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# International School Director Turnover as Influenced by School Board/Director Relationship

Zakariya Palsha D+Z30:AE30  
*Seattle Pacific University*

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International School Director Turnover as Influenced by  
School Board/Director Relationship

By

Zakariya S. Palsha

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Education at  
Seattle Pacific University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Doctor of Education Degree

Seattle Pacific University

June 2017

International School Director Turnover as Influenced by  
School Board/Director Relationship

By

Zakariya S. Palsha

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

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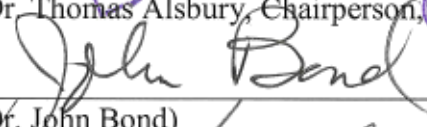
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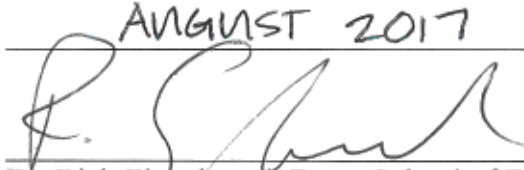
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dr. Thomas Alsbury, Chairperson, Dissertation Committee)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dr. John Bond)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Dr. William Nagy)

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ziglin', written over a horizontal line.

Date

August 2017

## Dedication

To Nardin, who has such confidence in my ability that she never permitted excuses; my love for you is profound and limitless.

To my parents, Stephan and Sauda, whose selfless choices and hard work have put me in a position to pursue good and effect positive change without fear of judgment.

To my children, Zaheen and Zohal, who have already changed my world with their smiles and will continue to change it more with their love and intellect. I truly live for you.

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I am beholden to those who came before me and responsible for those who come after. This work is never complete.

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Seattle Pacific University

Abstract

International School Director Turnover as Influenced by  
School Board/Director Relationship

By Zakariya S. Palsha

Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Thomas Alsbury

School of Education

In recent years, public school superintendents have faced increased demands from rigorous federal and state accountability standards. Yet, researchers have reported that academic improvement does not happen by chance but rather through effective leaders with ample time to implement broad, sustainable reform. The purpose of this study was to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors, specifically, whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to length of tenure of the international director. The theoretical framework that addresses superintendent turnover as influenced by internal board dynamics, including school board/superintendent relationship, is the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005). Descriptive data seem to indicate the quality of relationship between the international school director and the school board as a possible factor for international school directors to leave their previous position. There was a correlation between "quality of relationship" and "length of tenure,"  $r_s(120) = -.419, p < .001$ . There seems to be evidence that when the top administrator leaves, the entire organizational structure is affected, regardless of the professional setting. It seems evident that the understanding of building a positive relationship between the international school director

and school board, founded on trust and respect, is one that has a far-reaching impact on the length of tenure.

*KEYWORDS: Wirt and Kirst, Decision Output Theory; superintendent turnover, length of tenure; leadership turnover, length of tenure; international school director turnover, length of tenure.*

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Turnover of the top administrator in an organization is equivalent to a newly elected president. Change is often the order of the day, even if the new president is from the same political party. The new leader usually possesses and enacts certain individualities, ethos, goals, and even foibles; different from the former president.

Unlike a new president, the causes of turnover and the reasons for tenure of the top administrators of school districts (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Carella, 2000; Kowalski, 1999) can be even more difficult to identify because the incumbent may be removed by a simple majority vote of the respective board of directors. Contrastingly, the causes for the removal of the president are limited by a Constitution. A Constitution often provides for both stability and change. It is known that the president may be removed by the will of the electorate. However, once elected, it is extremely difficult to remove a president.

In a case where a president resigns, dies, or is unable to carry out their duties, a Constitution provides a stable method for the transfer of power. Conversely, this type of systematic stability does not exist in school systems. Further, international school environments in particular, fail to provide even basic due process elements with regards to director turnover.

Turnover is a reality among both superintendents and international school directors. Although each position is quite unique in terms of degrees, certification, and management styles, each is also very much related. Some skills and duties germane to both positions are long-range planning, human resource management, fiduciary decision-making, and public relations, to name a few. The differences lie more in the environment

in which they operate and the purpose or the motivation of their positions. School districts in the United States that prepare the young to enter the workforce or to go on to higher education are vastly different from non-profit schools that typically exist to meet a human service need or to accomplish an altruistic mission. Both contrast greatly from for-profit international schools motivated to make money and increase their market share of the service they provide.

Turnover and the tenure in their previous position of top school administrators can be volatile (Alsbury, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2015; Alsbury & Whitaker, 2015; Chingos, Whitehurst, & Lindquist, 2014). Opinion polls, political pundits, and the success or failure of foreign and domestic policies and decisions seem to influence the voting public and affect a president's length of stay in office. While a school director's tenure may be influenced by the opinions of staff members, parents, community public relations, and selective outcome measures, like test scores; a director's dismissal or pressured resignation may depend more upon the director's relationship with members of their school board (Alsbury, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2015; Alsbury & Gore, 2015; Mountford, 2008).

Using a theoretical framework of the Decision-Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005), this study explored possible reasons for international school director tenure in previous positions. To date, only two studies have measured explicitly the reasons for the turnover of international school directors (Hodgson & Chuck, 2015; Moos & Paulsen, 2014). This study narrowed the focus on the relationship between school boards and international school directors through use of a questionnaire of international school directors from South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia.

## **Historical Context**

The superintendency is an occupation with very little security (Fusarelli, Cooper, & Carella, 2003; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010), fewer benefits than similar jobs in the private sector, and one that faces increased public criticism and scrutiny, and increasing complexity (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Kowalski et al., 2010). Indeed, the role of the school superintendent could be characterized as daunting and challenging. Due to the increasing challenges of the job, concerns about the availability of quality candidates to fill superintendent vacancies have persisted (Cooper et al., 2000; Hoyle et al., 2005; Kowalski et al., 2010; Waters & Marzano, 2007). In recent years, public school superintendents have faced increased demands from federal accountability mandates (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, 2009) and rigorous state accountability standards.

Some believe the complexity of the superintendent position and the declining number of qualified candidates for the position may present a problem for districts striving to improve student performance, especially among underrepresented populations. This concern emanates from the presumption that not only the quality of superintendent leadership (Waters & Marzano, 2007), but that stable tenure of a superintendent (Alsbury, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2015; Alsbury & Whitaker, 2015) influences student achievement. Fullan (2002) suggested that academic improvement does not happen by chance but rather through effective school and district leaders with ample time to implement broad, sustainable reform.

However, the link between superintendent leadership and student performance is questioned. Some have argued that by supporting building-level leadership (principals),



the superintendent is ultimately accountable for the success or failure of student achievement—which in today’s world is measured through state standardized assessments such as the SBA (Smarter Balanced Assessment), HSPE (High School Proficiency Exam) and EOC (End of Course) assessments in Washington State. Unfortunately, Hoyle and colleagues (2005) expressed that the success or failure of various superintendents (as indicated by tenure) is an ambiguous and not thoroughly researched subject.

There seems to be evidence that when the top administrator leaves, the entire organizational structure is affected, regardless of the professional setting (Alsbury, 2008a, 2015; Alsbury & Whitaker, 2015; Waters & Marzano, 2007). While existing studies have concluded that turnover of the top administrator often revolves around poor board/executive relations, regardless of the reason for turnover, this phenomenon may cause difficulties in recruiting and securing the next top management position. Although a school organization is in crisis, it may present a lucrative, yet arduous opportunity for the successor who is hired to solve these acute problems.

### **Theoretical Constructs**

As noted above, several theories are proposed to help explain the political environment within schools and their communities. Theories include the Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970), the Continuous Participation Theory (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974), and the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005). Each of these theories contrasts in their foundation as to whether the governance of education is truly democratic and responsive to, or influenced by, the community. As it pertains to the focus of this study, these theories also provide support for the variables that most

likely influence superintendent and school director turnover. These theories are based upon and describe the political reality for school boards in the U.S. and cannot be directly applied to the study of international directors. However, the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005), provides a framework that can be used to define the effect of school board/director relationship and director tenure in this study.

**Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy.** In 1962, Lutz conducted a case study utilizing 25 years of historical data, an 18-month participant observer experience, and a three-year follow-up observation. The Lutz dissertation was conducted at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Two years later, the research continued at the Claremont Graduate School, where Iannaccone and Lutz (1994) made the theoretical argument they later named the Dissatisfaction Theory. Using the theoretical basis described in the writings of Mosca (1939) and Key (1955), they focused on a key component that became the Turning Point Election Period (TPEP). Iannaccone and Lutz described a TPEP as a multi-step process they tested and validated. Afterwards, many other studies validated and further developed the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970).

The Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970) suggests that local school board governance is a cyclic democratic process. In a public school district, local community politics directly affect school board members and superintendents. Public dissatisfaction can result in school board member defeat at the polls or school board members being forced into early resignation or retirement. In the absence of tenure laws for administrators in many states, superintendents lack protections and are vulnerable to replacement. Frequent superintendent turnover causes discontinuity

in organizational goals, policy, and procedures, that can negatively affect the entire organization (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Grady and Bryant, 1989). In addition, rapid turnover of top school officials can impede the achievement of positive school reform (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

As it pertains to the topic of focus in this study, Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970) does not speak directly to the relationship between the board and superintendent as a cause of superintendent turnover. Instead, Dissatisfaction Theory indicates that the causes for superintendent turnover would be the result of an event of politically motivated school board turnover. Thus, superintendent turnover is not specifically due to a souring relationship between the superintendent and the existing school board, but rather an effect caused by decline in community satisfaction and the subsequent defeat and pressured resignation of the school board.

**Continuous Participation Theory of Democracy.** The Continuous Participation Theory (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974) rejects the premise of the Dissatisfaction Theory that school boards operate in a democratic fashion. The theory suggests that low voter turnout and a lack of genuine competitors for school board seats is typical in local school board elections. This theory suggests that the lack of participation by the community prevents the local school board from being truly representative of their constituency; therefore, it is undemocratic in its composition and function.

Jennings and Ziegler's (1968) study consisted of 581 board members and 94 superintendents in 96 school districts across the United States. They looked at the degree school boards were responsive to the public and the extent to which boards act on the basis of public needs. The researchers relied upon a definition of democracy based upon

continuous participation (with competition during elections) in the political area. In other words, the theory focuses primarily on the turnout rate of voters to school board elections who use their electoral authority to elect a school board that represents them as constituents. The degree to which school boards exemplify democratic principles was dependent upon the degree to which school boards were responsive to the preferences of their local community to determine: the representative nature of the school board team; recruitment and selection process of school board members; relationship between the board members and the public; and the relationship between the board members and the superintendent. Basically, in the ideal democratic scenario, voters select the school board in accordance with constituency preferences, the board formulates policies in response to the community, and the superintendent implements said policies. Ziegler and Jennings concluded that evidence suggested this idea is not fully recognized in school districts.

The Continuous Participation Theory (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974) concludes that school boards do not necessarily represent their constituents. Regarding this study, the Continuous Participation Theory provides no direct evidence regarding the relationship between the board and the superintendent or the reason for the turnover of a superintendent. However, because it contends that the board maintains a status quo and does not represent its community, the likelihood of a souring relationship between the superintendent and the board is diminished. Indeed, a stable board would be much easier for a superintendent to get to know and to maintain a positive relationship with. In this theory, the primary reasons for superintendent turnover would be apolitical turnover predicated upon moves to larger districts with more pay or due to community changes leading to school board turnover.

**Decision Output Theory.** The Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) suggests the governance of local school boards is affected by the limitations of economic and personnel resources in local school districts. Another significant notion is the low number of citizens who actually provide input to school boards. School boards decide which actions to take from few options, and with limited resources, causing subjectivity and inconsistency in their decisions. Wirt and Kirst's (2005) model assumes educational policy-making is innately a political process that allocates value preferences through material (i.e., curriculum). The democratic nature of this process is determined by the interrelationships between the political system and other subsystems of the social environment. Wirt and Kirst illustrated these links by describing how subsystems generate *inputs* of demands on and supports of the political [school] system. They suggested the school system converts these *inputs* or demands into public decisions or *outputs*, which in turn feed allocated values back into the social environment. Since school districts lack sufficient resources to meet each demand placed upon them by the community, they must choose which group's demands to act upon and which to dismiss. As a result, the school board may or may not meet the needs of many of its constituency. Their choice of which concern to address is generally dependent on whether or not the school board has a clear understanding of the major issues in their respective communities.

The Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) is the theory most likely to predict that superintendent turnover may be caused by the relationship between the board and superintendent. This theory deals with the internal interactions within the school board as they debate the management of limited resources. This theory suggests that

perhaps a superintendent and school board relationship could sour due to a disagreement over policy decisions and allocation of resources. The possibility of superintendent turnover caused by relationship issues (and not only board turnover) is supported more by the Decision Output theory than by either the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970) or the Continuous Participation Theory.

Figure 1 depicts the various theories associated with superintendent turnover and their underlying differences, yet all leading to a very similar outcome of turnover by the superintendent or the school board (as it states in the Dissatisfaction Theory). As illustrated in Figure 1, the Decision Output Theory is the theory that can best predict the relationship between the school board and the superintendent as a possible cause of turnover.

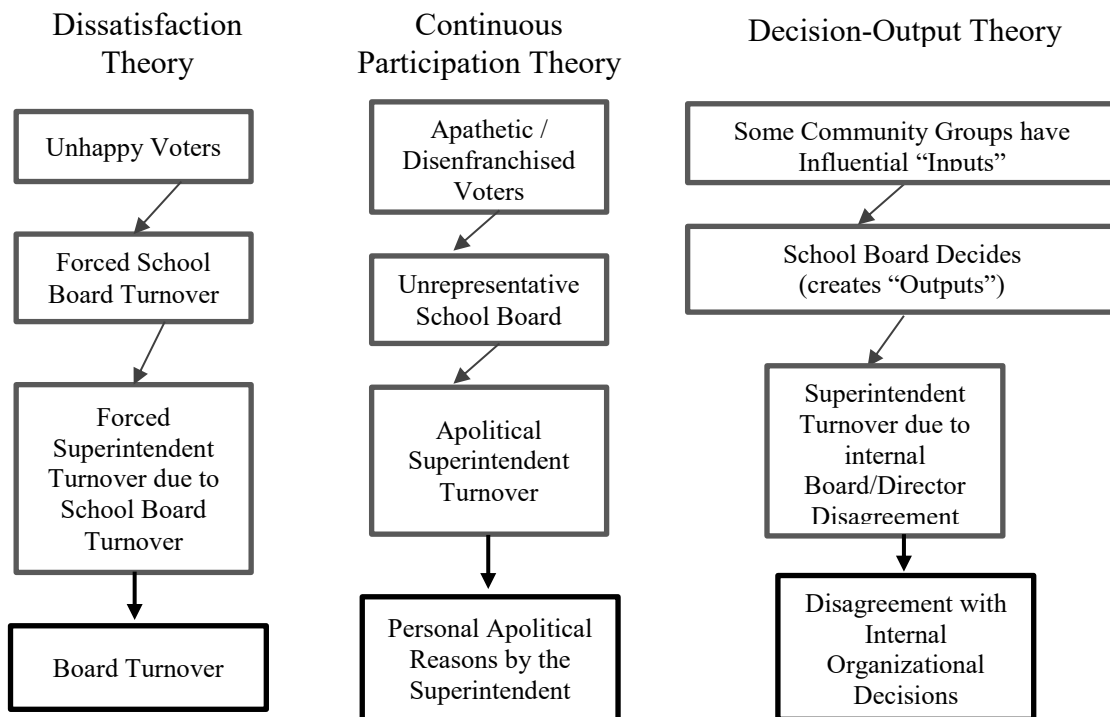


Figure 1. Causes for Superintendent Turnover Based on Three Theoretical Constructs.

## **Problem Statement**

Reischauer's (1973) assertion, "we need a profound reshaping of education if mankind is to survive in the sort of world that is fast evolving" (p. 3) still holds true today. Arguably, continuity in the superintendent position may contribute to the "profound reshaping of education" that Reischauer predicted. Unfortunately, according to Kowalski et al. (2010), the superintendency has become a job so daunting that superintendent tenure is on the decline. Because superintendent turnover is thought to negatively influence school performance (Alsbury, 2003, 2008a, 2008b, 2015; Chingos et al., 2014), one pressing question is *what are the factors that lead to superintendent turnover?* There has been much speculation about superintendent tenure and turnover; however, very little current quantitative research exists detailing the characteristics of superintendent tenure (Alsbury, 2003, 2008b; Chingos et al., 2014).

Turnover in the top administrative position in any organizational structure is a phenomenon that can be disruptive, whether it is planned, self-imposed, or imposed on the incumbent (Alsbury, 2003, 2008b). Few studies indicate the reasons for superintendent turnover but include obtaining a more lucrative or desirable position, poor board relations, and faulty management decisions as reported reasons (Alsbury, 2003, 2008b). The problem is that studies on the effects of turnover in the top administrative positions within school districts in international schools focused on the reasons for superintendent turnover are limited (Moos & Paulsen, 2014) and none explicitly measure the influence of board/director relationship on tenure.

This study focused on the presence of a significant relationship between the relationship of the school board and director on director tenure. In addition, age, gender,

race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position were analyzed for a significant relationship to director tenure.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors. Specifically, this study examined whether the relationships between the school board and the international school director is linked to tenure of the international director in their previous position.

Data was gathered through a questionnaire including director gender, race, age, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position of international school directors. Each respondent who completed the questionnaire was asked to write explaining why they left their last position. The data were analyzed to determine whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to the tenure in their previous position – moreover, whether other factors including age, gender race, highest degree achieved, are also linked to tenure in their previous position.

**Research questions.** Specifically, this study investigated the following questions:

1. What factors influence the turnover of international school directors?
2. Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position?

**Methods and analysis.** A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent to 300 international school directors. The data collected included: age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position, along with open ended questions,



and a question that asked specifically about the school board and superintendent relationship in the previous position.

This study collected self-reported perceived factors influencing the turnover of international school directors. The study examined whether school director/school board relationship influences director tenure in the previous position. The questionnaire (Appendix A) has demographic information as well as short answer responses that determine if relationship is a factor in director turnover. The follow-up question to the open-ended question (question 14) in the questionnaire provided information regarding the director and school board relationship.

Spearman's rank-order correlation was run as a method of analysis. The third research question was analyzed and assessed using Spearman's rho, a point-biserial correlation and a one-way ANOVA.

### **Glossary of terms.**

*Superintendent of Schools:* the chief school officer of a school organization.

*School Director:* synonymous to superintendent of schools in the international school community.

*School Board:* an elected council that helps determine educational policy in a small, city- or county-sized region (example: Seattle School Board oversees educational policy for the Seattle School District).

*School Board Turnover:* the number of times a school board member is replaced during a period of time (i.e., could be through elections and voter dissatisfaction; election to higher office or relocation of the elected official; or in some cases forced to resign from office).

*Superintendent Turnover*: the number of times a superintendent is replaced during a period of time.

*Superintendent/School Board Relationship*: the school board is the superintendent's statutory employer and supervisor, and the two parties work together to co-create policy for the school district.

### **Significance of Study**

The practical significance of the study is two-fold. First, the study attempted to raise awareness about the consequences of turnover to school districts so that proper planning for a successor may begin. Second, it attempted to determine what leads to the turnover of international school directors and if relationship to the school board is a contributing factor. The school board should be aware that a change in the top administrator, either voluntary or demanded by the board, may have consequences on the organization. The school board must consider the effects of director turnover on employee morale, negative public relations, and even the potential divisive infighting between upper administrators, as well as the occurrence of politics and strained relations among board members. All of these may have a lasting effect on the immediate and long-term future of the school district. A practical outcome of this study may contribute to improved administrative and institutional practices so as to prevent, to the extent possible, predictable and unnecessary turnover, and assist with the very practical management mechanism of a succession plan.

This particular study will not likely provide findings leading to theoretical significance regarding superintendent turnover theory. In regards to a substantive significance, only one other international school director turnover study exists, (Moos &

Paulsen, 2014) which covered the Nordic region of Europe; therefore, this particular study would add to the research of international school director turnover. Furthermore, a key variable of elected versus appointed boards will be asked in the questionnaire and this could support the relevancy of the Dissatisfaction Theory beyond the U.S., for elected boards, based on the findings.

### **Summary**

This study is organized into five chapters along with cited references, the blank questionnaire and relevant appendices. The first chapter is the overview of the research project. It includes an introduction, problem statement, purpose, significance, glossary of terms and a summary. The second chapter is a current review of the literature regarding superintendent turnover and the causes for such turnover. The third chapter explains the research methodology, research questions, procedures, the null hypotheses, and the analysis methods. The third chapter also describes the scope and limitations of the study, population and sample, survey instrument and the data collection procedures and a summary. The fourth chapter presents the findings along with the analysis of the data and its interpretation, based upon quantitative testing and qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, it reports the analysis using Spearman's rho, point-biserial correlation, and a one-way ANOVA. The fifth and last chapter provides summaries, implications (both practical and theoretical), future study recommendations and conclusions.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### Causes of Superintendent Turnover: An Examination of the Research

This issue of superintendent turnover is not limited to one section of the country (Cooper et al., 2000; Grady & Bryant, 1991; Hosman, 1990; Metzger, 1997) or to rural school districts (Eaton & Sharp, 1996; Grady & Bryant, 1991) or to urban school districts (Cooper et al., 2000; Kowalski, 1999; Yee & Cuban, 1996).

The position of school superintendent is one of the more difficult, complicated jobs in the educational profession (Chingos et al., 2014; Kowalski, 1999; Metzger, 1997; Waters & Marzano, 2007), because most, if not all, decisions and meetings are open to the community which subject the superintendent to public scrutiny and ridicule, especially during times of taxpayer revolt. Citizens with political aspirations, declared change agents, and sometimes disgruntled voters and taxpayers who often run for board of education seats (Alsbury, 2003; Natkin et al., 2002), could put the superintendent at odds with newly-elected board members (Alsbury, 2003). The superintendent of schools must publicly juggle a number of conflicting variables that sometimes lead to disputes with incumbent school board members (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1998; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1994). Some of these disputes have been traced back to a series of school reforms, generally started after the National Commission on Excellence in Education's report (Gardner et al., 1983) *A Nation at Risk* warned that the United States' educational system was inadequate, while not appropriately teaching the nation's youth. Farrar (1990) argued that these reforms came in three waves: the first, focused on improving student performance; the second, focused on upgrading teacher certification,

pay and working conditions; the third, focused on the preparation of school administrators. It is this third school reform effort that has become most contentious for the school superintendent.

Due to deteriorating resources and an increased demand for more and better educational outcomes, the tension between the school board and the superintendent has become more volatile (Kowalski, 1999). Giles and Giles (1990) found that over a six-year period in California, a staggering 75% of superintendent turnover was attributable to disharmonious board relations.

Danzberger and Usdan (1994) argued that the present system of a school board carrying out local educational practices through delegated state authority has changed very little since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Educational reformers have agreed that meaningful educational change is more likely to be successful when pursued at the local school board level, which is generally supported by the community and the professional educators, including the superintendents (Kowalski, 1999). Seemingly, however, these good educational policies and reforms are at the success or failure of the relationship held between the board of education and the superintendent. Blumberg (1985) noted that:

It is not surprising that superintendents have tended to think of the school board in terms of individual members rather than as a group. Both the superintendent's professional reputation and his personal welfare depend greatly on his ability to influence its decisions. Further, it is primarily through the one-on-one linkage between superintendent and school board member that attempts to influence take place. There is nothing underhanded about this. It is an accepted and legitimate

part of the workings of our political institutions--and lest there by any misunderstandings, school boards definitely are political institutions. (pp. 76-77)

Therefore, the superintendent's relationship with the board is critical, not just for educating the district's students, but also for job security of the superintendent (Sharp, 1994). Cuban (1988) stated that "...the central image [of a superintendent] is negotiator-statesman which is one of politics" (p. 116). Since superintendents must attempt to establish positive relationships with all board members, Kowalski (1999) warned that even positive relations cultivated over several years may be ruined by "a misconstrued comment, the failure to accommodate the request for a favor, or the unwillingness to support a particular position on a controversial policy matter" (p. 45). Inevitably, the superintendent and the school board are always in an uneasy conflict with one another (Blumberg, 1985; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Chance & Capps, 1990, 1992; Kowalski, 1999; Sharp & Walter, 2003).

Since this relationship is political, the superintendent's trustfulness and honesty come into play (Achilles, 1997; Blumberg, 1985; Dlugosh, 1997; Fullan, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005). Bennis (1989) suggested successful leaders, regardless of what profession or where they are in an organizational hierarchy, need to have the competency he calls "management of trust." This ability grows from the leader's capacity to be reliable and constant, which builds a record of support of issues when there are competing factions and pressures upon the leader. In other words, the person making the decision has the confidence and the support of the people for whom he or she is making the decision (Dlugosh, 1997). Even if a number of people publicly disagree with the superintendent of schools over some emotional problem, such as the promotion of a bond issue or an

increase in school taxes, there is a tendency to respect the honesty of the superintendent. When a superintendent is honest, forthright, and assertive, the board of education tends to inspire trust with the superintendent and helps to build his or her credibility. Blumberg (1985) stated that “the lack of those two ingredients to the relationship--trust and credibility--makes for an untenable situation” (p. 81). Eventually this type of circumstance will lead to the superintendent being replaced (Lutz & Iannaccone, 1986).

However, there are a number of other reasons why superintendents leave their positions than just board/superintendent relations. Dlugosh (1994), in a study of contributing factors of turnover of school administrators in Nebraska, found that administrators wanted to acquire “better” positions (with usually greater financial reward or higher status in the profession, such as movement to a larger district), or they wanted to move to a larger community. A few superintendents left because of family pressures, stress, working conditions and school board relations.

### **Major Studies Supporting the Study**

For at least five decades, researchers have been interested in the question of why superintendents leave their school districts (see Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). Though the question has been recurrent in the literature over this time period, most data used to address it have come from case studies, interviews, and small-scale surveys which may not be representative of the nation as a whole. However, a few national studies have used quantitative methods measuring superintendent turnover. These include the Natkin et al. study (2002); the American Association of School Superintendents surveys (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010); and the Alsbury studies (2003; 2008b).

**Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla and Ghosh Study.** Natkin et al. (2002) provided a quantitative study on survival of the superintendency. The study included two distinct sets of public school districts: (a) all those in North Carolina ( $n = 117$ ), and (b) a national random sample of school districts provided by the American Association of School Administrators ( $n = 462$ ). These were used to check for validity; then merged into one larger dataset for analysis.

These researchers found that superintendent tenure averaged six to seven years, regardless of the district's size or location. Factors significantly related to superintendents' longevity in office were the extent of school board involvement in management, support for needed construction, and consolidation of school systems, district poverty level, and superintendent's post-graduate education. The research indicated that superintendent tenure had not markedly increased since 1975, and that superintendent turnover was not as serious an issue as sometimes portrayed by news media. Despite this result, Natkin et al. revealed that, when combined, the factors of high poverty of students enrolled in the district, minimal support for construction of new facilities, and micromanagement by school governance, lead to shorter tenure.

In their study, Natkin et al. (2002) sought to determine median superintendent tenure, the relationship between tenure and district demographics, activities of the school board and their effect on superintendent tenure, and the effect of the superintendent's level of education on his/her tenure. An instrument entitled *Superintendent Longevity and Time Study (SLATS)* was developed for the study. The researchers had a return rate of 81% (95 out of 117) from North Carolina districts and 42.6% (197 out of 462) from the



national sample. Each school district provided feedback on one or more superintendents, all of which was factored into the study's 892 cases.

While this study did not specifically ask about the relationship between the school board and the superintendent when researching on superintendent turnover, the study found high levels of poverty, minimal support in regards to new facilities, and micro-management to be reasons for shorter tenure. This supports the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) with regards to the statement: "governance of local school boards is affected by the limitations of economic and personnel resources in local school districts." These factors all describe what one can infer to be a relationship strained because the demands placed on the superintendent were not met, which therefore caused friction in the relationship between the school board and the superintendent.

**American Association of School Superintendents Surveys.** Since 1923, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has conducted nationwide surveys of district superintendents. Every 10 years, thousands of superintendents are surveyed in an effort to provide a national perspective on the roles and responsibilities associated with the district superintendency. The two most recent surveys have shown that demographics such as race, age, and gender for the position of superintendent have not experienced much change over the last decade (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010). One of the most comprehensive studies about superintendent characteristics is the Glass et al. study of the American school superintendent. In this 2000 study, Glass and his colleagues examined and analyzed superintendent demographics such as age, gender, and ethnicity from a historical perspective. The researchers determined that there were 12,604 "regular public school districts" (Glass et al., 2000, p. 10), and of that population

a random sample of 5,336 superintendents were chosen to participate in the study. The survey instrument for the 2000 study was developed by AASA staff and the researchers. Items from the 1992 study were largely reused for the 2000 study, and items from the 1982 study were used to develop the 1992 survey instrument. The use of previous 10-year study survey items were incorporated to provide comparative data.

The survey was mailed to the participants with a 42.4% (2,262) rate of return. Data from the returned surveys was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and was disaggregated by total response group, enrollment strata, gender, and minority categories. Both simple percentage and cross-tabulation were used to present the findings. These are the only two methods of data analysis mentioned.

Researchers surveyed 2,262 superintendents and reported findings that did not differ dramatically from previous decennial studies. The average age for superintendents was reported to have been 52 and the vast majority of superintendents continued to be Caucasian males. It was noted that the median age of superintendents had increased to 52, indicating that individuals were accessing the position later in life. This increase in the median age was even more notable when compared to the median age of 43, which was reported in 1923 during a time when most school districts were rural and consisted of only a handful of schools. The most recent and comprehensive AASA study, published in 2010, surveyed just under 1,900 superintendents across the nation and provided similar findings to Glass et al. (2000) in regards to age, gender, and race (Kowalski et al., 2010). The reported median age of superintendents increased slightly from 52 in 2000 to the age of 56 in 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2010). Data regarding female superintendents in the 2010 study indicated 24.1% of women held the position, which was substantially higher than

the 13.2% reported by Glass et al. in 2000. In 2010, it was shown again that women were older when accessing the position and had more teaching and administrative experience than males, prior to becoming superintendents. Additionally, Kowalski et al. (2010) found that non-minority respondents were twice as likely to enter the position before the age of 46, whereas their minority peers were accessing the position later in life and less than 6% of superintendents nationwide were from an ethnic minority. Demographic data is relevant in looking at superintendent turnover because there is a higher chance that a minority would be placed (Kowalski et al., 2010) in an urban district, rather than a minority superintendent in rural America. Practically, whether or not a minority should enter the job of superintendent in an urban district with statistically high turnover makes it extremely relevant for job seekers.

The Kowalski et al. (2010) study findings were most relevant to the thesis of this paper because it measured a significant difference between average tenure for urban superintendents and other superintendents. In a larger urban district, superintendents would not typically be leaving due to moving up to higher paying larger district; therefore, their departure would more likely be due to board turnover or a relationship problem. Moreover, in looking at the data presented, board turnover typically occurred during an election cycle (which is typically four years) and the average superintendent tenure was less than three years (Kowalski et al., 2010), thus suggesting the reason for the turnover was not due to board turnover, but rather suggested a relationship strain between the board and the superintendent. While an argument could be made that the urban versus non-urban tenure difference is likely a result of a relationship breakdown, Kowalski et

al.'s study did not identify reasons for this difference, including whether the school board and superintendent relationship was a cause for superintendent turnover.

This study supported the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005), because historically, urban superintendents have experienced shorter tenure than other superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2010); and due to the fact that the role of the superintendent is so diverse for various reasons, geography and size being only two; tenure varies. Again, the Decision Output Theory speaks to local governance not having resources to support a myriad of initiatives, thus creating turnover of the superintendent (Wirt & Kirst, 2005). As mentioned above, the average tenure of an urban superintendent was less than three years, suggesting that the relationship between the board and the superintendent plays a critical part in the retention of the superintendent. Furthermore, large urban districts typically are what superintendents of smaller districts aspire to (Glass et al., 2000); so personal reasons to leave (i.e., Continuous Participation Theory) is not relevant. Finally, though urban districts do have several competing politics, and board turnover may be high (i.e., Dissatisfaction Theory), there are still elections that take place and the average turnover in urban districts occurs faster than the overall mean turnover rate. By eliminating both the Dissatisfaction Theory and the Continuous Participation Theory, the 2010 Kowalski et al. study pointed more to the school board and superintendent relationship as a possible cause for turnover (i.e., Decision-Output Theory).

**Alsbury studies.** Alsbury (2003 and 2008b) studied political versus apolitical turnover as a critical variable in the application of the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). In particular, he reported detailed analysis of a so-called “deviant case,” a

rural school district in Washington State that initially appeared not to support the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970)— for despite frequent school board turnover, there was no consequent superintendent turnover.

This study used qualitative and quantitative research methods in each of two phases in the project. In the first phase of the study, correlational design was used to collect and analyze data state-wide on superintendent and school board member turnover. In the second phase, the study investigated the existence of a statistically significant relationship between school board member and superintendent turnover, delineating between all school board turnover and politically motivated turnover and defeat. The study described the district as changing over the course of 20 years (1980-2000) due to changes in the community and economy. The Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970) would suggest that an increase in incumbent defeat indicates community dissatisfaction with the existing school board and its values; however, Alsbury (2003) noted in his findings that superintendent Dr. Miller (a pseudonym to protect anonymity):

...stepped away from direct board meeting control and allowed the board president to handle the conflict thus divesting power from himself and providing protection in case this antagonist had, indeed, eventually won support from other new board members.... This protective savvy, not detectable through quantitative measures, contributed to Dr. Miller's staying in the district. (p .692)

Alsbury (2008b) reported school districts in Washington had a high rate of school board member change (97%) during the 1993-2000 time frame. Superintendent turnover also was high (72%). Out of the 176 school districts who returned surveys, only five had

no school board member changes during the study period 1993-2000, while 46 districts had no superintendent turnover.

The Chi-square Test for Independence and the Bonferroni  $t$  statistic were used to analyze the data collected for the study. Of the 18 Chi-square tests performed, four tests showed a statistically significant relationship between incumbent school board member and superintendent turnover at an alpha level of .05. However, after using a new alpha level of .033 established with the Bonferroni  $t$  formula, only one test remained statistically significant.

The strongest relationship between school board member and superintendent turnover occurred four years after the 1995 election. Delineation between school board member defeat and turnover did not yield noticeable differences in the findings, although the one statistically significant correlation came from data comparing school board member defeat, with no significant relational results from the non-defeat data.

With little quantitative data to support the Dissatisfaction Theory, qualitative data were evaluated in Phase II of the study in hope of providing additional and more in-depth information. In this phase of the study, two districts, whose resulting quantitative data did not provide support for a significant link between school board member and superintendent turnover, were visited for 2 – 3 days. Data was collected through interviews of superintendents, principals, school board members and other district personnel, as well as an evaluation of the board minutes and other supporting documentation. Qualitative data supported the use of the Dissatisfaction Theory in these districts as a useful tool to explain the political chain of events wherein quantitative data could not demonstrate a relationship.

**Relevance to the current study.** Two of the studies did support the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005); from which it then can be inferred that there was a strain in the relationship, thus supporting the thesis. Some studies, for example Alsbury (2003), used a postcard to ask about superintendent turnover: political vs. apolitical; and one question alluded to the relationship between the superintendent and school board by stating “conflict with other board members” as a reason for leaving that superintendent post (Alsbury, 2003, p. 676). However, the vagueness of the survey question left further speculation on whether the relationship was severed; if there was conflict amongst board members’ viewpoints and not necessarily against the superintendent; or whether the relationship was severed due to turnover in school boards, rather than existing board members, which is a small, yet distinct significance in the reason for superintendent turnover.

**Other research.** A considerable number of studies involve interviewing members of major stakeholder groups, such as school board members, retired superintendents, or community leaders, and asking about reasons for superintendents leaving their positions (Grady & Bryant, 1991; Metzger, 1997). The interview findings are usually grouped by common features, resulting in lists of items cited as contributing to turnover, such as: board member interference in management; conflicts with staff; cultural clashes between board members and superintendents hired from outside the district; sports-related conflicts, and many others. Other studies have identified the stresses of difficult working conditions—including school board disharmony, the pressures of accountability, and the increasing complexity that accompanies changing student demographics—as reducing many superintendents’ job tenures (e.g., McCurdy & Hymes, 1992).

In 2003, the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) reported results of a survey conducted with member districts. Average tenure for urban superintendents was reported to be only 2.75 years (up from 2.5 in 2001), but mean tenure for the immediate past CGCS superintendents averaged over four years. Supporting CGCS findings, the Council of Urban Board of Education (CUBE) reported the tenure of urban superintendents between four and five years (National School Boards Association, 2001).

A more direct line of survey questions that help the researcher identify the root cause of superintendent turnover—directly linking the relationship between the school board and superintendent and a reason for moving to another district—would help answer the thesis question. Furthermore, specific research questions asked in a qualitative study as a follow-up to those superintendents who did in fact leave due to strained relationships between the board and superintendent would help answer questions posed in this paper.

### **Theoretical Frameworks in Previous Studies**

The deficiencies in this literature are also theoretical. Much of the early work that addressed superintendent turnover was rooted in Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970). This theory suggests that districts experience long stable periods of school board membership during which community dissatisfaction with district performance gradually builds until reaching a tipping point, at which time school board members are thrown out of office and their successors replace the superintendent, completing a new regime (Grissom, 2010; Hosman, 1990; Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970; Weninger & Stout, 1989).

Dissatisfaction Theory yields one prediction about superintendent turnover: that politically motivated school board turnover will lead to higher rates of turnover among



superintendents. But what about turnover during times of school board stability, a phenomenon that casual observation suggests is frequent but about which Dissatisfaction Theory is silent?

Existing literature on superintendent turnover offers little theoretical leverage on this important question. Seemingly, superintendents leave their posts for many reasons other than termination by a newly elected school board. For example, in one survey of superintendents who had changed districts, four times as many respondents listed their reason for leaving as an opportunity to move to a larger district than those who said that the move was due to “changing board/elections” (Glass et al., 2000, p. 89). This suggested that career advancement is a more important factor for superintendent turnover than are the regime changes Dissatisfaction Theory predicts. Other studies have identified the stresses of difficult working conditions—including school board disharmony, the pressures of accountability, and the increasing complexity that accompanies changing student demographics—as reducing many superintendents’ job tenures (e.g., McCurdy & Hymes, 1992). To more fully conceptualize superintendent turnover, a broader framework is needed that can incorporate involuntary turnover that dissatisfied communities may demand along with voluntary turnover that superintendents seeking more prestigious positions or better working conditions may create.

Studies that have used larger data sets typically have not employed multivariate methods that allow them to rule out alternative explanations for the associations they uncover. The result is a research base that is much leaner than those examining other types of turnover in education (e.g., Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006). Researchers have noted the need for studies of superintendent turnover using recent data that allow

consideration of the roles and relationships of superintendents and school boards in the age of complex accountability systems and changing student demographic trends (Fusarelli et al., 2010; Petersen & Fusarelli, 2005).

Another example, Yee and Cuban (1996) published quantitative studies that addressed superintendent turnover that have mainly been descriptive in nature, simply presenting tenure statistics for one or more time periods. Perhaps the earliest study to indicate that tenure in urban districts significantly exceeds two and a-half years was conducted by Yee and Cuban (1996), who presented virtually complete tenure statistics for superintendents of the nation's 25 largest districts for a period covering the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. They analyzed district records of complete tenure for superintendents who were in office at the beginning of every decade. Yee and Cuban's data were completed from 1980 and nearly through 1990, allowing them to draw an accurate historical picture of tenure in these largest districts.

### **Superintendent and School Board Relationships: A Factor of Superintendent Turnover**

While instructional leadership is integral to the role of superintendent, the increasingly complex political aspects of the job must be handled as well (Education Writers Association, n.d.; Hoyle et al., 2005). Superintendent relationships with school boards were found to be a decisive element of superintendent tenure (Education Writers Association, n.d.). Conflict with the school board is often cited as a common reason for superintendents leaving a district, hence their attrition (Rausch, 2001). Allen (1998) observed that superintendents listed the relationship with the board as a second reason for involuntary non-extension of a contract, while board members listed relationships with

the superintendent as the major cause. Despite conflicts, Glass and co-researchers (2000) surmised that the school board and superintendent must work together to connect the school district with the needs of the community (Goodman & Zimmerman, 2000).

While many school boards and superintendents described having mutually cooperative relationships, Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, and Foleno (2001) reported that 65% of superintendents speculated that many school boards simply wanted leaders the board could control. Furthermore, over 80% of superintendents have reported feeling frustrated with politics and bureaucracy of the job (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Farkas et al., 2001). A primary source of frustration, from a superintendent's perspective, stemmed from school boards micromanaging or interfering in superintendents' administrative responsibilities (Harvey, 2003); with more than two-thirds of superintendents stating that their board meddled in issues not within the scope of its responsibility. According to Goodman and Zimmerman (2000), a quality working relationship between effective leaders and school boards is a "key cornerstone of the foundation for high student achievement" (p. 1). As local school boards are the sole evaluators of superintendent performance and renewal of contracts, a quality working relationship with members directly influences the tenure of the superintendent.

Furthermore, the relationship between the superintendent and the school board that supervises him or her is a central aspect of the superintendency. The school board is the superintendent's statutory employer and supervisor, and the two parties work together to co-create policy for the school district. Therefore, in case-based studies of superintendent turnover, difficulties related to working with board members are typically the most frequently identified contributors (Parker, 1996; Richardson, 1998; Tallerico &

Burstyn, 1996). These difficulties have included conflict between the superintendent and board and the challenges of working with a board whose members cannot cooperate with one another, which are often related (Grissom, 2010; Mountford, 2008). Reasons cited for poor relationships between superintendents and their school boards have included role confusion, tendencies among some board members to micromanage, and incompatible approaches to decision-making (Danzberger, Kirst, & Usdan, 1992; Kowalski, 1999; McCurdy & Hymes, 1992; Mountford, 2008).

Despite evidence that *positive* board-superintendent relationships are the norm rather than the exception (Glass et al., 2000), findings from surveys of superintendents have supported the conclusion from qualitative studies that conflict with the school board is often an important factor in a superintendent's exit. In surveys of superintendents who had left positions in Nebraska and South Carolina by Grady and Bryant (1991) and Monteith and Hallums (1989), respectively, board conflict or interference was cited by more than half of respondents as a contributor to their departure (Grissom, 2010). In Eaton and Sharp's (1996) survey of superintendents which asked why their predecessor left the district, board relationship conflict was identified as a similarly large factor. Though not articulated in these studies, it is important to emphasize that conflict between board members and a strained relationship between the board and the superintendent can influence both the superintendent's decision to stay or go and the board's decision to retain the superintendent or not.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors. Specifically, this study examined whether the relationships between the school board and the international school director is linked to international school director tenure in their previous position.

This study combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was distributed to a sample of international school directors (both for profit and non-profit). They were asked to answer specific demographic questions about themselves and the history of board and superintendent tenure in their previous position. The data collected included: age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position, along with an open ended question and a question that asks specifically about the school board and superintendent relationship in the previous position.

### Research Questions

Specifically, this study investigated the following questions:

1. What factors influence the turnover of international school directors?
2. Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position?

**Null Hypotheses** In examining the second research question, does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to director

turnover; anecdotal experience indicated the relationship between the school board and director will impact turnover. Furthermore, if the relationship between the school board and director is poor, it is predicted that the director is likely to report they left their position within a four year margin – three years is the typical initial contract of an international school director (as indicated on the questionnaire – Appendix A).

In examining the first research question, it is expected that a key factor influencing turnover will be the relationship between the international school director and the school board, as described in the Decision Output Theory; therefore, the hypothesis for the second research question is:

1. International school director tenure in the previous position is significantly related to the self-reported relationship between the school board and the international school director.

In examining the third research question, the following null hypotheses are measured:

1. International school director gender is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position.
2. International school director race is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position.
3. International school director highest degree earned is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position.
4. International school director age is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position.

## Analysis

**Questionnaire.** The questionnaire included open-ended questions about reasons leaving their most recent position. The open-ended questions are listed below.

1. Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.
2. Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.

The reported reasons for turnover were analyzed to determine a significant relationship between a number of demographic characteristics and director turnover influenced by negative director/school board relationship. Previous research has indicated a variety of self-reported reasons for superintendent turnover: retiring; promoted to a new job; and conflict with school board (Alsburly 2003, 2008b; Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010). Each of the reasons for turnover reported by respondents in the open-ended question (question #13, Appendix B) were analyzed using an emergent theme method. Concepts (explanatory ideas) were identified from the data in the first stages of analysis and given a label or code that describes them. Concepts which are closely linked in meaning can be formed into categories; and categories which have similar meanings can be brought together into a theme (Field, 2013).

When an answer was coded “Board” (i.e., director/school board relationship influenced turnover), it meant that at some point in their answer to question 13 the respondent indicated that a negative or strained relationship was a factor in their turnover. If a respondent mentioned “relationship,” then it was coded as “Board.” If respondents put multiple reasons for turnover, then all mentioned reasons were counted. An artifact of this method of counting the responses is that the percentages of responses totaled more

than 100%; but it avoided artificially inflating one category relative to the rest of them.

Furthermore, the relationship between the school board and superintendent was directly asked in question 14 using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire item reads: *Rate your relationship with your school board on the following Likert scale (choose one)*. The scale is as follows: *Very Good Relationship; Good Relationship; Neutral; Poor Relationship* and *Very Poor Relationship*. The researcher cross-referenced question 14 with questions 13 and 15 for a deeper view of the association between relationship with board and turnover.

Open-ended questions 13 and 15 were used because these were potentially sensitive questions and respondents may have been reluctant to write that relationship is an issue; so they could include a variety of answers to describe the reason for turnover. However, any indication that a negative or strained relationship was a reason for turnover in their open-ended response was coded as relationship with board, and then was cross referenced with how they answered question 14 and their perception of the relationship based on the five-point Likert scale.

**Variables.** In order to determine which analysis methods to utilize, the researcher identified the variety of variables: age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, length of tenure in the previous position, quality of relationship with the board of directors/board of education, and reason for leaving the previous position.

Gender was defined as a dichotomous nominal variable with only two categories for this study (Field, 2013). Despite the recent developments regarding gender as perhaps being a multinomial variable (nominal variables with three or more categories; Field, 2013) gender is defined as male or female in this study.



Age is sometimes measured as a continuous variable, but this questionnaire asked respondents to select the age range that described them: 20 – 29, 30 – 39, 40 – 49, 50 – 59, 60 – 69, or 70+. From this was derived an ordinal variable for age range.

Highest degree achieved was measured as an ordinal variable in this study (Field, 2013). Ordinal variables are ranked, for example highest degree achieved is ranked 1 – Bachelor’s Degree; 2 – Master’s Degree and so forth.

Race/ethnicity was defined as a nominal variable. Nominal variables have three or more categories that do not have an intrinsic order (Field, 2013); in other words, they cannot be ranked.

Tenure in the previous position is a quasi-continuous variable, measured in years. This was captured in question 12 on the questionnaire.

For this study, the quality of the “relationship between the international school director and the school board” was measured as ordinal categorical variable (Field, 2013). The quality of relationship variable was categorized from answers to questions 13, 14, and 15. Question 13 was an open-ended question in the questionnaire that read: *Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.* Using an emergent theme method, five categories emerged—Board, Contract, Environmental, Opportunity, and Retirement—into which the responses were sorted, resulting in a nominal variable. In a few cases, responses were ambiguous or indicated multiple reasons for leaving, and the researcher examined the responses to question 14 (about quality of relationship with the board, on a 5-point Likert scale—see Appendix A) and question 15 (an open-ended question: *Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board*) to determine categorization. For example, for case #7,

the answer to question 13 was “Personal, wanted a new country and didn’t like the direction we were going,” which could be characterized as “Environmental” or “Board;” so the researcher examined the responses to questions 14 and 15. The case #7 response to question 14 was “Very Poor Relationship” with the board; and the question 15 response was “Board didn’t listen to my advice. It was time for change. They wanted a manager and not a leader.” Taking the three responses together, the researcher categorized case #7 as both “Board” and “Environmental” for the “reason for leaving” variable.

**Methods.** Initially, an ordinal logistic regression was considered as a method because the dependent variable is an ordinal dependent variable and multiple independent variables are categorical. This test would assess the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable taking into consideration all independent variables in the study. More specifically, it could determine which, if any, of the independent variables have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. In order to run an ordinal logistic regression, there are two assumptions that need to be considered. These assumptions are: assumption one, you have one dependent variable that is measured at the ordinal level (see question 14, Appendix A); and assumption two, you have one or more independent variables that are continuous. Furthermore, in ordinal logistical regression, a test for multicollinearity, which occurs when you have two or more independent variables that are highly correlated with each other, will need to be run. After more consideration and consultation, the researcher considered Spearman’s Rho as an analysis method to investigate the correlation between length of international school director tenure and quality of relationship with the school board. Spearman’s rho requires three assumptions (Laerd, 2015). First, one must have two variables that are continuous

and/or ordinal. The variables used for this analysis were length of tenure, as a ratio variable; and quality of relationship with the board. Second, the two variables must represent paired observations—that is, for each answer to question 12, there is a corresponding answer to question 14. Third, there must be a monotonic relationship between the two variables—in other words, as the tenure variable increases, the relationship variable consistently increases or decreases.

**Population and sample.** This study surveyed approximately 300 international school directors from a variety of geographical regions: South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Southeast Asia. A directory was available that enabled exporting of listed emails to Excel spreadsheet software. Schools without published email contacts were excluded from this study. International school directors were contacted from varying size schools from all over the world. The study was not limited to one country in particular, so a strong cross-section of global educators can be used in selecting the participants. Due to the researcher having been currently employed in Kuwait as an international school director and having received the online questionnaire himself, the researcher did not fill out the questionnaire.

**Survey instrument.** This study used a questionnaire to investigate the perceived reasons of international directors for director turnover. These different and/or similar reasons for turnover, along with the demographic characteristics of the surveyed administrators, were statistically analyzed using Spearman's rho, a point-biserial correlation and a one-way ANOVA in SPSS. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to international school directors worldwide.

**Data collection procedures.** Questionnaire returns were expected to be

approximately 100 international school directors; however, the actual return exceeded that amount and will be discussed in chapter four. The researcher used an updated directory list in January 2017 from the group list called HeadNet. All the directors, which are approximately 300, were selected from this directory and invited to complete the questionnaire. The list was maintained in an Excel spreadsheet and broken out by the size of school. The size of school was broken out into three categories, as on the questionnaire (Appendix A); small size are schools containing students 500 or less; medium size schools continue 501-1500 students, and large schools contain more than 1,501 students. There was a potential of over 300 questionnaires to be returned if 100% of the international school directors return the questionnaire in completion. The questionnaire was sent to international school directors using an American curriculum, therefore, no translation was required and questionnaire results were all reported in English. Next, each administrator received an introductory email from the investigator with a brief description of the study, the researcher, and instructions on how to access the web based questionnaire. The email explained that the questionnaire itself was voluntary, and the anonymity of the participants will be protected.

Response rates for questionnaires tend to be low in general (Fowler, 2013). The advantages to this online format are low cost, potential for high speed of returns, and potential for thoughtful and accurate responses. The disadvantages are potential email spam filtering that limits the realized sample size, and the limited cooperation of busy administrators that may impact the response rate.

**Summary**

Chapter three described the research questions and related hypotheses for this study as well as the population, sample, instrument and survey design, data collection procedures and statistical procedures to be used. The questionnaire, developed and distributed to international school directors by the researcher, was key to the study. The questionnaire asked the same individuals to answer a number of open-ended questions in paragraph form. This study employed quantitative research procedures and qualitative techniques, utilized various statistical analysis and qualitative content methods to answer the research questions: these included Spearman's rank-order correlation, a point-biserial correlation and a one-way ANOVA.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors. Specifically, this study examined whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to tenure of the international director in their previous position.

Data were gathered through a questionnaire including director gender, race, age, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position as international school directors. Each respondent who completed the questionnaire was asked to respond to an open-ended question explaining why they left their last position. The data were analyzed to determine whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to tenure in their previous position. Furthermore, data was collected from respondents to see if tenure in their previous position was impacted by a variety of variables, such as: age, gender, race, and highest degree achieved.

To collect data on international school director demographics, board/director relationship, and reasons for director turnover, an invitation with a web-link to a 15-question on-line questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent to 306 international school directors and administrators in various international schools, both for profit and non-profit, around the world, including South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia. These directors and administrators were asked specific demographic questions about themselves: age, gender, race, highest degree achieved; and length of tenure in their previous position; plus a question that asked specifically about the school board-

superintendent relationship in the previous position (question 14, Appendix A).

Additionally, the questionnaire included two open-ended items about reasons for leaving their previous position, which were:

1. Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.
2. Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.

The returned questionnaires were then analyzed qualitatively with an emergent theme method (as described in Chapter 3), and quantitatively with Spearman's rho, for their various reasons for turnover as well as the Director/Board relationship.

### **Instrument Return Rate**

A total of 155 questionnaires out of 306 were returned, an overall response rate of 51%. Completed instruments were examined to determine whether the respondents followed the instructions properly and provided complete responses. After first filtering in SPSS for respondents who answered "yes" to question 1 in the questionnaire, *In your previous position, were you an international school director/superintendent or administrator?*, 139 usable questionnaires remained. Next, question 3, *Did you report to a board of directors/education?* was assessed, and any questionnaire from an administrator who did not report directly to a school board or group of owner stakeholders (functioning as a school board) was discarded. There were a few respondents who listed "other" in response to the question. However, their explanations made it was clear that they had reported to a school board, and the respondents were clarifying whether the board was elected or appointed. So these cases were recoded for inclusion, leaving a dataset of 121 usable self-reported instruments.

Of the 121 questionnaires deemed suitable for use, some of the administrators did not specify their gender, age or years in previous position, while appropriately answering their reason(s) for turnover. This is the explanation for some of the variability in the questionnaire numbers used in the statistical analysis. One respondent did not answer question 12, *Years in previous position*. That case was excluded from consideration of research questions 2 and 3, leaving a total n value of  $n = 120$  for those questions.

### **Findings as They Relate to the Research Questions**

The findings below are reported as they pertain to the following three research questions investigated in this study:

1. What factors influence the turnover of international school directors?
2. Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position?

**Research question one.** In order to address the first research question, *What factors influence turnover of international school directors?* the written reasons for turnover (question 13, Appendix B) were analyzed using an emergent theme method (as described in Chapter 3) and five general categories emerged: “Board,” “Contract,” “Opportunity,” “Retirement,” and “Environmental.” The “Board” category encompassed board relations or conflict with board. The “Contract” category included responses such as “contract ended” and “contract not renewed,” and simply “contract.” The “Opportunity” category included responses indicative of acquiring better opportunities/career advancement. The “Retirement” category was self-descriptive. The



“Environmental” category included outside civil unrest, school closure, governmental interference, job stress, and personal and family reasons (Appendix B).

Answers coded “Board” indicate that at some point in answering question 13, the respondent indicated that a negative or strained relationship with the board was a factor in their turnover. In looking further into the 121 responses, three did not respond to question 13, thus leaving 118 cases. Of those, 20 presented two reasons for turnover, all of which were counted. This resulted in the percentages of responses for the group totaling 117%, but it did not artificially inflate one category relative to the rest. Question 13 yielded 138 responses that fell into the five categories as described in Table 1.

Table 1

*Reason for Leaving*

*Question #13, Reason for Leaving... 5 Categories (n = 118).*

Category	Board	Environmental	Contract	Opportunity	Retirement	Total
Number of Responses	39	36	26	24	13	138
Percentage (Responses)	28%	26%	19%	17%	9%	100%
Percentage (Respondents)	33%	31%	22%	20%	11%	117%

*Question #13, Reason for Leaving... After 4 Years or Less (n = 77).*

Category	Board	Environmental	Contract	Opportunity	Retirement	Total
Number of Responses	32	21	25	13	3	94
Percentage (Responses)	34%	22%	27%	14%	3%	100%
Percentage (Respondents)	42%	27%	32%	17%	4%	122%

Table 1 above suggests that the top three reasons for international school directors to leave their previous position were: school board relationship (28%), environmental (26%), and contract (19%). The lower half of Table 1 focuses on the subset of 77 respondents whose previous tenure was four years or less. The percentage of responses in

the “Board” category is even larger, suggesting that relationship with the board is a bigger factor in cases of short tenure; and the percentage of responses in the “Retirement” category is much smaller, suggesting that retirement is rarely a factor in cases of short tenure.

The responses in Table 1 total more than the 118 cases (for the full dataset) and more than the 77 cases (for the four-years-or-less subset) presented, because 20 and 17 cases respectively had responses indicative of two reasons for turnover. All reasons were counted to avoid artificially inflating one category relative to the others, so some cases were counted twice.

Based on these results, the top three factors that answer the first research question, “What factors influence turnover of international school directors?” are 1) the school board, which suggests school board relationship; 2) environmental factors, which include personal reasons and factors beyond the respondents’ control (such as war or school closure); and 3) contract completion. These factors are detailed in Appendix B.

“Contract” responses to question 13 were cross-referenced to question 14 (*Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on a 5-point Likert-type scale*) and question 15 (*Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board*). Of the 26 respondents whose question 13 answers were classified as “Contract,” 20 self-reported “poor” or “very poor relationship” on question 14, including 9 who answered open-ended question 15 in a way that underscored the poor relationship with their previous board as a factor in leaving their previous position. This provides evidence that even among the question 13 self-reported “Contract” respondents, on probing further, 77% had a “Poor” or “Very Poor”

relationship with their board that may have been a contributing factor in leaving their previous position. Similarly, question 13 responses categorized as Environmental had 10 (including one overlapping with the “Contract” responses described above) “Poor” or “Very Poor” responses to question 14 *Rate your relationship...*; and even among the “Very Good” or “Good” responses, there were five answers to question 15, the open-ended *Please add any additional information* question, that at least partly implicated board relations as a possible reason for departure (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Responses Highlighting Relationship with Board as a Likely Factor in Turnover*

Question 13 – Reason for Leaving, categorized by researcher	Question 14 – Relationship with Board		Question 15 – Additional Information	
	Likert rating of relationship with Board	Frequency	Indicating Board as a reason for departure	Blank, or otherwise not indicating Board as a reason for departure
Board: 39 of 118	Very Good and Good	3	2	1
	Neutral	3	1	2
	Poor and Very Poor	33	26	7
Environmental: 36 of 118	Very Good and Good	21	5	16
	Neutral	5	0	5
	Poor and Very Poor	10	3	7
Contract: 26 of 118	Very Good and Good	4	0	4
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Poor and Very Poor	20	9	11
Opportunity: 24 of 118	Very Good and Good	16	0	16
	Neutral	7	0	7
	Poor and Very Poor	1	0	1
Retirement: 13 of 118	Very Good and Good	9	0	9
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Poor and Very Poor	2	1	1

Focusing on the 77 who left after four years or less gives similar results, as seen in Table 3. As with Table 2, the frequencies sum to more than the 77 cases presented, because two categories were indicated in 17 of the cases.

Table 3

*Tenures of 4 Years or Less and Relationship with the Previous School Board*

Question 13 – Reason for Leaving	Question 14 – Relationship with Board		Question 15 – Additional Information	
	Likert rating of relationship with Board	Frequency	Indicating Board as a reason for departure	Blank, or otherwise not indicating Board as a reason for departure
Board: 32 of 77	Very Good and Good	1	0	1
	Neutral	2	1	1
	Poor and Very Poor	29	23	6
Contract: 25 of 77	Very Good and Good	4	0	4
	Neutral	2	0	2
	Poor and Very Poor	19	8	11
Environmental: 20 of 77	Very Good and Good	9	1	8
	Neutral	4	0	4
	Poor and Very Poor	7	3	4
Opportunity: 13 of 77	Very Good and Good	8	0	8
	Neutral	4	0	4
	Poor and Very Poor	1	0	1
Retirement: 2 of 77	Very Good and Good	1	0	1
	Neutral	0	0	0
	Poor and Very Poor	1	0	1

The frequencies given in Table 2, above, sum to 138, but there were only 118 viable cases. There were 20 cases that indicated two reasons for turnover, and so were counted twice. Table 3 shows similar information for cases with tenure of four years or less, and similarly double counts the 17 cases that indicated two reasons for turnover.

Table 4 contrasts cases that indicated “board” or “relationship” at least once in questions 13, 14, and/or 15 with cases that did not.

Table 4

*Frequency of Cases with Board or Relationship as Possible Turnover Factor*

Board/Relationship potentially implicated?	How many times “Board” or “Relationship” potentially implicated				Total	Percentage
	3 times	2 times	1 time	0 times		
Yes	19	17	22		58	49%
No				60	60	51%
Total					118	100%

*Tenure ≤ 4 Years, Cases with Board or Relationship as Possible Turnover Factor*

Yes	16	13	18		47	61%
No				30	30	39%
Total					77	100%

So, approximately 49% of cases (detailed in Appendix C) in some way indicated that the relationship with the board was potentially a factor in the previous turnover. Among the cases with tenure of four years or shorter, relationship with the board was potentially implicated in approximately 61% of cases. Descriptive data seemed to indicate a possible factor for international school directors to leave their previous position was the quality of relationship between the international school director and the school board.

**Research question two.** In examining the second research question, “Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?” the descriptive data reported in Table 2, Table 3, and

Table 4 above supported an argument that the relationship between the school board and the director may be correlated with turnover.

As noted in the findings above, most international school directors who leave their previous position due to the “Board” also indicated their relationship with the school board was “Poor” or “Very Poor.” These findings provided some evidence for the second research question, “Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?” All 120 respondents to question 14, *Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on the following scale (choose one)* are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*Frequency of Responses to Question 14: Relationship with Previous School Board*

Relationship Rating	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very Good Relationship	28	23.3	23.3
Good Relationship	26	21.7	45.0
Neutral	18	15.0	60.0
Poor Relationship	26	21.7	81.7
Very Poor Relationship	22	18.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

Table 5 showed that out of the 120 respondents, 54 self-reported that their relationship with their school board was “Good” or “Very Good.” In addition, 48 respondents self-reported that their relationship with their school board was “Poor” or “Very Poor.” Further, the 18 respondents who marked “Neutral,” were cross-referenced

with the other questions that indicated the type of relationship that existed between the Director and Board Members. Of those 18 “Neutral” responses to question 14 *Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on the following scale (choose one)*, three reported “Board” as a reason for departure in questions 13 and 15. Therefore, after further analysis, 51 respondents reported a negative relationship with their school board.

Descriptive statistics for question 12, where respondents were asked about the length of tenure in their previous position, are included in Table 6.

Table 6

*Responses to Question 12, Years in Previous Position*

Years of Tenure	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 1	6	5.0	5.0
1	5	4.2	9.2
2	8	6.7	15.8
3	41	34.2	50.0
4	18	15.0	65.0
5	9	7.5	72.5
6	8	6.7	79.2
7	8	6.7	85.8
8	5	4.2	90.0
10	5	4.2	94.2
11	1	.8	95.0
12	3	2.5	97.5
15	1	.8	98.3
17	1	.8	99.2
21	1	.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	

In Table 6, the first five rows add up to 78 respondents who reported they left

their previous position in four years or less. In examining the second research question, *Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to director turnover?* anecdotal experience indicated the relationship between the school board and director will correlate with turnover. Furthermore, as seen in Table 3 and Table 4, if the relationship between the school board and director is poor, it is predicted that the director is likely to report they left their position within a four year margin – three years is the typical initial contract of an international school director (as indicated on the questionnaire – Appendix A).

***Spearman’s rho for research question two.*** The researcher undertook to use Spearman’s rho to investigate the correlation between length of international school director tenure and quality of relationship with the school board. Spearman’s rho requires three assumptions. First, one must have two variables that are continuous and/or ordinal. The variables used for this analysis were length of tenure and quality of relationship with previous board.

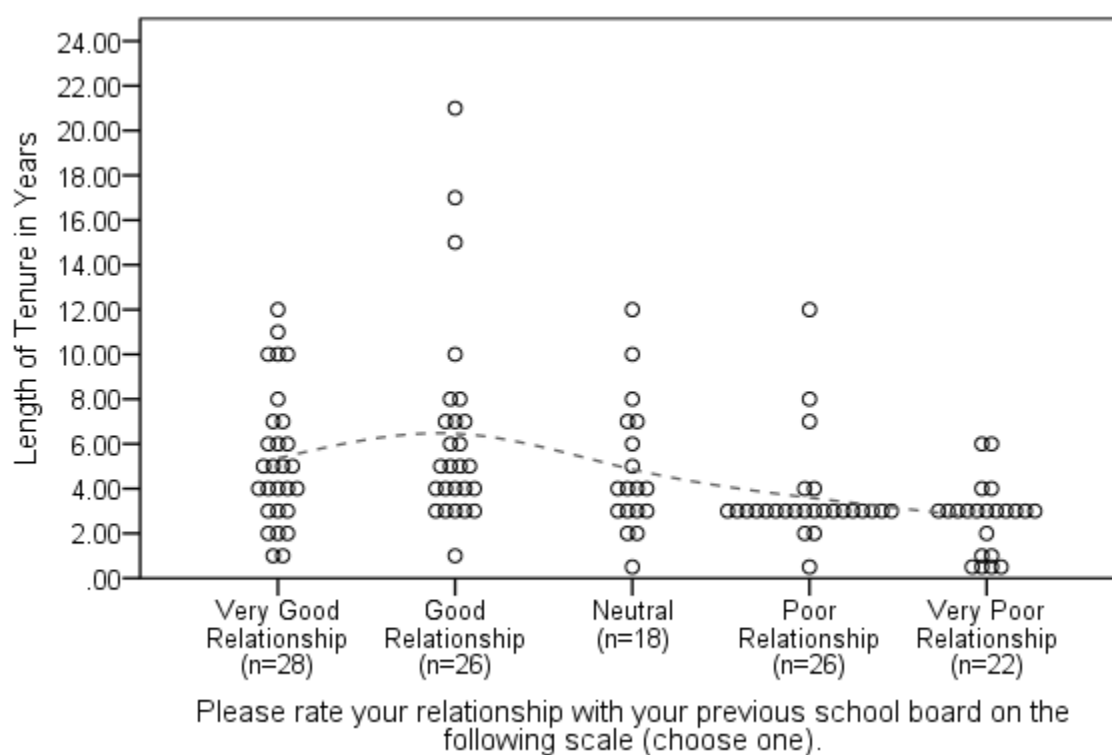
Data on tenure was from question 12 “length of tenure in years” with possible responses of “Less than 1 year,” “1 year,” “2 years,” etc., up through “29 years,” and finally “30 years or more.” For this analysis, the six “Less than 1 year” responses were each approximated as .5 years. There were no “30 years or more” responses, so the upper end of the tenure scale did not need approximation. In this way, a ratio variable was obtained for length of tenure. Data for the second variable was from question 14 which, via a 5-point Likert-type scale, captured “quality of relationship with the board” as an ordinal variable. These satisfied the first assumption for Spearman’s rho.

Second, the two variables must represent paired observations—that is, for each



answer to question 12, there is a corresponding answer to question 14. Of the 121 qualified respondents, only case #100 did not answer the tenure question. So, case 100 was filtered out to meet the second assumption for Spearman's rho.

Third, there must be a monotonic relationship between the two variables—in other words, as the tenure variable increases, the relationship variable also consistently either increases or decreases—see scatterplot Figure 2, and boxplots, Figure 3.



*Figure 2.* Scatterplot: Relationship with Board and Years of Tenure.

The scatterplot (with point dodging to show frequencies) in Figure 2 shows a generally monotonic relationship between the variables, despite the presence of outliers. In particular, the three respondents with tenures of 15 years or more are all in the “Good Relationship” category, causing a minor inconsistency in the monotonic relationship between variables. Furthermore, only cases rating their board relationship as neutral,

poor, or very poor, reported tenure of “less than one year” (here approximated as .5 year).

The boxplots in Figure 3 give another view of these variables.

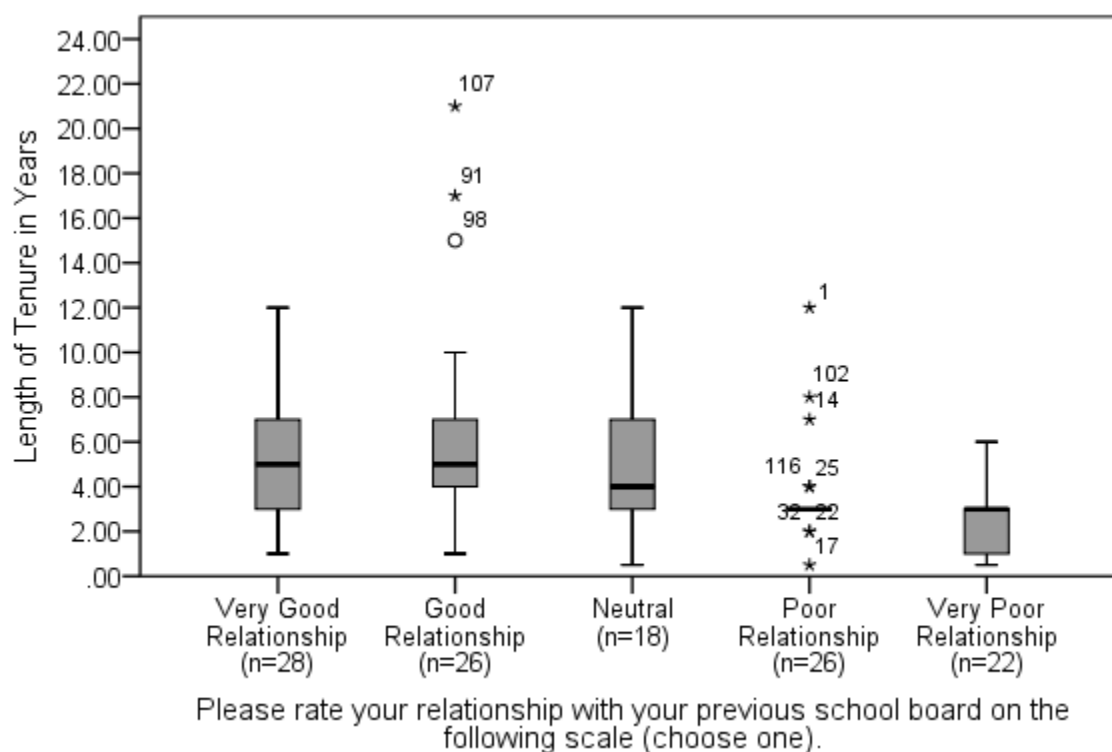


Figure 3. Boxplots: Relationship with Board and Years of Tenure.

The boxplots in Figure 3 explicitly show the outliers in the data. In the “Poor Relationship” group, nearly all respondents lasted three years, which is the industry standard initial contract length for international school directors. In case #1, the respondent’s length of tenure was 12 years despite a reported poor relationship with the board; and her response to question 13 was “Needed a change / change of board.” Based on this, the researcher speculates that the relationship was good for the bulk of the respondent’s tenure, and was only “poor” when the board changed, probably for only a year or two.

With the three assumptions met, the researcher ran a bivariate procedure in SPSS to find the Spearman’s rank-order correlation among the variables (see Table 7 below).

Table 7

*Spearman's Rho for Relationship and Length of Tenure*

Variables	Statistics	Length of Tenure in Years
Quality of Relationship with Board (5-Point Likert Scale)	Correlation Coefficient	-.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	120

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Based on Table 7, there was a statistically significant moderate correlation between quality of relationship with the board and length of tenure,  $r_s(120) = -.419, p < .001$ . The “negative” direction of the correlation coefficient is due to coding “Very Good Relationship” as “1,” and “Very Poor Relationship” as “5,” which reflects the order in which responses were presented on the questionnaire, to reduce the likelihood of order bias. Spearman’s rho reflects the relationship between two variables insofar as the relationship is monotonic. If the relationship is not monotonic, Spearman’s rho underestimates the strength of the relationship. With this result, the researcher finds evidence to reject the null hypothesis, and accept the hypothesis that there is a moderate statistically significant relationship between international school directors’ relationships with their boards and the length of their tenure.

**Research question three.** Finally, in reviewing research question 3, *Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position?* the researcher sought correlations between the demographic independent variables and length of tenure. Two of the demographic factors, age group and highest degree attained, were ordinal, and assessed with respect to

length of tenure via Spearman's rank-order correlation. Two other variables, gender and race, were not ordinal. Gender, a dichotomous variable, was attempted with a point-biserial correlation procedure. Race/ethnicity, a categorical variable, was first attempted with a one-way ANOVA procedure. When the underlying assumptions of ANOVA were not met, it was considered as a dichotomous variable, "white" (n = 86) or "non-white" (n = 34), and attempted with a point-biserial correlation.

*Analyzing highest academic degree and years of tenure.* The researcher used Spearman's rank-order correlation to assess the relationship between the highest academic degree attained by respondents and the length of tenure respondents reported for their previous position. The procedure requires three assumptions.

First, the variables must be ordinal or continuous. The dependent variable, tenure, is a quasi-continuous variable, treated as ordinal for this analysis. The data representing highest academic degree attained, from question 10, had one respondent who answered "Other" and gave the explanation "Educational Specialist." This case was excluded from this analysis. The remaining cases are ordered Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD/EdD, so the independent variable for highest degree achieved is ordinal, and the assumption is met.

Second, the variables must represent paired observations. The dataset of 121 qualified respondents had one who did not answer question 12 about length of tenure, bringing the number to 120. Another respondent who answered "Other" was excluded, leaving a dataset of 119 cases who answered both questions 10 and 12. Thus, the second assumption was met.

Third, there must be a monotonic relationship between variables. To check this assumption, the researcher used SPSS to generate a scatterplot (see Figure 4).

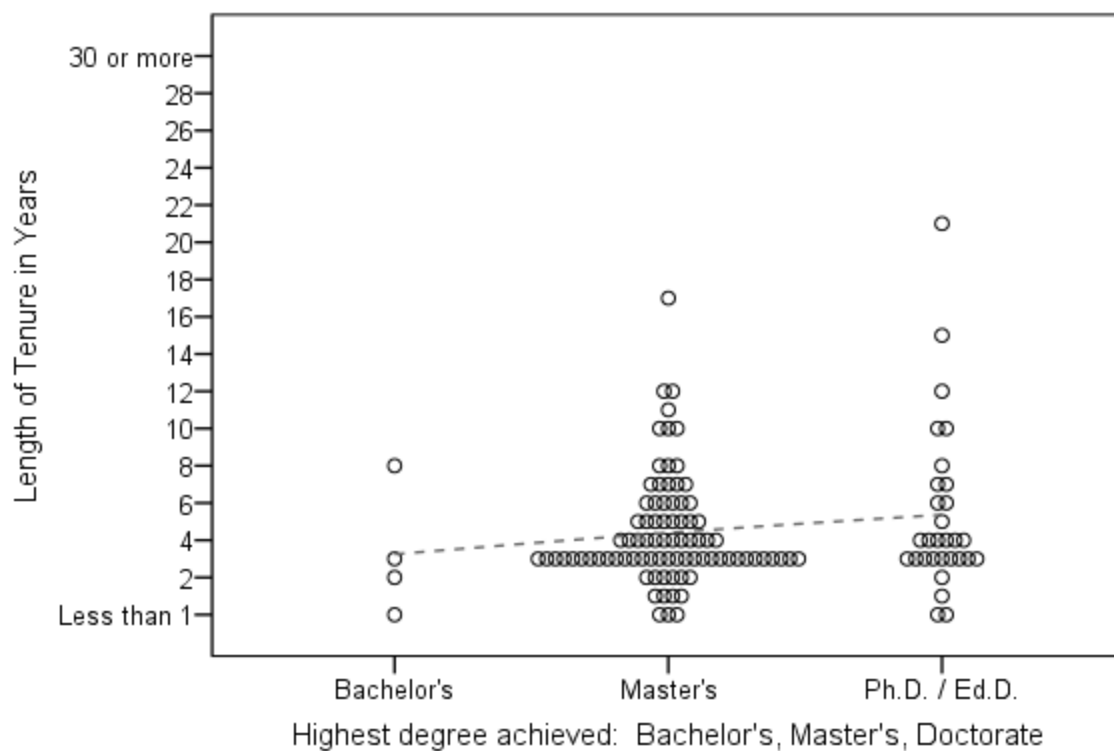


Figure 4. Scatterplot: Highest Academic Degree Achieved and Years of Tenure.

Visual inspection of the scatterplot for highest degree achieved and length of tenure (Figure 4) provided evidence of a monotonic relationship between the variables, satisfying the third assumption. So, the researcher generated SPSS output for Spearman's rho.

The procedure found a very weak and statistically non-significant correlation between highest academic degree attained and length of tenure,  $r_s(119) = .110, p = .232$ , as shown in Table 8. From this, the researcher finds no evidence of correlation between highest degree attained and length of tenure, and no evidence of highest academic degree as a factor in international school superintendent turnover.

Table 8

*Spearman's Rho for Highest Degree Attained and Length of Tenure*

Variable	Statistics	Length of Tenure in Years
Highest Academic Degree Achieved	Correlation Coefficient	.110
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232
	<i>N</i>	119

***Analyzing age group and years of tenure.*** Three assumptions are necessary for Spearman's rank-order correlation. There must be two variables that are (1) ordinal or continuous, and (2) represent paired observations, and (3) exhibit a monotonic relationship.

The dependent variable, length of tenure, is a quasi-continuous variable that we can treat as ordinal for this analysis. The independent variable, age range (from question 8) is ordinal. So, assumption (1) was met.

The dataset of 121 qualified respondents included one, case #100, who did not answer question 12 about length of tenure, bringing the number of cases to 120. Of those, all answered question 8 about age group. Thus, assumption (2) was met.

To test assumption (3), monotonic relationship between variables, the researcher used SPSS to generate a scatterplot comparing the variables—see Figure 5.

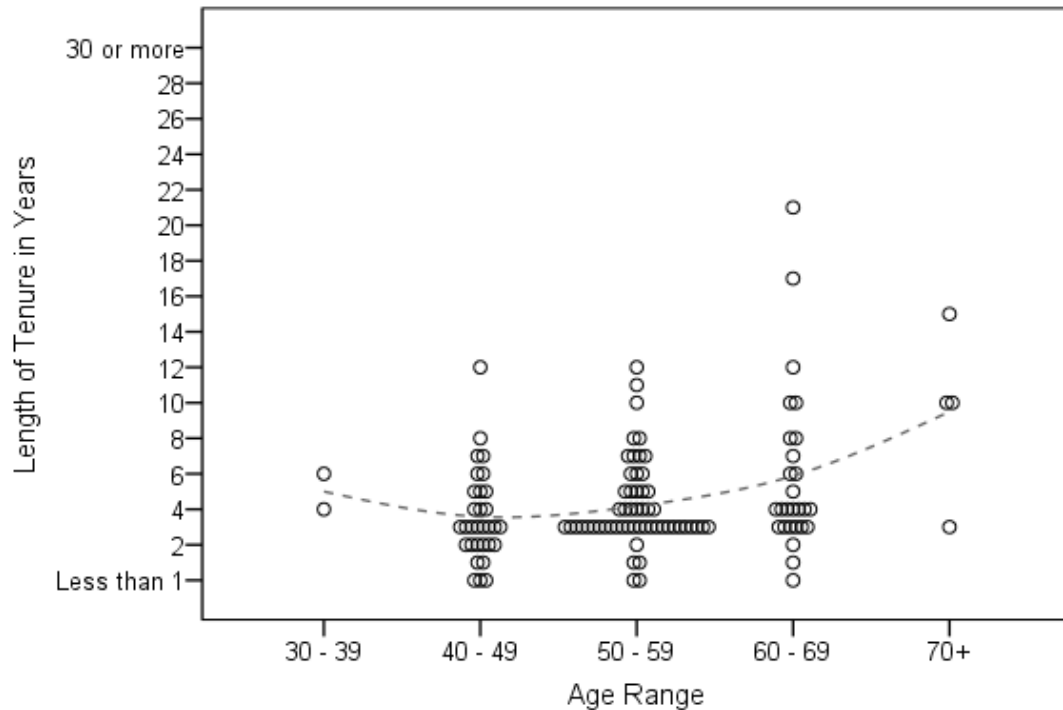


Figure 5. Scatterplot: Age Ranges and Length of Tenure.

Visual inspection of the scatterplot with point dodging and interpolation line for age range and length of tenure provided some evidence of a monotonic relationship between the variables. For a truly monotonic relationship, for each level of age range, length of tenure should increase; but there's an evident decrease from the 30-39 level to the 40-49 level. The other levels did show increasing length of tenure as age range increases. Since the 30-39 level consists of only two observations, the researcher considered assumption (3) of a monotonic relationship was reasonably met.

With the necessary assumptions met, the researcher used an SPSS bivariate process to find Spearman's rho. The procedure found a weak and statistically significant relationship between age range and length of tenure,  $r_s(120) = .266, p = .003$ , as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

*Spearman's Rho for Age Group and Length of Tenure*

Variable	Statistics	Length of Tenure in Years
Your age (select a range)	Correlation Coefficient	.266**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	<i>N</i>	120

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Analyzing gender and years of tenure.** The researcher used SPSS to find the point-biserial correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between gender and length of tenure. The gender variable consisted of data from question 9 on the questionnaire. The tenure data was from question 12. There were six answers to question 12 in the “Less than 1 year” category, which the researcher approximated as .5 year each to obtain a continuous variable for length of tenure.

The dataset of 121 qualified respondents included one who did not answer question 12 about years of tenure, leaving 120 cases. Of those, there were four who did not answer question 9 about gender, leaving a dataset of 116 for this analysis.

Six assumptions must be met for a point-biserial correlation. (1) One of the variables must be continuous. The tenure variable, as a ratio variable, meets this requirement. (2) The other variable should be dichotomous. The gender variable meets this assumption. (3) The variables should be paired. The dataset of 116 cases meets these requirements.

Of the remaining three assumptions, relating to how the dataset fits the point-biserial correlation model, two were problematic.



Assumption (4) is that the continuous variable, tenure, should have no significant outliers in either of the gender categories. Inspection of boxplots (see Figure 6) showed that outliers were present in both categories of gender, including two “extreme” outliers.

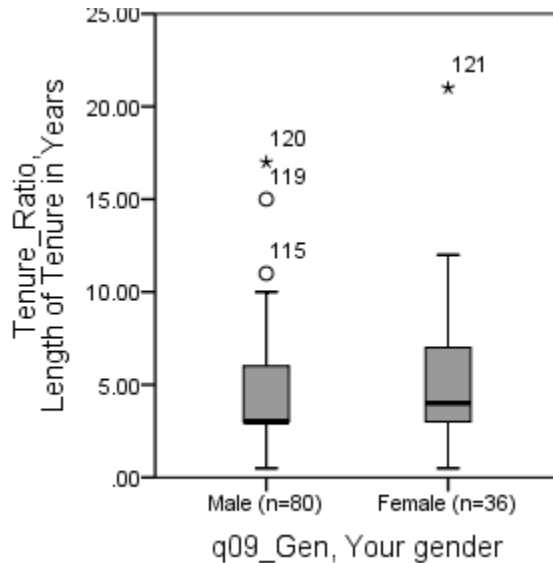


Figure 6. Boxplots: Genders and Length of Tenure.

Assumption (5) is that the variance of the continuous variable, tenure, should be equal in both of the gender categories. Homogeneity of variances was tested using Levene’s test of equality of variances. A statistically significant result of  $p < .05$  would indicate violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances. This test found there was homogeneity of variances for length of tenure for males and females ( $p = .072$ ), as seen in Table 10, thus satisfying assumption (5).

Table 10

*Test of Homogeneity of Variance for Genders and Tenure*

Variable	Statistic	Levene			
		Statistic	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig.
Length of	Based on Mean	3.290	1	114	.072
Tenure in	Based on Median	1.504	1	114	.223
Years	Based on Median and with adjusted <i>df</i>	1.504	1	107.308	.223
	Based on trimmed mean	2.655	1	114	.106

Assumption (6) is that the continuous variable, tenure, should have normal distribution in each group of the gender variable. Table 11 shows the dataset does not meet the Shapiro-Wilk test for normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 11

*Tests of Normality for Genders and Tenure*

Variable	Your gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	<i>df</i>	Sig.	Statistic	<i>df</i>	Sig.
Length of Tenure	Male	.224	80	.000	.815	80	.000
in Years	Female	.234	36	.000	.813	36	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Also, the histograms in Figure 7—male on the left, female on the right—both exhibit kurtosis and positive skewness, and show that assumption (6) is not met.

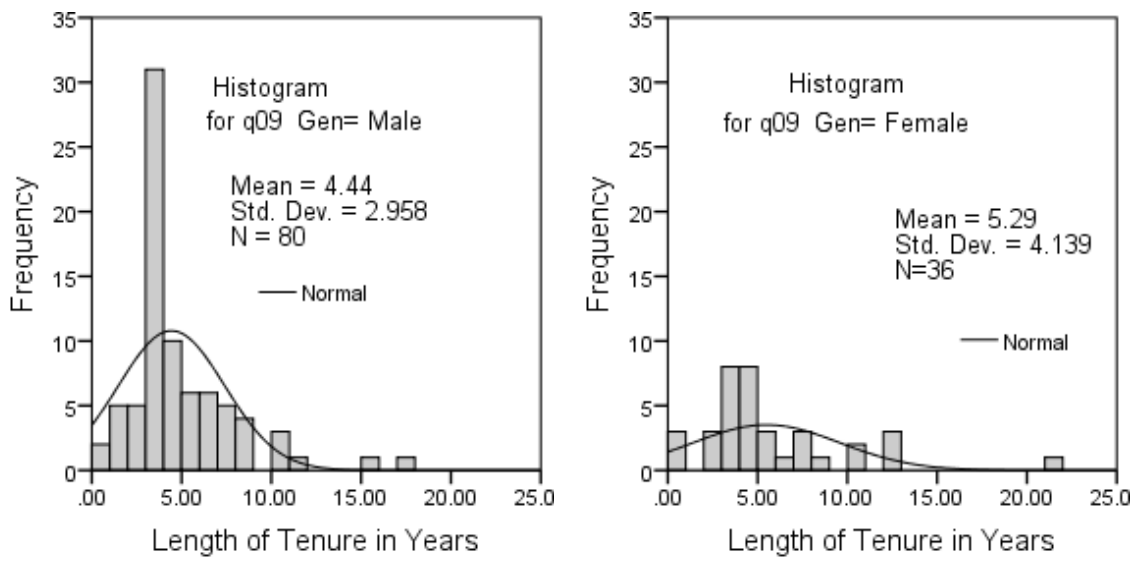


Figure 7. Histograms: Genders and Length of Tenure.

Since the dataset did not meet the necessary assumptions for normal distribution and lack of significant outliers, the researcher used  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  to transform the continuous variable, representing tenure data from question 12. This transformation decreased outliers and improved normality, as shown in the boxplots of Figure 8 and the histograms of Figure 9.

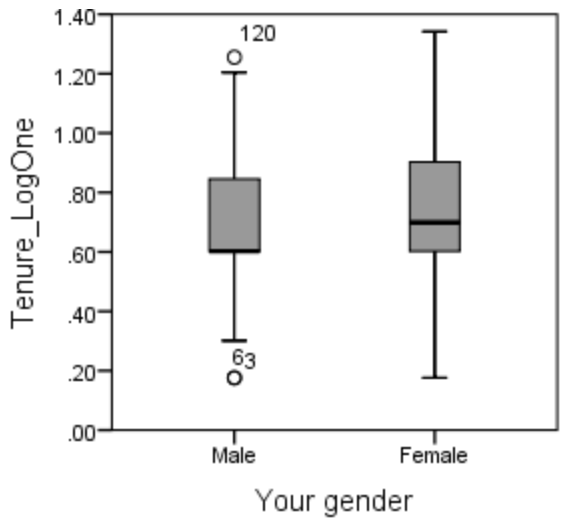


Figure 8. Boxplots: Genders and Transformed Tenure.

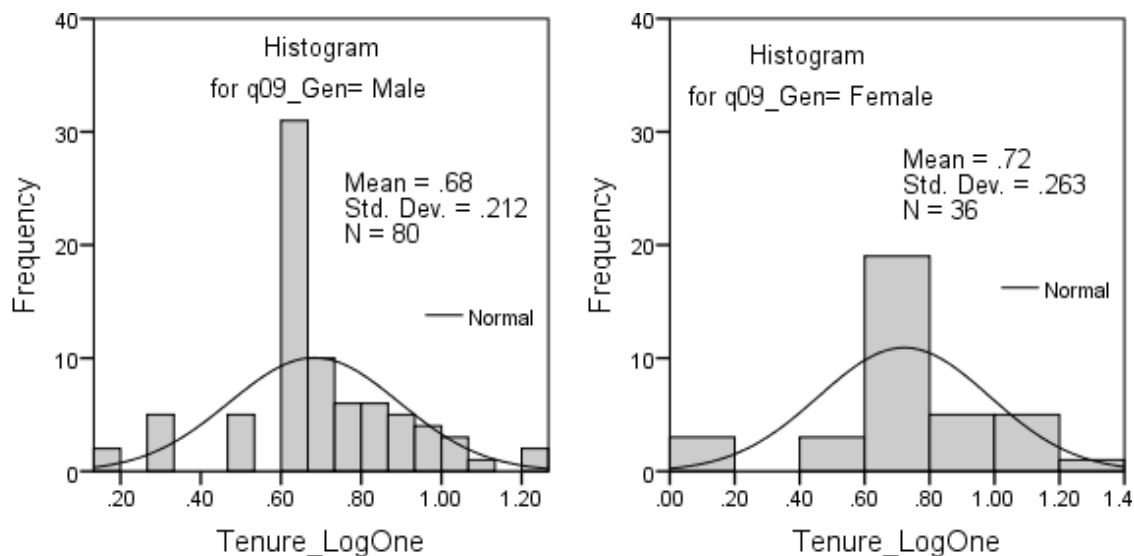


Figure 9. Histograms: Genders and Transformed Tenure.

Assessing equality of variances, Levene's test found homogeneity of variances for gender and length of tenure ( $p = .265$ ), shown in Table 12.

Table 12

*Test of Homogeneity of Variance with Transformed Tenure*

Variable	Statistics	Levene			
		Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Tenure with	Based on Mean	1.256	1	114	.265
log(+1)	Based on Median	1.024	1	114	.314
transformation	Based on Median and	1.024	1	113.126	.314
applied	with adjusted <i>df</i>				
	Based on trimmed mean	1.287	1	114	.259

Testing further for normal distribution, the researcher examined Q-Q plots generated by SPSS and found that, with the transformed tenure variable, scores were

approximately normally distributed (see Figure 10; “male” is shown on the left and “female” on the right).

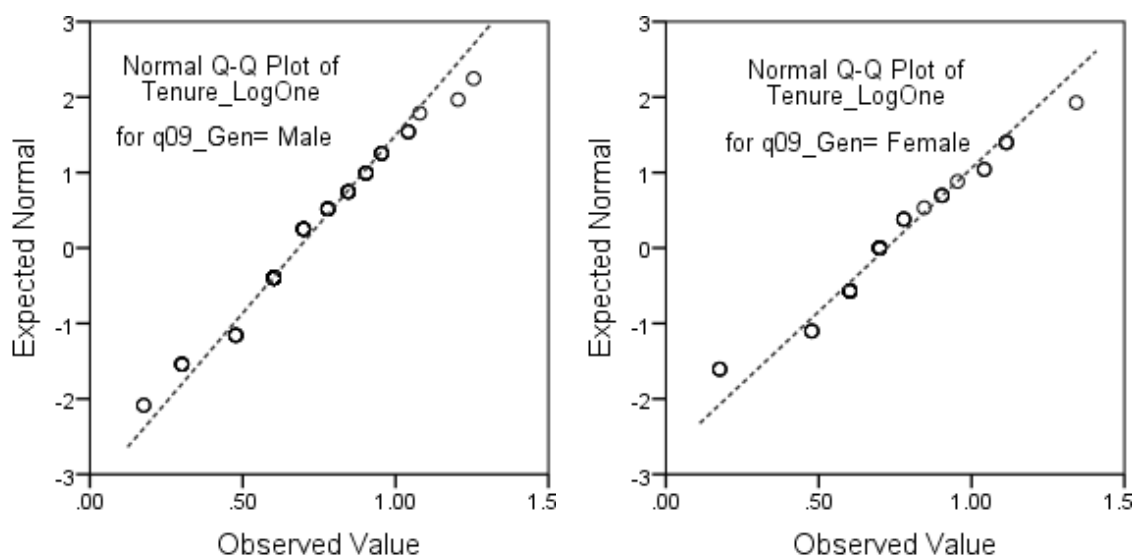


Figure 10. Q-Q Plots: Genders and Transformed Tenure.

Having met the assumptions necessary for a point-biserial correlation, the researcher ran the procedure using the transformed tenure variable, and found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation between gender and length of tenure,  $r_{pb}(114) = .079, p = .401$ , as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

*Correlations: Gender and Transformed Tenure*

Variable	Statistics	Tenure with Transformation
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401
	<i>N</i>	116

Looking at descriptive statistics for gender and the transformed tenure variable (see Table 14), the 80 males had back-transformed tenure  $M = 4.82$  years ( $SD = .212$ ), 95%CI (4.32, 5.37), and the 36 females had back-transformed tenure  $M = 5.27$  years ( $SD = .263$ ), 95%CI (4.29, 6.47).

Table 14

*Descriptive Statistics for Genders and Transformed Tenure*

Dependent Variable	Gender	Statistics	Statistic	Std. Error		
Tenure with Transformation Applied	Male	Mean	.6829	.02370		
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.6357		
			Upper Bound	.7301		
		5% Trimmed Mean		.6819		
		Median		.6021		
		Variance		.045		
		Std. Deviation		.21201		
		Minimum		.18		
		Maximum		1.26		
		Range		1.08		
		Interquartile Range		.24		
		Skewness		.130	.269	
		Kurtosis		.547	.532	
			Female	Mean	.7216	.04383
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Lower Bound	.6326	
				Upper Bound	.8106	
5% Trimmed Mean		.7231				
Median		.6990				
Variance		.069				
Std. Deviation		.26295				
Minimum		.18				
Maximum		1.34				
Range		1.17				
Interquartile Range		.30				
Skewness		-.043	.393			
Kurtosis		.450	.768			

*Analyzing race and years of tenure—one-way ANOVA.* The dataset of 121 qualified respondents included one who did not answer question 12 about years of tenure, bringing the number to 120, all of whom answered question 11 about race/ ethnicity. Question 12 permitted each respondent to choose only one racial category, presented graphically in Figure 11.

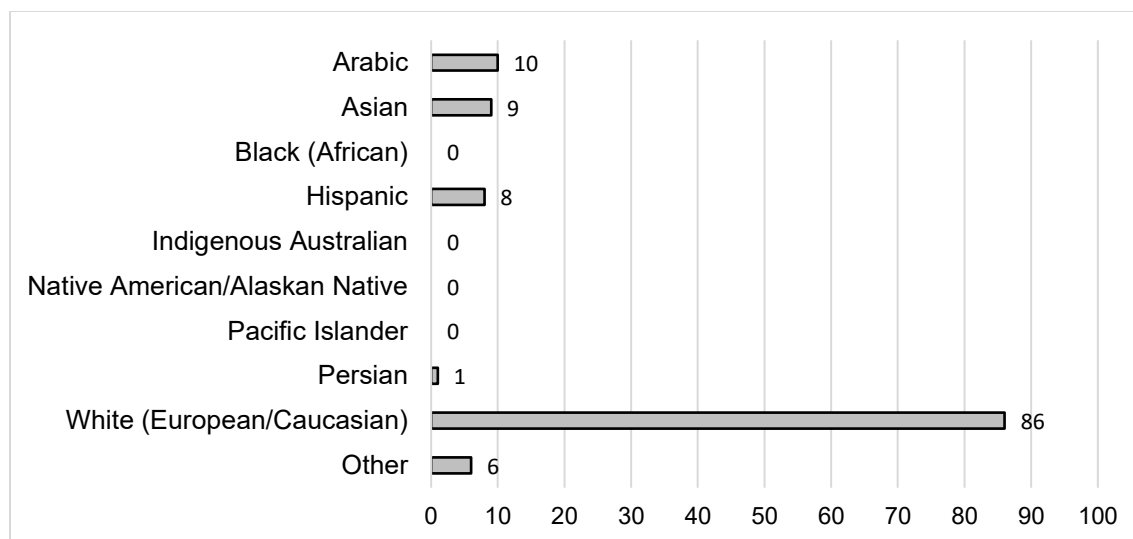


Figure 11. Response Frequencies for 10 Racial Categories.

The researcher attempted to use a one-way ANOVA process to investigate the relationship between race or ethnicity and length of tenure. However, the dataset did not meet the assumptions necessary for one-way ANOVA, even after transforming the dependent variable with the  $\log(\textit{Tenure\_Ratio} + 1)$  method that had improved outliers and normality for gender.

The first assumption—a continuous dependent variable—is met because length of tenure was measured as a quasi-continuous variable with possible answers ranging from “Less than 1 year”, “1 year,” “2 years,” etc., up through “29 years,” and finally “30 years or more.” The briefest tenure, chosen by six respondents, was “less than 1 year,” which was approximated as .5 year to obtain a continuous variable. No respondents’ chose “30

years or more,” so no additional approximation was necessary. This assumption continued to be met when the  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  transformation was applied.

The second assumption—a categorical independent variable with at least two independent groups—is met because respondents could select only one of the ten racial groups provided. The third assumption—independence of observations—is met for the same reason.

The fourth assumption—no significant outliers in the independent variable categories—was not met, as evidenced by the boxplots in Figure 12 below.

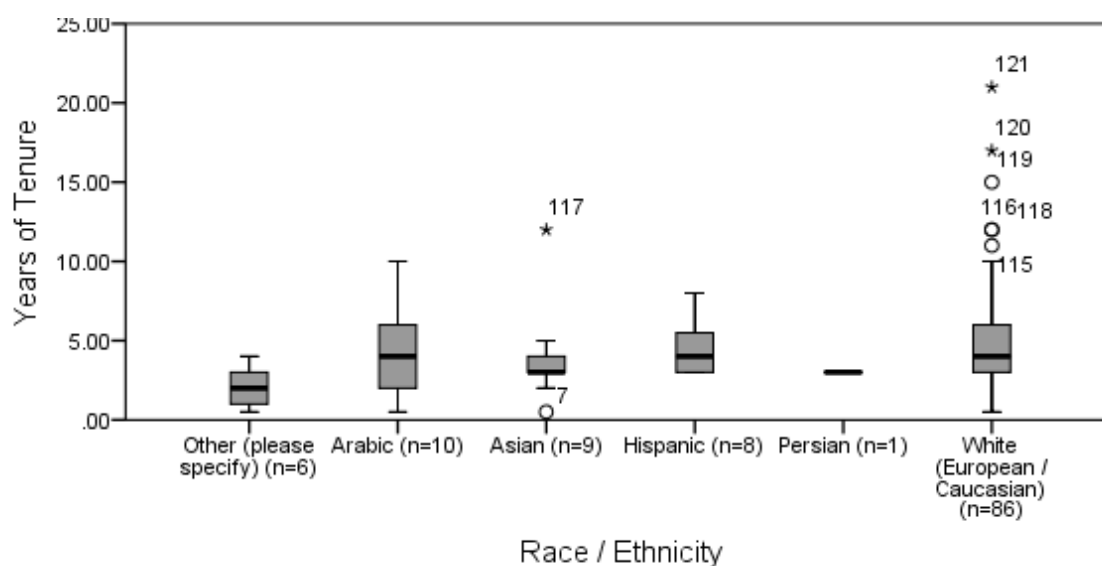


Figure 12. Boxplots: Race/Ethnicity and Tenure.

Incidence of outliers was improved only slightly by the  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  transformation. Quantity of outliers decreased from seven (as in Figure 12) to six (shown in Figure 13 below). This includes “extreme” outliers, which decreased from three to two.



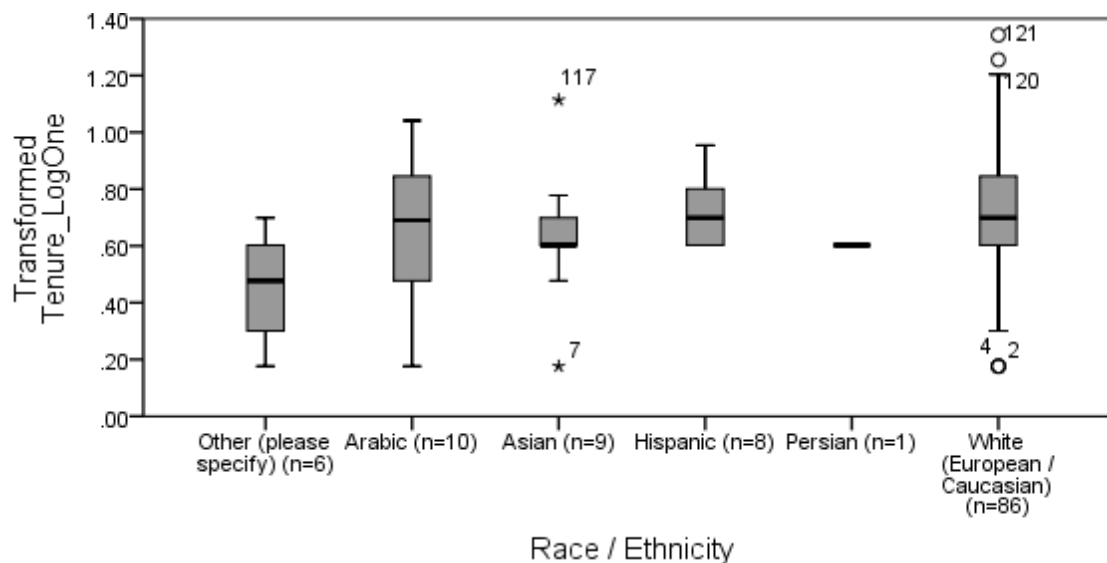


Figure 13. Boxplots: Race/Ethnicity and Transformed Tenure.

The fifth assumption—tenure should be approximately normally distributed for each racial group—was not met. In Figure 14, histograms of the “White (European/Caucasian)” racial group ( $n = 86$ ) show positive skew and kurtosis with the untransformed tenure variable on the left. On the right, after the  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  transformation, the variable still showed kurtosis, though skew was improved.

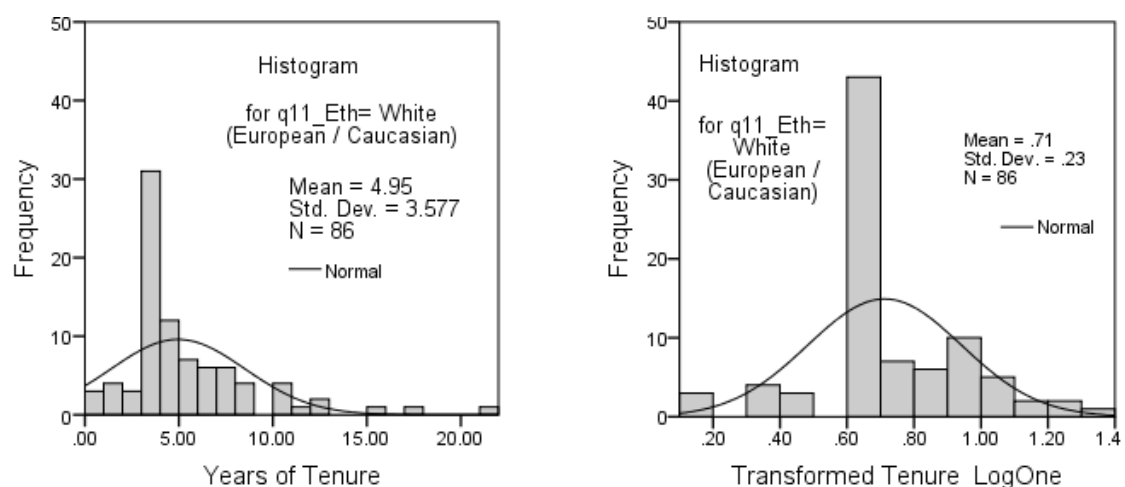


Figure 14. Histograms: Race (White) and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

The “Hispanic” racial group, shown in Figure 15 below, with  $n = 8$ , had non-normal distribution before and after transformation of the tenure variable.

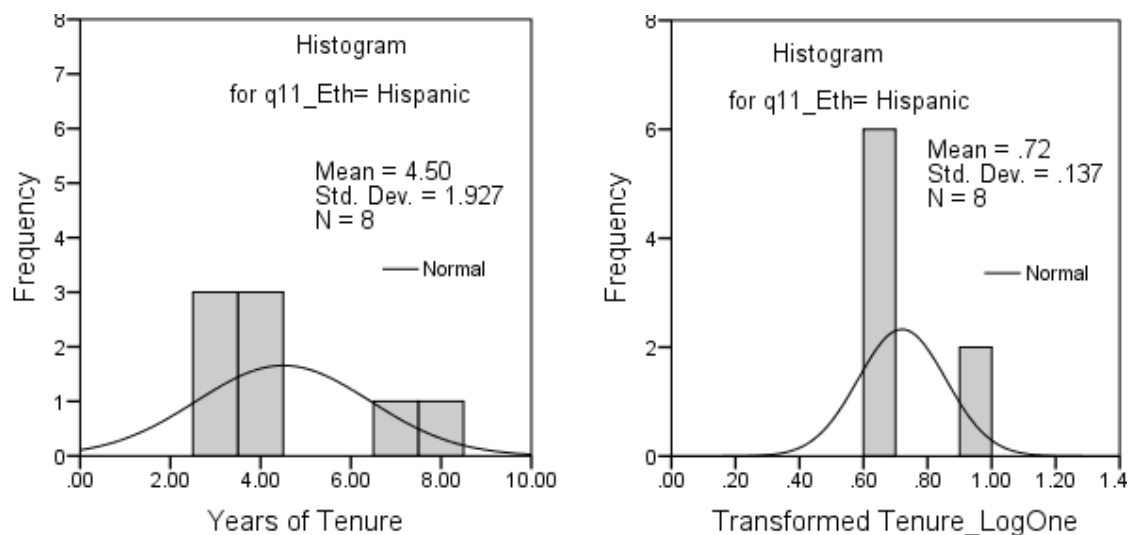


Figure 15. Histograms: Race (Hispanic) and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

The “Arabic” racial group ( $n = 10$ ) showed somewhat improved skewness and kurtosis after transformation of the tenure variable (see Figure 16).

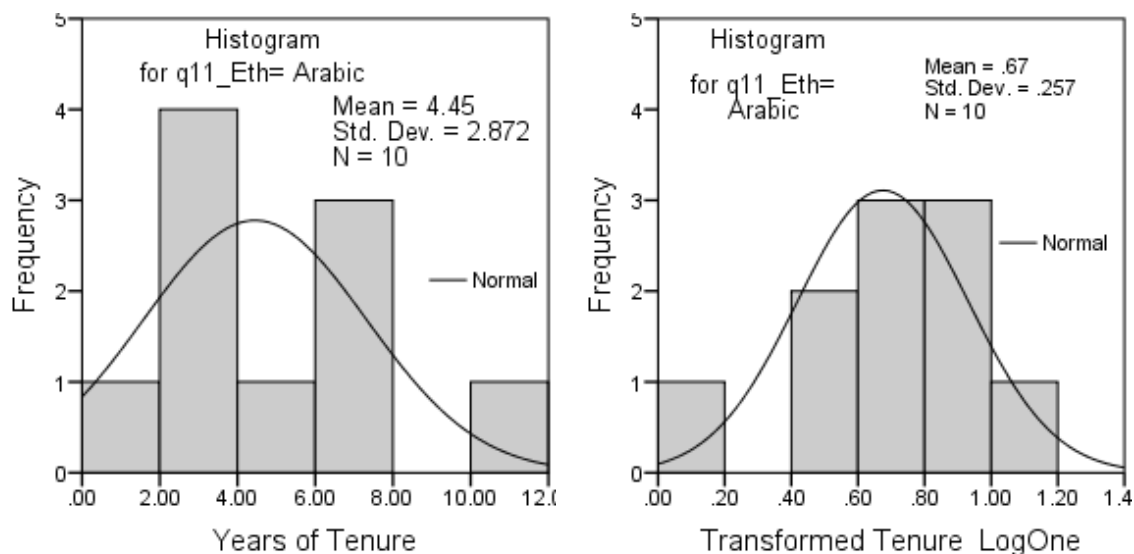


Figure 16. Histograms: Race (Arabic) and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

Q-Q plots for the racial categories, with the tenure variable untransformed and transformed, mostly did not show normal distributions. Figure 17 shows Q-Q plots for the three racial categories discussed above—White (European/Caucasian), Hispanic, and

Arabic. On the left are plots with “years of tenure” represented by the untransformed tenure variable, and the plots on the right have “years of tenure” with the  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  transformation applied. As seen previously in the histograms, this transformation improved normality for the “White (European/Caucasian)” racial group, but did not much help the other racial categories.

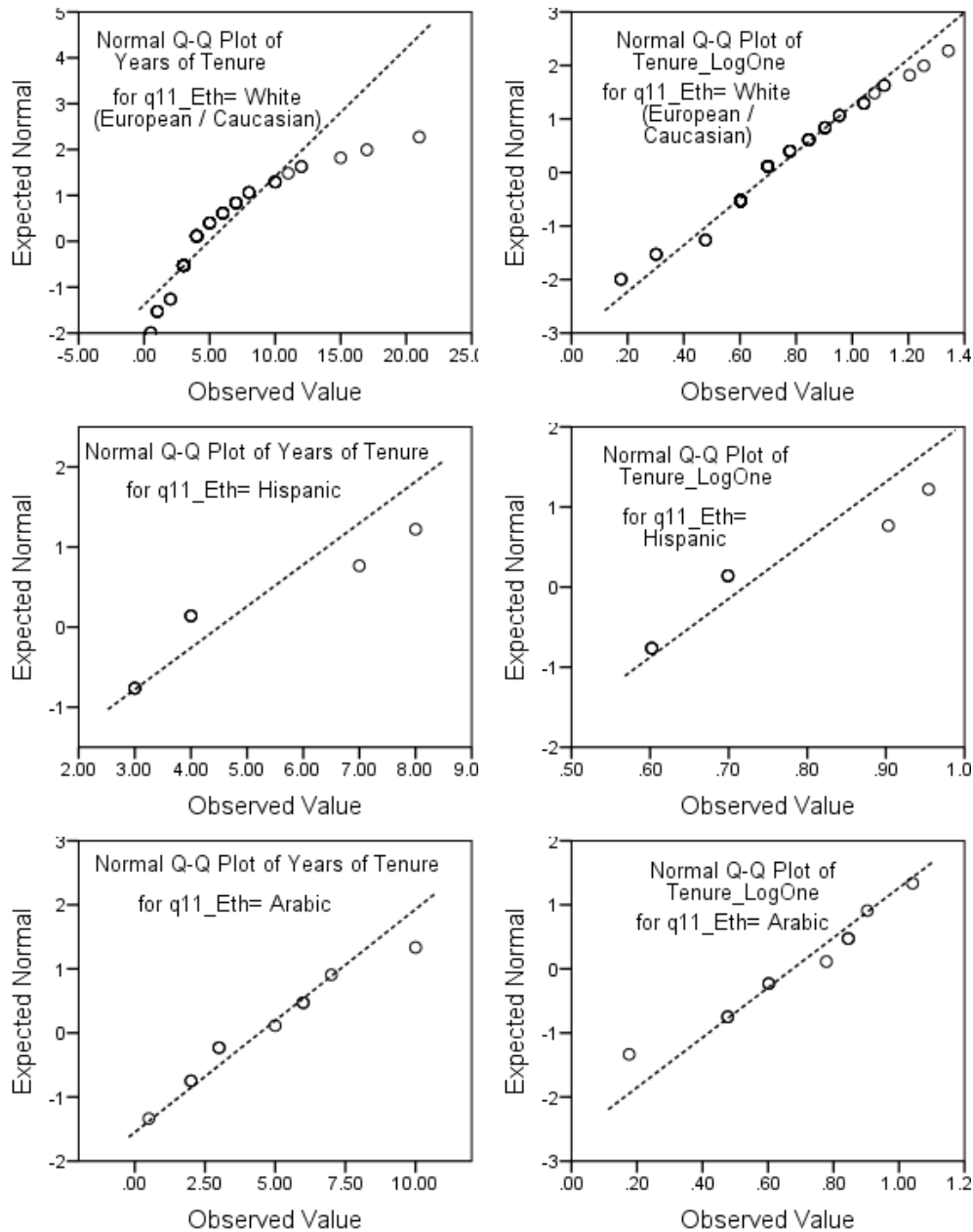


Figure 17. Q-Q Plots: 3 Racial Groups and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

With two key assumptions of one-way ANOVA unmet—lack of outliers, and normality of distribution in all categories of the independent variable—the researcher did not run the one-way ANOVA.

*Analyzing race: White and years of tenure—point-biserial correlation.* With such small sizes of most of the racial groups, it is unsurprising that distributions did not approximate normality. But with all the “non-white” ethnicities considered together, the sample would have white ( $n = 86$ ) and non-white ( $n = 34$ ). So the researcher considered “race/ ethnicity” in binary terms as white or non-white, to see what inferences could be drawn about the correlation of self-identification as racially “white” and length of tenure. Using data from question 11, the race/ethnicity variable was recoded with just two categories, white and non-white, and a point-biserial correlation was performed in SPSS.

The dataset of 121 qualified respondents included one who did not answer question 12 about years of tenure, bringing the number to 120. Of those, all 120 answered question 11 about race/ethnicity, leaving 120 cases for this analysis.

Point-biserial correlation requires six assumptions. (1) The tenure variable meets the requirement of a continuous variable, but did not meet other assumptions, so the analysis was performed with a  $\log(\text{variable} + 1)$  transformation, resulting in a transformed tenure variable which also meets the requirement of a continuous variable. (2) The white/non-white variable meets the requirement of a dichotomous variable. (3) The variables represent paired observations, meeting the third requirement.

Assumption (4) is that there are no outliers. This was not met with the untransformed tenure variable, but it was reasonably met with the transformed tenure

variable. Incidence of outliers was reduced from seven to four, including reducing extreme outliers from two to zero, as shown in the boxplots in Figure 18.

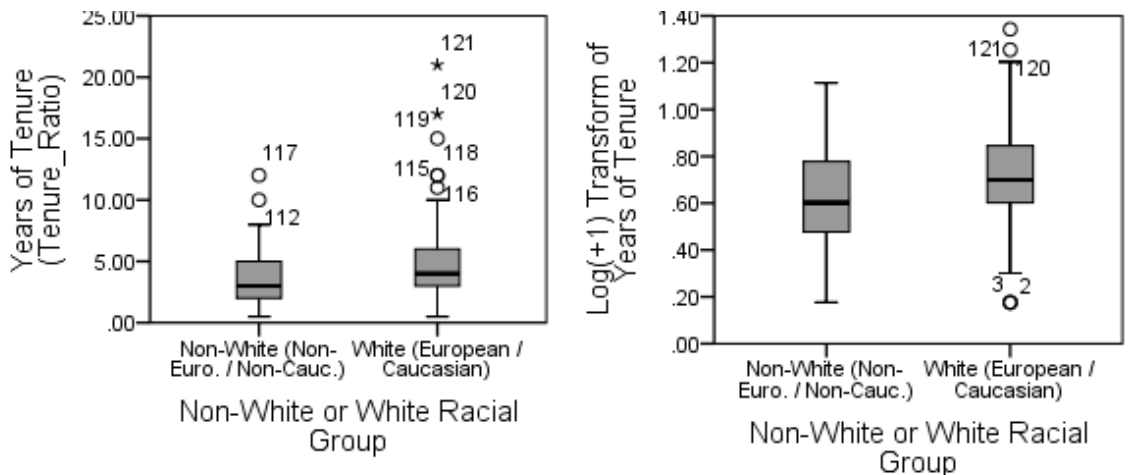


Figure 18. Boxplots: Non-White/White and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

Assumption (5) is that there is homogeneity of variances for both racial categories. This was tested with Levene’s test of equality of variances, and was met for both the untransformed tenure variable ( $p = .140$ ), shown in Table 15, and for the transformed tenure variable ( $p = .776$ ), seen in Table 16.

Table 15

*Test of Homogeneity of Variance with Untransformed Tenure Variable*

		Levene			
Dependent Variables	Methods	Statistic	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig.
Years of Tenure (Untransformed)	Based on Mean	2.213	1	118	.140
	Based on Median	1.157	1	118	.284
	Based on Median and with adjusted <i>df</i>	1.157	1	111.331	.284
	Based on trimmed mean	1.695	1	118	.196

Table 16

*Test of Homogeneity of Variance with Transformed Tenure Variable*

		Levene			
Dependent Variables	Methods	Statistic	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig.
Years of Tenure (with Log(+1) Transformation)	Based on Mean	.081	1	118	.776
	Based on Median	.091	1	118	.763
	Based on Median and with adjusted <i>df</i>	.091	1	117.914	.763
	Based on trimmed mean	.077	1	118	.781

Assumption (6) is that the continuous variable should be distributed approximately normally for both racial groups. This was not met with the untransformed tenure variable, but it was met with the transformed tenure variable, as shown in the Q-Q plots for the non-white racial group (Figure 19), and for the white racial group (Figure 20).

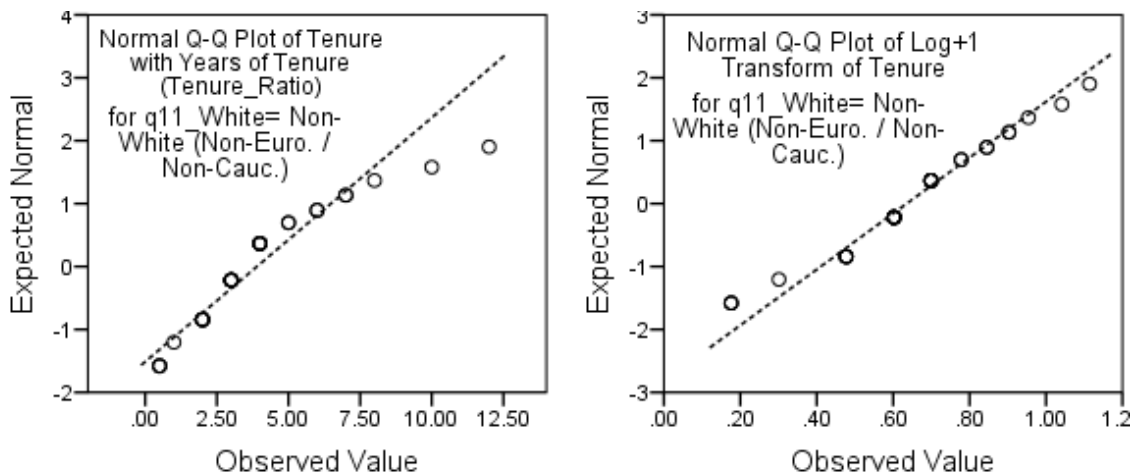


Figure 19. Q-Q Plots: Race: Non-White and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

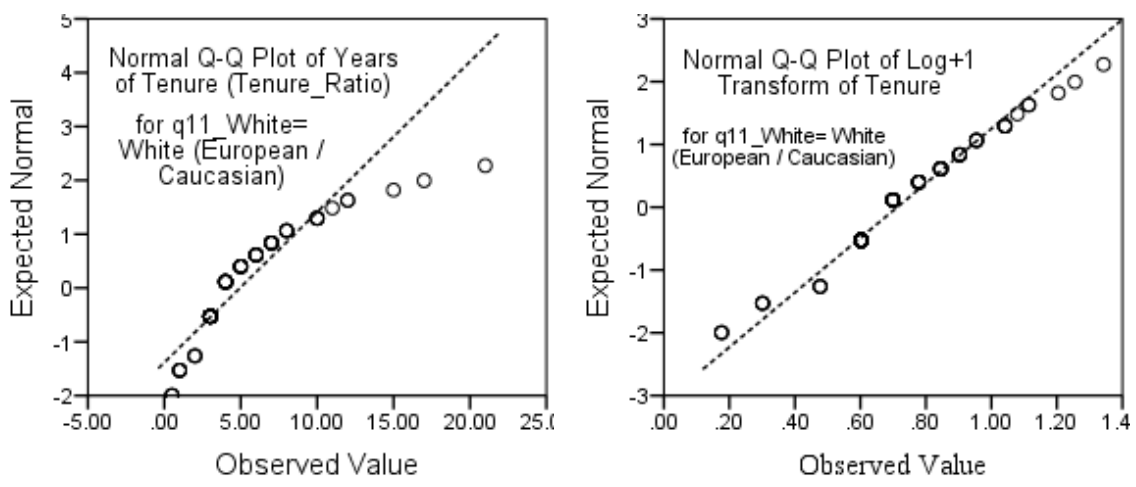


Figure 20. Q-Q Plots: Race: White and Tenure, Untransformed and Transformed.

With the six key assumptions underlying the point-biserial correlation relatively well met, the researcher used SPSS to run the point-biserial correlation procedure.

Descriptive statistics for non-white or white racial group and the transformed tenure variable are in Table 17. For the non-white racial category, mean tenure (back-transformed from the transformed tenure variable) was 4.32 years ( $SD = .225$ ), 95%CI (3.60, 5.17). For the white racial category, back-transformed mean tenure was 5.15 years ( $SD = .230$ ), 95%CI (4.60, 5.77).

Table 17

*Descriptive Statistics for Non-White or White and Transformed Tenure*

Dependent Variables	White or Non-White Racial Group	Statistics	Statistic	Std. Error		
Tenure with Transformation Applied	Non-White (Non-Euro. / Non-Cauc.)	Mean	.6350	.03861		
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.5565		
			Upper Bound	.7136		
		5% Trimmed Mean	.6356			
		Median	.6021			
		Variance	.051			
		Std. Deviation	.22515			
		Minimum	.18			
		Maximum	1.11			
		Range	.94			
		Interquartile Range	.30			
		Skewness	-.207	.403		
		Kurtosis	.301	.788		
		White (European / Caucasian)	White (European / Caucasian)	Mean	.7121	.02480
				95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.6628
Upper Bound	.7614					
5% Trimmed Mean	.7115					
Median	.6990					
Variance	.053					
Std. Deviation	.23001					
Minimum	.18					
Maximum	1.34					
Range	1.17					
Interquartile Range	.24					
Skewness	.145			.260		
Kurtosis	.591			.514		



There was a very small and statistically non-significant point-biserial correlation between Non-White or White racial grouping and the transformed tenure variable,  $r_{pb}(118) = .151, p = .099$  (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Correlations: Non-White or White and Transformed Tenure*

Variable	Statistics	Tenure with Transformation
Non-White or White	Pearson Correlation	.151
Racial Group	Sig. (2-tailed)	.099
	<i>N</i>	120

Table 19 and

Table 20 summarize the correlations found in this study.

Table 19

*Correlations: Spearman's Rho*

Variables	Statistics	Length of Tenure in Years
Highest Academic Degree	Correlation Coefficient	.110
Achieved	Sig. (2-tailed)	.232
	<i>N</i>	119
Age Group	Correlation Coefficient	.266**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003
	<i>N</i>	120
Quality of Relationship with	Correlation Coefficient	-.419**
Board (5-Point Likert Scale)	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	<i>N</i>	120

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\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 20

*Correlations: Point-Biserial*

Variable	Statistics	Tenure with Transformation
Gender:	Pearson Correlation	.079
Male or Female	Sig. (2-tailed)	.401
	<i>N</i>	116
Race:	Pearson Correlation	.151
Non-White or White	Sig. (2-tailed)	.099
	<i>N</i>	120

---

After reviewing the data from the Spearman's rho, point-bivariate, and ANOVA analyses, the researcher can address the null hypotheses for research question 3, listed below:

1. International school director gender is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
2. International school director racial group could not be assessed with one-way ANOVA because the underlying assumptions were not met. A point-biserial procedure found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation between white racial group and length of tenure ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
3. International school director highest degree earned is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is not rejected).

4. International school director age group is significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is rejected).

### Summary

Chapter 4 described the instrument return rate, findings from the data gathered by the researcher as they related to three research questions and the hypotheses for this study. For question one, *What factors influence turnover of international school directors?* the researcher determined that the written reasons for turnover (question 13, Appendix A) fell into five general categories: “Board,” “Contract,” “Opportunity,” “Retirement,” and “Environmental.” Furthermore, descriptive data seemed to indicate the quality of relationship between the international school director and the school board was possibly a factor for international school directors to leave their previous position.

For the second research question, *Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?* a Spearman’s rank-order correlation was run to assess the relationship between the directors’ quality of relationship with their boards and the directors’ length of tenure, and found a moderate, statistically significant correlation between “quality of relationship” and “length of tenure,”  $r_s(120) = -.419, p < .001$ . The negative direction of the correlation was due to coding “Very Good Relationship” as 1 and “Very Poor Relationship” as 5, so this correlation should be understood as: poorer relationships correlate with shorter tenure, and better relationships correlate with longer tenure.

For research question number three, *Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position?* a Spearman’s rank-order correlation found a very weak and statistically non-significant

correlation between highest academic degree attained and length of tenure,  $r_s(119) = .110, p = .232$ . A Spearman's rank-order correlation found a weak and statistically significant relationship between age range and length of tenure,  $r_s(120) = .266, p = .003$ . A point-biserial correlation for gender and length of tenure found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation between gender and length of tenure,  $r_{pb}(114) = .079, p = .401$ . A one-way ANOVA was unsuccessful at determining correlation between racial group and length of tenure, and a point-biserial correlation for white vs. non-white racial group and length of tenure found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation,  $r_{pb}(118) = .151, p = .099$ .

After reviewing the data from the Spearman's rho, point-bivariate, and ANOVA analyses, the researcher can address the null hypotheses for research question 3, listed below:

1. International school director gender is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
2. International school director racial group could not be assessed with one-way ANOVA because the underlying assumptions were not met. A point-biserial procedure found a very weak and statistically non-significant correlation between white racial group and length of tenure ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
3. International school director highest degree earned is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
4. International school director age group is significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is rejected).

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

Using a theoretical framework of the Decision-Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005), this study explored possible reasons for international school director tenure in previous positions. This study narrowed the focus on the relationship between school boards and international school directors, through the use of a questionnaire of international school directors from South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia.

The purpose of this study was to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors. Specifically, this study examined whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to tenure of the international director in their previous position.

#### Summary of Research Findings

Chapter 4 described the instrument return rate, findings from the data gathered by the researcher as they related to three research questions and the hypotheses for this study. For question one, *What factors influence turnover of international school directors?* the researcher determined that the written reasons for turnover (question 13, Appendix A) fell into five general categories: “Board,” “Contract,” “Opportunity,” “Retirement,” and “Environmental.” Furthermore, descriptive data seem to indicate that the quality of the relationship between the international school director and the school board is possibly a factor for international school directors to leave their previous position.

For the second research question, “Does relationship between school board members and international school directors correlate to length of tenure?” a Spearman’s rank-order correlation was run to assess the relationship between the directors’ quality of relationship with their boards and the directors’ length of tenure. Preliminary analysis showed the relationship to be monotonic, as assessed by visual inspection of a scatterplot. There was a negative correlation between “quality of relationship” and “length of tenure,”  $r_s(120) = -.419, p < .001$ .

For research question number three, “Is there a significant relationship between the age, gender, race, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position;” a Spearman’s rank-order correlation found a very weak and statistically non-significant correlation between highest academic degree attained and length of tenure,  $r_s(119) = .110, p = .232$ . A Spearman’s rank-order correlation found a weak and statistically significant relationship between age range and length of tenure,  $r_s(120) = .266, p = .003$ . A point-biserial correlation for gender and length of tenure found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation between gender and length of tenure,  $r_{pb}(114) = .079, p = .401$ . A one-way ANOVA was unsuccessful at determining correlation between racial group and length of tenure, and a point-biserial correlation for “white or non-white racial group” and length of tenure found a very small and statistically non-significant correlation,  $r_{pb}(118) = .151, p = .099$ .

After reviewing the data from the Spearman’s rho, point-bivariate, and ANOVA analyses, the researcher can address the null hypotheses for research question 3, listed below:

1. International school director gender is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is rejected).
2. International school director racial group could not be assessed with one-way ANOVA because the underlying assumptions were not met. A point-biserial procedure found a very weak and statistically non-significant correlation between white racial group and length of tenure ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
3. International school director highest degree earned is not significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is not rejected).
4. International school director age group is significantly related to tenure in their previous position ( $H_0$  is rejected).

### **Theoretical Implications**

As mentioned in the introduction, several theories are proposed to help explain the political environment within schools and their communities. Theories include the Dissatisfaction Theory of Democracy (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970), the Continuous Participation Theory (Zeigler & Jennings, 1974), and the Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005).

The Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) suggests the governance of local school boards is affected by the limitations of economic and personnel resources in local school districts. Another significant notion is the low number of citizens who actually provide input to school boards. School boards decide which actions to take from few options, and with limited resources, causing subjectivity and inconsistency in their decisions. Wirt and Kirst's (2005) model assumes educational policy-making is innately a political process that allocates value preferences thorough material (i.e., curriculum). The

democratic nature of this process is determined by the interrelationships between the political system and other subsystems of the social environment. Wirt and Kirst (2005) illustrated these links by describing how subsystems generate *inputs* of demands on and supports of the political [school] system. They suggested the school system converts these *inputs* or demands into public decisions or *outputs*, which in turn feed allocated values back into the social environment. Since school districts lack sufficient resources to meet each demand placed upon them by the community, they must choose which group's demands to act upon and which to dismiss. As a result, the school board may or may not meet the needs of many of its constituency. Their choice of which concern to address is generally dependent on whether or not the school board has a clear understanding of the major issues in their respective communities.

The Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) is the theory most likely to predict superintendent turnover may be caused by the relationship between the board and superintendent. This theory deals with the internal interactions within the school board as they debate the management of limited resources. This theory suggests that perhaps a superintendent and school board relationship could sour due to a disagreement over policy decisions and allocation of resources. The possibility of superintendent turnover caused by relationship issues (and not only board turnover) is supported more by the Decision Output theory than by either the Dissatisfaction Theory (Iannaccone & Lutz, 1970) or the Continuous Participation Theory.

This particular study did not provide findings leading to theoretical significance regarding superintendent turnover theory. However, if we were to assume that the relationship is a significant factor in international school director turnover, then one could



argue that indeed The Decision Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005) is strengthened because it contends the governance of local school boards is affected by the limitations of economic and personnel resources in local school districts. Another significant notion is the low number of citizens who actually provide input to school boards. School boards decide which actions to take from few options, and with limited resources, causing subjectivity and inconsistency in their decisions. This could suggest that local community issues have little influence on the Board and the relationship with the superintendent is more of a factor in tenure, but what is happening in the community is indeed a factor. Again, this is operating under the assumption that relationship is not a factor, which the researcher found evidence of according to this study. As indicated by the findings and descriptive data seem to indicate the quality of relationship between the international school director and the school board as a possible factor for international school directors to leave their previous position. Additionally, to further complicate this issue, international schools rarely have school boards that are elected, with only 25% of respondents in the questionnaire responding to question 4, "Was your School Board... Elected, Appointed, N/A or Other." Further research would need to be conducted specifically looking at elected boards and their relationship with their superintendent and the superintendent tenure of those communities. Furthermore, how international school boards are elected would also be a factor, because their election process would vary from what we are familiar with in the United States due to the expatriate community and the overall consistent turnover of School Boards in international communities in general.

## **Practical Implications**

There seems to be evidence that when the top administrator leaves, the entire organizational structure is affected, regardless of the professional setting (Alsbury, 2008a, 2015; Alsbury & Whitaker, 2015; Waters & Marzano, 2007). While existing studies have concluded that turnover of the top administrator often revolves around poor board/executive relations, regardless of the reason for turnover, this phenomenon may cause difficulties in recruiting and securing the next top management position. Although a school organization is in crisis, it may present a lucrative, yet arduous opportunity for the successor who is hired to solve these acute problems.

For sitting superintendents looking to move to a new school or for administrators aspiring to be a superintendent, using the findings in the research explored in this paper would allow a more analytical approach on whether or not to apply for the job. Some of the research would prove extremely valuable in regards to the turnover rate with the school board. Additionally, understanding the theoretical constructs of the rationale for superintendent turnover would help a potential candidate understand the history of the position.

As an aspiring superintendent, research around the causes of superintendent turnover would prove to be extremely valuable because it would give the incoming superintendent information about why the job was lost—a handbook of “what not to do” if you will. Moreover, providing information like this could help build and bridge relationships with the school board by creating systems that are transparent and based on the questionnaire data. Further analysis as to what exactly went wrong with the school

board and superintendent relationship could provide information on how each board member communicates and what each board member expects.

Several implications were found from the results of this study which could have a far reaching impact on current educational leaders as well as those who are aspiring to those positions. Relationship with the school board is the key. Regardless of a school leader's preparation, his/her career experience, and areas of expertise- if the superintendent cannot get along with the school board, it has been suggested that their tenure would be short (Achilles, 1997; Blumberg, 1985; Dlugosh, 1997; Fullan, 2002; Hoyle et al., 2005; Sharp, 1994). Despite the prediction that superintendent/school board relationship is critical to superintendent tenure, no previous studies directly tested that hypothesis.

It seems evident that the understanding of building a positive relationship between the international school director and school board, founded on trust and respect, is one that has a far-reaching impact on the length of tenure. Descriptive statistics from the study seem to support this claim as 43 out of 77 (56%) directors who left their previous position in four years reported a negative relationship with their previous school board.

Taking the time and effort to create a positive relationship, both in everyday contact and in those situations where the superintendent is able to participate in a board retreat or make away time, is something that most leaders know, but of which they probably just need to be reminded. The other aspect to this relationship is the importance of understanding the roles of each side. Several respondents reported in question 15 that the board micromanaged decisions and thus their relationship was "poor" or "very poor" as indicated on question 14. Understanding the role of the director and the school board

can help with the relationship between the director and the school board, which would help with the increase in tenure.

This particular study did not provide findings leading to theoretical significance regarding superintendent turnover theory. However, if we were to assume that the relationship is not a significant factor in international school director turnover, then one could argue that indeed a practical implication would be that training for school boards and international school directors should focus on improving relationships and communication between the school community and the board and superintendent together; not just necessarily between the school board and superintendent.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Data were gathered on international school directors through a questionnaire that included director gender, race, age, highest degree achieved, and tenure in their previous position of international school directors. Each respondent who completed the questionnaire was asked to respond to an open-ended question explaining why they left their last position. The data were analyzed to determine whether the relationship between the school board and the international school director is linked to tenure in their previous position. Furthermore, data were collected from respondents to see if tenure in their previous position was impacted by a variety of variables, such as: age, gender race, and highest degree achieved. One limitation may be the sample size of the international school directors. However, 155 out of 306 responses (51%) is considered adequate for the analysis methods used in this study. Another possible limitation to the study would be the collection of self-reported responses from international school directors regarding their relationship with their previous school board. No data was collected regarding the school

board viewpoint on said relationship.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As previously mentioned, only two studies to date have measured explicitly, the reasons for the turnover of international school directors (Hodgson & Chuck, 2015; Moos & Paulsen, 2014). Studies across the United States have mainly been descriptive in nature, simply presenting tenure statistics for one or more time periods (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2010; Natkin et al., 2002). Furthermore, qualitative studies generally report data from case studies, interviews, and small-scale surveys, raising concerns that the conclusions drawn from this research are not representative (Monteith & Hallums, 1989; Peterson & Fusarelli, 2005; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). There is a need for a more holistic study, similar to Alsbury (2003) with quantitative and qualitative methods, encompassing a representative percentage of superintendents across the world, from a variety of school sizes, countries, for-profit and non-profit statuses, and with a wide representation of minority and non-minority international school directors as descriptive statistics.

Additionally, further research should examine the reasons why the superintendent turns over with a more qualitative approach to fully encompass the reasons for leaving the superintendency.

In order to continue to explore the theoretical aspects of this topic, the researcher suggests further research would need to be conducted specifically looking at elected boards and their relationship with their superintendent and the superintendent tenure of those communities. Furthermore, how international school boards are elected would also be a factor, because their election process would vary from what we are familiar with in

the United States due to the expatriate community and the overall consistent turnover of School Boards in international communities in general.

Based on Figure 11, showing no respondents from four ethnicities, it is worth further investigating the role of race in employment as an international school director.

### **Summary**

This study was organized into five chapters along with cited references, the blank questionnaire and relevant appendices. The first chapter provided an overview of the research project. It included an introduction, problem statement, purpose, significance, glossary of terms and a summary. The second chapter provided a relevant, current review of the literature regarding superintendent turnover and the causes for such turnover. The third chapter explained the research methodology, research questions, procedures, the null hypotheses, and the analysis methods. The third chapter also described the scope and limitations of the study, population and sample, survey instrument and the data collection procedures and a summary. The fourth chapter presented the findings along with the analysis of the data and its interpretation, based upon quantitative testing and qualitative inquiry. Furthermore, it reported the analysis using Spearman's rho, point-biserial correlation, and a one-way ANOVA. The fifth and last chapter provided summaries, implications (both practical and theoretical), future study recommendations and conclusions. As previously mentioned, only two studies to date have measured explicitly, the reasons for the turnover of international school directors (Hodgson & Chuck, 2015; Moos & Paulsen, 2014).

Finally, as mentioned in the limitations of the study section of this chapter, no data were collected from school board members. The results would provide a unique

analysis to compare the self-reported relationship of a school board versus the self-reported relationship views of the international school director. However, this is very difficult to do in the international arena, as school board members experience frequent turnover and are difficult to track down. Consequently, no research using international school board member data is known.

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## **Appendix A: Informed Consent and Questionnaire**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **International School Director Turnover as Influenced by School Board/Director Relationship**

##### **Introduction**

Welcome, and thank you for your interest! I am a doctoral student in the Seattle Pacific University Educational Leadership program and am conducting a research study for my dissertation.

##### **Investigator**

Zakariya Palsha., who is a doctoral candidate at Seattle Pacific University in Seattle, Washington is conducting this research. Mr. Palsha can be reached at 206-868-8618 or at [palshaz@spu.edu](mailto:palshaz@spu.edu). Mr. Palsha is employed by Fawzia Sultan International School in Kuwait, but this research is solely his own and is not sponsored by his employer. Mr. Palsha is working under the faculty advisor, Dr. Tom Alsbury who can be reached at 206-378-5099 or at [alsburyt@spu.edu](mailto:alsburyt@spu.edu).

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study will be to examine the self-reported causes of turnover of international school directors. Using a theoretical framework of the Decision-Output Theory (Wirt & Kirst, 2005), this study explores possible reasons for international school director tenure in previous positions. To date, only two studies have measured explicitly, the reasons for the turnover of international school directors (Hodgson & Chuck, 2015;

Moos & Paulsen, 2014). This study narrows the focus on the relationship between school boards and international school directors, through use of a questionnaire of international school directors from South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Southeast Asia. You have been invited to take part in a research study. It will take about 20 minutes to complete. You are being invited to participate because you belong to the listserve HeadNet and are currently working as an international school director. Your participation is invaluable to this study.

### **Procedures**

Each administrator will be sent an introductory email from the investigator with a brief description of the study, the researcher, and instructions on how to access the web based questionnaire. The email will explain that the questionnaire itself is voluntary, and the anonymity of the participants will be protected. The questionnaire data will be returned to me via email, but the IP address will be masked and there is no way to identify respondents. Data will be coded numerically in excel so no to duplicate information.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

There are no known inherent risks in or discomforts in voluntarily completing this online questionnaire. A commercial online questionnaire will be used, however, despite this effort; transfer of information across the Internet is not secure and could be observed by a third party. To varying degrees, this is fundamental aspect of all Internet activity and communications. If you choose to respond to this questionnaire on a computer and/or network owned or accessible by a third party, such as your employer, then such persons may be able to view your responses. You may be able to increase your privacy protection

by using a limited access computer and by closing your browser window after completing the questionnaire.

### **Benefits**

There are no known direct benefits to completing this voluntary online questionnaire. However, there may be benefits that emerge through a greater understanding of turnover for international school directors.

### **Participation and Alternatives to Participation**

Your participation is voluntary. Your participation is important, but is voluntary. There is no penalty for not taking part, nor any benefit to taking part. Your participation is strictly for the purpose of the researcher's study, and you may decline to participate. If you do choose to participate, your responses will contribute to understanding of international school director turnover.

### **Confidentiality**

The information in the study records will be kept confidential. It is the intent of the researcher that your participation and your responses be anonymous. This means that no one will know that the information you give came from you. The researcher will make no attempt to personally identify respondents. Data will be kept securely and only available to the researcher(s) conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. The de-identified data may be used for future research, presentation, or for teaching purposes by the Principal Investigator listed above.

### **Subject Rights**

If you have questions at any time about the study or procedures (or if you

experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact the Principal Investigator Mr. Palsha who can be reached at 206-868-8618 or at palshaz@spu.edu If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the SPU Institutional Review Board Chair at 206-281-2201 or IRB@SPU.edu

### **How to Participate (Consent)**

If you wish to participate in the study and you confirm that you are 18 years of age or older, please click on the CONTINUE button below. By clicking on the CONTINUE button, you are affirming that you are at least 18 years of age and that you give your voluntary consent to participate in this study.

**Directions:** Please indicate your opinion about each of the questions below by marking one of the responses. Your answers are confidential. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer all questions honestly. If you are unsure about how to answer a question, then please choose what you feel is the best response. Please read each question carefully and respond to each of the questions.

### **International School Administrator Questionnaire**

#### **Questionnaire Page 1: Welcome**

Thank you for helping with my research, which is part of my doctoral work at Seattle Pacific University (SPU). I hope it will ultimately benefit all International Schools and administrators by providing better information for decision making.

This study investigates some realities faced by International School superintendents, directors, and administrators. Members of internet forums for International School administrators are invited to participate.

This questionnaire is completely voluntary. It has 15 questions, and most people will complete it in less than 5 minutes. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. Approximately 300 people are invited to participate. I hope to get approximately 100 completed questionnaires for statistical analysis.

Your anonymity and confidentiality are assured. The questions are about your previous position (not your current position), and no personally identifiable information is asked. SurveyMonkey.com will log the IP address you used, but I do not have access to it, and I cannot associate answers with individuals.

This study has been assigned SPU Institutional Review Board (IRB) number 161706015. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please email me: Zak Palsha, palshaz@spu.edu

Also, you may contact the SPU IRB Office -- IRB@SPU.edu -- for information about the rights of human subjects in SPU-approved research.

Thank you,  
Zak Palsha

### Questionnaire Page 2: Previous Position

We are conducting research on the state of affairs for superintendents, directors, and other top administrators at International Schools. All information will be anonymous and confidential. Please tell us a bit about your previous position.

1. In your previous position, were you an international school director/superintendent or administrator?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Was your school	<input type="checkbox"/> For Profit <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Profit
3. Did you report to a Board of Directors / Education?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No (please explain)
4. Was your School Board ... ?	<input type="checkbox"/> Elected <input type="checkbox"/> Appointed <input type="checkbox"/> N/a or Other (please explain)
5. What was the enrollment of your school?	<input type="checkbox"/> Small (500 or fewer students) <input type="checkbox"/> Medium (501 to 1500 students) <input type="checkbox"/> Large (over 1500 students)
6. Did your organization require a superintendent or director certificate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. What was your position title?	(Open text box)

### Questionnaire Page 3: Demographic Information

Please tell a bit about your demographics. All information will be anonymous and confidential.

8. Your age (select a range)	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 – 29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 – 39 <input type="checkbox"/> 40 – 49 <input type="checkbox"/> 50 – 59 <input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 69 <input type="checkbox"/> 70+
9. Your gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
10. Highest degree achieved	<input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D. / Ed. D. <input type="checkbox"/> Master's <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain)

11. Race / Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic <input type="checkbox"/> Black (African) <input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous Australian <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander <input type="checkbox"/> White (European / Caucasian)	<input type="checkbox"/> Asian <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Native American / Alaskan Native <input type="checkbox"/> Persian <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	
<b>Questionnaire Page 4: Career Moves</b> Please tell us more about your position changes.			
12. Years in previous position:	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 13 <input type="checkbox"/> 14 <input type="checkbox"/> 15 <input type="checkbox"/> 16 <input type="checkbox"/> 17 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 <input type="checkbox"/> 19 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 <input type="checkbox"/> 25 <input type="checkbox"/> 26 <input type="checkbox"/> 27 <input type="checkbox"/> 28 <input type="checkbox"/> 29 <input type="checkbox"/> 30 or more		
13. Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	(Open text box)		
<b>Questionnaire Page 5: Board</b> Please tell us about your school board / board of directors / board of education.			
14. Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on the following scale (choose one).	<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good Relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Good Relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Poor Relationship <input type="checkbox"/> Very Poor Relationship		
15. Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.	(Open text box)		
<b>Questionnaire Page 6: Thank You</b> Thank you for your time and feedback. I sincerely appreciate your support.			

## Appendix B: Categorized Reasons for Leaving the Previous Position

To generate the categorical variable that represented respondents' reason for leaving their previous position, the researcher applied an emergent theme method to the responses from open-ended question 13, "Describe your reason for leaving your previous position." In some cases, to determine categorization, the researcher also used information from Likert-scale question 14, "Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on the following scale (choose one: Very Good Relationship, Good Relationship, Neutral, Poor Relationship, Very Poor Relationship)" and open-ended question 15, "Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board." The cases are listed here.

All responses in the Q. 13 and Q. 15 columns are reproduced here verbatim, including spelling, grammatical, usage, and typographical errors.

### Board

"Reason for leaving previous position" categorized as "Board;" $n=34$			
Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
1	Needed a change / change of board	Poor Relationship	[No response]
3	multiple reasons: budget, Board	Very Poor Relationship	Most unprofessional Board I have worked with
5	Issues with ownership and board of trustees	Very Poor Relationship	We did not align philosophically
7	Personal, wanted a new country and didn't like the direction we were going	Very Poor Relationship	Board didn't listen to my advice. It was time for change. They wanted a manager and not a leader



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“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Board;” *n*=34

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Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
10	conflict with owner group	Very Poor Relationship	I would rather not say
13	Conflict with owner	Very Poor Relationship	Board micromanaged all decisions
15	Fired	Very Poor Relationship	They did not listen to my experience
17	I had a very big conflict with the managing director and he was supported by ownership	Poor Relationship	The board supported the ownership
18	board Interference	Very Poor Relationship	Promises were made to staff then not kept. I was in the position of having to face staff with re these broken promises
22	difference of opinion with board	Poor Relationship	[No response]
25	Forced to Retire	Poor Relationship	The Board of Trustees forced me to retire, stating age as a factor
27	Mission and vision took a drastic turn and I could not be that flexible.	Very Good Relationship	The top board members left, sort of politics, and that too played a part in my leaving.
28	Did not agree with shareholders; contract expired	Very Poor Relationship	Shareholders were not educators and were only after profit
29	Owner and Board of Directors conflict	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
30	Left for personal reasons related to health	Very Poor Relationship	Distinction at the board level causes my health issues
36	End of contract and BOG issues	Very Poor Relationship	Did not agree with BOG.... micromanaged too much
38	Conflict with owner and board of governors	Very Poor Relationship	Unprofessional
41	The BOArd changed and I was not offered a contract beyond my initial 3 year contract	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
42	Mutual decision to move on	Very Poor Relationship	Micromanaged by owner and board

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“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Board;” *n*=34

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
43	did not agree with stakeholders..... they have no idea about education	Poor Relationship	they were after money and I did not agree with that
46	Complex issues	Very Poor Relationship	Board astranged
55	Working for a ‘for-profit’ school was not what I expected	Very Poor Relationship	the for profit attitude got in the way
58	priorities keep shifting and there’s no vision	Very Poor Relationship	Board follows flavor of the month; does not have a Visio
59	Not a good fit	Poor Relationship	[No response]
64	Conflict of interest, the board of trustees is not a real board,	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
68	conflict with stakeholders and contract was not renewed	Neutral	[No response]
73	change of direction from stakeholders	Neutral	[No response]
83	disagreement with Board/Owner group	Very Poor Relationship	Micromanaged every decision
86	Did not meet board objectives	Poor Relationship	Board was not reasonable with their demands
91	Complicated...the school could get new direction ...but also Board relations had reached a low from which there could be no recovery	Good Relationship	As mentioned - for 15 years it was Good to Very Good at the last 2 years the relationship went little by little into the porcelain
99	Micromanagement from 2 founding trustees.	Neutral	Founders wanted a world-class program without enough funding. They had a chaotic financial aide criteria and policy that was making impossible to even break even. Over 50% of the students received financial assistance.

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“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Board;”  $n=34$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
103	My contract was not renewed by the Board.	Poor Relationship	My previous school’s board structure and governing bylaws was seriously flawed, resulting in great turnover and personal-interest board member agendas.
105	Unhappy and dysfunctional school	Neutral	[No response]
111	Board of Owners broke verbal contract agreement.	Good Relationship	No other comment

**Environmental**

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“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Environmental;”  $n=28$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
4	Fours years in Saudi was enough	Good Relationship	[No response]
6	Needed a change	Good Relationship	None
11	Personal reasons	Neutral	[No response]
12	It was interim position	Good Relationship	[No response]
14	time for a change, personal	Poor Relationship	It was good I left
19	Needed a change.... 5 years in Nigeria is a long time	Good Relationship	There were no members from the original board that hired me left when I left after 5 years. I got along with the board members professionally but that was it.
21	I would rather not say	Very Poor Relationship	They were very unprofessional
23	Time to move on	Very Good Relationship	[No response]

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Environmental;”  $n=28$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
33	School closed	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
44	Time for a change, I did what I could for the organization	Neutral	None
50	Moved country	Good Relationship	[No response]
51	Relocation	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
63	Personal reasons	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
69	moved to a warmer climate	Good Relationship	[No response]
71	my kids graduated so I wanted to move	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
74	War stricken country	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
77	Changed schools	Good Relationship	[No response]
80	pursue my PHD	Neutral	[No response]
87	4 years in Saudi is long enough	Good Relationship	[No response]
89	Personal	Poor Relationship	just wasn't a pleasant post
92	My father died, needed to help my mother	Very Good Relationship	Best Board I ever worked with!
95	Enough time there, felt I'd done what I wanted. Also significant was the age of my kids (transitioning to middle school)	Very Good Relationship	In five years, I had two very difficult years with the Board one okay and two very good.
102	Wanted a new challenge.	Neutral	[No response]

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Environmental;”  $n=28$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
108	After four years at my previous school, I had achieved the goals (new building project) and felt it was time to move on to a new school and fresh goals	Good Relationship	The decision to leave my previous school after four years was mine. I notified the board one year in advance, and was part of the selection and transition processes for the new Director
110	family reasons	Very Good Relationship	My relationship with the board as a whole was extremely positive, though I had challenges with one board member, which made working with the whole board difficult at times
113	Relocation	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
114	The school enrollment was too low to sustain the school.	Very Good Relationship	My relationship with Board members at my previous position was very professional. Board members were supportive and understanding. They helped when needed and respected the Director’s responsibilities without interfering.
115	Local circumstances made it too unstable and dangerous to continue	Good Relationship	The Board was also unstable, there was a high turnover rate for ex-pats in the country

### Opportunity

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Opportunity;”  $n=24$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
8	Went to a bigger school	Neutral	[No response]

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Opportunity;”  $n=24$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
16	Better position	Very Good Relationship	No issues with board
26	Better opportunity	Neutral	[No response]
45	Finish contract and more money in new job	Poor Relationship	[No response]
52	Moved to another school	Neutral	[No response]
56	bigger school	Good Relationship	[No response]
57	New job better for me	Neutral	[No response]
75	Promoted to Director	Good Relationship	[No response]
78	Assigned to lead a new school	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
79	I got a promotion to be a director within the same school	Neutral	[No response]
82	promotion to Director	Neutral	[No response]
84	Moved to better opportunity for me	Good Relationship	[No response]
85	Moved countries; bigger school	Good Relationship	No issues
88	Opportunity here in Doha	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
93	Carreer move	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
94	New challenges	Good Relationship	[No response]
96	Voluntary. Looking for new overseas adventures	Very Good Relationship	No influence on my leaving
97	Relocation to a new school, city and country	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
101	More responsibility	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
104	I was promoted to Director General	Good Relationship	[No response]
106	to become a school director	Neutral	[No response]

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Opportunity;”  $n=24$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
116	Professional advancement; geographic selection	Very Good Relationship	My previous board had already extended an additional year contract to me in hopes that I would continue there.
118	To take another position in the USA	Very Good Relationship	Previous position I stayed 5 years - the Board was wonderful!
119	New opportunities and growth	Good Relationship	[No response]

### Contract

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Contract;”  $n=20$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving ...	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
2	contract expired	Good Relationship	[No response]
9	End of fixed contract.	Very Good Relationship	Contract previous to the one reported on here: 6 years, good relationship with the board. Prior to that, 2 years - worked for an owner, no board.
32	Contract expired	Poor Relationship	[No response]
34	Contact expired	Poor Relationship	Did not align with BOT
35	contract ended	Poor Relationship	[No response]
37	Contract	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
39	completion of initial contract	Poor Relationship	Focussed on the wrong things, we disagreed on key principles
40	completed contract	Poor Relationship	We did not see eye to eye on critical issues
48	contract ended	Poor Relationship	[No response]
53	Contract expired	Poor Relationship	[No response]
54	Completed contract	Poor Relationship	Wasn't a good match for me
61	Done with contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Contract;” *n*=20

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving ...	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
62	Expiration of contract	Poor Relationship	board views and my views differed
65	Contract expired	Poor Relationship	board was always split on decisions, hard to move forward
66	Completed my contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
67	Expiration of my initial contract, mutually agreed not to renew	Poor Relationship	Key issues we disagreed on, for example budget and class size
76	I change jobs every 3 years	Neutral	[No response]
81	Initial contract completed	Poor Relationship	[No response]
120	End of contract	Very Good Relationship	[No response]
121	It was a one year interim position	Very Good Relationship	[No response]

### Retirement

“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Retirement;” *n*=12

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
20	Retired, now working as an interim HoS	Good Relationship	[No response]
24	Retired	Neutral	[No response]
31	Retired	Good Relationship	[No response]
47	Retired	Good Relationship	[No response]
49	Retired	Very Good Relationship	Great working relationship
60	Retired	Neutral	[No response]
72	Retiring	Good Relationship	[No response]



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“Reason for leaving previous position” categorized as “Retirement;”  $n=12$

Case ID	Q. 13: Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.	Q. 14: Please rate your relationship with your previous school board ...	Q. 15: Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.
90	Retirement	Very Good Relationship	Generally, I have had over 30 years of success with school boards, but there are those years when the board mix is not good or the leadership strong. Elected boards are a roll of the dice. You have to work with what you get.
98	Retiring	Good Relationship	I worked with appointed and elected Boards; Appointed are far more rational, objective and pleasant.
109	Retirement.	Good Relationship	Board turnover was normal for a school with a Board consisting of members elected from an expatriate, internationally mobile community: Most members fulfilled their two-year terms; a few stayed three or more years. The Board Chair, Board, and Director normally worked closely and well in encouraging specific parents to be nominated and in developing and revising Board-Director agreements (annually) on governance.
112	retirement	Very Good Relationship	healthy international school community with 50+ nationalities
117	Retirement	Poor Relationship	[No response]

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### **Appendix C: Cases with evidence of conflict with board as a factor in job turnover**

Of 118 qualified respondents, 58 (49%) indicated there had been a difficult relationship or conflict with their board of education/board of directors/board of governors/board of trustees in their answers to questionnaire questions 13, 14, and/or 15.

Question 13 was “Please describe your reason for leaving your previous position.” An open-ended text box was provided. The researcher used an emergent theme process to analyze the responses.

Question 14 was “Please rate your relationship with your previous school board on the following scale (choose one).” A 5-level Likert-type scale was provided, with choices of: Very Good Relationship, Good Relationship, Neutral, Poor Relationship, Very Poor Relationship.

Question 15 was “Please add any additional information regarding your previous turnover and the relationship with the board.” It provided an open-ended text box. Relatively few respondents answered question 15.

All responses in the Q. 13 and Q. 15 columns are reproduced here verbatim, including spelling, grammatical, usage, and typographical errors.

#### **3 of 3 answers. Q. 13, *Reason for Leaving*, Q. 14, *Relationship with Board*, and Q. 15, *Additional Information*, at least partly implicate Board and/or Relationship.**

3 of 3 answers indicating conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=19$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
3	multiple reasons: budget, Board	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Most unprofessional Board I have worked with

3 of 3 answers indicating conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=19$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
5	Issues with ownership and board of trustees	Board	Very Poor Relationship	We did not align philosophically
7	Personal, wanted a new country and didn't like the direction we were going	Board, Environmental	Very Poor Relationship	Board didn't listen to my advice. It was time for change. They wanted a manager and not a leader
13	Conflict with owner	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Board micromanaged all decisions
15	Fired	Board	Very Poor Relationship	They did not listen to my experience
17	I had a very big conflict with the managing director and he was supported by ownership	Board	Poor Relationship	The board supported the ownership
18	board Interference	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Promises were made to staff then not kept. I was in the position of having to face staff with re these broken promises
25	Forced to Retire	Board, Retirement	Poor Relationship	The Board of Trustees forced me to retire, stating age as a factor
28	Did not agree with shareholders; contract expired	Board, Contract	Very Poor Relationship	Shareholders were not educators and were only after profit
36	End of contract and BOG issues	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Did not agree with BOG.... micromanaged too much
38	Conflict with owner and board of governors	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Unprofessional
42	Mutual decision to move on	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Micromanaged by owner and board
43	did not agree with stakeholders..... they have no idea about education	Board	Poor Relationship	they were after money and I did not agree with that
46	Complex issues	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Board astranged

3 of 3 answers indicating conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=19$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
58	priorities keep shifting and there's no vision	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Board follows flavor of the month; does not have a Visio
67	Expiration of my initial contract, mutually agreed not to renew	Board, Contract	Poor Relationship	Key issues we disagreed on, for example budget and class size
83	disagreement with Board/Owner group	Board	Very Poor Relationship	Micromanaged every decision
86	Did not meet board objectives	Board	Poor Relationship	Board was not reasonable with their demands
103	My contract was not renewed by the Board.	Board, Contract	Poor Relationship	My previous school's board structure and governing bylaws was seriously flawed, resulting in great turnover and personal-interest board member agendas.

**2 of 3 answers. Question 13, Reason for Leaving, and Question 14, Relationship with Board, at least partly implicate Board and/or Relationship.**

2 of 3 answers (Q. 13, Q. 14) show conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=7$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
1	Needed a change / change of board	Board, Environmental	Poor Relationship	[No response]
10	conflict with owner group	Board	Very Poor Relationship	I would rather not say
22	difference of opinion with board	Board	Poor Relationship	[No response]
29	Owner and Board of Directors conflict	Board	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]

2 of 3 answers (Q. 13, Q. 14) show conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=7$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
41	The BOArD changed and I was not offered a contract beyond my initial 3 year contract	Board, Contract	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
55	Working for a 'for-profit' school was not what I expected	Board, Environmental	Very Poor Relationship	the for profit attitude got in the way
64	Conflict of interest, the board of trustees is not a real board,	Board	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]

**2 of 3 answers. Question 13, Reason for Leaving, and Question 15, Additional Information, at least partly implicate Board and/or Relationship.**

2 of 3 answers (Q. 13, Q. 15) show conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=3$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
27	Mission and vision took a drastic turn and I could not be that flexible.	Board	Very Good Relationship	The top board members left, sort of politics, and that too played a part in my leaving.
91	Complicated...the school could get new direction ...but also Board relations had reached a low from which there could be no recovery	Board	Good Relationship	As mentioned - for 15 years it was Good to Very Good at the last 2 years the relationship went little by little into the porcelain
99	Micromanagement from 2 founding trustees.	Board	Neutral	Founders wanted a world-class program without enough funding. They had a chaotic financial aide criteria and policy that was making impossible to even break even. Over 50% of the students received financial assistance.

**2 of 3 answers. Question 14, Relationship with Board, and Question 15, Additional Information, at least partly implicate Board and/or Relationship.**

2 of 3 answers (Q. 14, Q. 15) show conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=7$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
21	I would rather not say	Environmental	Very Poor Relationship	They were very unprofessional
30	Left for personal reasons related to health	Environmental, Board	Very Poor Relationship	Distinction at the board level causes my health issues
34	Contact expired	Contract	Poor Relationship	Did not align with BOT
39	completion of initial contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	Focussed on the wrong things, we disagreed on key principles
40	completed contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	We did not see eye to eye on critical issues
62	Expiration of contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	board views and my views differed
65	Contract expired	Contract	Poor Relationship	board was always split on decisions, hard to move forward

**1 of 3 answers. Question 13, Reason for Leaving, at least partly implicates Board and/or Relationship.**

1 of 3 answers (Q. 13) shows conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=3$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
68	conflict with stakeholders and contract was not renewed	Board	Neutral	[No response]
73	change of direction from stakeholders	Board	Neutral	[No response]
111	Board of Owners broke verbal contract agreement.	Board	Good Relationship	No other comment

**1 of 3 answers. Question 14, Relationship, implicates Board and/or Relationship.**

1 of 3 answers (Q. 14) shows conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=15$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
14	time for a change, personal	Environmental	Poor Relationship	It was good I left
32	Contract expired	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
35	contract ended	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
37	Contract	Contract	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
45	Finish contract and more money in new job	Opportunity	Poor Relationship	[No response]
48	contract ended	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
53	Contract expired	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
54	Completed contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	Wasn't a good match for me
59	Not a good fit	Environmental	Poor Relationship	[No response]
61	Done with contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
63	Personal reasons	Environmental	Very Poor Relationship	[No response]
66	Completed my contract	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
81	Initial contract completed	Contract	Poor Relationship	[No response]
89	Personal	Environmental	Poor Relationship	just wasn't a pleasant post
117	Retirement	Retirement	Poor Relationship	[No response]

**1 of 3 answers. Question 15, Additional Information, at least partly implicates**

**Board and/or Relationship.**

1 of 3 answers (Q. 15) shows conflict or relationship as a factor of turnover;  $n=4$

Case ID	Q. 13: Reason for Leaving	Reason Category	Q. 14: Relationship	Q. 15: Additional Information
19	Needed a change.... 5 years in Nigeria is a long time	Environmental	Good Relationship	There were no members from the original board that hired me left when I left after 5 years. I got along with the board members professionally but that was it.
95	Enough time there, felt I'd done what I wanted. Also significant was the age of my kids (transitioning to middle school)	Environmental	Very Good Relationship	In five years, I had two very difficult years with the Board one okay and two very good.
110	family reasons	Environmental	Very Good Relationship	My relationship with the board as a whole was extremely positive, though I had challenges with one board member, which made working with the whole board difficult at times
115	Local circumstances made it too unstable and dangerous to continue	Environmental	Good Relationship	The Board was also unstable, there was a high turnover rate for ex-pats in the country