondents considered themselves on the way, already there, or in denial about being a workaholic. The study also found that administrators typically attended school activities 4 nights a week. With such demands, it is understandable that a superintendent has inadequate time to spend with family or friends.

**Summary**

This chapter has included a summary of the literature relevant to problems experienced by school superintendents across states and districts. Specifically, content has pertained to problems *work-embedded* and *work-induced*. Included in this review were (a) a summary of the superintendent position, (b) a demographic profile of superintendents, and (c) a summary of problems commonly identified by district superintendents.

Two general conclusions can be made about problems in the superintendency. First, certain challenges, such as insufficient fiscal resources (Glass & Franceschini, 2007) and strained relationships with school board members (Cuban, 1985), are rather common. Second, the difficulty of problems more so than frequency of problems depends on contextual variables such as community diversity, district enrollment, district wealth, and human and material resources (Daresh & Aplin, 2001). As a result, research on superintendents remains less comprehensive than research on principals.

The dearth of empirical data on superintendents’ problems is disconcerting because future decisions on academic preparation, state licensing, and continuing education may continue to go unchallenged. For example, advocates for deregulating
superintendent licensing assert that persons with managerial skills in business, the military, and government can be successful superintendents even though they have no compelling data to support this assertion (Kowalski, 2004, 2009). In order to influence future policy decisions that may be detrimental, the education profession needs to produce compelling evidence demonstrating why rigorous academic preparation and state licensing criteria are in society’s best interest.

Since 2000, many states have revised licensing criteria for school district superintendents. More often than not, these policy decisions have been political and not professional; that is, they have been made by legislative groups and based on preferences and pressures and not by professional standards’ boards based on empirical data (Kowalski, 2004). For example, some states either have eliminated superintendent licensing or have made it voluntary based largely on anecdotal evidence coming from very large urban districts with 25,000 or more students (Feistritzer, 2003). Little or no consideration has been given to the effects of deregulation on much smaller districts, a major oversight considering that two-thirds of the nation’s school systems enroll less than 1,500 students.

Although the complexity and difficulty of being a school district superintendent is widely recognized by educators, surprisingly little is known about the frequency and difficulty of problems associated with the position. This lack of data is partially explained by demographic, geographic, and legal dissimilarities among the nation’s school systems. This study addressed these gaps, and findings and conclusions may contribute to a growing professional knowledge base concerning superintendent practice.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

This non-experimental, ex post facto, descriptive study was conducted using survey research. The primary purposes were (a) to develop a demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population, (b) to determine the frequency and difficulty of two categories of problems reported by these superintendents, (c) to determine levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level), and (d) to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variability in the criterion variable.

Ohio policymakers may consider the information when making future decisions affecting professional licensing and education. Second, professional administrator organizations, such as the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), may determine the results beneficial to creating ongoing and relevant professional development for its members. Third, university administrators and professors may utilize the data when both modifying and evaluating instructional practices and curricula. Last, results contribute to extant literature on district superintendents.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study.

1. What was the demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population?

2. With what frequency did superintendents comprising the study population encounter problems commonly identified in extant literature?

3. What commonly identified problems did superintendents comprising the study population perceive to be most difficult?

4. What were the levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of the predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level)?

5. To what degree did the predictor variables collectively account for variability in the criterion variable?

Study Population

Members of the defined population met the following three criteria.

1. They were school district superintendents employed in the northwest region of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year. As defined here, the northwest region is one of five state regions determined by the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). The other four are northeast, southwest, southeast, and central. The 20 counties comprising the northwest region include Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot.
2. They were employed in a district with an average daily membership (ADM) between 100 and 10,000 ($N = 111$). Superintendents in Kelleys Island, Middle Bass, North Bass, Put-in-Bay, and Toledo City were excluded from the study; an explanation regarding these superintendents is in Chapter 1.

3. They had at least 1 year of experience as a school district superintendent prior to the 2014-15 term.

Survey and Data Collection

Items for the superintendent survey were derived from extant literature, primarily journal articles, books, dissertations, and two of the most recent American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) decennial studies (Glass, et al., 2000; Kowalski, et al., 2011). The researcher initially identified 25 potential problems to use for the survey, with that number eventually reduced during the literature review to 13. The final items used for the survey were those that recurred in the literature. Other sources used in the study, in addition to the survey data, were official state records maintained by the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS), and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE).

The University of Dayton Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this study on October 14, 2015 (Appendix D). Appropriate statutory requirements and ethical standards were applied in the execution of this research and in the collection of data from superintendents in the study population.

The survey’s content validity was established by a panel of experts that included Dr. Lars G. Björk, Chair and professor, Department of Educational Leadership Studies at the University of Kentucky; Dr. Jerry Klenke, past Executive Director of the Buckeye
Association of School Administrators (BASA); and Dr. Mary Ziskin, assistant professor, Department of Educational Administration at the University of Dayton. This study also received support from BASA, and an email stating such was sent to members of the study population by BASA Executive Director Dr. Kirk Hamilton.

Study population members were invited to complete the survey via email sent to individual district email addresses (see Appendix A). Each respondent’s survey was coded to track returns. The invitation letter (see Appendix B) included the following information:

- an explanation of the research,
- an explanation of the study population,
- an assurance of confidentiality, and
- contact information for the researcher and the professor directing the research.

The researcher used the commercial product, Survey Monkey, to administer the survey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C. Follow-up emails were sent to initial non-responders, and telephone calls were made to those not completing the survey via the electronic prompt. Respondents were not compensated for their participation in the research. Data gathered from State of Ohio databases and the survey were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 software program for analysis.

**Data Analysis**

This study was conducted with a defined population and as such, descriptive statistics were commonly calculated to determine findings. Correlations, however, were calculated to determine levels of association between the criterion and predictor
variables; the correlations were applied descriptively without intent to determine causal relationships. Problem frequency was chosen as the criterion variable in these correlations since it is more generalizable than difficulty across districts (e.g., difficulty is often influenced by human and material resources). This ex post facto study relied on data from the superintendents in the defined study population. According to Krathwohl (2009), an ex post facto (after-the-fact) study is one in which the variables occur naturally and are not manipulated. Causation was not hypothesized, since variables were not controlled (Krathwohl, 2009). The predictor variables in this study were district enrollment and district wealth (institutional data), and teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level (personal data). The criterion variable was problem frequency, the rate at which a problem recurs. For analysis purposes, problems were categorized as being either work-induced or work-embedded. Survey questions 1-13 (Part A) which pertained to problem frequency, were answered using a semantic differential scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). Questions 14-26 (Part B), which pertained to problem difficulty, were answered using a semantic differential scale ranging from not difficult (1) to extremely difficult (5). Questions 27-31 (Part C), which pertained to personal predictor variables, were answered using specified response options.

Research question 1 (What was the demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population?) was answered using personal and district demographic data. Research question 2 (With what frequency did superintendents comprising the study population encounter problems commonly identified in extant literature?) was answered by calculating and ranking mean scores for
each problem listed in Part A of the survey (questions 1-13). The following numeric
values were assigned to each response option:

- *Never* 1
- *Seldom* 2
- *Sometimes* 3
- *Often* 4
- *Always* 5

Thus, the higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of frequency. Based
on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of frequency
(highest to lowest).

Research question 3 (*What commonly identified problems did superintendents
comprising the study population perceive to be most difficult?*) was answered by
calculating means and standard deviations for each problem listed in Part B of the survey
(questions 14-26). The following numeric values were assigned to each response option:

- *Not at all difficult* 1
- *Slightly difficult* 2
- *Moderately difficult* 3
- *Very difficult* 4
- *Extremely difficult* 5

Thus, the higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of difficulty.
Based on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of
difficulty (highest to lowest).
Research question 4 (What were the levels of association between the criterion variable [problem frequency] and each of the predictor variables [district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level]?) was answered by calculating a mean problem frequency score for each respondent and by determining the requisite data for each. Each respondent’s mean problem frequency score was determined by calculating an average response score for survey problems in Part A (questions 1-13). A respondent’s mean frequency score was then correlated (Pearson $r$ correlation coefficient) with data for each of the five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level) to determine levels of association. “The Pearson correlation coefficient describes the linear relationship between the two interval variables, two ratio variables, or one interval and one ratio variable” (Heinman, 2010, p. 155). Chen and Popovich (2002) describe multiple uses of Pearson's $r$, including several special cases utilizing forms of the correlation coefficient as a descriptive statistic. Whereas use of the correlation coefficient as an inferential statistic requires several assumptions, including an underlying normal distribution of data, Chen and Popovich note that no such restrictions limit the use of $r$ when it is used as a descriptive statistic. Whether it is used as a descriptive or inferential statistic, a correlation coefficient describes interdependence between variables, not causation. The researcher utilized the following rubric described by Cohen (1988) to classify strength of association:

- **small** association: correlations from (+ or -) .01 to .29
- **medium** association: correlations from (+ or -) .30 to .49
- **large** association: correlations of (+ or -) .50 and higher.
Cohen (1988) cautions that estimates of association are relative only to each other and must be interpreted in the context of the specific content of the investigation and of the particular research method. For this reason, findings of association should not be generalized beyond the study.

Research question 5 (*To what degree did the predictor variables collectively account for variability in the criterion variable?*) was answered by utilizing a two-step process. First, a multiple correlation coefficient \( R \) was calculated to determine the association between the criterion variable and the five predictor variables collectively. A multiple correlation indicates the strength of relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable (Heinman, 2010). \( R \) was then squared to establish the coefficient of determination \( (R^2) \), a statistic that identifies the proportion of common variance produced by the predictor variables. The coefficient of determination can be any value from 0 to 1 (Heiman, 2010). Variance in responses indicates the extent to which respondents answered questions differently. Variance demonstrating a strong or weak relationship helps to determine if the predictor variables collectively accounted for the variability in problem frequency.

**Limitations**

The study population was limited to superintendents in 20 counties all located in northwest Ohio; therefore, generalizations to all superintendents, nationally or in Ohio, are not appropriate. The study results also relied primarily on the accuracy of self-reported information pertaining to problem frequency and difficulty, and self-reported personal demographic information. Finally, this study examined levels of association between predictor and criterion variables without an intent to determine causation.
Summary

This study was descriptive, non-experimental, and ex post facto in which the researcher had no control over members of the study population who provided the data for the study. The researcher’s purpose was to determine the frequency and difficulty of problems reported by experienced school district superintendents in northwest Ohio and possible associations with selected demographic characteristics. The results of the statistical analysis are provided in the following chapters, as well as a discussion of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

This chapter includes a description of the study population, the survey return rates, and study findings presented in the chronological order of the research questions. The purposes of this study were to: (a) develop a demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population, (b) determine the frequency of problems reported by experienced school superintendents comprising the study population, (c) determine which problems were perceived to be most difficult by superintendents comprising the study population, (d) to determine the levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level), and (e) to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variability in the criterion variable.

Description of the Study Population

Members of the defined population met the following three criteria.

1. They were school district superintendents employed in the northwest region of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year. As defined here, the northwest region is one of five state regions determined by the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA). The other four are northeast, southwest, southeast, and
central. The 20 counties comprising the northwest region include Allen, Auglaize, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa Paulding, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot.

2. They were employed in a district with an average daily membership (ADM) between 100 and 10,000 \((N = 111)\). Superintendents in Kelleys Island, Middle Bass, North Bass, Put-in-Bay, and Toledo City were excluded from the study due to district size (enrollment). The position of superintendent in these very small (<100 students), and very large (10,001>) districts was considered atypical because of factors such as position responsibilities (e.g., transporting students in a very small district) and human resources (e.g., having a large number of professional support staff in a very large district).

3. They had at least 1 year of experience as a school district superintendent prior to the 2014-15 term.

**Survey Response Rate**

The two primary data sources were responses to a survey designed for this study, the *Survey on Superintendent Problems* (found in Appendix C), and official state records maintained by the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS), and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The researcher used the commercial product, Survey Monkey, to administer the survey. Survey data were collected over a period of 3 weeks between October 16, 2015, and November 6, 2015. One hundred three of 111 superintendents comprising the study
population (93%) completed and returned surveys. Data gathered from OEDS, EMIS, and ODE databases were entered for all 111 members of the population.

For analysis, superintendent survey problems were categorized as being either work-induced or work-embedded. Survey questions 1-13 (Part A) which pertained to problem frequency, were answered using a semantic differential scale ranging from never (1) to always (5). Survey questions 14-26 (Part B), which pertained to problem difficulty, were answered using a semantic differential scale ranging from not difficult (1) to extremely difficult (5). Questions 27-31 (Part C), which pertained to personal predictor variables, were answered using specified response options.

**Findings**

**Demographic Profiles of the Study Population and Employing Districts**

Research question 1 (What was the demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents in the study population?) was answered with district and personal demographic data. The demographic profile includes seven variables, two, district enrollment (ADM) and district wealth (AVPP), are institutional and five, degree level, teaching experience, administrative experience other than as superintendent, superintendent experience, and number of districts served as a superintendent, are personal. Means and standard deviations were calculated for six of these variables; degree level was the exception. In this study, respondents were identified either as not having a doctoral degree or having an earned doctoral degree. Only 14 respondents (14%) reported having the degree. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to tabulate and analyze data. Quantitative data for the remaining seven variables are included in Table 2.
Table 2

Quantitative Data for the Respondents and Their Employing Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience (N = 102)</td>
<td>1-35 years</td>
<td>10.25 years</td>
<td>6.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative experience excluding superintendency (N = 103)</td>
<td>3-35 years</td>
<td>12.41 years</td>
<td>7.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent experience (N = 103)</td>
<td>2-34 years</td>
<td>8.41 years</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of districts served (N = 103)</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District enrollment (ADM; N = 111)</td>
<td>254-7,420</td>
<td>1,464.30</td>
<td>1,254.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District taxable wealth (AVPP; N = 111)</td>
<td>$56,542-</td>
<td>$143,051.02</td>
<td>$70,219.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the seven variables, the modal superintendent in northwest Ohio had 10 years of teaching experience, between 12 and 13 years of administrative experience (excluding the superintendency), and 8 years of experience as a superintendent. She or he did not have an earned doctorate, was employed in a district with less than 1,000 students, and in a district with taxable wealth base below the state average. Thirty-four of the respondents (33%) had been a superintendent in more than one district.

Five of the seven variables comprising the study population’s demographic profile were predictor variables in this study. Consequently, they were categorized to accommodate statistical analysis. Data for degree level were not included in this table;
responses were categorized de facto because only two responses were possible for each. Categorization data for the remaining predictor variables are included in Tables 3 through 6. Data in Table 4 are divided into four categories and are based on ADM. Table 5 data are divided into two categories and are based on AVPP.

Table 3

*Categorized Years of Teaching Experience (N = 102)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38.24</td>
<td>42.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 years</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.41</td>
<td>71.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12&gt; years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.43</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Categorized Years of Superintendent Experience (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.33</td>
<td>22.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.04</td>
<td>54.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>77.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12&gt; years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.33</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

*Categorized District Enrollment Based on ADM (N = 111)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADM category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1,000</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>48.65</td>
<td>48.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-1,499</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>68.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500-2,499</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19.82</td>
<td>88.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2500&gt;</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Categorized District Wealth Based on AVPP (N = 111)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVPP category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below state average*</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63.06</td>
<td>63.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above state average*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36.94</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The state average AVPP was $137,969.72

**Problem Frequency**

Research question 2 (*With what frequency did superintendents comprising the study population encounter problems commonly identified in extant literature?*) was answered by calculating and ranking mean scores for each problem listed in Part A of the survey (questions 1-13). In order to do this, the following numeric values were assigned to each response option:

- *Never* 1
- *Seldom* 2
• Sometimes 3
• Often 4
• Always 5

Thus, the higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of frequency. Based on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of frequency (highest to lowest). Frequency data for each of the 13 survey problems are included in Tables 7-19. A composite for all 13 problems are included in Table 20.

Table 7

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Negative Relations with One or More Board Members (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.62</td>
<td>12.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43.69</td>
<td>56.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.16</td>
<td>84.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>99.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Board Members Being Involved in Administration (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34.95</td>
<td>39.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39.81</td>
<td>79.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>97.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Excessive Conflict Generated by Political Factions or Individuals Seeking to Influence District Policies (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.71</td>
<td>9.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.10</td>
<td>39.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36.89</td>
<td>76.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.33</td>
<td>99.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Excessive Job-Related Stress (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>17.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.83</td>
<td>56.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37.86</td>
<td>94.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Inadequate Job Security (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.1845</td>
<td>27.1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37.8641</td>
<td>65.0486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23.3010</td>
<td>88.3496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.7087</td>
<td>98.0583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9417</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Inadequate Funds for District Programs/Operations (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.902</td>
<td>4.902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20.588</td>
<td>25.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.294</td>
<td>60.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.412</td>
<td>90.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.804</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Excessive Conflict Resulting from Stakeholders Having Dissimilar Values and Preferences (N = 101)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.93069</td>
<td>6.93069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37.62376</td>
<td>44.55445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38.61386</td>
<td>83.16831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.85149</td>
<td>98.0198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.98020</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Negative Relationships with District Employees or Employee Groups (N = 101)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>6.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50.50</td>
<td>57.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38.61</td>
<td>96.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Inadequate Opportunities for Professional Growth (N = 102)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.37</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.10</td>
<td>76.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.69</td>
<td>92.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Unrealistic Federal or State Accountability Mandates (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>20.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48.54</td>
<td>68.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.07</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Loss of Privacy (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.9126</td>
<td>2.9126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.5049</td>
<td>19.4175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39.8058</td>
<td>59.2233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.2718</td>
<td>83.4951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.5049</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness*  
(*N* = 102)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>23.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46.08</td>
<td>69.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.61</td>
<td>89.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19

*Frequency, Percent, and Cumulative Percent for Inadequate Time to Spend with Family or Friends*  
(*N* = 103)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.970874</td>
<td>0.970874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13.592233</td>
<td>14.563107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34.951456</td>
<td>49.514563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33.980583</td>
<td>83.495146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.504854</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

**Ranked Frequency of Problems Reported by Experienced Superintendents** \( (N = 103) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Frequency Mean</th>
<th>Frequency Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Frequency Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of privacy</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive job-related stress</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funds for district programs/operations</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive conflict resulting from stakeholders having dissimilar values and preferences</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relations with district employees or employee groups</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate job security</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate opportunities for professional growth</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notably, three of the five most frequent problems relate to the impact on the individual superintendent rather than to the effect on the district. The most frequent problems affecting the district were excessive mandates and inadequate funding.

**Problem Difficulty**

Research question 3 (*What commonly identified problems did superintendents comprising the study population perceive to be most difficult?*) was answered by calculating and ranking mean scores for each problem listed in Part B of the survey
(questions 14-26). In order to do this, the following numeric values were assigned to each response option:

- *Not at all difficult* 1
- *Slightly difficult* 2
- *Moderately difficult* 3
- *Very difficult* 4
- *Extremely difficult* 5

Thus, the higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of difficulty. Based on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of difficulty (highest to lowest). Difficulty data for each of the 13 problems are included in Tables 21-33. A composite for all 13 problems are included in Table 34.

Table 21

*Difficulty Level of Negative Relations with One or More Board Members (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>19.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.13</td>
<td>48.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.21</td>
<td>74.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>89.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.68</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 22

**Difficulty Level of Board Members Being Involved in Administration (N = 103)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.65</td>
<td>11.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34.95</td>
<td>46.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.18</td>
<td>73.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.48</td>
<td>91.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 23

**Difficulty Level of Excessive Conflict Generated by Political Factions or Individuals Seeking to Influence District Policies (N = 103)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>14.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>39.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35.92</td>
<td>75.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.45</td>
<td>94.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.83</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 24

*Difficulty Level of Excessive Job-Related Stress (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.10</td>
<td>34.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34.95</td>
<td>69.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23.30</td>
<td>93.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 25

*Difficulty Level of Inadequate Job Security (N = 102)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36.27</td>
<td>36.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.39</td>
<td>66.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>83.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td>95.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 26

*Difficulty Level of Inadequate Funds for District Programs/Operations (N = 102)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.706</td>
<td>14.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.647</td>
<td>32.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27.451</td>
<td>59.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26.471</td>
<td>86.275</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.725</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27

*Difficulty Level of Excessive Conflict Resulting From Stakeholders Having Dissimilar Values and Preferences (N = 101)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.851</td>
<td>14.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.743</td>
<td>40.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35.643</td>
<td>76.237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.822</td>
<td>94.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.941</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 28

**Difficulty Level of Negative Relationships with District Employees or Employee Groups**

\(N = 103\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21.36</td>
<td>21.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>39.81</td>
<td>61.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22.33</td>
<td>83.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14.56</td>
<td>98.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29

**Difficulty Level of Inadequate Opportunities for Professional Growth** \(N = 103\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43.6832</td>
<td>43.6832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>38.8349</td>
<td>82.52427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.6214</td>
<td>95.14563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8544</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 30

*Difficulty Level of Unrealistic Federal or State Accountability Mandates (N = 99)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22.22</td>
<td>30.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50.51</td>
<td>80.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19.19</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31

*Difficulty Level of Loss of Privacy (N = 102)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.765</td>
<td>11.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.392</td>
<td>42.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30.392</td>
<td>72.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18.627</td>
<td>91.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.824</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 32

*Difficulty Level of Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.5340</td>
<td>15.5340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31.0680</td>
<td>46.6020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28.1553</td>
<td>74.7573</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.4175</td>
<td>94.1748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8252</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 33

*Difficulty Level of Inadequate Time to Spend with Family or Friends (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.77</td>
<td>7.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>27.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32.04</td>
<td>59.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25.24</td>
<td>84.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 34

*Ranked Difficulty of Problems (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Difficulty Mean</th>
<th>Difficulty Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Difficulty Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funds for district programs/operations</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive job-related stress</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of privacy</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive conflict resulting from stakeholders having dissimilar values and preferences</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relations with district employees or employee groups</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate job security</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate opportunities for professional growth</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notably, the problem difficulty data reveal that those problems reported as being most difficult, also were reported as being the most frequent. For example, the five problems identified as having been the most frequent were the problems also identified as having been the most difficult.

**Levels of Association between Problem Frequency and Each of the Five Predictor Variables**

Research question 4 (*What were the levels of association between the criterion variable [problem frequency] and each of the predictor variables [district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level]?*) was answered by calculating a mean problem frequency score for each respondent and by determining the requisite demographic data for each. Each respondent’s mean problem frequency score was determined by calculating his or her average response score for the survey questions in Part A (1-13). Then a respondent’s mean frequency score was correlated (Pearson $r$ correlation coefficient) with data for each of the five predictor variables to determine levels of association. The researcher utilized the following rubric described by Cohen (1988) to classify strength of association:

- **small** association: correlations from (+ or -) .01 to .29
- **medium** association: correlations from (+ or -) .30 to .49
- **large** association: correlations of (+ or -) .50 and higher.

Based on this rubric, all five levels of association were small, and the two pertaining to *teaching experience* and *superintendent experience* were negative. A point-biserial correlation would have been appropriate, since one correlation coefficient was calculated for an interval variable (*problem frequency*) and a nominal binary variable.
A point-biserial correlation coefficient is calculated in the same manner as the Pearson’s bivariate correlation coefficient. SPSS does not have a specific procedure for the point-biserial correlation analysis, thus utilizing the procedure for Pearson’s $r$ was deemed appropriate (IBM, n.d.; Statistics Solutions, n.d.). Table 35 contains the coefficients for each test.

Table 35

*Levels of Association between Problem Frequency and Each of the Five Predictor Variables (N = 103)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristic</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient ($r$)</th>
<th>Strength of association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>Small negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent experience</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>Small negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree level</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>Small positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District enrollment (ADM)</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>Small positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District taxable wealth (AVPP)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>Small positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variability in Problem Frequency Attributed to the Predictor Variables

Research question 5 (*To what degree did the predictor variables collectively account for variability in the criterion variable?*) was answered by utilizing a two-step process. First, a multiple correlation coefficient ($R$) was calculated to determine the association between the criterion variable and the five predictor variables collectively. A multiple correlation indicates the strength of relationship between the predictor variables and the criterion variable (Heinman, 2010). The coefficient ($R$) was then squared to
establish the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), a statistic that identifies the proportion of common variance produced by the predictor variables. The coefficient of determination can be any value from 0 to 1 (Heiman, 2010). The value of $R$ was .285, and the value of $R^2$ was .081. Accordingly, the five demographic variables collectively accounted for only 8% of the variance on reported problem frequency (or almost 92% of the variance of the criterion variable cannot be explained by the predictor variables).

Summary

Surveys were completed, returned, and analyzed from 103 of the 111 superintendents comprising the study population. The modal experienced superintendent in northwest Ohio had 10 years of teaching experience, between 12 and 13 years of administrative experience (excluding the superintendency), and 8 years of experience as a superintendent. She or he did not have an earned doctorate, was employed in a district with less than 1000 students, and in a district with a taxable wealth level below the state average. Thirty-four of the respondents (33%) had been a superintendent in more than one district.

With respect to problem frequency, the three least frequent problems were identified as inadequate opportunities for professional growth, inadequate job security, and negative relations with district employees or employee groups; the three most frequent problems were identified as unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, inadequate time to spend with family or friends, and loss of privacy. With respect to problem difficulty, the three least difficult problems were identified as inadequate opportunities for professional growth, inadequate job security, and negative relations with district employees or employee groups; the three most difficult problems were
identified as unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, inadequate time to spend with family or friends, and inadequate funds for district programs/operations.

All five predictor variables examined in this study had a small association with the criterion variable (problem frequency); associations for both teaching experience and superintendent experience were negative and associations for the three remaining predictor variables were positive. Collectively, the five predictor variables accounted for only 8% of variance in responses for problem frequency.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Data from the defined population of Ohio superintendents in this study provide insights regarding the efficacy of pre-service professional preparation, the adequacy of state licensing policy, and the need for continuing education among experienced practitioners. The study had the following objectives:

1. To develop a demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population.

2. To determine the frequency of problems reported by experienced school superintendents comprising the study population.

3. To determine which problems were perceived to be most difficult by superintendents comprising the study population.

4. To determine the levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and selected institutional and personal variables. The institutional variables include (a) district enrollment (average daily membership), and (b) district wealth (assessed valuation per pupil); the personal variables include (a) teaching experience, (b) superintendent experience, and (c) degree level.

5. To determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variability in the criterion variable (problem frequency).
The study population consisted of 111 school district superintendents having at least one year of experience in the position who were employed in the northwest region of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year. The employing districts had an average daily membership (ADM) between 100 and 10,000 students. The two primary data sources were responses to a survey designed for this study, the *Survey on Superintendent Problems* (found in Appendix C), and official state records maintained by the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS), and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). A commercial product, Survey Monkey, was used to administer the survey. The response rate in this study was 93%.

**Summary of Findings**

An overview of the findings associated with the five research questions stated previously in Chapters 1 and 3 is provided here.

1. *What was the demographic profile of experienced school district superintendents comprising the study population?*

District and personal demographic data were used to develop a profile of the study population. The modal superintendent in northwest Ohio had 10 years of teaching experience, between 12 and 13 years of administrative experience (excluding the superintendency), and 8 years of experience as a superintendent. She or he did not have an earned doctorate, was employed in a district with less than 1,000 students, and in a district with a taxable wealth base below the state average. Thirty-four of the respondents (33%) had been a superintendent in more than one district.

2. *With what frequency did superintendents comprising the study population encounter problems commonly identified in extant literature?*
Means were calculated and ranked for each problem listed in Part A of the survey (questions 1-13). Frequency responses were determined using a five-point semantic differential scale (never, seldom, sometimes, often, and always). Each response was assigned a numeric value (1 through 5 in ascending order) to allow calculations. The higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of frequency. Based on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of frequency (highest to lowest). The three least frequent problems were identified as inadequate opportunities for professional growth, inadequate job security, and negative relations with district employees or employee groups; the three most frequent problems were identified as unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, inadequate time to spend with family or friends, and loss of privacy. Overall, 3 of the 13 problems identified in extant literature were work-induced, or initiated by or associated with one’s employment that affects a superintendent’s personal life. Those three problems ranked in the top six most frequent, with inadequate time to spend with family or friends ranked second, loss of privacy third, and feelings of isolation and loneliness ranked sixth. All three were found to be problematic at least sometimes, with mean scores higher than 3.00.

Ten of the 13 problems identified in extant literature were work-embedded, or endemic to the workplace or the position. Work-embedded problems are indicative of organizational conditions and a person’s knowledge and skills. Three of those problems ranked in the top five of the most frequent, with unrealistic federal or state mandates ranked first, job related stress ranked fourth, and inadequate funds for district programs/operations ranked fifth. Only unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates was found always to be problematic (M = 4.10).
3. **What commonly identified problems did superintendents comprising the study population perceive to be most difficult?**

Means were calculated and ranked for each problem listed in Part B of the survey (questions 14-26). Difficulty was determined using a 5-point semantic differential scale (*not at all difficult, slightly difficult, moderately difficult, very difficult, and extremely difficult*). Each response was assigned a numeric value (1 through 5 in ascending order). The higher the mean score for a problem the greater its level of difficulty. Based on item mean scores, the 13 problems were ranked in descending order of difficulty (highest to lowest). Problem difficulty data indicate that the most frequent problems also tend to be perceived as the most difficult problems. For example, the five problems identified as having been most difficult also were identified as having been the most frequent. The three least difficult problems were identified as *inadequate opportunities for professional growth, inadequate job security, and negative relations with district employees or employee groups*; the three most difficult problems were identified as *unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, inadequate time to spend with family or friends, and inadequate funds for district programs/operations*. Three of the top five were categorized as being *moderately or very difficult (unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, inadequate time to spend with family or friends, and inadequate funds for district programs/operations)*, all with means higher than 3.00. *Inadequate opportunities for professional growth* was the only problem with a mean lower than 2.00 (*slightly difficult*).
4. What were the levels of association between the criterion variable [problem frequency] and each of the predictor variables [district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level]?

Responses to survey items 1-13 and the predictor variables were the basis for answering the fourth research question. A correlation coefficient was calculated (Pearson product-moment, $r$) and then classified descriptively to determine the level of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each predictor variable. Each predictor variable had only a small association with the criterion variable; associations for both teaching experience and superintendent experience were negative ($-0.07$, $-0.10$), and associations for the three remaining predictor variables were positive (degree level $0.02$, district enrollment $0.24$, district taxable wealth $0.04$).

5. To what extent did the predictor variables collectively account for variability in the criterion variable?

A multiple correlation coefficient ($R$) was calculated to determine the association between the criterion variable and the five predictor variables collectively. The coefficient ($R$) was then squared to establish the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), a statistic that identifies the proportion of common variance produced by the predictor variables.

The value of $R$ was $0.285$, and the value of $R^2$ was $0.081$. Accordingly, the five predictor variables collectively accounted for only $8\%$ of the variance on reported problem frequency (or almost $92\%$ of the variance of the criterion variable cannot be explained by the predictor variables). This finding is relevant because it reveals that further research is needed to identify variables that may explain variance in responses.
Conclusions

Demographic information about all Ohio superintendents was not available through the Ohio Department of Education, the Ohio School Boards Association, or the Buckeye Association of School Administrators at the time of this study. Thus, a state profile could not be used for making a comparison to the study population. Demographic findings were compared, however, with the two most recent decennial studies commissioned by AASA and conducted nationally (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011). With respect to professional experience in teaching and administration and the number of districts served as superintendent, the respondents were typical of national profiles.

Superintendents in this study population were atypical, however, in two notable areas: enrollment of the employing district and percentage having a doctoral degree. In this study, 88.29% of the respondents were employed in districts with less than 2,500 students; nationally, 68.3% of respondents were employed in districts with less than 3,000 students (Kowalski et al., 2011). The greater prevalence of small-enrollment districts is largely explained by the prevalence of homogeneous rural communities. With respect to degree level, the percentage of superintendents in this study having a doctoral degree (14%) was well below the national percentage (45.3%) reported both in 2000 (Glass et al.) and 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Compiling demographic information and determining trends are relevant for (a) policymakers, universities, and departments of education to determine superintendent academic preparation and licensing (b) professional organizations and boards of
education to facilitate professional development and superintendent selection, and (c) researchers conducting superintendent studies.

The literature review did not produce findings specific to measuring “problem difficulty” or “problem frequency”. Nevertheless, study findings were compared to common problems cited in earlier research.

Findings here support previous research with respect to those problems found to be most prevalent. They include (a) unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates (e.g., Farkas et al., 2003; Kowalski et al., 2011; Lamkin, 2006; Lane, 2002; Mentzer, 2002; Montgomery, 2010; Peters, 1997); inadequate funds for district programs/operations (e.g., Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Clark, 2006; Domene, 2012; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Hall & Difford, 1992; Kelley, 1983; Kowalski, 1995; Kowalski et al., 2008; Kowalski et al., 2011; Mansfield, 2005; Ornstein, 1991; Rausch, 2001; Sutton, 2012; Wheeler, 2012; Williams, 1994), and excessive job related stress (e.g., Blair, 2010; Cooper et al., 2000; Dykiel, 2003; Eastman & Mirochnik, 1991; Farkas et al., 2003; Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2006; Welch, 2004). Comparative findings imply that many of these problems do not arise because of specific variables (e.g., teaching experience, superintendent experience, degree level), but instead are inherent in the superintendency.

Study findings also support earlier research that reported problems that were work-induced. They included inadequate time to spend with family or friends (Burbank, 1969; Chan, Pool, & Strickland; Kowalski, 1995; McKay, 2004), loss of privacy (Haar et al., 2005; Kowalski, 2013; Lamkin, 2003, 2006; Ramsey, 1999); and feelings of isolation and loneliness (Barker, 1985; Beckner, 1983; Ceglarek, 1994; DeYoung, 1994; Jazzar &
Kimball, 2004; Jones, 1994; Sharp & Walter, 1997; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977; Stephens & Turner, 1988; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Notably, although respondents in this study ranked all 3 work-induced problems highly, especially for frequency, more research was found from previous studies related to work-embedded problems. Though an explanation for this finding is not readily apparent, it could suggest that many superintendents in northwest Ohio are more impacted by work-induced problems because of the prevalence of relatively small, rural districts and communities. In such settings, superintendents personally deal with a wide range of leadership and managerial responsibilities because they do not have other licensed staff at the district level.

Several problems were found to be less frequent and less difficult here than in earlier studies. The following problems received the lowest rankings for both frequency and difficulty from the respondents: inadequate opportunities for professional growth (Nelson, 2010; Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2011); inadequate job security (Campbell & Carlson, 1972; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franeschini, 2007; Heller & Conway, 1987; Heller et al., 1991; Kowalski et al., 2011; Sharp & Walter, 1997; Unzicker, 2012); negative relations with district employees or employee groups (Kowalski et al., 2011; Kiess, 1992; Sharp & Walter, 1997; Riley, 1999; Zeehandelaar, 2012); and negative relations with one or more board members (Byrd et al., 2006; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1985; Kowalski, 2011; McMaster, 1986; Norton et al., 1996; Rausch, 2001; Wheeler, 2012). The fact that these were not reported to be more frequent or more difficult may be explained by the nature of personal relationships and the social climates common in small communities and small-enrollment districts, conditions prevalent in northwest Ohio.
Generally, the similarities in findings from this study show that some problems are prevalent across states, districts, and schools. In this study, only one problem, unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates, exceeded an overall mean of 4.00 ($M = 4.10$) in terms of frequency, and just below 4.00 in terms of difficulty ($M = 3.78$). This outcome may be explained partially by two conditions common in small rural districts: strong support for local control of public schools (Levin, 1999) and inadequate resources to implement mandates (Kowalski, 2013).

The researcher was unable to locate specific findings during the literature review that revealed levels of association between this study’s five predictor variables and the frequency with which the superintendents experienced common problems. Findings here revealed small levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and the predictor variables (district enrollment, district taxable wealth, teaching experience, superintendent experience, and degree level). In other words, personal or institutional variables did not seem to influence how superintendents perceived problems. This inference is also supported by the fact that the five predictor variables collectively accounted for only 8% of the variance in problem frequency.

Determining whether problem frequency is associated with demographic variables is especially relevant since such associations can provide information beyond problem identification. In order to counteract detrimental or questionable policy changes in the future, the education profession needs to demonstrate the professional and social merits of rigorous academic preparation and state licensing for superintendents. The identification of both work-embedded and work-induced problems has improved over the
past several decades; however, underlying reasons for these problems has received far
less attention.

**Recommendations**

**Profession Related**

According to Cooper et al., (2002), the preparation of superintendents is a critical component and essential element of systemic education reform. Therefore, outcomes reported here should be considered by universities preparing superintendents and professional organizations serving superintendents (e.g., BASA, AASA) to evaluate and modify the services they provide. Pre and post-licensing revisions should be based on real needs and problems.

The 2001 Public Agenda Study revealed that 63% of superintendents said their position isolated them, resulting in limited opportunities to discuss problems and seek advice from peer administrators. In light of this fact, superintendents should have opportunities to discuss common and highly relevant problems both in formal and informal settings. Examples are county roundtables, topically related workshops and conferences, and discussion sessions in professional association meetings.

Lastly, the fact that a demographic profile of all Ohio superintendents did not exist at the time of this study was surprising. The absence of such data arguably increases the probability that state policies for licensing and institutional curricula for preparing practitioners will be based on politics or emotion rather than on empirical evidence. Hence, establishing such a state database should be a major priority.
Policy Related

Findings and conclusions presented in this study should be used by Ohio policymakers to render evidence-based decisions regarding the regulation and oversight of state licensure programs. Since 2000, many states have revised licensing criteria. More often than not, policy decisions have been political rather than professional; that is, they have been made by legislative groups and based on preferences and pressures and not by professional standards’ boards based on empirical data (Kowalski, 2004). For example, some states either have eliminated superintendent licensing or have made it voluntary (Feistritzer, 2003) and this decision has been based largely on anecdotal evidence coming from very large urban districts with 25,000 or more students. Little or no consideration has been given to the effects of deregulation on much smaller districts, a major oversight considering that two-thirds of the nation’s school systems enroll less than 1,500 students.

Despite being addressed in licensing courses and professional standards, certain problems (e.g., state and federal mandates and insufficient fiscal resources) were identified by most superintendents as being especially difficult. Specifically, policymakers should consider implementing a more rigorous system for reviewing and monitoring university professional preparation programs to ensure authentic alignment to the standards outlined in Chapter 2. Programs aligned with normative standards of practice are more effective in preparing educational leaders for contemporary challenges (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Murphy, 2003).
Research Related.

The overall lack of evidence regarding the frequency and difficulty of problems reported by superintendents provided an impetus for this research. As previously noted in Chapter 2, the vast majority of studies on the efficacy of administrator preparation programs have focused on principals. Specific recommendations for further research include:

1. The study reported here should be replicated in other regions of Ohio or states in the United States to determine the extent to which the population is typical of other superintendents. Demographic data collected over multiple years would also help to build a superintendent profile.

2. Comparative studies of superintendent preparation programs are needed within and across states to determine the efficacy of pre-service education in relation to problems of practice.

3. Longitudinal studies of cohort groups of Ohio superintendents should be conducted to determine how superintendent perceptions of their practice and problems change over time.

4. Additional studies utilizing similar study methods are recommended for different populations including (a) alternatively licensed superintendents, (b) community school superintendents, and (c) ESC superintendents.

5. This study examined associations between problem frequency and only five predictor variables. Future studies could include other possible variables such as gender, age, race, and district type.
6. Qualitative studies could be valuable to gain a deeper understanding of superintendent problems, especially those that are *work-induced*. Data could be used to determine how these issues might be mitigated through professional preparation or professional experiences.
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APPENDIX A
EMAIL TO SUPERINTENDENTS

My name is Carl R. Metzger, and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Dayton. I know this is a very busy time of the year, but I am requesting your assistance with a study I am conducting concerning experienced school district superintendents in northwest Ohio. This study has received the support of BASA (Buckeye Association of School Administrators). Attached you will find a formal letter requesting your participation in research regarding superintendent problems. A superintendant problem is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.

Within the next few days, you will be receiving an electronic survey from Survey Monkey, which should take about 10 minutes to complete. I hope that you are able to complete it by October 23, and I would be happy to provide you a copy of my findings when the study is completed. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Carl R. Metzger
APPENDIX B

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH AND STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

I am seeking your assistance in completing a doctoral research study for the University of Dayton. You are being asked to complete a brief survey to provide personal demographic information and to report the frequency and difficulty of problems encountered during your tenure as a superintendent. Answering the survey questions should take about 10 minutes. You have been selected due to your employment as a superintendent in the northwest region of Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year, and for having at least 1 year of experience as a school district superintendent prior to 2014-15. This study is supported by the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA).

This survey provides data for my dissertation. Findings and conclusions have potential value for the profession and for society for at least three reasons. First, Ohio policymakers may consider this study in relation to future decisions affecting the professional education and licensing of superintendents. Second, university professors and administrators may rely on the results to evaluate and modify professional preparation. Third, professional organizations, such as BASA, may find the data beneficial to developing continuing education programs for its members. Results also constitute a contribution to extant literature on district superintendents.
Your responses remain confidential, and no record of your participation is disclosed to others. Codes are used to identify participants once survey information is received. I cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and our data collection point. Please consider this when responding to the survey questions. The University of Dayton’s Institutional Review Board has approved this study.

Completion and return of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research project. Please read the following carefully and direct any questions concerning the study or survey to the researcher, Carl R. Metzger (carl.metzger@yahoo.com), or his dissertation advisor Dr. Theodore Kowalski (tkowalski1@udayton.edu).

By returning the completed survey, I acknowledge that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. I confirm that the researcher has adequately answered all questions regarding this research, the procedures, and my participation. I understand the researcher is available to answer any questions throughout this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate, may terminate my participation in this research at any time, or refuse to respond to parts of the survey instrument without penalty. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Mary Connolly, Ph.D., Chair of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Dayton, IRB@udayton.edu; Phone: (937) 229-3493.
Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Carl R. Metzger

Carl R. Metzger
567-644-8377
**APPENDIX C**

**SURVEY ON SUPERINTENDENT PROBLEMS**

**Part A: Superintendent Problem**

A superintendant problem is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendant which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.

Reflecting on your experience as superintendant, please indicate how frequently you have encountered each problem. The term frequently refers to the rate of recurrence. The following are the response options.

1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Frequency level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How frequently have you encountered each of the following problems?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Excessive job-related stress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inadequate job security</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inadequate funds for district programs/operations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Excessive conflict resulting from stakeholders having dissimilar values and preferences</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Negative relationships with district employees or employee groups</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inadequate opportunities for professional growth</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Loss of privacy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Inadequate time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Part B: Superintendent Problem**

A *superintendent problem* is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.

Reflecting on your experience as superintendent, please indicate the **difficulty** of each problem you have encountered. The term **difficulty** refers to the degree of challenge a problem presents. The following are the response options.

1 = Not difficult; 2 = Slightly difficult; 3 = Moderately difficult; 4 = Very difficult; 5 = Extremely difficult

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult is each of the following problems?</th>
<th>Difficulty level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not difficult----Extremely difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Inadequate time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part C: District and Personal Information

27. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

28. How many years of administrative experience (school or district level, excluding superintendent experience) do you have?

29. How many years of superintendent experience do you have?

30. Do you have an earned doctoral degree (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.)?

31. How many districts have you served as superintendent?

Thank you for your assistance.
APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EXEMPT B-2, Approved 10/14/2015

RESEARCHER: Carl R. Metzger, The School of Education and Health Sciences, Ph.D. Program in Educational Leadership. University of Dayton e-mail: metzgerc2@udayton.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Theodore J. Kowalski, The School of Education and Health Sciences, Ph.D. Program in Educational Leadership. University of Dayton email: tkowalski1@udayton.edu

PROJECT TITLE: Frequency and Difficulty of Problems Reported by Experienced School District Superintendents in Northwest Ohio

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the subject proposal and has found this research protocol is exempt from continuing IRB oversight as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).* Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study.

REMINDES TO RESEARCHERS:

• As long as there are no changes to your methods, and you do not encounter any adverse events during data collection, you need not apply for continuing approval for this study.

• The IRB must approve all changes to the protocol prior to their implementation, unless such a delay would place your participants at an increased risk of harm. In such situations, the IRB is to be informed of the changes as soon as possible.

• The IRB is also to be informed immediately of any ethical issues that arise in your study.

• You must maintain all study records, including consent documents, for three years after the study closes. These records should always be stored securely on campus.

*Project title was later revised to Problem Verification among Experienced Superintendents in Northwest Ohio