Turnover of appointed county administrators in large American counties

Robert John Tekniepe

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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TURNOVER OF APPOINTED COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS
IN LARGE AMERICAN COUNTIES

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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TURNOVER OF APPOINTED COUNTY ADMINISTRATORS
IN LARGE AMERICAN COUNTIES

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Turnover of Appointed County Administrators in Large American Counties

by

Robert John Tekniepe

Dr. Christopher Stream, Examination Committee Chair
Professor of Public Administration
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Researchers have suggested that American counties are emerging as leaders in local governance. This is mainly attributed to the fact that counties are being called upon to provide a whole host of new services to an ever-growing suburban and an incorporated areas population. County administrators are known to play a critical role in the provision of these services, however, researchers know very little about the factors contributing to county administrator turnover. Several empirical analyses have explored tenure and turnover patterns of top-level government executives, yet these analyses have principally focused on local governments, e.g., municipalities.

This paper is intended to extend existing research by examining how factors contributing to government performance, political uncertainty, and community instability affect appointed county administrator turnover in large American counties. This paper also attempts to determine whether an appointed administrator/managers' level of...
education, tenure, race and gender had statistically significant predictive or explanatory strength with regards to turnover.

This study incorporates a mixed-methods strategy of analysis. The quantitative component employs a dual-model (2-stage) approach that allowed for additional comparative analysis. The qualitative component incorporates interviews with present and past appointed county administrators aimed at guiding in the selection of explanatory variables contained in the research models, and development of the specific research questions and related hypotheses.

The quantitative study sample consists of data collected on the 32 largest U.S. counties with council-manager forms of government (based on 1990 U.S. Census data). The models were estimated using a pooled cross-sectional panel beginning with year 1992 and ending with year 2005. The unit of analysis was appointed county administrators within large American counties. The Cox proportional regression procedure, a form of duration analysis was employed to determine casual-effect.

The findings of this research study suggest that certain political uncertainty, community instability, fiscal performance and select administrator profile factors influence appointed county administrator general turnover. The results of this study also suggest that certain political uncertainty, fiscal performance and community instability factors influence appointed county administrator push-induced departures, and certain fiscal performance, community instability and select administrator profile factors influence appointed county administrator pull-induced departures.
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A special thanks is due to the present and past county managers who graciously provided their time to be interviewed for this study, and insight into the reasons why
county managers depart their positions. Unfortunately these four individuals must remain anonymous.

Lastly and most importantly, I thank my wife Rosario who provided encouragement and understanding throughout my seemingly endless academic pursuit. She has consistently inspired me to reach for my goals while voluntarily putting her life on “hold.” Without her continuous support and reassurance, this dissertation would not have been possible.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Prologue

Given the considerable impact that appointed county administrator turnover could have on county governments, it is startling to find that so little research has been performed in this area. Hambrick and Mason (1984) suggested that successful organizational performance is a direct reflection on the decisions made by the organization’s top executive. Brady and Helmich (1984) echoed this notion and furthered the theory that top-executive turnover can have traumatic effects on any organization. While the greatest amount of research on appointed top-executive turnover has been performed in the private sector, research in the public sector has been somewhat limited. This is especially true in the case of American counties. Therefore, it is essential that we understand the dynamics and factors that contribute to appointed administrator career movement and turnover in county governments.

A review of the literature offered an abundance of theoretical perspectives on top-executive career movement. Chapter 2 contains a discussion of the important components and limitations of the most frequently cited theories of executive career movement and acts as a platform for the selection of the best-suited theory for this research study, i.e., push and pull motivation theory.
Research Study Overview

This research study, therefore, is a culmination of interests regarding appointed county administrator turnover in large American counties couched in push and pull motivation theory.¹ Feiock, Clingermayer, Stream, McCabe, and Ahmed (2001) described push factors as characteristics of an administrator’s present state that force them to search for and locate a position elsewhere. These factors include internal conflict between commission or council members, leadership uncertainty, and general hostility in the workplace. Pull factors on the other hand refer to opportunities for professional, financial, or personal advancement in other positions or organizations.

To better understand how the theoretical viewpoint of push and pull motivation theory could increase the ability to explain county administrator turnover, explanatory variables of previously developed models that examined the push and pull factors, and their resultant effects on top municipality executive turnover, were broadly applied to the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government as defined by the National Association of Counties (2006). Subsequently, this sample served as the basis for the research contained in this study.

Important to note is that an appointed county administrator’s job title in the Commission-Administrator form of government may vary from county to county, e.g., county administrator, county manager, chief executive, chief operating officer, etc. Therefore, for purposes of ease and uniformity, the appointed administrator will simply

¹ The origin of push and pull motivation theory can be traced as far back as the late 1800s (see Ravenstein, 1885, 1889). Push and pull motivation theory has long been used to describe the dynamic process of an individual’s psychological factors such as needs, level of satisfaction and goals, and the relationship between these factors and an individual’s motivation to move from locale to locale, or workplace to workplace.
be referred to as the “administrator” from this point on in this research study. Also, the National Association of Counties’ definition of the Commission-Administrator form of government includes a derivative form of government called Commission-Manager (Chapter 3 discusses this derivative form of government in detail). Again, for purposes of ease and uniformity both forms of government will simply be referred to as the “Commission-Administrator form of government” throughout this research study. The result of this research study was a series of quantitative analyses, supported by a qualitative component based on a cross sampling of present and past county administrators.

The application and use of push and pull motivation theory over other career movement theories to county administrator turnover was alluring because of the limited research that had been conducted in this domain. Although important progress has been made over the past century “in advancing our knowledge base about the role, functions, and activity of American county governments,” there are still significant “voids still left in our knowledge base about the American county” (Benton, 2003, p. 471). This research study was intended to fill one such void. By extending the application of push and pull motivation theory to large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government, and by demonstrating that similar methods used to explain top municipality turnover could similarly be applied to appointed county administrator turnover, theory building and proposition testing within the studies of American counties could be advanced.

The application and limitations of the General and Push/Pull models of county administrator turnover contained in this research study are certainly noted. For example,
it is unsure whether the models contained in this research study would yield similar results in American counties with mid-size or small populations.

Regardless of the limitations, the resulting analyses in this research study are an important first step in understanding administrator turnover in American counties. More specifically, the analyses provide a starting point for development and specification of a single plausible model that might identify and test basic assumptions of county administrator turnover in American counties of varying sizes.

Research Problem

A review of literature has shown that top-executive turnover has profound effects on organizational policy, programs and fiscal commitments. One can therefore theorize that county administrator turnover would have similar effects on county policy, programs, and fiscal commitments. Although several empirical studies have explored the factors that account for the length of top-executive tenures in the public sector (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Clingermayer, Feiock, & Stream, 2003; Feiock et al., 2001; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe, Feiock, Clingermayer & Stream, 2006; Renner, 1990; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991), a review of the literature suggested no empirical research has been undertaken that specifically explore the factors that account for turnover of appointed county administrators.

Benton (2003, p. 473) stated that, "somewhat forgotten has been the emergence of counties as leaders in local governance and as providers of a whole host of new services to an ever-growing suburban and even incorporated area population." It follows, therefore, that county administrators should play a critical role in the provision of these
services as well. We know, however, little about factors that contribute to county administrator turnover.

Purpose of the Research Study

There were three purposes of this research study. The first purpose was an attempt to explain turnover in appointed county administrators in large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government by using push and pull motivation theory. An examination would be made of how push and pull factors within the domains of political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, and community instability (as well as select administrator profile measurements) impact turnover of county administrators.

The second purpose of this research study was to determine whether previous methods used to explain top municipality executive turnover could also be applied to explain appointed county administrator turnover.

The third purpose of this research study was to provide a starting point for development and specification of a single plausible model that could explain appointed county government administrator turnover in American counties of varying populations.

While counties with large populations have distinct characteristics that set them aside from mid-sized and small counties, the approach to examine large American counties may prove extensible to analyses of administrator turnover in American counties with lesser populations.
Research Approach

This research study attempted to illustrate the applicability of previously developed models that examined city manager turnover in municipalities to administrator turnover in large American counties. The research study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics in a quantitative research approach. Model building and specification were assisted, based on interviews of a cross-sectional sampling of present and past county administrators thought to be familiar with the factors that may lead to county administrator turnover.

As previously mentioned, this research study was broadly based on study methods of turnover among appointed top municipality executives that explored the push and pull factors related to political conflict, as well as fiscal stress and specific community characteristics (Feiock et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2006). In previous studies, the researchers employed a dependent variable that was a dichotomous measure of top municipality executive turnover and covariates hypothesized to influence and mediate the dependent variable. The covariates included measures of turnover among elected commission members, community characteristics that measured a community’s level of instability, and factors that gauge government fiscal conditions, e.g., bond ratings.

The first theoretical model developed and tested in this research study was the General Model of county administrator turnover. Development of the General Model first began by incorporating similar measurements of political uncertainty and community characteristics previously used in the study of top municipality executive turnover. Next, government fiscal performance and county administrator profile measurements were added. By including government fiscal performance and county administrator profile
measurements, it was thought the overall explanatory powers of the General Model could be enhanced. Figure 1-1 provides an illustration of the General Model of county administrator turnover.

![Figure 1-1. General Model of county administrator turnover.](image)

In the General Model it was theorized that positive correlations existed between factors that contribute to greater political uncertainty, poorer governmental fiscal performance, and county administrator turnover. Additionally, it was theorized that positive correlations existed between administrator profiles (higher educational levels, female gender, and non-white race) while negative correlations existed between administrator profiles (increased tenure and internal recruitments) and county
administrator turnover. The general research questions and related hypotheses to be addressed by the General Model are contained in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1

*General Model Research Questions and Related Hypotheses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q1: What is the relationship between measurements of political uncertainty and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H1: A positive correlation exists between higher levels of political uncertainty within the commission and county administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: What is the relationship between measurements of community instability and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H3: A positive correlation exists between increased community instability and county administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: What is the relationship between county administrator profile measurements and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H4: A positive correlation exists between higher levels of education, non-white race and female gender, while a negative correlation exists between increased tenure and internal recruitments and county administrator turnover.</td>
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To further study the cause-and-effect relationship between political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, community instability, county administrator profile measurements and county administrator turnover, a Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover was developed. The Push/Pull Model differed from the General Model such that it further examined the push and the pull properties of 15 explanatory variables deemed appropriate on county administrator turnover. In the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover, it was theorized that factors contributing to political uncertainty, poor governmental fiscal performance, community instability, and select

---

2 In the Push/Pull Model the dependent variable (turnover) was treated as a dichotomous variable that further classified administrators' departures as push-induced or pull-induced.
administrator profile characteristics affect “coerced” or “involuntary” county administrator turnover (push-induced) as well as “voluntary” turnover (pull-induced). Figure 1-2 provides an illustration of the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover.

![Figure 1-2. Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover.](image)

The general research questions and related hypotheses of the Push/Pull Model differ from the General Model in the sense that they provided a second stage, or additional window of opportunity to further explore the relationships of the push and pull factors, and the grounds or reasons for which an appointed county administrator chose to leave.
office. The general research questions and related hypotheses to be addressed by the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover are provided in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q1: What are the push/pull relationships between measurements of political uncertainty and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H1: The greater the political uncertainty within the commission, the more likely the county administrator will be pushed out of office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What are the push/pull relationships between measurements of governmental fiscal performance and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H2: Poor governmental fiscal performance is more likely to lead to a county administrator being pushed out of office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: What are the push/pull relationships between measurements of community instability and county administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H3: The greater the instability within the community, the more likely the county administrator will be pushed out of office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: What are push/pull relationships between county administrator profile measurements and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H4: Administrator profiles (higher educations, longer tenures) have a pull affect on administrator turnover.</td>
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The time dimension of the research approach was retrospective. In other words, 14 years worth of observations of the dependent variable and covariates were collected and compiled, beginning with year 1992 and ending with year 2005. A pooled cross-sectional time-series was considered essential to ensure a rich description of the sampled counties contained within this research study.

The research observations were limited to data for the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government. Counties were selected based on April 1, 1990, population estimates obtained from the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census. The limitation of using the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government arose due to the fact that accurate data on American counties with mid-sized and small populations were sparse and not easily obtainable prior
to year 1992. Furthermore, it was thought that using inaccurate data of mid-sized and small American counties could have a negative impact on the validity of this research study.

Also included in this study were the solicited responses from a cross-sectional sampling of present and past county administrators. By including this qualitative component in the research study, it was felt that “first hand” experiences would add to model construction and hypotheses building, and subsequently support the study’s quantitative results. Table 1-3 illustrates the cross-sectional sampling strategy used in the selection of present and past county administrators for inclusion into the qualitative portion of this research study.

Table 1-3

Qualitative Research Sampling Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of individuals to be interviewed</th>
<th>Reason for county administrator leaving office</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pushed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>X</td>
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Structure of the Research Study

In this chapter, the research study problem, purpose of the study, and general research approach (both quantitative and qualitative) were provided.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature important to the topic of this research study, beginning with assessment of the most important theoretical perspectives on career development and movement. Previous research of private and public executive turnover
is then examined. Chapter 2 continues with an appraisal of factors that are thought to contribute to county administrator turnover. The purpose of this examination was to provide a framework for the formulation of "specific" research study questions and hypotheses to be tested in Chapters 5 and 6.

In Chapter 3, a brief overview of the origin and history of American counties is presented, followed by a discussion of the three basic forms of county governments, i.e., Commission, Commission-Executive, and Commission-Administrator/Manager forms of government. Chapter 3 then explores the principal role of county governments, and finishes by examining the primary roles and functions of county administrators.

A discussion of the conceptual background of the methodology used in this research study is presented in Chapter 4. Next, the specific research questions and related hypotheses for both the General Model and Push/Pull Model are outlined, and comprehensive models of county administrator turnover are offered.

Chapter 5 provides a thorough description of the research study design, i.e., unit of analysis, target population, sample, and issues regarding validity. The chapter continues with a discussion of the research model, relational measures, data collection, data sources, and coding procedures for both the dependent variable and covariates, and cross-sectional interviews. Next, the chapter presents the methods of analysis used to investigate the cause-effect relationships between the dependent variable and covariates including statistical software selection, treatment of missing data and issues regarding multicollinearity. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion of the quantitative procedures important to the Cox proportional regression procedure and the qualitative research
methodology used in the supplemental cross-sectional interviews of present and past-appointed county administrators.

Chapter 6 provides the findings of the General Model analyses. This examination includes both descriptive data analyses and a form of duration analysis, i.e., the Cox proportional hazards regression procedure.

Chapter 7 in turn, provides the findings of Push/Pull Model analyses by also using descriptive data analyses and the Cox proportional hazards regression procedure.

Chapter 8 summarizes the results of the General and Push/Pull Model analyses and draws important conclusions. The chapter continues by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of this research study, including the contributions and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes by outlining future research considered to be important for the continuation of this area of study.

A chapter outline of this research study and important components of each is contained in Figure 1-3.
Figure 1-3. General outline of the research study.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Perspectives on Career Development and Movement

Career movement is a way of describing how individuals move from one position to another. Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence (1989) described career as being the unfolding sequence of events of an individual’s work experience over the course of time. Schein (1992) portrayed career as “a set of occupational experiences and roles that make up a person’s work life” (p. 207).

Traditionally, career movement has been viewed as vertical. That is, individuals generally aspire to “climb up” an organization’s hierarchy. Career movement has also been viewed from a time dimension where individuals develop their skills and become more competitive over time; and from a geographical and physical dimension where individuals move from one organization to another, or from one position to another within the existing organization (Olsson, 2003). Arthur and Rousseau (1996) termed the geographical dimension as boundaryless careers because it viewed individuals moving across boundaries of separate employers. Arthur and Rousseau also viewed the physical dimension as organizational careers, or those that described individuals going vertical.
A review of the literature identified three broad groups of career development and movement theories. Those groups are (a) structural theories that focus on identifying an individual’s characteristics and work-related tasks, (b) developmental theories that center on individual’s career development over time, and (c) motivational theories that focus on what motivates an individual to seek career fulfillment. Reviewed below are the principal assumptions and limitations of major theories within each group, and how they apply to this research study.

**Structural Theories**

**Trait and Factor Theory**

The first career choice theory to be expounded on was trait and factor theory developed by Frank Parsons in the early 1900s. Parsons (1909) put forth the posit that the best possible career choices required adherence to three basic steps, i.e., self knowledge, knowledge of the work environment, and the matching of an individual’s personal characteristics with the requirements of the position.

In the first step, Parsons emphasized the importance of assessing an individual’s characteristics (abilities, interests, values, and needs), which he termed “traits.” Parsons keyed abilities as what an individual was capable of doing or potentially could do in the future, while characterizing interests as an individual’s preference of activities deemed important for his or her career. Parsons viewed value and needs as a set of cognitive principles that guide an individual’s behavior and act as a benchmark to judge the behavior of others.

The second step in Parsons’ theory related to the “factor” aspect. Sharf (1997) described this step as the need for acquiring three aspects of the work environment, i.e.,
types of occupational information, type of classification systems, and trait and factor requirements. The final step placed importance in the “match” of an individual’s personal assessment to the job characteristics.

Klein and Wiener (1977) summarized trait and factor theory as (a) individuals have a measurable set of traits; (b) occupations require specific individual’s traits for success; (c) the matching of an individual’s unique traits and an occupation’s requirements is accomplishable and for the most part straightforward; and (d) the closer the match between an individual’s traits and an occupation’s requirements, the higher the likelihood of success.

While trait and factor theory can be used to assist in career development, it has limited use in explaining top public executive turnover. As Gothard and Mignot (1999) suggested, the theory’s underlying value is to assist individuals in the field of career counseling and guidance by providing the basic principles of properly matching individuals to occupations (job and career selection).

Work Adjustment Theory

Work adjustment theory first appeared in the literature in 1964 (Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1964). Later versions of work adjustment theory were published by Lofquist and Dawis (1969) and Dawis and Lofquist (1984). The theory’s principal assumption is that an individual “seeks to achieve and to maintain correspondence with the environment. As individuals respond to their environment, their responding becomes associated with reinforcers in the environment” (Stemple, 2004, p. 14). Job reinforcers may include, but are not limited to, achievement, advancement, authority, and benefits.
Dawis et al. (1964) recapitulated work adjustment theory by suggesting that (a) work can be viewed as the interaction between an individual and their work environment; (b) an individual brings specific skills to the work environment so as to perform certain required tasks; (c) a mutually acceptable exchange of compensation exists between the individual and work environment, e.g., financial remuneration and safe work environment; (d) to maintain the relationship between both the individual and the work environment, each party must continue to meet each other’s requirements (Dawis et al. termed this correspondence); (e) to achieve and maintain correspondence, both parties must be satisfied with the relationship (Dawis et al. termed this work adjustment); and (f) tenure is the primary measurement of satisfaction or “satisfactoriness.”

In summary, work adjustment theory’s principal usefulness is in its application to explore aspects of an individual’s job satisfaction and success. In line with this concept, the theory provides an excellent framework for the career-counseling field to match client job satisfaction to amenable work environments. Its application to the study of top public executive succession, however, is thought to be problematic because it does not address or attempt to identify the specific factors that lead to top public executive turnover.

**Vocational Choice Theory**

Holland (1973) offered a developmental process to career development, which has been termed *vocational choice theory*, based upon an individual’s life history of responding and adjusting to a work environment’s demands. Similar to trait and factor theory, Holland posited that individuals search for work environments that match their personality type.
In Holland's (1997) theory, four assumptions exist. First, "In culture, most persons can be categorized as one of six personality types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional" (p. 2). Second, "There are six kinds of environments: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional" (p. 3). Third, "People search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles" (p. 4). Fourth, an individual's behavior is "determined by an interaction between personality and environment" (p. 4). Holland further theorized that successful career choices depended solely on how well an individual knows themselves, their personality types and environments, and that intelligence, gender and social class can influence an individual's career choice.

Vocational choice theory has been extensively used as a theoretical base for the development of computerized career choice tests. The theory has also provided a consistent organizational structure for assisting individuals in the career-counseling field match individuals to the proper work environment. Although vocational choice theory has proven results in the career-counseling field, it is thought to have limited application in explaining top public executive turnover.

Developmental Theories

Social Learning Theory

Krumboltz (1979) introduced the social learning theory in an attempt to streamline the process of career choice and counseling. The theory, which is broadly based on the general social leaning theory of behavior developed by Bandura (1979), suggested that an individual's life events are important factors in determining career choices. Following
this logic, Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990) further proposed that an individual’s “educational and occupational preferences represent self-observation generalizations about interests, values, and task approach skills that have arisen as a result of various learning experiences” (p. 168), or life events.

According to Mitchell and Krumboltz (1990), career decision-making is predicated on four important factors. The first factor was termed *genetic endowments and special abilities*, which included qualities that could inhibit an individual’s career opportunities, e.g., ethnicity, gender, physical characteristics, and ability to learn from experiences. The second factor, or *environmental conditions and events*, encompasses aspects that are generally out of an individual’s control, e.g., social, cultural, political and economic forces. The third factor, labeled *learning experiences*, takes into account an individual’s “unique history of learning experiences that results in his or her chosen career path” (p. 146). Krumboltz further distinguished learning experiences into three types: (a) instrumental learning experiences, (b) associative learning experiences, and (c) vicarious learning experiences. The final factors, or task approach skills, included skills such as problem solving, work habits, and an individual’s emotional and cognitive responses.

Krumboltz and Baker (1973) suggested that the application of social learning theory is especially important to an individual’s career decision-making (occupational choice) because it allows an individual to recognize an important decision situation, define the decision or task realistically, examine self-observation, consider the alternatives, gather the information as it relates to the alternatives, and determine which sources of information are reliable, accurate and relevant. Social learning theory, however, has limited application to the study of top public executive turnover because the theory’s
principal objective is to assist career counselors and individuals (through self-observation) make career decisions and plan actions.

**Social Cognitive Career Theory**

Social cognitive career theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) is a relatively new theory in the field of career development that has built upon Albert Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. The theory places importance on self-efficacy, outcome expectations and personal goals as critical factors in an individual's academic and career plans and choices, and further attempts to incorporate other elements that may supersede an individual's pragmatic career choices, e.g., gender, race, culture, genetic endowment, and unexpected life events.

According to Lent et al. (1994) self-efficacy relates to "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance" (p. 83). Outcome expectations on the other hand, are the preferred consequences of an individual's course of action, while personal goals are defined as an individual's efforts that are required to take on any given activity or endeavor.

Lent et al. (1994) envisioned social cognitive career theory as an evolutionary process beginning in the early days of an individual's life and progressing through adulthood. During one's lifespan, an individual's view of successful academic activities and career choices becomes increasingly more focused. As Lent et al. noted, essential to the process is the degree in which an individual views his or her ability to be successful at the activity, and the degree in which compensation for performing the activity is satisfactory. Simply stated, if an individual perceives limited obstacles to the success of an academic endeavor or career choice action (coupled with adequate compensation in the case of a
work activity), a stronger degree of interest and action on the part of the individual would ensue.

The strength of social cognitive career theory is in its ability “to provide a framework for explaining both academic and career (choice) behavior” through the measurement of an individual’s self-efficacy and outcome beliefs (Smith, 2002). Since social cognitive career theory emphasizes the role of an individual’s self-system and beliefs, the theory’s application has drawbacks in the quantitative analysis of factors contributing to political uncertainty, fiscal performance and community instability and their effects on top public executive turnover. The theory, however, does have strengths in that it assists in the development of questions contained in the qualitative component of this research study.

*Life-Span Theory*

One of the most noteworthy career developmental theories is life-span theory (Super, 1990). Super’s theory is unique in that it encompassed the entire life-span of an individual, and demonstrated how various psychological and environmental factors affected an individual’s self-concept, the principal factor that determines an individual’s approach to career development. Zunker (1994) suggested that “vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, general environment, and general experiences” (p. 30).

Principal in Super’s life-span theory are five stages of an individual’s growth. The first stage was termed the *growth stage* (birth to 15 years of age), where individuals form attitudes, interests and needs, and develops a basic understanding of the work environment. Next came the *exploratory stage* (15 to 24 years of age), where individuals collect relevant information, establish tentative career choices, and develop the
appropriate skills. The third stage, termed the *establishment stage* (25 to 44 years of age), was the period in an individual’s life where entry-level skills are developed through work experience. The fourth stage, or the *maintenance stage* (45 to 64 years of age) was where individuals continue to improve and adjust to the work environment and career to improve their positions. The final stage, termed the *decline stage* (65 years and older), was where an individual’s output declines and preparation for retirement begins.

Super further suggested that an individual goes through five vocational maturity stages during their life-span due to gained life-experiences. Super termed the first stage the *crystallization stage* (14 to 18 years of age), where individuals develop and plan a tentative vocational goal. Next came the *specification stage* (18 to 21 years of age), where individuals firm up their vocational goals. The third stage was called the *implementation stage* (21 to 24 years of age), where individuals train for and begin employment in conjunction with their goals. The *stabilization stage* (24 to 35 years of age) followed next, where individuals confirm their career choice by continuing to work in their chosen vocational field. The final stage, or the *consolidation stage* (more than 35 years of age), was where individuals focus on the advancement of their career.

Life-span theory’s strength resides in the study of career choice counseling and developmental psychology because of its view that individual development and change occurs over time. For purposes of this research study however, it is thought to have limited ability in explaining the factors that affect turnover of top public executives. This is due to the fact that life-span theory recognizes that change occurs in a social and historical context, not as a scientific observation.
Motivational Theories

Ambition Theory

Schlesinger (1966) theorized that career decisions could be predicted based on the potential benefits of alternative positions as well as the probability of an individual achieving those positions. Further, Schlesinger suggested that individuals make career choices based on opportunities, personal aspirations, and the status they expect to gain in the future. While ambition theory was primarily developed to study the career decision habits of elected officials, its fundamental assumptions are worth exploring in relation to appointed top public executives.

An individual’s ambition, as Schlesinger argued in ambition theory, could take on three forms. Additionally, Schlesinger suggested that each type of ambition could be used to predict an individual’s career choice behavior.

The first form was termed discrete ambition, where individuals assume a position for a pre-set period of time, generally considered short-term. The second form was termed static ambition, where an individual seeks a position with a long tenure as his or her goal. The third form was termed progressive ambition, where individuals search for a position with the intention of obtaining a higher and more attractive position in the future.

In summary, the strength of ambition theory is its ability to guide research into the political careers and aspirations of elected officials. By focusing on the costs, benefits and probabilities associated with a politician’s career ambitions, political behavior can be predicted. The theory’s application to appointed top public executive turnover, however, is thought to be problematic because (a) the theory focuses on elected officials and not appointed officials; and (b) the theory does not address the effects of negative factors on
the individual's career, e.g., political uncertainty, poor fiscal performance, and community instability.

**Push and Pull Motivation Theory**

Push and pull motivation theory has long been used to describe the dynamic process of an individual's psychological factors, such as needs, level of satisfaction, and goals, and the relationship between these factors and the uncomfortable levels of conflict that may exist within an individual's personal environment and/or work place.

The origin of push and pull motivation theory can be traced as far back as the late 1800s (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889). From a migration standpoint, Ravenstein suggested that push factors such as an individual's dissatisfaction with life situations and their locales, and pull factors such as the appealing attributes of distant places could be used to explain migratory patterns of individuals. Further migratory motivation factors as Ravenstein pointed out included war, overcrowding, and freedom and rights.

Similarly, push and pull motivation theory has been used in an attempt to explain an individual’s travel desires, and to develop marketing plans to foster tourism policies (Sukbin, McLeary, & Uysal, 1995). Sukbin et al. suggested that tourist motivation (and the subsequent marketing of the tourism industry) should focus on both the push and pull factors of individuals. Push factors, as Sukbin et al. explained, were the negative internal forces that facilitated an individual to travel. Pull factors, on the other hand, were the external forces or positive attributes of the destination.

Many researchers have successfully applied the principles of push and pull motivation theory to top-executive turnover in the private sector (Hall, 1989; Helmich, 1974; Lundberg, 1986). Similarly, researchers have attempted to apply the principals of
push and pull motivation theory to top-executive turnover in the public sector, however the extent of the results have been somewhat limited (Murdaugh, 2005; Orosz, 1991; Wechsler & Rainey, 1988).

Lee and Mitchell (1994) suggested that push factors reflect the degree to which current work or life situations cause sufficient discomfort or dissatisfaction to warrant generation and evaluation of alternatives. Relations between withdrawal behavior and work attitude variables such as job fulfillment, job pressure, and pay level, also contribute to the push process, leading individuals in both the private and public sectors to consider alternative employment (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mobley, Griffith, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Youngblood, Mobley, and Meglino (1983) put forth the hypothesis that higher turnover may sometimes reflect the differences between an individual’s work role expectations and actual experiences. These differences result in outside jobs and organizations appearing more attractive, therefore perpetuating employee turnover.

Conversely, pull factors are generally lures that encourage individuals to leave their current positions, e.g., professional, financial, or personal advancement (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990). A job search motivated by the pull process generally reflects the costs of searching in relation to the probability of finding a new position. From this perspective, the degree at which an individual actively searches will be positively related to the income an individual believes his or her knowledge, skills and abilities can obtain (see Lippman & McCall, 1979), and inversely associated with the perceived costs of the search (Kormendi, 1979). Individuals currently employed may incur low search costs because the loss in “utility” from not finding alternative employment is offset by the benefits of the current position (Hall, Lippman, & McCall, 1979).
Labor economics literature suggested that search costs may vary due to an individual’s ability to network, and the degree in which an individual is “visible” in his or her profession (Devine & Kiefer, 1991). Additionally, the degree to which an individual is perceived as instrumental in an organization’s success may also be an important pull factor.

After reviewing multiple theoretical perspectives on career development and movement, it was determined that push and pull motivation theory was the most applicable theory to couch the quantitative analysis component contained in this research study. The principal reason for selecting this theory was because of its theoretical framework and ability to isolate and analyze specific factors that may affect an appointed county administrator’s departure or non-departure career decision-making process. Additionally, push and pull motivation theory has the ability to isolate factors that may contribute to an administrator’s induced or non-induced departure.

Further, no such research was uncovered in the review of literature that applied push and pull motivation theory to appointed county administrator turnover. This indicated that the selection and usage of push and pull motivation theory in the analyses contained in this research study would forge new ground in the body of knowledge.

Private Sector Executive Turnover

Significant research in the private sector has shown that executive turnover can critically affect an organization’s performance (Droege & Hoobler, 2003; Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998; Sheehan, 2001). Brady and Helmich (1984) supported this idea by suggesting that top-executive turnover can be a traumatic event for any private
organization because it affects not only the employees within the organization, but the entity’s economic security as well. Chaganti and Sambharya (1987) theorized that the degree of trauma caused by executive turnover is compounded by the fact that organizations are, in many cases, a reflection of their leadership.

Grusky (1960) was one of the first researchers to apply a scientific approach to the study of executive turnover. From Grusky’s work developed a early field of study that could be categorized into four principal areas: (a) the extent to which organizations promote top executives from within the organization compared to external recruitments, (b) the relationship between organizational size and executive turnover, (c) post-succession performance and the frequency of executive turnover, and (d) leadership styles and organizational characteristics (Carlson, 1962).

The area of study receiving the most attention in the 1960s was successor origin. Both Carlson (1961) and Grusky (1964) contributed to the field of top-executive turnover by first defining “insiders” and “outsiders,” and second by establishing a starting point in which to analyze the relationship between top-executive turnover and its resulting consequences. Carlson for example, determined that top executives promoted from within the organization generally received lower compensation, achieved a less important level of status, and made fewer changes to the organization.

Although the area of successor origin garnished most of the attention in early research, insight was also gained in the relationship between organizational size and the rate of top-executive turnover. Grusky (1964) and Trow (1961) for example, determined that top-executive turnover rates varied significantly when the organizational size was
taken into account. Further, the researchers determined that large organizations experienced higher top-executive turnover rates when compared to smaller organizations.

The third area where contributions were made by early researchers was in the domain of post-succession performance and the frequency of executive turnover. Within this domain, three theoretical viewpoints were developed.

Grusky (1963) termed the first viewpoint as the *vicious cycle theory*, which suggested that recurrent turnover was disruptive to an organization. The second viewpoint has been known as the *common sense theory*, where organizational performance improved with the replacement of a top executive. The third viewpoint was described as the *ritual scapegoating theory*, which suggested that top-executive replacement was a method of signaling to outsiders of the organization that change was taking place to address poor performance (Gamson & Scotch, 1964).

The fourth area where contributions were made by early researchers of top-executive turnover was in the domain of leadership styles and organizational characteristics, and their resulting effects on organizational performance. Kesner and Sebora (1994) described this domain as *succession contingencies*. The principal contributors to research in this domain included Kotin and Sharaf (1967), who studied top-executive attributes and leadership styles and their impact on organizational performance, and Gouldner (1954) and Guest (1962), who investigated the organizational structure and performance of prior executives and the resulting effect on the ability of newly appointed executives to affect positive changes in the organization.

The study of successor origin and characteristics, and succession frequency, continued throughout the 1970s. Birnbaum (1971), for example, proposed the concept of
industry familiarity. In his study of university and college presidents, Birnbaum challenged the traditional view of insiders and outsiders by suggesting that top executives who were trained in similar institutions when compared to the recruiting organization exhibited a greater degree of fostering organizational stability. Helmich and Brown (1972) and Pfeffer and Leblebici (1973) also found similar results as Birnbaum in their study of top executives who were recruited from within a similar career field (or industry) versus individuals recruited from outside the career field.

The 1970s also provided a new perspective of successor characteristics. Helmich (1975, 1977), for example, began to investigate the linkage between a successor’s leadership style and his or her need for fulfillment, i.e., social fit and esteem. From his research, Helmich was able to conclude that successors in large organizations were able to experience career development and personal growth when compared to successors in smaller organizations. It was not surprising that Helmich’s research revitalized other researchers to further study the concept of “best fit” as well.

The leading researchers of the “best fit” concept in the 1970s were Pfeffer and Salancik (1977), Hall (1976), and March and March (1977). While Pfeffer, Salancik, and Hall were able to establish an empirical relationship between certain characteristics of top executives and the career fields they choose, e.g., level and type of education, March and March suggested that these characteristics might be unrelated to the criteria used in the selection process.

Empirical research in the 1970s also continued to explore the frequency of top-executive succession. For example, Helmich (1974a, 1974b, 1975) examined administrator characteristics and their effect on succession frequency, while Crain,
Denton, and Tollison (1976), and Pfeffer and Salancik (1977) furthered research on organizational size, age and type.

Kesner and Sebora (1994) suggested that the 1980s and 1990s “ushered in a time of reflection for succession researchers” (p. 8). While Gordon and Rosen (1981), Kohler and Strauss (1983), and Brady and Helmich (1984) put forth the effort to capsulate the progress that was made in the past 20 years of succession research, new researchers were furthering the studies of successor origin (Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993; Dalton & Kesner, 1983; Reinganum, 1985; Worrell & Davidson, 1987; Zajac, 1990). Some of the most notable contributions of these researchers included the analysis of an organization’s performance, organizational size, and market effects on top-executive succession.

Similarly, new researchers continued the studies of succession rates (Benston, 1985; Cannella & Lubatkin, 1993; DeAngelo & DeAngelo, 1989; Morck, Schleifer, & Vishny, 1988). One of the most important breakthroughs in succession rate research of the 1900s came when Miller (1993) determined that infrequent top-executive turnover resulted in poor organizational performance, an observation echoed by Bommer and Ellstrand (1996).

Two relatively new areas of study that surfaced during this period of top-executive turnover research included succession planning, and succession and the executive board. Mahler (1980) was considered one of the first researchers to investigate succession planning and elevate its importance to the organization. Rhodes and Walker (1984), and Hall (1986) and Freidman (1990) followed Mahler’s research by examining organizational succession planning approaches, the evolution of succession-planning, and the role of management incumbents’ development and learning cycle.
Early research on succession and the executive board was pioneered by Helmich (1980), Salancik and Pfeffer (1980), Weisbach (1988), and Puffer and Weintrope (1991). Important observations in this area of research included a higher incidence of turnover when top executives did not meet the expectations of the board, and top-executive turnover was only prevalent when the executive boards were dominated by members from outside the organization.

More recently, researchers of top-executive turnover have focused on the organizational structure (Denis, Denis, & Sarin, 1997), the effect of unsolicited takeover bids (Huson, Malatesta, & Parrino, 2004; Huson, Parrino, & Starks, 2001), and the makeup of top managerial teams (Fee & Hadlock, 2004) as explanatory variables of executive turnover.

Public Sector Executive Turnover

While the research of top public executive turnover is somewhat limited, Murdaugh (2005) suggested there was “a sufficient body of literature to allow one to organize those efforts into research which has examined federal, state, and municipal (including county) executives” (p. 21). The following is a summary of the research of top public executive turnover.

Research at the Federal Level

Much of the literature associated with the turnover of appointed federal executives has focused on the political dimensions of the appointed executive and his or her relationship with career federal employees. Covington (1985), for example, suggested that levels of stress and uncertainty occur between politically appointed federal
executives and career federal executives, resulting in a blurred understanding of the organizational hierarchy. Joyce (1990), on the other hand, pointed to the lack of interaction between appointed federal executives and career federal employees due to differing communication styles.

The literature also suggested that a high degree of organizational turmoil follows the turnover of politically appointed federal executives (Covington, 1985; Heclo 1988; Joyce 1990). Interestingly, the literature review found no research that focused on the specific factors that could explain appointed federal executive turnover other than the change in administration.

Research at the State Level

As with research at the federal level, the literature associated with turnover of appointed state executives has also focused on the political dimensions of the process with emphasis on governor appointments. Abney (1988) for example, examined the influences of appointed state executives on an elected governor. Roberts (1988), on the other hand, analyzed the impact appointed state executives had on the effectiveness of the organization. Roberts also compared the tenures and stability of political appointees versus bureaucratic appointees across 50 states. In his research, Roberts found that bureaucratic appointees tended to have more stability, leading to lengthier tenures than political appointees.

Other researchers have studied the methodology of state political appointments, the impact political appointments have on the organization, and the effect political appointments have on incoming administrations (Sherwood & Chackerian, 1988; Roberts, 1988; and Rogers & Halachmi, 1988, respectively). As with research at the
federal level, the literature review found no research that focused on the specific factors that could explain appointed state executive turnover other than the change in administration.

Research at the County and Municipal Level

There has been a general lack of research by the academic community regarding appointed administrator turnover in county governments as compared to municipalities (Kammerer, Farris, DeGrove, & Clubok, 1962; Schneider & Park, 1989). This is especially true in the area of county administrator turnover. Schneider and Park suggested this might be so because of the absence of easily defined theoretically driven research agendas.

Svara (1999) suggested that the study of top-executive turnover in local government entities was important because these executives play an increasingly complex and interrelated role in both the substance and the process of local governance. It is not surprising, therefore, that the study of executive leadership and its importance in governance at the municipal level is a common and recurring topic in the contemporary literature (Nalbandian, 1999, 2000; Svara, 1990, 1998).

Researchers have become more attuned to the fact that top executives, once viewed as neutral forces with limited roles, play an increasingly important role in an organization’s success. Interestingly, traditional separation between a top public executive’s “administrative” roles versus “political” roles has, in many ways, been observed to be more symbolic than factual (Miller, 2000; Stillman, 1974). Miewald (1984) contended this broader view of public executives was evident as far back as Woodrow Wilson’s era.
when Wilson suggested that “the real function of Administration is not merely ministerial, but adaptive, guiding and discretionary” (p. 18).

Nalbandian (1999) posited that top municipality executives are expected to take on the role of “community building” by facilitating the democratic processes between government and the community. As Nalbandian emphasized, top executives are becoming increasingly responsible for bringing forward issues and information before the elected governing board. By providing the board with information that supports their recommendations and directing employees to carry out specific programs, top public executives have become an integral part of the organization’s policy-making process. Considering this fact, it is easy to understand why researchers have found that policy proposals frequently begin with top executives and not with the commission or council (Martin, 1990; Morgan & Watson, 1992; Newell & Ammons, 1987).

Because top county and municipality executives play an ever-increasing role in policy formulation and implementation, the turnover of executives in local public entities can have a far-reaching negative effect on an organization’s success. This concept of negative effects was noted in recent research on top municipality executive turnover, where researchers theorized that persistent executive turnover affects the implementation of local municipality innovations such as new approaches to service delivery, ability to enter into long-term debt obligations, or commitment to contracting services (Clingermayer & Feiock, 2001; Feiock & Clingermayer, 1993).

Wright (1969) and Banovetz (1995) built upon this concept by putting forth the premise that top county and municipality executives play a key role in the formulation of economic development policy, a recurring theme in the review of literature. Renner
(2001) reaffirmed this idea in reviewing the International City/County Managers’ (ICMA) 2000 National State of the Profession survey results, by finding that top executives identified economic development as one of the principal issues of any jurisdiction.

Further, in the 2000 National State of the Profession survey, Renner discovered that the 10% of top municipality executives who left their jobs on their own accord in the previous year cited pull factors such as career advancement and opportunities in larger organizations. It follows, therefore, that career paths of successful public executives generally reflect a progression to increasingly larger organizations.

Buckwalter and Parsons (2000) noted that managers of municipalities generally begin their careers as an assistant to a city manager, gradually being pulled out of their assistant position and securing a city manager post with a smaller municipality, and later a larger organization. Buckwalter and Parsons also suggested that it was not uncommon for top municipality executives to have worked for several municipalities over their careers, and that pull factors to leave for positions with greater opportunity was inherent in their overall plans of career advancement.

In local municipalities, push factors such as political uncertainty and differences in policy between administrators and governing board members have also been known to accelerate an executive’s departure (Clingermayer et al., 2003; DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006; Renner, 1990; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991). To illustrate this point, Renner (2001) uncovered that in a single year, 3% of public executives who held the position of top
municipality executive left their job reluctantly. Of those, 10% were dismissed, 20% were forced resignations and 70% were pressured to quit.

Factors Contributing to County Administrator Turnover

As previously discussed, researchers have long explored the factors that account for public executive turnover. Additionally, most studies have focused on factors contributing to top-executive turnover in municipalities.

Some research studies have suggested that political conflict and uncertainty, fiscal stress, and characteristics of a community's instability, play major roles in public executive turnover (Boynton & DeSantis, 1990; Clingermayer et al., 2003; DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006; Newell, Ammons, & Glass, 1989; Renner, 1990; Stillman, 1974; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991). Other studies have explored the effect of administrator profile factors such as administrator tenure, age, level of formal education, salary and benefits, degree of job satisfaction, career advancement, and decision to enter retirement (Banovetz, 1995; Barber, 1988; Feiock & Stream, 2002; Porter & Steers, 1973; Renner, 2001; Stein, 1990; Watson & Hassett, 2003, 2004; Werbel & Bedeian, 1989; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991; Wright, 1969).

The factors contributing to top public executive turnover receiving the most attention by researchers are political conflict and uncertainty. The review of literature suggested that Goodnow (1900), was the first to give political conflict attention. In his book Politics and Administration, Goodnow argued that attempts by politicians to control a
jurisdiction’s administrative function was liable to produce “inefficient administration in that it makes administrative officers feel that what is demanded of them is not so much work that will improve their own department, as compliance with the behests of the political party” (1990, p. 83). Researchers have considered reformed governments, such as the Commission-Administrator form of government, as a type of government that exhibits, to a lesser degree, signs of political conflict (although some degree of political conflict always exists).

Conflict in County Government

The review of literature suggested that the relationship between “conflict” in public organizations and top public executive turnover has been of interest to researchers since the early 1960s (see Kammerer et al., 1962). Important to note is that the literature review uncovered a limited number of empirical studies that explored the area of conflict and county government. Menzel (1992) suggested this to be somewhat surprising considering the increased influence of counties on the public such as the expansion of service delivery roles. This has led researchers to suggest a need for a better understanding of conflict in county government (Benton, 2003).

Conversely, numerous empirical analyses were found that explored the notion of conflict and municipal governments. The review of literature clearly suggested that local government researchers have focused on conflict related to municipalities much more so than their county counterparts (Huelsberg & Lincoln, 1986; Jenks, 1994; Svara, 1999). Since conflict is considered a “universal” concept that affects county and local municipal governments alike, it was deemed important to discuss the study results of both.
Lineberry and Fowler (1967) were the first to empirically analyze conflict and county government. Interestingly, in their study the researchers suggested that "reformed" county governments such as the Commission-Administrator form of government were less likely than "traditional" county governments to experience adversarial patterns of hostility. As Lineberry and Fowler proposed, this was principally due to the greater degree of central authority, relative insulation from community conflicts, and the tendency for shared values between commission and council members and appointed administrators.

The review of literature also suggested that counties play critical roles in the provision of public services; however, as some researchers have pointed out, very little is known about the influences of organizational conflict and a county's ability to provide these services. Salant (1989) categorized the public service functions of American counties into four groups: (a) administrative arms of the state, (b) traditional governments, (c) regional governments, and (c) local governments. The administrative arm can generally be considered the principal area where American counties exert the most influence over the provision of public services. Salant highlighted "indigent health care" at the county level as a prime example of state mandated services where counties have significant influence.

In another research study, Svara (1990) proposed that conflict was greater in counties with professional administrators as compared to counties without professional administrators. This occurrence, as Svara hypothesized, might be attributable to the inability of some county administrators to foster a facilitative-participatory relationship with commission or council members.
Svara suggested that this phenomenon could be attributed to an administrator’s failure to understand and define his or her role in a fragmented government structure with complex inter-governmental relationships. As Svara implied, contrasting role expectations between commission and council members, and the administrator may cause this phenomenon. Because of these factors, Svara was led to conclude that role uncertainty was a leading cause of conflict in county government. Svara recommended that future research on county government conflict should include an exploration component that further studies role expectations among commission and council members, and administrators.

Lewis and Taylor (1990) also explored role expectations among county administrators. In their study, the researchers primarily examined the attitudes and roles of county administrators from a national perspective, focusing primarily on trying to understand “what the county manager does, why, and what difference it makes” (p. 11).

Menzel (1996), in a comparative study of county and municipality political structures, suggested that fragmentation combined with complex intergovernmental relationships were principal factors differentiating county governments from city governments. As a result of these dynamics, Menzel suggested that county administrators many times confront varying degrees of conflict that are considerably different in scope than their counterparts in municipalities.

Interestingly, in a study conducted by Streib and Waugh (1991), the researchers found similar results as Svara (1990) and Lewis and Taylor (1990). Streib and Waugh pointed to adversarial relationships between board and council members, and administrators, as a common impediment to improving management capacity in county government.
Klase, Pops, and Mok (1996) proposed a conceptual model of county government conflict based on past literature of organization and environmental relationships (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979; Katz & Kahn, 1982; March & Simon, 1958; Thompson, 1967). In their study, Klase et al. attempted to identify the factors that affected county conflict. The researchers proposed a model that accounted for the general environmental factors in which local governments operated and experienced conflict, e.g., general economic conditions, geographic uniqueness, social diversity, and political dimensions. Additionally, the researchers’ model examined the detailed task environment of county governance and conflict. They concluded that factors such as partisan elections, shared administrative authority, and fragmentation of authority, all contributed to adversarial environments for county administrators, both general and task-specific.

The studies on county governments performed by Svara (1996), and DeSantis and Renner (1996), both supported earlier research of Lineberry and Fowler (1967), when the researchers concluded that traditional county governments were frequently criticized for being less responsive to citizen demands when compared to reformed governments. DeSantis and Renner also found that traditional governments were less capable of adapting to changes in the demographic and social character of their jurisdictions when compared to reformed governments. The study results of DeSantis and Renner also mirrored earlier research by Kessel (1962) that put forth the posit that reformed governments were synonymous with communities that had socially homogeneous values and reduced levels of conflict, while unreformed governments were generally found in socially heterogeneous communities with higher levels of conflict.
The review of literature suggested that the type and degree of county conflict might differ depending on the form of government a county chose to incorporate, e.g., the Commission-Administrator form of government versus the Commission-Manager form of government (Morgan & Kickham, 1999). As previously discussed, the first type of government, called the county administrator plan, incorporates an administrator who generally has limited authority in the appointment of department heads. Because county administrators operate under closer supervision by the commission or council, it has been hypothesized that they have much less opportunity to shape county policy (see DeSantis & Renner, 1993), an attribute that may lessen the degree of conflict between appointed administrators and commission or council members (Klase, Pops, & Mok, 1996; Streib & Waugh, 1991; Svara, 1990). DeSantis & Renner further posited that in the weakest version of the administrator plan, the administrator “primarily performs tasks and gives advice at the request of the council” (p. 23).

This differs from the second type, which is called the “county manager plan,” where the county manager has the authority to appoint department heads. In the county manager plan, the appointed manager generally possesses authority similar to that of a city manager. Further, under this plan the county manager sets the legislative agenda, formulates the budget, appoints department heads, and oversees the general county operations (Benton, 2002). Because of the greater authority of appointed executives in the county manager plan, the degree of conflict between the manager and commission members may be greater.

In a study that reviewed the research on both county and municipality governments in the 1990s, Pammer, Lightle, and Watson (2000) determined that inherent differences
existed between the two. Unlike municipalities that principally function with a Council-Manager form of government, American counties that use a Commission-Administrator form of government generally do not vest the county administrator with all of the executive functions as their city counterparts.

Pammer et al. (2000) expanded this area of thought by proposing that complex intergovernmental relationships placed burdensome requirements on county administrators to understand their responsibility in influencing the execution of various public services. Pammer et al. also explored the methods as to how administrators deal with county issues in a fragmented political structure. In their study, they concluded that administrators value a facilitative-participatory form of rapport with governing commission members and departmental staff alike. The researchers further concluded that increased rapport between county administrators and governing commission members effectively reduced conflict within the county government structure.

Conflict in county government is derived from many sources. These sources might include political uncertainty, organizational turf battles, and competition for declining resources (Klase & Song, 2000). Klase and Song posited that demands on county governments by citizens, and political and special interest groups, also contributed to the increased intensity and duration of conflict within a county organization.

 political uncertainty

Kammerer et al. (1962) suggested that political uncertainty may be common explanatory factors of top public executive turnover. In their study of 39 top municipality executive turnovers in ten Florida Cities, the researchers uncovered political disputes as the principal factor for two-thirds of the involuntary departures. Banfield and Wilson
(1963), in their book City Politics, reinforced the idea that political uncertainty played a critical role in most municipalities. In their work, Banfield and Wilson discovered that municipalities with larger populations were more likely to have a greater degree of political conflict than their smaller counterparts. The researchers also noted that when conflict was not suppressed, “politics in the small community tends to be more bitter, more divisive, and more explosive than politics in the large city” (p. 26). Banfield and Wilson, as well as Lineberry and Fowler (1967), agreed with and suggested that the degree of political conflict and uncertainty within local governments is one of the most crucial determinants in an appointed administrator’s decision to leave their position.

Researchers have posited that not all top public executives approach political conflict and uncertainty the same. Downs (1967), for example, classified public executives into five types, each with their own approach to political conflict. Downs called the two self-interested types climbers and conservers. As Downs explained, climbers were mostly focused on their own career advancement in lieu of organizational goals and objectives. Conservers, on the other hand, were focused on maintaining what they had with the least amount of effort. The three public-spirited types, as Downs explained, were zealots, advocates, and statesmen. While zealots were considered more strongly committed to the success of a particular policy, advocates and statesmen were more pragmatic and took a global view by concentrating on the overall good of the organization.

Zeigler, Kehoe, and Reisman (1985) also studied political uncertainty. Based on data from the early 1980s, the researchers reviewed executive career patterns as they related to top-executive career advancement. Their research fell short, however, because they did not investigate the relationship of political uncertainty to top-executive turnover.
In a more recent study, DeHoog and Whitaker (1990) found that disagreements between commission and council members, and top public executives, indirectly influenced an administrator's decision to voluntarily leave his or her position. As DeHoog and Whitaker suggested, this preemptive move by an administrator may be a strategic move before conflict with the council reaches the “firing point” (p. 369).

The theory that top public executives voluntarily leave their positions due to political conflict and uncertainty prior to being dismissed is also found in later studies. For example, in a study of top municipality executive turnover conducted by DeSantis and Newell (1996) one experienced city manager was quoted as saying, “Get out before they fire you” (p. 3).

In that same year, Svara (1990) put forward the idea that there were two patterns of interaction in local governments. The first had its foundation embedded in conflict while the other was based on cooperation. In local governments that operated in conflict, distrust is pervasive because goals are incompatible. The prevailing motto, as Svara explained, was, “do it to them before they can do it to you” (p. 30). Svara further suggested that a government which principally operates in the realm of conflict “is inherently ungovernable” because there are no common goals or values between the separate parties (p. 31).

Echoing earlier works (Banfield & Wilson, 1963; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967), Svara (1990) further advocated that reformed governments were less likely to be conflict-prone. The one exception to this rule, as Svara explained, was when a local government did not

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4 In the Dehoog and Whitaker 1990 study, top municipality executives found in high-conflict situations were twice as likely to quit their jobs as compared to top municipality executives that were not in what they considered a high-conflict position.
have “evenly balanced political factions” (p. 53). Svara put forward the idea that, “In these cities the shift of a council majority from one faction to another is likely to be accompanied by replacement of the manager” (p. 53).

In a lengthy follow-up study of top municipality executive turnover one year later, Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) suggested that political conflict and uncertainty had not been studied in depth by local government scholars, and that the common belief amongst researchers was that top public executives in the Council-Manager form of city government leave their jobs because of career advancement, not because of preemptive reasons due to being “under fire” (p. 164).

In their study of 133 top municipality executives in Florida between 1986 and 1990, Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) found that political conflict was a frequently cited cause of turnover, and that the “type” of conflict made a difference. For example, policy conflicts and style disagreements were more apt to cause turnover than conflicts that were caused by underlying commission factions. The researchers also found a correlation between the turnover in commission members and increased top municipality executive turnover.

Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) proposed two models of political conflict contributing to top public executive turnover. The first model suggested an internal struggle for control amongst the commission members. In this model, the commission members are typically divided into two factions, each struggling with the other for control. Whitaker and DeHoog suggested that if the struggle expanded to include the top public executive, it could signal the executive’s departure.

The second model pointed to a discord between the top public executive and the commission members themselves. In this model, the actions or conduct of either party
becomes a major issue. Because the executive typically serves at the “will” of the commission, conflicts between the two could easily contribute to an executive leaving his position.

The researchers further concluded that top public executives who departed their positions of city manager cited considerable political uncertainty or conflict as a principal reason for exiting. Interestingly, conflict between commission members and executives was more a cause of departure than internal conflict among commission members.

Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) also found that conflict within the commission led to involuntary or forced appointed executive turnover only when the executive became entangled or aligned. The researchers, for example, discovered that nine of the executives studied left their jobs because they lost the commission majority support. Additionally, the researchers found that in six of the nine cases, an election amongst the commission changed the balance of power of the governing board, ushering in a faction that was opposed to the existing appointed top executive.

Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) also posited that internal commission conflict had a contributing effect on top municipality executive turnover because of its ability to create high levels of frustration on the part of the executive. In many ways, Whitaker and DeHoog’s study results mirrored the research of 30 years prior, when Kammerer et al. (1962), and Banfield and Wilson (1963), put forth the idea that conflict played a critical role in top public executive turnover. Whitaker and DeHoog’s study also added credence to their earlier study in 1990, which found that political environments with high levels of uncertainty and conflict led top municipality executives to depart their positions at twice the normal rate.
DeSantis and Newell (1996) found similar turnover patterns of top municipality executives in a later study. As with Whitaker and DeHoog’s (1991) research, DeSantis and Newell estimated that political conflict attributed to roughly one-half of all departures of top municipality executives. This differed somewhat from the earlier study by Kammerer et al. (1962), which concluded that two-thirds of the turnover in top municipality executive positions were involuntary and caused by conflicts between commission members and top municipality executives.

Five years later, Renner (2001) reported the most striking dissimilarity in previous studies and the influence of political conflict on top public executive turnover when she presented the results of the 2000 ICMA State of the Profession survey. Renner’s results concluded that of the 10% of top municipality executives who had changed positions in the previous year, only 3% were terminated. Furthermore, of the 3% who changed jobs, 10% were fired, 20% were forced to resign, and 70% were pressured.

Other studies have found comparable results, pointing to the fact that political conflict among commission members produced unbearable working environments for top public executives, effectively creating a push effect that led to executive turnover (Box, 1993; Kaatz & Gabris, 1996; Kaatz, French, & Prentiss-Cooper, 1999; Loveridge, 1971; Renner & DeSantis, 1993, 1994; Svara, 1991).

Svara (1995) and Protasel (1995) speculated that the origin of political conflict could be found in the vagueness of public policy and administration duties between governing commissions and top public executives. More specifically, the researchers suggested that responsibilities between commission members and top municipality executives in the domain of strategic mission formulation, administrative policy, and the day-to-day
management of a city’s operation, were sometimes blurred. Even though the classic policy-administration dichotomy model puts forth a doctrine of separation of responsibilities, Svara and Protasel both suggested models with mixed responsibilities would be better utilized in the real world.

Denton and Pisciotta (1993), and Golembiewks and Gabris (1995), both pointed out that the Council-Manager form of city government continues to change in ways that requires increased partnership and interaction between governing board members and top appointed public executives. Streib (1992) and Brimeyer (1993) both posited that this development is largely caused by the need for top executives to work more closely with commission and council members, community leaders, and ordinary citizens, to build consensus and formulate and address policy issues (ICMA, 1995). Because close relations are required to ensure cooperation with stakeholders in the community, it is important that the efforts of top executives are not perceived as an infringement on the policy-making responsibilities of the commission or council.

Some researchers have posited that varying value orientations of governing commission members and top executives can have an intensifying effect on political conflict and uncertainty, i.e., self-promoting activities (Brimeyer, 1993; ICMA, 1958). Because governing commissions ultimately have the power to dismiss top executives, executives have an elevated interest in establishing and nurturing good relationships with commission and council members.

Carnevale (1995) suggested that trust was an important key to establishing good relations. As Carnevale put forth, trust is a set of expectations such as honesty, responsiveness, and competency, that elected commission and council members, and top
executives, should expect from each other in the performance of their duties. McClelland
(1985) proposed that trust between commission and council members, and top
executives, could be enhanced if one party perceived the other as supportive of their
goals, were efficacious in their actions, took into account their concerns, and participated
in the decision-making process. McClelland also suggested that the lack of any of these
qualities would effectively denote distrust, thereby increasing the potential for political
conflict and uncertainty.

A study by Berman (1997) found similar results to those of earlier researchers
(Brimeyer, 1993; Streib, 1992). In Berman’s study, the researcher assessed the efficacy of
trust-building strategies of city managers in municipalities with populations greater than
50,000, and posited that increased involvement by top municipality executives in
community leadership was the most significant threat (as well as opportunity) affecting
municipality council-manager relations in recent years.

According to Berman (1997), “The potential threat to council-manager relations from
activities such as visible leadership in community-based strategic planning, increased
coordination of public and private services, development of public-private partnerships,
cultivation of media relations, etc., is that these activities may be perceived as infringing
on council’s policy-making responsibilities and as influencing community politics”
(1997, p. 2). As Berman explained, “These community-based activities need not
necessarily have detrimental affects on council relations”5 (p. 2). Svara (1990) and
Watson and Hassett (2003) put forth the theory that two models existed between

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5 Specifically, top municipality executives could use their community-based activity roles as an opportunity
to foster increased cooperation with council members and, therefore, effectively reduce political conflict
(Berman, 1996; Carnevale, 1995; Svara, 1995).
governing boards and top-executive interaction. The first was based on conflict, the second on cooperation. Interestingly, both studies suggested that in municipalities that display characteristics of the conflict model, consensus building between the two parties regarding community goals was near impossible because the prevailing motto was “do it to them before they can do it to you” (Svara, p. 53).

Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) suggested that political uncertainty and conflict of this nature played an important role in shortening a top municipality executive’s tenure. In their study, Whitaker and DeHoog concluded that political conflict, for the most part, was counterproductive and harmful to local governance. As Whitaker and DeHoog pointed out, commission members or top executives that pursue selfish or personal objectives may divert resources or delay action at the expense of the public well-being. Similarly, the researchers brought forth the opinion that “firing of competent, public-spirited managers because they refuse to violate laws or professional ethics, or because of petty jealousies, costs (local governments) the effective executive leadership which that manager provided” (p. 156).

A further review of recent literature on political conflict and uncertainty alluded to the notion that political conflict among commission and council members often preceded the departure of a top public executive (Pammer, Marlowe, & Dustin, 1999). Svara (1999) suggested this was especially the case when there was a shift in the majority on a governing board.

Kaatz (1996), on the other hand, concluded that turnover in a commission might indicate an underlying political controversy that ultimately draws a top executive into disagreement with commission members. Based on his research of Chicago-area
municipalities, Kaatz suggested that turnover in the local governing board was directly correlated with higher turnover in local top executives.

Svara (1999) built upon this idea by putting forth the theory that public executive turnover could be related to “short term visions” of governing board members (p. 50). In his study of council-manager relations in over 30 cities in the United States with populations in excess of 200,000, Svara determined that seven out of every ten top municipality executives felt that council members focused more on “short-term” problems (or failures) versus “long-term” matters.⁶

While the literature review was rich in empirical studies supporting the view that political conflict and uncertainty acted as a precursor to top-executive turnover in local governments, it lacked research that addressed strategies of reducing political conflict. As Golembiewski and Gabris (1995) argued, one way for top public executives to reduce political conflict is to create “management teams” where the executive’s role changes from “chief implementer to chief facilitative change agent” (p. 244). In Golembiewski and Gabris’ study of top municipality executives, the researchers suggested that by creating management teams, top executives could garnish more support from key stakeholders, therefore reducing the possibly of involuntary turnover. As the researchers stated, “exchanges of support can buffer turbulence, for example, or see individuals through the inevitable rough spots that might otherwise induce turnover” (p. 244).

Similarly, Pammer, Marlowe, Janet, and Dustin (1999) identified several strategies that top public executives could use to gain the support and confidence of commission and council members, thereby reducing political conflict. The researchers posited that the

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⁶ In his research, Svara also alluded to the idea that top municipality executives were generally held accountable for these failures.
most important strategy was the creation of an agenda to which internal stakeholders’
roles and expectations could be identified to further consensus building. Furthermore, the
researchers argued that for this strategy to succeed, succinct goals had to be established to
serve as the foundation for a mutually cooperative relationship.

A second strategy put forth by Pammer et al. (1999) to reduce political conflict was
for top public executives to devise “new collaborative approaches enabling staff and
council members to discuss policy-related issues in a forum outside a formal council
meeting” (p. 161).

Many researchers have forwarded the opinion that top public executives should
always respond to the governing board members’ requests and inquiries in a timely
manner. Similarly, many studies have shown that when top public executives provide
timely information, explain the rationale for actions taken, respond promptly to citizen
requests, and give “credit” to commission and council members (to help boost their
public images), political conflict and uncertainty within the public organization could be
minimized (Gabris & Kaatz, 1994; Marshall, 1992; Mathis, 1993).

Government Fiscal Performance

A review of the literature suggested that researchers have only recently begun to use
government fiscal performance factors as explanatory variables in models of top public
executive turnover. Additionally, the review of literature found no such studies that
specifically pertained to county administrator turnover. While the studies uncovered
during the literature review do not explicitly apply to county administrator turnover, a
discussion of their results was deemed relevant to this research study.
The first such study noted was performed by Feiock et al. (2001). In this study the researchers examined whether increased tax burdens led to greater turnover of top public executives (measured in per capita property tax revenue). The study results suggested that growth in property tax revenue had no significant effect on top public executive turnover.

Similarly, one year later a study by Feiock and Stream (2002) uncovered that only modest effects existed between top-executive turnover and a municipality’s fiscal policy, i.e., level of taxing, spending, and borrowing.

Most recently, McCabe et al. (2006) proposed that the fiscal status of municipalities might contribute to an appointed top public executive’s decision to leave his or her position. The researchers further theorized that a top executive’s performance might be inconsequential in municipalities that exhibit strong fiscal capacity, low taxes, and low debt.

McCabe et al. (2006) also posited that top executives in smaller and more homogenous municipalities might exhibit less turnover. In their study, the researchers measured fiscal stress as a function of the municipalities’ level of per capita property tax, bond rating, and per capita long-term debt. The results of their study mirrored those of earlier research suggesting that a municipality’s fiscal condition, i.e., debt level and property tax, had no significant influence on top-executive turnover.

Community Instability

In the review of literature, no studies were found that applied community instability factors to county administrator turnover. The review of the literature did find research however, on community instability factors as they relate to top municipality executive turnover. Because of the parallels between top municipality executive turnover and
county administrator turnover, it was thought to be appropriate to discuss the results of these studies.

Stillman (1974) was one of the first to determine that in municipalities, population size was a dominant factor in top-executive turnover. Subsequent studies have yielded similar results (Boynton & DeSantis, 1990; Newell et al., 1989).

Feiock et al. (2001) suggested that demographic factors, such as a community’s level of affluence and ethnic diversity, might be indicators of divisions or “cleavages” within a community. Furthermore, Feiock et al. posited that measurements of cleavages within a community may be useful in explaining top municipality executive turnover. Using a pooled cross-sectional sample of cities within the United States with populations of at least 75,000 in 1989, the researchers determined that top executives serving in more wealthy and homogenous communities exhibited lesser frequency of turnover. Conversely, the researchers found that top executives serving in heterogeneous communities tended to have shorter tenures and higher turnover rates than their counterparts.

Two years later, Watson and Hassett (2003) performed a study of “long-serving” municipality executives (20 or more years of continuous service with the same municipality) using the ICMA’s 2000 National State of the Profession Survey. The researchers found that most top executives came from relatively homogenous, politically stable municipalities with populations of 30,000 or less. Furthermore, many of the long-serving top executives examined in the study were raised in the communities in which they were employed, suggesting that top executives are not as mobile as once believed.
Interestingly, Watson and Hassett (2004) further examined top executives in large municipalities and discovered a positive relationship between the size of the municipality and the amount of compensation the executive received. This may be due to the fact that large municipalities require an executive compensation package that is proportionate to the executive’s role and responsibility.

Researchers have also attempted to link population growth to a community’s level of instability. Recently, researchers have found that top executives in communities that experience little or no growth, as well as those that experienced rapid and sustained growth, were equally as likely to leave their positions (McCabe et al., 2006). This phenomenon as McCabe et al. suggested, demonstrated the importance of economic development within a community and its relationship to top-executive turnover.

While the literature review found no specific empirical studies correlating economic development and top public executive turnover, it has been proposed as an important investigative factor in the research of this topic (Wright 1969). Accurately measuring the influence a top public executive exerts on community economic development, however, is problematic considering the difficulty in defining parameters against which to measure. Given these difficulties, researchers have used the economic accomplishments of the jurisdiction to simulate the performance of top public executives with reasonable proxy (Fiorina, 1981).

One such study performed by Arnold (1990) examined congressional action. Arnold determined that poor outcomes (or results) were more likely to lead to “blame” as compared to good outcomes. Following this line of reasoning, Arnold theorized that poor economic growth within a community in the short term could lead to dissatisfaction
within the governing commission towards the executive, effectively contributing to the executive’s pushed departure. Conversely, Arnold posited that good long-term economic growth within a community might be a sign of a top executive’s ability to successfully oversee multiple programs, therefore increasing the executive’s opportunity to be pulled out of his or her position.

Appointed local government executives have increasingly been assigned the responsibility of managing a jurisdiction’s economic development (Banovetz, 1995). Renner (2001), in her analysis of the ICMA’s 2000 National State of the Profession Survey, found that top executives identified economic growth as a key issue within their jurisdictions.

Stein (1990) also reviewed the economic development practices of top executives in municipalities as they relate to pull factors. Stein suggested that top executives could leverage successful developmental policies within their jurisdictions to obtain more prestigious positions in larger communities, a theory also supported by the later work of researchers Feiock and Stream (2002).

More recently, McCabe et al. (2006) determined that the economic conditions of a municipality, both in magnitude and duration, had a measurable influence on top-executive tenure. McCabe et al. proposed that while top municipal executives were able to convincingly take credit for the economic successes of their jurisdictions, so could they be blamed for the jurisdiction’s economic failures. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that by concentrating on the economic successes and failures of a municipality, it could be possible to measure the magnitude and degree of both the push and the pull factors affecting top public executive turnover.
McCabe et al. (2006) built upon this idea by advancing the concept that top executives in municipalities that experienced sustained economic growth could be afforded career-advancing opportunities by being pulled to more lucrative positions in larger municipalities. Conversely, top executives in municipalities that experienced declining economic conditions would more likely be pushed from their positions.

Administrator Profile

In a review of the literature, a number of researchers were found to suggest the importance of advanced education in the vocation of public administration of local government. Banovetz (1971) stated that many early top municipality executives were civil engineers by vocation, selected because they were technicians “employing neutral competence rather than as leaders in policy development” (p. 82). According to Banovetz, the challenges of forming public policy faced by early top public executives did not have the “immediacy” as those facing contemporary public executives (p. 82). Barber (1988) also studied this domain and concluded that graduate degrees in public administration and public policy have become the “preferred graduate degree” over earlier civil engineering degrees (p. 697).

In a study conducted by Renner (2001), the researcher discovered that by the turn of the 21st century 63% of all top municipality executives had obtained an advanced degree, with most degrees being in public administration, urban planning, or public policy. Similarly, Watson and Hassett (2002) found that 69% of long-serving top executives in municipalities with populations under 30,000 had a graduate degree.

The ability of top executives to exhibit “mobility” appeared to be a common thread in the literature reviewed. Paul (1981) and Barber (1988) proposed that mobility was a
principal strategy to a public executive’s career advancement plans, and that executives commonly sought and accepted management positions with increasingly larger organizations. Similarly, Descants and Newell (1996) found that nearly 80% of top public executives in large municipalities came from outside the community.

Watson and Hassett (2004) suggested that many larger organizations are beginning to nurture “homegrown” executives through internal career paths. This has led researchers to posit that the percentage of top public executives that come from “outside” an organization may be diminish significantly in future years. This may be partially due to the increased availability and access to graduate-level public administration education in faster growing communities. If this theory holds true, homegrown local professionals from within large communities will rise to the top of public organizations, prompting earlier literature of public executive mobility to be altered to include the category of “local professionals.”

In earlier studies, researchers also found evidence that increased tenure strengthened the tendency for employees to remain at their place of employment (Porter & Steers, 1973). Mobley et al. (1979) confirmed this earlier work and suggested that as an individual’s tenure increased, the probability of the individual leaving his or her position decreased. Likewise, researchers Cotton and Tuttle (1986) found compelling evidence in their meta-analysis that a negative relationship existed between tenure and turnover. Other researchers have, by and large, supported the hypothesis of these earlier studies (Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990; Lucas, Parasuraman, Davis, & Enis, 1987).

The review of literature suggested that researchers of Council-Manager forms of city government have long theorized that most top executives change positions numerous
times during their professional careers. Similarly, it is common belief amongst current and future top municipality executives that securing the most lucrative public management positions requires an individual to make multiple job changes during ones career. This echoed the theories of researchers who have posited that short job tenures of top executives in local municipalities are principally due to job market searching by these individuals for more lucrative and politically stable positions (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1994; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Kaatz et al., 1999; Renner & DeSantis, 1994).

Some researchers, however, have found evidence that a small group of top executives experience lengthy careers in a single municipality. For example, in Watson and Hassett’s (2003) study of 146 current and past city executives (who had at least 20 years of service in the same municipality), the researchers found that most executives with lengthy tenures were from smaller municipalities with populations of less than 100,000. Furthermore, the researchers concluded that those communities tended to be politically stable and homogeneous. Watson and Hassett also found that the majority of these executives were males of Caucasian descent with above-average education who had strong cohesive relationships with the governing commission members.

In a similar study, Watson and Hassett (2004) examined the career paths of 113 appointed top city executives in communities with populations over 100,000. The researchers concluded that a positive correlation existed between top executives who had a high degree of management latitude, and longer tenures. Many executives in the study also suggested that a high degree of management latitude was paramount in the

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7 Important to note is that those who participated in the study cited management latitude as the third leading factor contributing to extended tenures.
performance of their duties, and that nurturing an atmosphere of trust from governing commission members early on was instrumental in acquiring longer-term managerial discretion.

Top public executives have also been described as “principled agents” who “do not shirk, subvert, or steal on the job even when the pecuniary and other tangible incentives to refrain from these behaviors are weak or non-existent” (Dilulio, 1994, p. 282). Dilulio proposed that top executives who act with loyalty to the organization, personally accept and endorse its mission, and communicate their support to employees throughout the organization, exhibit less turnover than their peers.

Renner’s (2001) report on the State of the Profession survey suggested that the average tenure of top public executives in municipalities is now nearly 7 years, doubling since 1965 when it was roughly 3 ¼ years. According to the report, the researcher found that the average tenure for top public executives in large municipalities with a Council-Manager form of government was slightly less at 6 ½ years. This appears to contradict previous literature regarding top-executive tenure in large municipalities that alluded to increased political instability as a principal factor limiting executive tenure (Banfield & Wilson, 1963).

Average tenures of top municipality executives, for the most part, have increased over the past few decades. Renner (2001) suggested that a high degree of job satisfaction and reduced forced turnover rates might be principal factors contributing to this trend. Whether or not this trend will continue is an area of continued debate among many researchers. For now, however, shorter top-executive tenures will remain the norm due to push factors such as political uncertainty, poor government fiscal performance, and
community instability, as well as pull factors such as incentives associated with career advancements.

**General Factors**

The review of literature found that factors influencing top-executive turnover, such as compensation and benefits, ranked low compared to other factors, i.e., feeling valued and serving in the public interest (Patton, Witt, Lovrich, & Fredericksen, 2002). In a study of long-serving top city executives conducted by Watson and Hassett (2003), similar results were found. Additionally, Watson and Hassett noted that the “quality of life” some public executives enjoyed after 20 years or more of service was valued more than their actual compensation and benefits. Watson and Hassett found that some long-serving top municipality executives conveyed the importance of their public service role to the citizens of the community over pay and benefits.

Buckwalter and Parsons (2000) found that high level of job satisfaction among top public executives was a key factor in reducing top-executive turnover. In their study of 800 top executives in local municipalities, the researchers noted that most executives who enjoyed a high level of job satisfaction attributed the job fulfillment to their “sense of success” (p. 19). In a comparable study of long-serving public executives, Watson and Hassett (2002) found similar results when they concluded that the principal reason for reduced turnover in top municipality executive positions was a high level of job satisfaction.

Renner (2001) also found job satisfaction to be an important factor in top-executive tenure and retention. In her research, Renner discovered that an overwhelming majority
of top public executives (97%) felt that their careers had been “successful,” while 22% of those surveyed said they were “highly satisfied with their jobs” (p. 40).

An examination of earlier literature also uncovered research suggesting that a relationship existed between an individual’s age and length of tenure. Porter and Steers (1973), for example, concluded that a strong “negative” relationship existed between age and tenure. Mobley et al. (1979) also found that “age...is consistently and negatively related to turnover” (p. 493). Similarly, later meta-analyses advocated that turnover declined with age, suggesting that older employees are less likely to leave their positions than their younger counterparts (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). This may be due to the inherent difficulties experienced by older employees in obtaining similar employment (Werbel & Bedeian, 1989). Some researchers have pointed to age discrimination as a principal factor in the difficulty of older employees securing further employment (McGoldrick & Arrowsmith, 1993; Perry, Kulik, & Bourhis, 1996).

More recent literature, however, has disputed these earlier theories. Healy, Lehman, and McDaniel (1995), for example, found that no statistically significant relationship existed between age and turnover.
CHAPTER 3

U.S. COUNTY GOVERNANCE

History of American County Government

The word “county” can be traced back to the French word “conte,” meaning the domain of a count. Webster defines county as “the largest territorial division for local government within a state of the U.S.” The Anglo-Saxon county called “shire” is the basis of Webster’s definition. The origin of American county government dates back to the shire system in early English history, although there are even earlier examples of county forms of government (Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, 2006).

In the early 16th century, the basic unit of local government in New England colonies was the town. Soon thereafter, colonists adopted the shire structure of government for purposes of addressing a broader range of colony issues, such as economic and geographic needs. Conversely, in the southern states counties generally developed without townships or subdivisions such as colonies.

As America grew, new states adopted either the New England or southern state design. Interestingly, during the authoring of the United States Constitution, the founding fathers did not provide for local governments, rather leaving the choice of local
governance to each individual state. Subsequently, this led to early state constitutions viewing county governments as an extension, or arm, of that state.

As America pushed westward, counties advanced as the primary local unit of government, providing the delivery of public services in large regions where rural populations were widely dispersed. Following the turn of the 20th century, increasing populations, trends towards suburban development, and the government “reform” movement gave strength to the role of local governments such as counties. These combined developments, in many ways, provided the necessary elements for greater urbanization in the mid-20th century. Additionally, due to the reform movement, counties began to gain greater independence from state influence, and started to be viewed as a provider of an ever-widening range of services (Iowa State Association of Counties, 2006).

For American counties to fulfill their newly perceived responsibilities however, they needed to acquire more authority and political power. To accomplish this task, counties had to eliminate the long-standing “perception” of limited authority. This required counties to develop more respect and cooperation from other government entities. The National Association of Counties (2006) summarized this situation as follows: “The battle, then, was twofold: First, expand county government’s capacity to address local challenges; second, secure counties a “seat at the table” when city, state and federal authorities came together” (p. 10).

With the population growth of rural areas in the United States during the mid-20th century, non-urbanized counties also began to increase their power base. Many non-
urbanized counties attempted to leverage this newly acquired influence to further gain expanded “home rule” from their respective state legislatures.

The National Association of Counties (2006) suggested home rule as following one of two general models. In the first model, states delegated to the county limited and specifically defined powers, while continuing to maintain control over critical functions such as revenue and fiscal policy. In the second model, sometimes called the charter model, states permitted counties to adopt a form of local constitution that included a broader scope of authority, with county voter approval. This authority covered many aspects of county governance such as the determination of organizational structure, the imposing of taxes to generate revenues, and the autonomy in the spending of monies on a broad continuum of service-related programs and activities.

The home rule movement of the 20th century in many ways signaled a new era for American counties. First, counties were given the authority to decide for themselves their own form of government rather than being mandated to choose from the limited forms of government formerly prescribed by state statutes or law. Second, counties were able to apply for more resources to meet public demands (National Association of Counties, 2006).

The National Association of Counties further classified American counties into three broad categories. These categories included the (a) Commission form of government, (b) Commission-Executive form of government, and (c) Commission-Administrator (or Manager) form of government.

The form of county government with the longest history is the Commission form of government, where the qualified electors of the county elect either a single or multi-
member board that directly manages the county’s affairs in lieu of employing a professional administrator.

Proponents of the Commission form of government have suggested that it is the most democratic form of government, because independent elections of key individuals within the government structure limit the potential of corruption. Proponents further suggest that the Commission form of government offers more “checks and balances.”

Opponents, on the other hand, suggest that the Commission form of government lacks a strong executive component. Opponents further advocate that a diffused power structure contributes to vague responsibilities and, due to the absence of a professional administrator, important decisions may tend to be politically driven.

Due to the inherent “management” limitations of the Commission form of government, some American counties have elected to incorporate a form of government that includes a professional administrator position, e.g., Commission-Executive or Commission-Administrator form of government.

The overall responsibilities of a professional administrator vary from county to county, but are generally limited to the administration and operation of county programs. Also, professional administrators hold a variety of titles, e.g., chief executive, chief executive officer, or chief administrative officer.

Forms of American County Government

There are numerous forms of county governments within the United States, each governed by their respective state’s statutes, laws and regulations. As previously mentioned, most American county governments can be classified into three basic
categories: Commission, Commission-Executive, and Commission-Administrator forms of government. Under each form of county government, many administrative responsibilities are vested by state constitution or statute to independently elected row officers, e.g., county clerk, county coroner, county sheriff, and county treasurer (National Association of Counties, 2006).

Elected board or governing board members in American counties are most frequently called commissioners or supervisors, although there are many more titles that have been adopted. Many governing board members of counties in the State of Louisiana, for example, are called parish police jurors, while governing board members of counties in the State of New Jersey are called freeholders.

The form of government adopted by the qualified electors of a county is dependent on a multitude of factors. Factors may include population, the number of rural and urban communities, tax revenue bases, and the availability of administrative resources. While some counties choose to operate within a form of government incorporating streamlined and centralized decision-making attributes, such as the Commission-Executive or Commission-Administrator forms of government, other counties choose a form of government that is more decentralized, with dispersion among many interests, such as the Commission form of government. A more in-depth discussion of the three basic forms of county government follows.

Commission Form of County Government

In the Commission form of county government, legislative authority and executive powers are generally shared by a group of individuals elected to a commission or council. Legislative authority may include the power to enact county ordinances or regulations, or
adopt budgets. Executive powers may also include the administration of county policies or regulations, and the appointment of county employees. In most instances, the county governing body consists of an elected board or commission composed of three commissioners or supervisors. In counties with larger populations, the board size may be increased accordingly. Figure 3-1 provides an illustration of the traditional Commission form of county government (excluding row officers).

![Figure 3-1. Traditional Commission form of government.](image)

Interestingly, the Commission form of government does not afford the opportunity for one executive to oversee a county’s operations.⁸

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⁸ Many times in the Commission form of government, the board or council share the administrative and legislative functions with other county officials who are elected by county voters, e.g., county clerk, treasurer, sheriff, coroner, and/or assessor. This shared function of authority may vary from county to county.
A few counties within the United States, although not predominant, consist of one elected official who is vested with the legislative authorities and executive powers normally reserved for a commission or council with multiple elected officials. Figure 3-2 illustrates the Sole Commissioner form of county government (excluding row officers).

![Diagram of Sole Commissioner form of government]

Figure 3-2. Sole Commissioner form of government.

*Commission-Executive Form of County Government*

The Commission-Executive form of county government consists of an elected board and an elected county executive or administrator. The underscoring principle of this form of government is the separation of powers. A county executive is generally considered the chief administrative officer of the county. Typically, the county executive has the authority to veto regulations or ordinances enacted by the commission or council, and
appoint and dismiss county department heads. Figure 3-3 presents the typical structure of the Commission-Executive form of county government (excluding row officers).

**Figure 3-3.** Commission-Executive form of government.

Although the Commission form of government has been the predominant county government structure in the United States, many counties in the recent past have turned to the Commission-Executive, or Commission-Administrator (or Manager) form of government. This has lead to the Commissioner-Executive form of government becoming the most accepted form of county government in the United States (County Executives of America, 2006). Many states, such as Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee, have added to
this shift by mandating that county executives head counties within their respective states. The National Association of Counties (2006) has estimated that more than 40% of American counties have shifted to a type of government that incorporates either an elected executive or appointed county administrator.

All Commission-Executive forms of county government operate within an adopted charter. An adopted charter details the roles and authority of the commission or council and other elected officials, and delineates the roles and authority of other appointed positions within the county government. While American counties are ultimately subject to state laws, under home rule the adopted charter allows the county the expanded ability to exercise a greater role in the formulation and execution of county policies as they deem fit.

As previously mentioned, the primary responsibility of the county executive is to serve as the chief executive officer of the county, while the commission or council function as the county’s legislative body (County Executives of America, 2006). In rare cases, a county manager is appointed by the commission or council to aid a county executive in the functional operations of county programs. Other elected officials within the Commission-Executive form of government may include the county attorney, sheriff, treasurer, and public administrator or manager.

Directly elected by the voters, county executives are ultimately accountable to the qualified electors of the county and are obligated to carry out a host of administrative functions in accordance with the terms and conditions of an elected representative. County executives, for example, generally direct county policy and work cooperatively with the county commission or council. County executives also exercise the power to
appoint and dismiss employees from county positions, oversee the development of the
county budget, and provide a legislative voice when approving or vetoing proposed
regulations and ordinances. In many cases, county executives are tasked with the
responsibility of overseeing all county services, including criminal justice, social and
health services, welfare, waste treatment, taxes, business and economic development,
recreation, disaster and natural/environmental assistance, and other programs specific to
the needs of the county (County Executives of America, 2006).

Commission-Administrator/Manager
Forms of County Government

Although the Commission-Administrator and Commission-Manager forms of
government were considered synonymous for purposes of this research study, it is
important to note that there is a subtle distinction between the two: Administrators in the
Commission-Administrator form of government generally do not have the authority to
appoint and dismiss department heads. This authority usually rests with the commission
or council. Conversely, in the Commission-Manager form of government, administrators
are generally vested with the powers to appoint and dismiss department heads.

Figure 3-4 illustrates a typical Commission-Administrator form of county
government (excluding row officers). For comparative purposes, an illustration of a
typical Commission-Manager form of county government (also excluding row officers) is
provided in Figure 3-5.

The first administrator position legally defined by ordinance occurred in Staunton,
Virginia, in 1908. In 1912, Sumter, South Carolina, became the first local government to
adopt a charter incorporating the basic principles of the Commission-Administrator form
of government, followed closely by Dayton, Ohio, in 1914.
The first American counties to officially adopt the Commission-Administrator form of government were Arlington County, Virginia, and Durham and Robeson Counties, North Carolina, in the 1930s. Since its establishment, the Commission-Administrator form of government has become the most popular of all forms of county governments in American counties with populations of 5,000 or greater.
The Commission-Administrator form of government generally consists of an elected board of commissioners or council, and an administrator that is appointed by the governing board. The administrator operates as the chief administrative officer of the board.
county and is responsible to the governing board for all county affairs placed under his or her direction by county regulations, laws, or ordinances. The operating powers of this form of county government are either general or self-governing as determined by the qualified electors of the county.

The principal strength of the Commission-Administrator form of government is its ability to combine the strong political leadership of elected governing board members with the strong managerial experience of an appointed administrator. In the Commission-Administrator form of government, the appointed administrator serves at the pleasure of the board.

Many American counties have chosen the Commission-Administrator form of government for two reasons. First, this form of government allows elected governing board members the ability to represent the community as leaders and policymakers by focusing their time on policy issues that are perceived as responsive to the citizens' needs and wants. Second, the county benefits from the professional expertise of an administrator who ensures the day-to-day operations of the county are efficiently executed, and that all the citizens of the county are being served.

It is again important to note that in the Commission-Administrator form of government, the commission or council may terminate the administrator at any time he or she is perceived as unresponsive to the board’s needs. In one sense, an administrator’s responsiveness in the Commission-Administrator form of government is continuously being tested.

9 In one sense, this form of government establishes a representative system where all the legislative powers are concentrated within the board or council, and where board members appoint a professionally trained administrator to oversee the delivery of county services.
Role of County Government

County governments, as with all forms of government, are an institution formed with the intent to provide public services to its citizens that they cannot provide themselves. County governments also regulate activities that are overall considered harmful to the community. Contemporary American counties, however, are quickly moving into other service delivery areas as well, e.g., assisting in the administration of programs related to consumer protection, economic development, employment and training, planning and zoning, and water and air quality.

Wiseman (2004) suggested that the role of county governments could be delineated into four primary areas. First, counties imply a “place that one calls home rather than a governmental management system” (p. 88). Although this concept may be overdone, Wiseman suggested that this role provides a useful lens in explaining the way citizens identify with the place where they live.

Second, Wiseman (2004) put forth the idea that counties provide a means of citizen access to the federal system. Citizens rarely discern the appropriate jurisdiction for solutions deemed the responsibility of government; rather, citizens choose to address the issues deemed important to them at the level they to which they have access, i.e., the local level.

Third, Wiseman (2004) theorized that “citizens generally have a very real perception of their relationship with democratic government,” and that when demands are made, responses (positive or negative) are expected (p. 88). Wiseman termed this role as

10 Historically, the role of American counties has been focused on the performance of state mandated duties, e.g., assessment of property, record keeping of vital statistics, maintenance of rural roads, administration of elections and judicial functions, and indigent relief (National Association of Counties, 2006).
“governmental demand and response” (p. 89). In many ways, qualified electors of the county feel that their best opportunity to obtain a response from government is at the municipal or county level.

Fourth is the issue of service delivery. Wiseman proposed that citizens primarily view the delivery of services at the local level. Many times the local level is that of the American county. In many instances, county citizens view any deletions or changes from the array of services that a county provides as serious, implying service delivery is a paramount role of American counties.

The function of American counties as service-delivery units can vary significantly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. One case in point is that most American counties are called upon to construct and maintain local roads. Some counties, such as those in the State of North Carolina, however, have no responsibility in the construction and repair of local roads. The National Association of Counties (2006) further pointed out that service variations from county to county exist in the domain of social service provisions such as indigent care, and utility services such as the supply of water.

Similarly, disparity also exists between counties and local municipalities relating to the delivery of core services, e.g., planning, zoning, and building permits. In many regions of the country, local municipalities are viewed as the principal provider of services to incorporated areas, while counties are only required to provide services to unincorporated areas.

The inconsistency in service deliveries can also be observed when state-to-state program mandates are examined, such as Medicaid. In Alabama, for example, Medicaid is administered by the state, and counties have no fiscal or administrative responsibility.
Conversely, in Iowa, counties fund 100% of the non-federal share for certain Medicaid services, such as waivers, and 50% of the non-federal share for other Medicaid services, such as case management (National Association of Counties, 2006).

Furthermore, the mix of services provided by American counties is many times a "shared responsibility" between a county and a local municipality. Fire and police protection are two such examples.

In the past few decades, county governments have extended their role as service delivery units in response to the ever-changing economic and political landscape in which they serve (Lobao & Kraybill, 2005). Since contemporary American counties are emerging as the fastest growing general-purpose government in the United States, their role in economic development and public service activities is also advancing. American counties are more and more being looked upon as a promoter of local economic development and a provider of expanded social "safety nets."

County services referred to as safety nets are services that address a core group of citizens whose social, financial, physical, or mental conditions limit their ability to access and receive conventional medical care and related support services. The expanded role of American counties as providers of social safety nets includes making available major health services, such as health care for the uninsured, mental health, public health outreach, and substance abuse treatment services. While federal and state funds exist to support many of these programs, American counties are further allocating monies from their general funds to augment federal and state efforts to meet the local health care needs.
Taxes continue to be the primary source of revenue for American counties. Many state constitutions, laws, and statutes mandate the sources of revenue upon which a county may draw. American counties spend their revenues on a number of public needs, such as educational and social services, transportation, public safety, and the protection of the environment. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2006) reported that in 2000-2001 American counties, on average, spent 14% of their revenues on educational services, 11% on social services, and 6% on public safety.

Contemporary American counties have been categorized as enigmatic hybrids of state and local government, acting sometimes as agents of the state, sometimes as county governments, and other times as municipal governments (Hoene, Baldassare, & Shires, 2002). This concept supports the notion that American counties are frequently viewed as performing dual functions; first as a service delivery arm of the state, and second as a local point of government.

Throughout the United States, counties have provided, and continue to provide, a myriad of services through numerous public bodies and agencies. In the course of providing these services, American counties have acted as a local economic stabilization force by employing millions of professional, technical, and clerical personnel. The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2006) estimated that there are nearly 2,500,000 individuals employed full-time by counties throughout the United States. Most full-time county employees provide public services in the areas of education, medical care, police and fire

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11 According to a 2001 National Association of Counties study titled, County Revenue Patterns: A Survey of Authority Practices, the single most important revenue source for American counties is property taxes, or roughly 31% of the general revenue funds. Sales tax is the second largest revenue source for American counties, or 14% of the general fund.
protection, corrections, streets and highways, public welfare, health, and the operation of a judicial system.

Role of County Administrator

It has been suggested that the principal role of a county administrator is to effectively oversee and manage the delivery of local programs and services (County Executives of America, 2006). In counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government, the administrator’s duties, for the most part, include the following tasks and responsibilities in the delivery of those services:

1. Supervision of all county offices, departments, boards, commissions, and agencies under the general control of the governing board, subject to the general direction and control of the board. Also, in the case of county managers, the appointment of department heads;

2. Execution of all ordinances and resolutions of the governing board, and all laws of the state subject to enforcement by the county;

3. Preparation and submittal of administrative codes and/or regulations that incorporate the details of administrative procedures for the provision of county services to the governing board;

4. Preparation, submittal and administration of an annual budget and long-range expenditure plan, including a financial plan for raising revenues to the governing board;

5. Preparation and submittal of financial and administrative activity reports at the end of the fiscal year to the governing board;
6. Act as principal liaison between the governing board and all other departments, boards, and commissions;

7. Appointment and dismissal (with the approval of the governing board) of all appointed county officers, employees, and agents, except those who are elected by the people or whose appointment is otherwise provided for by law;

8. Implementation of policies and guidelines mandated by both federal and state laws and statutes;

9. Recommendation of necessary and desirable state legislation that supports the county’s goals and objectives;

10. Research and recommend the establishment and modification of county policies;

11. Representation regarding the county’s relations with the public, the press, and other governmental entities; and

12. Response to citizen inquiries, complaints and requests.

In summary, professional administrators have brought to American counties the experience and training of administering local government projects and programs. Commission and council members, and county citizens alike, have grown accustomed to the need of professional administrators to provide complete, accurate, and objective information on a myriad of county policies and programs.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Background

The review of literature produced reoccurring themes that emphasized the profound effects of local municipality top-executive turnover on city policies, programs, and fiscal commitments. This research study theorized that county administrator turnover would have similar effects on county policies, programs, and fiscal commitments. Numerous research efforts have been made to establish the relative suitability of various explanatory variables accounting for turnover of top executives in municipalities (Clingermayer et al., 2003; Feiock et al., 2001; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006); however, no similar research efforts have been undertaken to date in an attempt to explain appointed county administrator turnover.

One of the principal purposes of this research study was to examine factors thought to contribute to appointed county administrator turnover in American counties, both in terms of general turnover and push/pull dynamics. In Chapter 1, the research study problem was posed and theoretical models formulated depicting “general” research questions and hypotheses. The focus of the literature review in Chapter 2 and the cross-sectional interviews with past and present county administrators formed the basis for selecting appropriate covariates, and developing “specific” research questions and
hypotheses investigated in the empirical analyses conducted in Chapters 6 and 7. This chapter outlines the specific research questions and model-related hypotheses. The first section of this chapter provides the hypotheses for each of the 21 covariates in the General Model, denoted as Hypothesis a. The second section provides the hypotheses for each of the 15 covariates in the Push/Pull Model, denoted as Hypothesis b.

**General Model - Research Questions and Hypotheses**

It has been established that the turnover of top executives in local municipalities is affected by political conflict and uncertainty within the governmental entity. It has also been ascertained that turnover of top executives in municipalities is affected by the municipality’s fiscal performance, relative measurement of stability within the community, and select administrator profiles. This research study proposed that similar relationships existed between these domains and appointed county administrator turnover in large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government.

The first model developed in this research study, the General Model, included a number of explanatory variables that measured key dimensions thought to influence appointed county administrator turnover. The key dimensions (or domains) thought to influence county administrator turnover included political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, community instability, and select administrator profile characteristics.\(^ {12} \)

Past studies have put forth the argument that any one domain may precipitate the departure or turnover of a top public executive. This study, on the other hand, suggested

\(^ {12} \) Additionally, by including precise measurements (or covariates) within each of the four domains, it was thought that the general research questions provided in Chapter 1 could be further refined, allowing for the testing of more specific research questions and hypotheses.
that models incorporating multiple domains could provide a better methodology in explaining appointed administrator turnover in large American counties.

Important to note is that up to this point in the research study, the ruling body of the public entity has been specifically referred to as the governing board, governing council, and/or commission. For purposes of uniformity, the public entity ruling body will simply be referred to as the commission from this point forward.

Political Uncertainty Domain

Political uncertainty as a determining factor of top public executive turnover has been a topic of research for nearly 50 years (see Kammerer et al., 1962). Many earlier researchers theorized that political conflict and political uncertainty were principal reasons why top public executives left their office (Banfield & Wilson, 1963; Lineberry & Fowler, 1967). Recent studies of top public executive turnover have found that disagreements between commission members and top public executives had measurable effects on the decision of a top executive to leave his or her position (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; Desantis & Newell, 1996).

The importance of political uncertainty in appointed county administrator turnover was also reflected in the interview responses with past and present county administrators. For example, Interviewee #1 responded:

I would strongly agree as to the importance of political uncertainty and appointed county administrator turnover, only because elected officials serve at the will of their constituents, and constituents can be very demanding. This leads elected officials to change in the wind, and when things aren’t going so well they take it out on the executive.

Similarly, support of the political uncertainty domain was indicated by Interviewee #2 when they said:
As a county manager, I expect success in the performance of my job functions, but I also expect criticism from commission members. In some of the decisions I've made, I have not been able to count on the political support from commission members. This has, to some extent, added to the uncertainty of my career.

Interviewee #4, on the other hand said:

I knew of times when commission members did nasty things to each other and asked me to do things I was not very comfortable with. This created political and moral conflicts. One example would be asking that individuals be promoted people into positions they were not qualified for.

Not all interviewees were totally convinced that political uncertainty was a dominant factor in appointed county administrator turnover. For example, Interviewee #2 said:

I think what you term political uncertainty has some impact on administrator turnover. In my case, I was there for 13 years, and I made it through a major scandal. I guess political uncertainty could be a factor in some administrators deciding to leave office, while others it's not.

To explore the role of political uncertainty and appointed county administrator turnover, the General Model put forth in this study contained four attributes thought to accurately measure the domain of political uncertainty: (a) short-term commission member turnover, (b) mid-term commission member turnover, (c) commission leadership turnover, and (d) partisanship/non-partisanship in commission member elections - change in commission party control. The use of these attributes permitted the study to focus on measurements of those key attributes when developing specific research questions and related hypotheses in the General Model.

Interestingly, Interviewee #3 strongly agreed with the selection of the four aforementioned attributes when they stated:

In terms of your four measurements, I think they would accurately reflect (or measure) political uncertainty.
The specific research questions and related hypotheses for the domain of political uncertainty follow.

**Short-term Commission Member Turnover**

Research Question 1: *What is the relationship between short-term commission member turnover and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 1a: *The greater the short-term commission member turnover, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.*

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between short-term commission member turnover (measured as the percentage change of commission members in any one-year time frame) and an appointed administrator’s decision to seek alternative employment. In the Commission-Administrator form of county government, the decision to appoint or dismiss an administrator is made solely by the commission members (National Association of Counties, 2006). A discord between the administrator and new commission members (or conflicts between the two) is thought to contribute to administrator turnover. Additionally, when new members are elected to a commission, a shift of the commission majority from one faction to another could occur, followed closely by the replacement of the administrator (Svara, 1990).

**Mid-term Commission Member Turnover**

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between mid-term commission member turnover and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 2a: *The greater the mid-term commission member turnover, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.*
It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between mid-term commission member turnover (measured as the cumulative percentage change of commission members in a rolling two-year time frame) and an appointed administrator’s decision to seek alternative employment. Inclusion of this measurement was deemed prudent because it is thought that adversarial relationships between commission members and administrators build over time. DeHoog and Whitaker (1990) defined this elevated level of disagreement as the “firing point.” It is thought that it could take a longer period of time for new commission members to build commission majority and execute plans for an administrator’s departure.

Interviewee #2 echoed DeHoog and Whitaker’s theory when they suggested:

I strongly agree with your mid-term commission turnover measurement (two-year horizon), only because the seeds for the dirty deed (forced administrator departure) might take that long. I personally think that a three to five-year horizon is more appropriate, only because the commission does not want to give the public the appearance of being unstable.

Leadership Turnover

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between commission leadership turnover and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 3a: The higher the frequency of commission leadership turnover, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.

It is hypothesized that a positive correlation exists between commission leadership changes (measured as the percentage change of commission leadership in any one-year time frame) and an administrator’s decision to seek alternative employment. Commission chairpersons maintain an increased level of authority and visibility over fellow commission members, exerting and subtly shaping a wide array of official county actions.
(National Association of Counties, 2006). It is therefore thought that changes in the commission chairperson could influence a commission's overall decision to retain or dismiss an appointed administrator.

**Commission Partisanship – Commission Party Control**

Research Question 4: *What is the relationship between partisan and non-partisan commissions, and changes in commission party control and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 4a1: *Partisan commissions result in higher administrator turnover when compared to non-partisan commissions.*

Hypothesis 4a2: *Partisan commissions that experience a change in party control result in higher administrator turnover when compared to no change in party control.*

It is posited that a positive correlation exists between partisan commissions (measured as commission electoral structures that incorporate partisan election processes) and administrator turnover. Political cross-pressures arise within commissions when partisan election processes exist within the county (as compared to counties with non-partisan election processes). It is also thought that cross-pressures created along party lines due to disagreement among commission members leads to political instability ultimately resulting in political uncertainty. Whitaker and DeHoog (1991) suggested that if the political instability expanded to include the administrator, it could signal the departure of that administrator. Similarly, if an administrator becomes entangled or aligned with the minority party side, an administrator may seek alternative employment.

Similarly, it is theorized that a positive correlation exists between changes in commission party control (measured as a change in any given year in the majority of commission members' affiliation with the Democratic or Republican party from the
previous year) and administrator turnover. Past research suggests that cross-pressures created along party lines due to disagreement among commission members leads to political instability, ultimately resulting in political uncertainty. If an administrator becomes entangled or aligned with the minority party side, this could precipitate the administrator’s decision to seek alternative employment.

Interviewee #3, however, offered the opposite view on the importance of commission partisanship and appointed county administrator turnover when they suggested:

I’m not so sure that commission partisanship is that important. No matter which party a commission member is aligned with, they seem to have their own individual agenda, and something the administrator needs to adjust to accordingly.

Table 4-1 provides a summary of the specific research questions and related hypotheses contained in the General Model regarding the relationship between political uncertainty measurements and administrator turnover.

Table 4-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: What is the relationship between short-term commission member turnover and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H1a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a one-year percentage commission member turnover and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What is the relationship between mid-term commission member turnover and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H2a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a rolling two-year percentage commission member turnover and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: What is the relationship between commission leadership turnover and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H3a: (+) A positive relationship exists between commission leadership changes and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: What is the relationship between partisan and non-partisan commissions and changes in commission party control and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H4a1: (+) A positive relationship exists between partisan commissions versus non-partisan commissions and administrator turnover. H4a2: (+) A positive relationship exists between changes in the party control of partisan commissions and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government Fiscal Performance Domain

Government fiscal performance as an explanatory factor of top public executive turnover has only recently become a topic of research in local municipalities with somewhat inconclusive results (Feiock et al., 2001; Feiock & Stream, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006). The review of literature, however, found no such research relating to government fiscal performance and top public executive turnover within American counties.

In the past 15 years, a number of models have been developed to measure the fiscal performance of local governments. Some of the conceptual approaches, or lenses, researchers have developed include financial position, fiscal stress, fiscal crisis, and financial condition, and incorporate different county financial aspects in to assess whether local governmental entities are embodied with certain financial difficulties. Berne (1992), for example, focused on the study of future assets and liabilities.

Berne and Schramm (1986), on the other hand, suggested that a model of government fiscal performance could focus on measurements of a community’s needs, i.e., conditions affecting service provisions, and public policies affecting the local government entity. Greenberg and Hiller (1995) put forth the theory that three basic indicators could measure a government’s fiscal condition: (a) sustainability, (b) flexibility, and (c) vulnerability. Other researchers have proposed that a government’s fiscal performance could simply be measured from cash, budgetary, long-run, and service-level solvency lenses (Groves, Godsey, & Shulman, 1981; Kloha, Weisert, & Klein, 2005).

Leatherman and Deller (2001) pointed out that fiscal performance and evaluation methods generally use ratios of various types and follow them over time. One such
method was the Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS) developed by the International City/County Management Association (Groves & Valente, 1994).

A second method of measuring local government fiscal performance was the Ten-Point Test of financial condition (Brown, 1993). This method utilized a series of ratios related to a local government's revenue, expenditures, debt structure, and operating position, and measured these ratios against other local governments of similar size. While some researchers have concluded that this method was the easiest to use, not all of the necessary information needed to perform the analysis was readily available in county annual financial statements (Honadle & Lloyd-Jones, 1998).

The importance of government fiscal performance in county administrator turnover was also echoed by the interviewee responses with past and present county administrators. For example, Interviewee #1 was adamant when they said:

A county's fiscal performance absolutely affects an administrator's ability to retain their appointed position. My creating variables that measure activity in the General Fund, you are capturing the core group of county (fiscal) activity; and County administrators are frequently placed in the position of saying "no, no, no" to elected official's requests for project funding. This, in turn, can create friction between commission members and the administrator. If the friction becomes to great, the administrator might choose to voluntarily seek alternative employment. Similarly, if the level of disagreement becomes unsuitable for commission members, an induced departure may begin.

Interviewee #3 had similar thoughts when they stated:

I agree that a county's fiscal performance could facilitate an administrator's departure. This is especially true if the administrator is a spender or a conservative.

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13 The FTMS was based on a series of 36 indicators that are tracked over time. Unfortunately, many of the indicators included information not available in a county's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR).

14 This method of measuring local government performance was principally developed for use in smaller municipalities and counties, and its application to larger units of government has not been tested.
Likewise, the same goes for the commission. Both the administrator and the commission must be on the same page in this respect. I guess you could say my predecessor was a spender. Because of a change in the commission many years ago, tax restraint became the norm. This shift in fiscal policy did not bode well with regards to my predecessor’s relationship with the commission that eventually contributed to his departure.

Interviewee #4 also agreed with the assessment of a county’s fiscal performance on appointed administrator turnover when they said:

I strongly agree with your assessment of a county’s fiscal performance as a measurement of county manager turnover.

In an attempt to understand the role of government fiscal performance on county administrator turnover, six attributes of fiscal performance were proposed and included in the General Model. These were a county’s (a) cost burden, (b) income growth, (c) revenue dependency, (d) financial outlay, (e) short-term stability, and (f) long-term stability. Development and inclusion of these attributes allowed the ability to focus on measurements of these key attributes and further develop specific research questions and related hypotheses.

Interviewees #1 and #2 concurred with the aforementioned attributes when they said, respectively:

I strongly agree with the measurements you have chosen; and

In my mind, the six variables you have chosen appear to accurately measure a county’s fiscal performance.

Interviewees #3 and #4, however, offered additional suggestions as follows:

Your measurements for fiscal performance seem reasonably good. It would be useful is you were able to measure internal budget performance, because I think managerial success is highly related to the organization’s internal budgeting process. In other words, “Which department gets what?”; and

Another important aspect of fiscal performance is the internal (departmental) fights for the limited funds. Also, it does not necessarily depend on the fiscal performance
measurements that you have indicated, however, the internal (departmental) performance that ultimately reflects on good management.

The specific research questions and related hypotheses in the domain of government fiscal performance follow.

Cost Burden

Research Question 5: What is the relationship between a county’s cost burden and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 5a: The larger a county’s cost burden, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between a county’s cost burden (measured as tax revenue equity or the ratio of total property tax revenue to a county’s total population) and administrator turnover. Inclusion of this measurement was considered prudent simply because property tax issues are considered highly charged and visible (Feiock et al., 2001). As with past studies of top municipality executive turnover, it is thought that high levels of property tax revenue burdens could lead to higher levels of county administrator turnover.

Income Growth

Research Question 6: What is the relationship between a county’s income growth and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 6a: The smaller a county’s income growth, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.

It is posited that a negative correlation exists between a county’s income growth (measured as a one-year change in tax revenue) and administrator turnover. Researchers have suggested that income growth is an indicator of whether a community’s economy is
expanding (Honadle & Lloyd-Jones, 1998). Researchers have also theorized that counties experiencing higher levels of income growth are able to maintain higher levels of sustainability of the community’s well being. Higher levels of income growth also afford top public executives’ flexibility to respond to economic changes and new financial circumstances within the limits of the county’s tax-paying abilities (Greenberg & Hiller, 1995).

**Revenue Dependency**

Research Question 7: *What is the relationship between a county’s revenue dependency and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 7a: *The larger a county’s revenue dependency, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.*

It is thought that a positive correlation exists between a county’s revenue dependency (measured as a ratio between intergovernmental transfers and total revenue) and administrator turnover. Intergovernmental revenues as a percentage of total revenues are an indicator of a county’s dependence on income from both the state and federal governments. While large amounts of intergovernmental revenue could be good if counties are paying for services mandated by the state or federal government, potential cutbacks in funding could place counties and appointed administrators in precarious positions of having to look for money elsewhere (Honadle & Lloyd-Jones, 1998).

**Financial Outlay**

Research Question 8: *What is the relationship between a county’s financial outlay, or expenditures and administrator turnover?*
Hypothesis 8a: *The larger a county’s level of expenditures, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.*

The argument is put forth that a positive correlation exists between a county’s fiscal outlay (measured as a ratio between total expenditures and total population), and administrator turnover. Increasing per capita expenditures is indicative that “the cost of providing services is increasing faster than the county’s ability to pay, or that productivity is declining and the government is spending more to support the same level of service” (Honadle & Lloyd-Jones, 1998, p. 83). It is thought that higher service costs and declining productivity rates are directly related to higher levels of administrator turnover.

**Short-term Stability**

Research Question 9: *What is the relationship between a county’s short-term (financial) stability and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 9a: *The unhealthier a county’s short-term (financial) stability, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.*

It is thought that a negative correlation exists between counties that exhibit healthy short-term stability (measured as a one-year change in total expenditures) and administrator turnover. As in hypotheses 8a, increasing expenditures is indicative of increasing service costs and declining productivity. Conversely, decreasing expenditures is indicative of lower service costs and increasing productivity.

Interestingly, Interviewee #2 suggested that short-term financial shortfalls do not always precipitate departures when they explained:

I had short-term financial shortfalls in the past, however I was always able to weather through it. The best an administrator can do is make what you consider the best decision possible and present it to the commission, and leave it up to them to decide.

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**Long-term Stability**

Research Question 10: *What is the relationship between a county’s long-term (financial) stability and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 10a: *The unhealthier a county’s long-term (financial) stability, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.*

It is thought that a negative correlation exists between counties that exhibit healthy long-term financial stability (measured as a county’s bond rating) and administrator turnover. Previous studies exploring how fiscal policies such as borrowing and debt levels influence tenure of top public executives in municipalities, have revealed only modest effects (Feiock & Stream, 2002). It is also thought that administrators in more stable counties with low long-term debt levels (as reflected in higher bond ratings) experience decreased levels of turnover.

The interview responses from Interviewees #1, #2 and #3 presented multiple viewpoints on the effect of long-term financial stability and appointed administrator turnover. For example, Interviewee #1 questioned:

Whether long-term stability (bond ratings) might be better suited as a *barometer* for measuring the *overall economics of the community.*

On the other hand, Interviewee #2 suggested:

A county’s long-term fiscal performance could have an impact on a commission’s decision to dismiss an administrator, but this goes back to the *relationship* the administrator has with commission members.

Interviewee #3 said:

With regards to bond ratings, I think this measurement is only important if it goes down. Although a county’s bond rating is, for the most part, outside the control of most administrators, they may still have to *shoulder* the responsibility.
Table 4-2 provides a summary of the specific research questions and related hypotheses contained in the General Model regarding the relationship between government fiscal performance measurements and administrator turnover.

Table 4-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5: What is the relationship between a county's cost burden and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H5a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county's cost burden and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: What is the relationship between a county's income growth and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H6a: (-) A negative correlation exists between a county's income growth and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: What is the relationship between a county's revenue dependency and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H7a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county's revenue dependency and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What is the relationship between a county's level of expenditures and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H8a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county's level of expenditures and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: What is the relationship between a county's long-term (financial) stability and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H10a: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county's long-term (financial) stability and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Community Instability Domain

Researchers have long thought that instability factors inherent in the demographic composition of a municipality play an important role in top-executive turnover (Boynton & Desantis, 1990; Feiock et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2006; Newell et al., 1989; Stillman, 1974; Watson & Hassett, 2003). Due to the similarities of top executives in municipalities and county administrators, it is thought that community instability factors would also play an important role in county administrator turnover.

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Stillman (1974) was one of the first to determine that population size was a dominant factor in top public executive turnover. Similar results were found in later studies which suggested that the level of affluence or ethnic diversity within a community could cause divisions, or cleavages, in that community, ultimately impacting the decisions of top executives to remain in office or seek alternative employment (see also Boynton & DeSantis, 1990; Feiock et al., 2001; and Newell et al., 1989). Watson and Hassett (2003) found that top municipality executives with long tenures came from relatively homogenous cities.

The interview responses from past and present county administrators provided multiple viewpoints as to the importance of community instability and appointed county administrator turnover. For example, Interviewee #3 suggested community instability was an important factor when they said:

1 definitely agree that community instability factors play a role in an administrator's success for failure. A good administrator must pay attention to the voice of the community. If they don’t, they leave themselves open for attack.

Interviewee #2 was not sure as to the impact of community instability on county administrator turnover as reflected in their interview response:

I'm not sure whether community instability has any impact on administrator turnover. In order to examine the influence that community instability factors have on county administrator turnover.

Interviewee #3, on the other hand stated:

I don’t see community instability as a major factor in county administrator turnover. For the most part, it’s an administrator’s performance that matters, and the relationship they have with commission members.

In order to examine the influence that community instability factors have on county administrator turnover, the General Model presented in this study contains six attributes thought to accurately measure the domain of community instability: (a) county
population growth, (b) county scope of jurisdiction, (c) ethnic diversity, (d) economic conditions, (e) affluence, and (f) poverty.

Both Interviewee #1 and #3 agreed with the aforementioned attributes when they said, respectively:

I generally agree with the measurements you have chosen; and

I agree with your choice of measurements with regards to community instability. They would seem to accurately capture this domain.

The specific research questions and related hypotheses in the domain of community instability are as follows.

*Population Growth*

Research Question 11 *What is the relationship between a county’s population growth and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 11a: *The smaller the county’s population growth rate, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.*

It is posited that a negative correlation exists between expanding counties (measured as a one-year change total population) and administrator turnover. Feiock et al. (2001) found that municipalities with growing populations had lower turnover rates of top executives. Conversely, Feiock et al. suggested that population declines could create instability in the commission. Based on the researchers’ findings, it is proposed that a similar relationship exists with county population increases and decreases, and county administrator turnover.

Interviewee #1 agreed with the positive effect of county growth and appointed county administrator turnover when they said:

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It would seem that high growth communities would tend to have a greater degree of administrator turnover when compared to low growth communities. This would have to do with the upward mobility factor of career administrators. It would also seem that communities with sustained or no growth would retain their administrators for longer periods of time.

County Scope of Jurisdiction

Research Question 12: What is the relationship between a county’s scope of jurisdiction and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 12a: The larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the more likely an administrator will depart his or her position.

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between counties with a large scope of jurisdiction (measured as a ratio between a county’s total population and the number of residents residing in unincorporated jurisdictions) and administrator turnover. Wiseman (2004) theorized that “citizens generally have a very real perception of their relationship with democratic government” (p. 88), and that when demands are made, responses (positive or negative) are expected. Qualified electors of a jurisdiction feel that their best opportunity to obtain a response from government is at the level associated with the delivery of services. It is posited that the larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the potential for negative elector response, precipitating community instability.

Interviewee #4 agreed with the aforementioned hypotheses when they said:

Your measurement of total county population to the population not residing in incorporated jurisdictions is an excellent variable, only because it directly measures the amount of services the county is responsible for.

Ethnic Diversity

Research Question 13: What is the relationship between a county’s ethnic diversity and administrator turnover?
Hypothesis 13a: The larger the county’s ethnic diversity, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between a county’s ethnic diversity (measured as the non-white percentage of the county’s total population) and administrators departing their positions. McCabe et al. (2006) suggested that in heterogeneous communities, cleavages based on race or other social conditions could be linked to top public executive turnover. Similarly, Simons and Simons (2002) suggested that certain conditions contributing to community instability, such as population heterogeneity or cultural diversity, may produce political demands for a change in the local government’s administration.

The posit of cleavages based on race is echoed in Interviewee #4’s response when they suggested:

I agree that minority diversity (within the community) could cause tensions for a county manager and commission members, however I have not experienced this in my short tenure. This could be due to the fact that the minority population does not have a lot of influence in our county because they are so dispersed.

Similarly, Interviewee #3 stated:

I place a lot of importance on maintaining good relations with all ethnic sub-groups within the community. Open and honest communication has a way of preventing many misunderstandings. Also, the hiring pattern of the county to include individuals from an ethnic cross-section of the community helps in many ways.

Economic Conditions

Research Question 14: What is the relationship between a county’s economic condition and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 14a: The unhealthier a county’s economic condition, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.
It is hypothesized that a positive correlation exists between poor county economic conditions (measured as the percentage of the available workforce that is unemployed) and administrator turnover. Feiock et al. (2001) found that communities experiencing economic growth have less administrative turnover. Further research suggested that economic growth trends over time might signal an administrator’s departure (McCabe et al., 2006). Simmons and Simmons (2002) supported this notion by postulating that higher rates of unemployment could change a community’s “polite cultural base” producing demands for top-administrative change within the government entity.

Interviewee #1 agreed with that a community’s economic condition may effect appointed county administrator turnover however, suggested:

*The number of building permits, or percentage change (up or down) in building permits might be a good indicator of a community’s economic condition. Also, the percentage change in assessed property value may be an additional indicator of a community’s economic condition.*

Additionally, Interviewee #3 interestingly pointed out:

With regards to your measurements on a community’s economic prosperity, I think that a good economy drowns out a lot of these issues. In other words, in good times, the effects of community instability on administrator turnover in significantly diminished.

**Affluence**

**Research Question 15: What is the relationship between a county’s affluence and administrator turnover?**

**Hypothesis 15a: The less affluent the county, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.**

It is postulated that a negative correlation exists between a county’s affluence (measured as the rate of per capita income of the population in the community) and
administrator turnover. Past studies of top-executive turnover in municipalities have consistent Evidence that growth in terms of per capita income is predictive of a city retaining its top executives (Feiock et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2006). Based on these studies, it is thought that similar relationships exist within American counties. As Feiock et al. suggested, income growth “may influence not only the performance of managers but also the desirability of the city to the manager, and the affordability of the manager to the city” (p. 106). Furthermore, a largely affluent population provides a larger revenue base for services, and may lead to a more positive commission-administrator relationship, thereby reducing internal conflict (Berman, 1997).

**Poverty**

Research Question 16: *What is the relationship between a county's poverty rate and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 16a: *The larger a county's poverty rate, the more likely an administrator will leave his or her position.*

It is proposed that a positive correlation exists between increasing county poverty rates (measured as the percentage of the households below the federal poverty level) and administrator turnover. The inclusion of this measurement was deemed important because it allowed a “cross-check” of hypotheses 15a. While increased affluence within a community was thought to decrease administrator turnover, increased poverty was thought to hasten an administrator’s departure. As Berman (1997) proposed, increased poverty levels reduce the revenue base and tend to have a negative impact on public safety and the welfare and economic growth concerns of the community. This in turn
could cause disharmony amongst the commission members and thus on the
administrative arm of the local government.

The specific research questions and related hypotheses contained in the General
Model regarding the relationship between community instability measurements and
appointed administrator turnover are contained in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q11: What is the relationship between a county’s population growth and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H11a: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county’s population growth rate, and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: What is the relationship between a county’s scope of jurisdiction and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H12a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s scope of jurisdiction and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q13: What is the relationship between a county’s ethnic diversity and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H13a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s ethnic diversity and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: What is the relationship between a county’s economic condition and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H14a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s economic condition and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: What is the relationship between a county’s affluence and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H15a: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county’s level of affluence and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q16: What is the relationship between a county’s poverty rate and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H16a: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s poverty rate and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrator Profile Domain

A number of studies have linked administrator profile characteristics to extended administrator tenures (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Renner, 2001; Watson & Hassett, 2002, 2004; Whitaker & DeHoog,
For example, Watson and Hassett (2002) found that a vast majority of long-serving top municipality executives had graduate degrees. This notion was echoed by a similar study by Renner (2001). DeSantis and Newell (1996), on the other hand, found that a large percentage (80%) of top municipality executives did not come from within the community, indicating mobility in an executive’s career track. Mobley et al. (1979) suggested that as an individual’s tenure increased, the probability of the individual leaving his or her position decreased, an observation also confirmed by Cotton and Tuttle (1986) in their analysis of top municipality executives.

While many researchers have put forth the theory that most top public executives change positions numerous times during their careers for more lucrative and politically stable positions (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1994; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Kaatz et al., 1999; Renner & DeSantis, 1994), some researchers have found evidence that a small group of top executives experience lengthy tenures in a single municipality (Watson & Hassett, 2003, 2004).

Responses from two of the interviewees provided further insight into the effect of administrator profiles (characteristics) on appointed county administrator turnover. First, Interviewee #3 generally agreed that:

Certain administrator profiles could be used to explain county administrator turnover, especially in the sense that they reflect the performance of the individual. Tenure, for example, is probably a good indicator of an individual’s performance such as interpersonal relationship with the commission.

Interviewee #1, however, was not convinced of the importance of select administrator profiles on appointed county administrator turnover when they said:

15 Although most studies focused on top executives in local municipalities, it is thought that the same relationships exist with regards to American counties and county administrators.
I’m not sure whether you could really tie leadership profile measures to administrator turnover. I think you could find a relationship between administrator hiring practices and education, gender and ethnicity. I guess if you consider turnover as the flip side to hiring, you could make the argument.

To further investigate the relationship of administrator characteristics and administrator turnover, the General Model presented in this study contain five important attributes thought to measure an administrator’s profile: (a) knowledge, (b) experience, (c) gender, (d) ethnicity, and (e) origin of recruitment. Developing these attributes facilitated the advancement of specific research questions and related hypotheses.

Although Interviewee #1 was not convinced of the importance of select administrator profiles on appointed county administrator turnover, they did say:

I do agree that the measures you have mentioned are probably good measures for your research study.

The specific research questions and related hypotheses for the aforementioned profiles are as follows.

Knowledge (Education)

Research Question 17: What is the relationship between an administrator’s formal education and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 17a: The lower an administrator’s level of education, the more likely he or she will leave their position.

It is thought that a negative correlation exists between an administrator’s success in academia (measured as the administrator’s level of formal education) and administrator turnover. While many researchers have concluded that a large majority of contemporary long-serving top public executives have graduate degrees (Renner, 2001; Watson & Hassett, 2002, 2004), there have been no studies that have examined the relationship between the level of formal education and county administrator turnover. It is thought,
however, that administrators who have acquired an advanced degree are more apt to be retained than their counterparts who have not acquired an advanced degree.

**Experience**

Research Question 18: *What is the relationship between an administrator's job experience and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 18a: *The shorter an administrator's job tenure, the more likely he or she will leave their position.*

It is hypothesized that a negative correlation exists between longer administrator job tenure (measured as the number of years in the position) and administrator turnover. Although researchers have found evidence that increased tenure strengthens the tendency for individuals to remain at their place of employment in the private sector (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Kirschenbaum & Weisberg, 1990; Lucas et al., 1987; Mobley et al., 1979; Porter & Steers, 1973), there has been no research as to the effect of lengthy tenure on top public executive turnover. Devoid of this research, it is posited that increased tenure strengthens the propensity that administrators will remain in office, since lengthened tenures are indicative of harmonious relations between the administrator and commission.

Interviewee #2 moderately agreed with the above hypotheses when they said:

Administrators with longer tenures would seem to indicate that these individuals are satisfied with where they're at, resulting in less turnover and job search.

Interviewee #4 had a uniquely different way of explaining the effect of appointed administrator tenure and turnover in that:

County managers with longer tenures would have a *lower chance of leaving their jobs, voluntarily or otherwise.* This is due to the fact that you are a known commodity. In some ways you are the devil they know, but at least they know you.
Gender Diversity

Research Question 19: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s gender and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 19a: *Female administrators are more likely to leave their positions when compared to male administrators.*

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between female administrators (measured as the gender of the administrator) and administrator turnover. A review of the literature found no studies that examined the relationship of a top public executive’s gender and turnover, whether in the public or private sector. Due to an abyss of studies on this association, researchers have suggested that local governments are beginning to take a proactive approach to hire disproportionately higher levels of females in top executive positions (Fox & Schuhmann, 2001; Reid, Kerr, & Miller, 2001). While females are still far underrepresented in top-level administrative positions (see Watson & Hassett, 2002, 2004), it is theorized that ongoing efforts in local governments to equalize opportunities for females has created sizable opportunities for experienced female administrators.

Ethnic Diversity

Research Question 20: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s ethnicity and administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 20a: *Administrators who are non-white are more likely to leave their positions when compared to administrators of Caucasian decent.*

As with hypotheses 19a, it is theorized that a positive correlation exists between non-white administrators (measured as the ethnicity of the administrator) and administrator turnover. Again, a review of the literature found no studies that examined the relationship
of top public executive ethnicity and turnover. While non-whites are notably underrepresented in top-level administrative positions (see Watson & Hassett, 2002, 2004), it is theorized that ongoing efforts in local governments to equalize opportunities for non-whites has created opportunities for experienced non-white administrators.

Recruitment Origin

Research Question 21: What is the relationship between an administrator's origin of recruitment and administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 21a: Administrator's who are recruited from outside the organization are more likely to leave their positions when compared to administrators who are promoted from within the organization.

It is argued that administrators who are recruited from outside the organization are more likely to leave their positions (measured as an internal or external recruitment) as compared to administrators who are promoted from within the organization. Researchers have long thought that mobility was a principal strategy in an administrator's career advancement plans (Barber, 1988; Paul, 1981) and that top public executives seek and accept management positions with increasingly larger organizations. DeSantis and Newell (1996) for example, found that nearly 80% of top public executives in large municipalities do not come from within the organization; a similar pattern thought to exist for county administrators. Watson and Hassett (2004), however, alluded to the fact that local professionals who are homegrown may not exercise a "mobility" strategy in their career advancement plans, instead electing to remain in the community in which they reside.
Table 4-4 provides a summary of the specific research questions and related hypotheses proposed in the General Model regarding the relationship between administrator profiles and appointed administrator turnover.

Table 4-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q17: What is the relationship between an administrator's formal education and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H17a: (-) A negative relationship exists between an administrator's formal education and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q18: What is the relationship between an administrator's job experience and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H18a: (-) A negative relationship exists between an administrator's job tenure and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q19: What is the relationship between an administrator's gender and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H19a: (+) A positive relationship exists between female administrators and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q20: What is the relationship between an administrator's ethnicity and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H20a: (+) A positive relationship exists between non-white administrators and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q21: What is the relationship between an administrator's origin of recruitment and administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H21a: (+) A positive relationship exists between administrators who are recruited from outside the organization and administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Model of County Administrator Turnover

As previously discussed, one of the principal purposes of this research study was to examine factors thought to contribute to general appointed county administrator turnover in large American counties. Figure 4-1 provides a depiction of the General Model. The top row denotes general turnover/non-turnover of county administrators. The second row indicates the four domains within the General Model thought to influence general administrator turnover. Below each domain (listed vertically) are the corresponding covariates within each of the four domains. It should be noted that no temporal order or...
The rank of importance is implied in Figure 4-1 with regards to the position of individual domains and their respective covariates within the model.

**Figure 4-1. General Model of county administrator turnover.**
Push/Pull Model - Research Questions and Hypotheses

As previously noted, the second model developed in this research study, the Push/Pull Model, incorporated 15 of the 21 covariates contained in the General Model. The selected covariates were thought to measure key dimensions influencing push and pull-effected appointed county administrator turnover. The specific research questions and hypotheses contained in the Push/Pull Model of appointed county administrator turnover follows.

*Political Uncertainty Domain*

As discussed in the previous section, political uncertainty as a determining factor of top public executive turnover has been a topic of research for nearly 50 years. Many earlier researchers theorized that political conflict and political uncertainty were principal reasons why top public executives left their office.

One notable study suggested that internal political struggles for control within the commission played a major role in whether a top executive chose to remain in office or seek alternative employment elsewhere (Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991). As Whitaker and DeHoog pointed out, inherent discords between members of the commission and the top executives have a significant push effect on leadership turnover. The researchers also found that uncertainty within the commission led to involuntary or forced turnover when the top executive became entangled or aligned with the commission members.

Other researchers have posited similar theories by suggesting that internal conflict within the commission represented a push effect on top public executive turnover because of its ability to create high levels of frustration on the part of the executive (Box, 1993; DeSantis & Newell, 1996; Kaatz et al., 1999; Kaatz & Gabris, 1996; Loveridge, 1971; Renner & DeSantis, 1993, 1994; Svara, 1991).
To further explore the role of political uncertainty and its push or pull effect on county administrator turnover, the Push/Pull Model incorporated the same four attributes as contained in the General Model: (a) short-term commission member turnover, (b) mid-term commission member turnover, (c) commission leadership turnover, and (d) partisanship/non-partisanship in commission member elections - change is commission party control.

Short-term Commission Member Turnover

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between short-term commission member turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 1b: The greater the short-term commission member turnover, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is theorized that the greater the percentage change of commission members in any one-year time frame, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. As previously mentioned, when new members are elected to a commission, a shift of the commission majority from one faction to another could occur, followed closely by the replacement of the administrator (Svara, 1990).

Both Interviewee #3 and #4 strongly agreed with the push effect of short-term commissioner turnover on appointed administrator turnover. For example, Interviewee #3 said:

I would agree that building a good relationship with commission members is important. When new members (winners) come on board (the commission) it's imperative that the county administrator nurture a strong working relationship with them. This is something that my predecessor was unable to do and, in many ways, it led to his departure; and

I would have to strongly agree that turnover of commission members has a major impact on a county administrator's longevity.
Interviewee #4's thoughts were similar when they suggested:

An important component of commission turnover is the fact that new individuals to the commission who have limited or no experience in the public sector must be educated or re-educated to the inter-workings of county government. This re-education process in many ways creates levels of frustration within the administration.

Mid-term Commission Member Turnover

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between mid-term commission member turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 2b: The greater the mid-term commission member turnover, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is further theorized that the greater the cumulative percentage change of commission members in a rolling two-year time frame, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. As discussed in the previous section, inclusion of this measurement was deemed prudent because it is thought that adversarial relationships between commission members and administrators build over time.

Leadership Turnover

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between commission leadership turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 3b: Commissions that experience leadership changes have a push effect on administrator turnover.

It is hypothesized that a commission leadership change (measured as the percentage change of commission leadership in any one-year time frame) has a push effect while no commission leadership change has a pull effect on administrator turnover. As previously
noted, the commission chairperson could influence a commission’s overall decision to retain or dismiss an appointed administrator.

Interviewee #1 agreed with the push effect of commission leadership turnover and appointed administrator turnover when they said:

I would strongly agree that turnover of commission leadership has a major impact on a county administrator’s longevity.

Commission Partisanship – Commission Party Control

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between partisan and non-partisan commissions, and changes in commission party control and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 4b: Partisan commissions are a push effect on administrator turnover when compared to non-partisan commissions.

Hypothesis 4b2: Partisan commissions that experience a change in party control are a push effect on administrator turnover when compared to partisan commissions that do not experience a change.

As previously discussed, it is thought that political cross-pressures arise within commissions when partisan election processes exist within the county (as compared to counties with non-partisan election processes). It is also thought that cross-pressures created along party lines due to disagreement among commission members leads to political instability ultimately resulting in political uncertainty. Also, changes in commission party control may contribute to push-induced administrator turnover.

Interviewee #4 echoed the aforementioned theory when they explained:

The push effect can be brutal on a county manager when a partisan board is divided on critical issues such as pro-development versus anti-development. Additionally, the commission members’ decision making process is very different than that of a county
Labor relations are one good example. Typically, a county manager's responsibility is to contain costs while commission members attempt to maintain relationships.

A summarization of the related research questions and hypotheses contained in the Push/Pull Model with regards to the domain of political uncertainty are provided in Table 4-5.

### Table 4-5
**Push/Pull Model - Political Uncertainty Research Questions and Related Hypotheses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: What is the relationship between short-term commission member turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H1b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a one-year percentage change in commission member turnover and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2: What is the relationship between mid-term commission member turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H2b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a rolling two-year percentage change in commission member turnover and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3: What is the relationship between commission leadership turnover and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H3b: (+) A positive relationship exists between commission leadership changes and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4: What is the relationship between partisan and non-partisan commissions and changes in commission party control and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H4b; (+) A positive relationship exists between partisan commissions and push-effected administrator turnover. H4b; (+) A positive relationship exists between changes in the party control of partisan commissions and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Government Fiscal Performance Domain

As discussed in the previous section, government fiscal performance as an explanatory factor of top public executive turnover has only recently become a topic of research in local municipalities with somewhat inconclusive results. The review of
literature, however, found no such research relating to the push or pull effects of government fiscal performance on appointed county administrator turnover.

In an attempt to understand the role of government fiscal performance on push and pull-induced county administrator turnover, four attributes of fiscal performance were proposed and included in the Push/Pull Model. These were a county’s (a) cost burden, (b) financial outlay, (c) short-term stability, and (d) long-term stability. The specific research questions and related hypotheses in the domain of government fiscal performance follow.

**Cost Burden**

Research Question 5: *What is the relationship between a county’s cost burden and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 5b: *The larger a county’s cost burden, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.*

It is theorized that the larger the ratio of total property tax revenue to a county’s total population, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. As discussed in the previous section, it was thought that inclusion of this measurement would be prudent simply because property tax issues are considered highly charged and visible. Further, it was thought that high levels of property tax revenue burdens could lead to higher levels of push-induced county administrator turnover.

**Financial Outlay**

Research Question 6: *What is the relationship between a county’s financial outlays, or expenditures and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?*

Hypothesis 6b: *The larger a county’s level of expenditures, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.*
It is argued that the greater a county’s ratio between total expenditures and total population, the larger the push effect on administrator turnover. Interviewee #3 agreed with the push effect of larger county expenditures on appointed administrator turnover when they said:

The most important factor that many citizens don’t understand is that we (the county) have demands for services (that are) beyond our capabilities. Many forms of services are competing for the same funds. Examples would include parks and recreation, and public hospitals. Larger county expenditures as a function of per capita without a corresponding increase in revenue places the administrator “at risk” of being label as fiscally irresponsible and subject to dismissal.

Short-term Stability

Research Question 7: What is the relationship between a county’s short-term (financial) stability and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 7b: The lesser a county’s short-term (financial) stability, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is thought that the higher a county’s one-year change in total expenditures, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. As in hypotheses 5b and 6b, increasing expenditures is indicative of increasing service costs and declining productivity. It is thought that these pressures can precipitate push-induced administrator turnover.

Long-term Stability

Research Question 8: What is the relationship between a county’s long-term (financial) stability and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 8b: The healthier a county’s long-term (financial) stability, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover.

It is put forth that the unhealthier a county’s long-term financial stability, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. Conversely, the healthier a county’s long-term
financial stability, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover. Simply stated, administrators in more stable counties with low long-term debt levels (as reflected in higher bond ratings) experience decreased levels of push-induced turnover, while administrators in less stable counties with high long-term debt levels (as reflected in lower bond ratings) experience increased levels of push-induced turnover.

Table 4-6 provides a summary of the specific research questions and related hypotheses contained in the Push/Pull Model regarding the relationship between government fiscal performance measurements and administrator turnover.

### Table 4-6

**Push/Pull Model - Government Fiscal Performance Research Questions and Related Hypotheses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q5: What is the relationship between a county’s cost burden and push or pull-effected</td>
<td>H5b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s cost burden and push-effected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>administrator turnover?</td>
<td>administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6: What is the relationship between a county’s financial outlay (expenditures) and push or</td>
<td>H6b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county’s level of expenditures and push-effected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7: What is the relationship between a county’s short-term (financial) stability and push or</td>
<td>H7b: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county’s short-term (financial) stability and push-effected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8: What is the relationship between a county’s long-term (financial) stability and push or</td>
<td>H8b: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county’s long-term (financial) stability and push-effected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Instability Domain**

As previously discussed, researchers have long thought that instability factors inherent in the demographic composition of a municipality play an important role in top-executive turnover. Due to the similarities of top executives in municipalities and county
administrators, it is thought that community instability factors would also play an important role in push and pull-effected county administrator turnover. To further understand the role of community instability on push and pull-induced county administrator turnover, four attributes of community instability were included in the Push/Pull Model. These were a county’s (a) population growth, (b) scope of jurisdiction, (c) economic condition, and (d) level of poverty. The specific research questions and related hypotheses in the domain of community instability follow.

**Population Growth**

Research Question 9: What is the relationship between a county’s population growth and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 9b: The smaller the county’s population growth rate, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is posited that the smaller the one-year change in a county’s total population, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. As previously discussed, researchers have suggested that municipalities with growing populations had lower turnover rates of top executives. Conversely, researchers have suggested that municipalities with population declines may create instability in the commission and induce a push effect on top-executive turnover. Therefore, it is proposed that a similar relationship exists with county population decreases and push-induced county administrator turnover.

**County Scope of Jurisdiction**

Research Question 10: What is the relationship between a county’s scope of jurisdiction and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?
Hypothesis 10b: The larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is theorized that a positive correlation exists between counties with a large scope of jurisdiction (measured as a ratio between a county’s total population and the number of residents residing in unincorporated jurisdictions) and push-induced administrator turnover. As discussed earlier, the larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the potential for negative elector response, therefore precipitating community instability and push-induced administrator turnover.

Economic Conditions

Research Question 11: What is the relationship between a county’s economic condition and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 11b: The unhealthier a county’s economic condition, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is hypothesized that the unhealthier a county’s economic condition (measured as the percentage of the available workforce that is unemployed), the greater the push effect on administrator turnover. Researchers have suggested that economic growth trends over time signal a key pull effect (McCabe et al., 2006). Simmons and Simmons (2002) supported this notion by postulating that higher rates of unemployment could change a community’s “politico cultural base” producing demands for push-induced top-administrative change within the government entity.

Poverty

Research Question 12: What is the relationship between a county’s poverty rate and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?
Hypothesis 12b: *The larger a county's poverty rate, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.*

It is proposed that the larger a county's poverty rate (measured as the percentage of the households below the federal poverty level) the higher the frequency of push-induced administrator turnover. As with the General Model, the inclusion of this measurement was deemed important because it allowed a "cross-check" of hypotheses 11b.

The specific research questions and related hypotheses contained in the Push/Pull Model and proposed in this research study regarding the relationship between community instability measurements and administrator turnover are contained in Table 4-7.

Table 4-7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q9: What is the relationship between a county's population growth and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H9b: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county's population growth and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q10: What is the relationship between a county's scope of jurisdiction and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H10b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county's scope of jurisdiction and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q11: What is the relationship between a county's economic condition and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H11b: (-) A negative relationship exists between a county's economic condition and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q12: What is the relationship between a county's poverty rate and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H12b: (+) A positive relationship exists between a county's poverty rate and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Administrator Profile Domain*

A number of studies have linked administrator profile characteristics to extended administrator tenures (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Feiock & Stream, 1998; Renner, 2001; Watson & Hassett, 2002, 2004; Whitaker & DeHoog, 2002).
The review of literature, however, found no studies linking administrator profile characteristics and push or pull-effected administrator turnover.

To further investigate the relationship of administrator profile characteristics, and push and pull-effected administrator turnover, the Push/Pull Model presented in this study contained three important attributes thought to measure an administrator’s profile: (a) knowledge, (b) experience, and (c) origin of recruitment. The specific research questions and related hypotheses in the domain of community instability follow.

Knowledge (Education)

Research Question 13: What is the relationship between an administrator’s formal education and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 13b: The lower an administrator’s formal education, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is thought that a negative correlation exists between higher levels of an administrator’s formal education (measured as the administrator’s level of formal education) and push-induced administrator turnover. As previously discussed, there have been no studies that have examined the relationship between the level of formal education, and push or pull-effected county administrator turnover. It is thought, however, that administrators who have acquired an advanced degree are more apt to be pulled from office than their counterparts who have not acquired an advanced degree.

Interviewee #2 agreed with the aforementioned hypotheses when they said:

I would agree that there is probably a relationship between education and administrator turnover; especially when you compare this measurement to what you described as push and pull departures; and

I would think that the higher an administrator’s level of education, the more likely they would be pulled out of office. I only say this because of the upward mobility...
factor. Individuals with advanced educations are generally highly motivated people. Therefore, one could expect that these individuals would be career driven as well (always looking for a better opportunity).

Interviewee #3, however, offered a different viewpoint when he stated:

I’m not so sure that education matters after you get the job, but I’d be interested to see what your study reveals.

**Experience**

Research Question 14: What is the relationship between an administrator’s job experience and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 14b: The shorter an administrator’s job tenure, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

It is hypothesized that a negative correlation exists between longer administrator’ tenures (measured as the number of years in the position) and push-induced administrator turnover. As previously mentioned, although researchers have found evidence that increased tenure strengthens the tendency for individuals to remain at their place of employment, there has been no research as to the effect of tenure on push or pull-induced administrator turnover. Devoid of this research, it is posited that shorter administrator tenures leads to push-induced departure. Conversely, longer administrator tenures are indicative of harmonious relations between the administrator and commission and may result in pull-induced departures.

**Recruitment Origin**

Research Question 15: What is the relationship between an administrator’s origin of recruitment and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?

Hypothesis 15b: The push effect is greater for administrators who are recruited from outside the organization when compared to those who are promoted from within.
It is argued that administrators who are recruited from outside the organization are more likely to experience a push-induced departure (measured as an internal or external recruitment) as compared to administrators who are promoted from within the organization.

Interestingly, Interviewee #3 strongly agreed with hypothesis 15b when they said:

I think the origin of recruitment is important, only because individuals who are promoted from within generally have an established working relationship with commission members and department heads.

Table 4-8 provides a summary of the specific research questions and related hypotheses proposed in the Push/Pull Model regarding the relationship between select administrator profiles and push or pull-effected administrator turnover.

Table 4-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific research question</th>
<th>Related hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q13: What is the relationship between an administrator’s formal education and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H13b: (-) A negative relationship exists between an administrator’s formal education and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q14: What is the relationship between an administrator’s job experience and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H14b: (-) A negative relationship exists between an administrator’s job tenure and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q15: What is the relationship between an administrator’s origin of recruitment and push or pull-effected administrator turnover?</td>
<td>H15b: (+) A positive relationship exists between an administrator who was recruited from outside the organization and push-effected administrator turnover.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Push/Pull Model of County Administrator Turnover*

Figure 4-2 provides a depiction of the Push/Pull Model. The top row denotes push and pull-effected turnover of county administrators. The second row indicates the four domains in the Push/Pull Model. Below each domain (listed vertically) are the
corresponding covariates within each of the four domains. As with the General Model in Figure 4-1, it should be noted that no temporal order or rank of importance is implied in Figure 4-2 with regards to the position of individual domains and their respective covariates within the Push/Pull model.

Figure 4-2. General Model of county administrator turnover.
CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN AND SYSTEM FOR ANALYSIS

First, this chapter discusses general research designs and the mixed methods research design used in this study. Second, issues relating to validity, the unit of analysis, the target population and study sample are addressed. Third, relational measures (dependent and covariates), data collection and data sources, and coding procedures are discussed. Fourth, an overview of the quantitative analysis techniques employed in the study to answer the research questions and subsequently test the research hypotheses are presented, e.g., statistical software selection, treatment of missing data and multicollinearity. Finally, this chapter discusses the quantitative procedures important to the Cox proportional regression procedure and the qualitative research methodology used in the supplemental cross-sectional interviews of present and past-appointed county administrators.

Research Design

A research design or plan can best be described as a set of logical steps that occur in sequence for the purpose of linking data to a study’s research questions so as to draw reasonable and sound conclusions. A properly constructed research design is further
intended to provide a researcher with a set of rules, or “blueprint,” to facilitate the linkage of a researcher’s theoretical paradigm to the collection and analysis of empirical data.

As previously summarized in Chapter 1, this research study followed a holistic approach of inquiry by using a mixed-methods design typology incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Priority was given to the quantitative approach for the overall study design, data collection, and analysis, because of the study’s cross-sectional time series method of inquiry. A succinct discourse of both approaches and a summary of the selected design used in this research study follow.

Quantitative Designs

There exist two basic research designs, the first being the quantitative approach and the second being the qualitative approach. Differentiation between the two designs, or approaches, lies in the way data is collected and analyzed. Although many researchers portray the two approaches as a dichotomy, they do share a common bond (Decrop, 1999). Some researchers, for example, have suggested that if both methods are utilized correctly, they contain the same logic of inference (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994).

Quantitative research designs primarily reflect the “scientific method” and adopt a more deductive approach to designing the research study, testing the research hypotheses, and interpreting the results. Quantitative research designs principally test preconceived theories and do not attempt to develop new theories.

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16 Creswell (2003) and Creswell, Clark, Guttmann and Hanson (2003) described mixed-methods research as a process of collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single research study.
17 In a quantitative approach the entire framework of a research study is constructed around a theory, and the theory acts as a systematizing model for the development of the research questions, hypotheses, data collection procedure and analyses (Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Welman & Kruger, 2001).
Babbie (1995) put forth the view that the quantitative approach has strength in its inherent precision and control. As Babbie suggested, control is attained through the sampling and research design, and reliable methods of measurement. Similarly, other researchers have proposed that the quantitative approach has further powers because of its use of quantitative data. In other words, researchers are afforded the opportunity to experiment with empirical data by systematically manipulating one variable to determine its effect on another (Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Welman & Kruger, 2001).

Some researchers have also suggested that the quantitative approach has inherent limitations. Gilbert (1993) and Massey (2003), for example, presented the idea that quantitative research fails to take into account an individual’s ability to interpret his or her own experiences and assemble his or her own meanings to situational events. In short, qualitative researchers present the argument that the quantitative approach, and the subsequent use of the scientific method, diminishes the richness, individuality, and subjective nature of an individual’s perspective.

Qualitative Designs

Qualitative research traces its origin to the social sciences, particularly sociology and anthropology. While quantitative research typically adopts a deductive approach to research study design, qualitative methods are more closely associated with an inductive approach.

As Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggested, qualitative research methods generate findings without the use of statistical procedures or quantification. In its simplest state, qualitative research places little reliance on numbers, but instead concentrates on rich descriptions of an individual’s personal viewpoints. As a result, qualitative research does
not test preconceived theories, but attempts to develop new theories. Creswell (2003) asserted that issues of validity are common criticisms of qualitative research methods. Creswell’s assertions are primarily based on the inherent subjectivity of qualitative data and the inability to replicate conditions or interrelationships. Creswell further pointed out that the subjective character of an individual’s perspective and views are not in accord with the criteria of the scientific method.

Summary of the Selected Mixed Methods Research Design

As noted earlier, this research study employed a mixed methods design typology. The process for selecting an integrated design that combined the elements of both the qualitative and quantitative approach involved weighing the benefits and deficiencies of the available methodologies. It was decided that combining the two approaches would minimize the shortfalls of using only one methodology. A summary of the important features of the mixed methods cross-sectional time series design incorporated in this research study is best described as follows.

- **Mixed Method Dual-Model Approach:** The research design incorporated both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to develop and analyze two distinct models, the General Model and the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover.
- **Model Based:** The research design included a causal model that made assumptions about the cause-and-effect relationships between the study variables.

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18 Because of its fundamental paradigm, qualitative research is considered subjective in context, due in part to the reliance on the texts and discourses of the study participants (Gilbert, 1993).
• **Theory Driven:** Push and pull motivation theory influenced the selection of variables and methods of analyses.

• **Descriptive:** The research study described and documented the phenomena of interest regarding county administrator turnover in large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government.

• **Explanatory:** The research study attempted to explain county administrator turnover, both from a departure/non-departure perspective, and from a push and pull viewpoint using the variables in the study model.

• **Time Series or Retrospect:** The research study consisted of collecting information for both the dependent and covariates over a period of 14 years, beginning in 2005 and moving backward to 1992.

• **Cross-Sectional:** The research study observed changes in both the dependent variable and covariates from the 32 largest American counties based on 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census data across 12 states.

**Issues of Validity**

Validity has commonly been referred to as the extent that a research study’s results accurately represent real phenomena. Quantitative and qualitative researchers constantly strive for validity, both internally and externally, so as to provide a true representation of the underlying theories under investigation (Bowen, 2003). Internal validity addresses whether a study measures what it claims to measure, while external validity refers to whether a study’s results are generalizable to a population (Hernon, 1994; Krathwohl, 1993). By using both primary and secondary sources of information in conjunction with a
mixed-methods research design (a primarily quantitative approach supported by “first
hand” interviews from a cross-sectional sampling of present and past county
administrators), it was thought that issues of validity were properly addressed.\textsuperscript{19} Table 5-
l provides a listing of both the primary and secondary sources of information contained
in this research study.

Table 5-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary and Secondary Sources of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government documents containing census data, demographic statistics, annual financial results, and research reports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Government, business, fraternal, and professional organization/association newsletters and releases, and meeting minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Peer reviewed journal articles and surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic yearbooks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal correspondence with county officials including telephone conversations, electronic email, and letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Firsthand interviews with present and past county administrators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Annually published reference directories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that the firsthand interviews conducted with present and past county administrators allowed for the use of triangulation techniques. Qualitative researchers have described triangulation as a method that provides overlapping information, allowing the researcher to check the study’s results from more than one

\textsuperscript{19} Primary sources of information are commonly considered “first-hand” information, or original documents or records used in the preparation of a published or unpublished work. Secondary sources of information are published or unpublished work that analyzes, interprets, and/or evaluates primary sources.
viewpoint (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe, 1991). Researchers have posited that triangulation the effect of reducing the likelihood of misinterpreting a study’s results, thereby increasing a research study’s overall validity (Baker, 1999; Decrop, 1999; Jones, 1996).

Unit of Analysis, Target Population and Samples

Unit of Analysis

Appointed county administrators are the focus for this research study nested within large American counties (populations 100,000 or greater) with a functioning Commission-Administrator form of government, as defined by the National Association of Counties in 2006. The unit of analysis was appointed county administrators within large American counties. The unit of analysis was thought to be appropriate for examining the specific research questions and related hypotheses contained within this research study.

Targeted Counties

The review of literature found that 48 of the 50 states within the United States have operational county governments, the exceptions being the Connecticut and Rhode Island. The literature further pointed out that of the 3,033 American counties that existed in 2006, nearly 20% had populations of 100,000 or greater (National Association of Counties, 2006). This became the basis for defining the parameter of large American counties, and subsequently the targeted counties.

Other counties were considered but not selected. They included American counties with Commission or Commission-Executive forms of government. The rationale for
excluding these counties from this research study was based on the fact that these forms of government were either void of a professional administrator position, or the administrator was elected through popular vote in lieu of being appointed by the commission.

Using the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census, 429 counties with populations of 100,000 or greater were identified. Each county was then codified as to its respective form of government using the National Association of Counties (2006) definitions. A summary of the results is contained in Table 5-2.

Table 5-2

Summary of Large American County Governance (1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of county government</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sole Commission</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission-Administrator/Manager</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission-Executive</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Parish, Borough, no form of government, etc.)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data contained in Table 5-2 indicate that nearly one-third, or 32%, of all large counties in 1990 had a functioning Commission-Administrator form of government. The review of literature also uncovered no known changes in the forms of governments within large American counties since 1990. Based on this knowledge, the following equation was applied to estimate the 2006 targeted county population for this research study:

---

20 The use of 1990 U.S. bureau of the Census data was considered a foundational starting point of this time-series research study.
2006 Targeted county population = Number of counties (2006) \times \text{Percentage of large counties} \times \text{Percentage of counties (1990) with a Commission-Administrator form of government.}

The resulting 2006 targeted county population was estimated to be 194 large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government.

Quantitative Sample

The quantitative research observations (or samplings) for this research study were limited to data for the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government (based on 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census population estimates). The time period for this study was bounded to data collected from 1992 through 2005.

As discussed in Chapter 1, these limitations arose due to the fact that accurate data on counties with mid-sized and smaller populations were sparse and not easily attainable within the time limitations of performing this research study. Furthermore, data on counties prior to 1992 were inadequate and, in most cases, unavailable. Because of these facts it was thought that using inaccurate data that represented mid-sized and smaller counties would negatively skew the overall validity of this study. Table 5-3 provides a listing of the American counties used in this research study.
Table 5-3

32 Largest U.S. Counties with Commissioner-Administrator Form of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>April 1, 1990 Population estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>8,863,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>San Diego</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>2,498,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>2,410,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maricopa</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>2,122,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Santa Clara</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,497,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>San Bernardino</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,418,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Alameda</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,279,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Broward</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>1,255,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,170,413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tarrant</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1,170,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>1,041,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>1,032,431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>866,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>863,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pinellas</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>851,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>834,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Hillsborough</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>818,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>803,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Clark</td>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>741,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>677,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>669,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Fresno</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>667,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Pima</td>
<td>Arizona</td>
<td>666,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>San Mateo</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>649,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fulton</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>648,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>573,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>547,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Kern</td>
<td>California</td>
<td>543,477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>541,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mecklenburg</td>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>511,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>493,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>485,765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: United States Bureau of the Census, 1990
Qualitative Sample

A total of four county administrators selected from the sample counties participated in this study: two currently in office (one with a long tenure, one with a short tenure), one deemed pushed from office, and one considered pulled from office. Table 5-4 provides descriptive statistics for the four participants (length in office, level of education, race, gender and source of recruitment). Additionally, Table 5-5 provides a career path chronology of each participant.

Table 5-4

Descriptive Statistics of Cross-Sectional Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator profile characteristics</th>
<th>Interviewee #1</th>
<th>Interviewee #2</th>
<th>Interviewee #3</th>
<th>Interviewee #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for departure</td>
<td>Pushed departure - Political disagreement with commission</td>
<td>Pulled departure - Upward mobility to larger county</td>
<td>N/A – Currently in office</td>
<td>N/A – Currently in office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>4 Years</td>
<td>13 Years</td>
<td>14 Years</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>Master degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of recruitment</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethical Considerations

Several safeguards were used for protecting the individuals participating in the qualitative component of this research study. First, the objectives of this research study

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21 Miller and Miller (1991) suggested that selecting individuals who have firsthand knowledge of the theoretical paradigm effectively evades the ecological fallacy of asking the incorrect person the correct question.
were clearly articulated to the participants prior to beginning the telephone interview. Second, verbal consent was received from the participants prior to administering the research questions. Third, using pseudonyms in lieu of actual names, it was further thought that the confidentiality of the participants could be maintained, i.e., Interviewee No. 1, Interviewee No. 2, Interviewee No. 3, and Interviewee No. 4. Fourth, the participant's present or past place of employment (county name and state) was presented in such a way that lessened personal identification. Specifically, an individual's present or past place of employment was categorized into geographical \textit{regions} within the United States.

Table 5-5

\textit{Career Path Chronology of Interviewees}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Interviewee #1</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001 – Present</td>
<td>Consultant (Private Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 – 2001</td>
<td>County Manager (Large County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Executive (Private Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983 – 1995</td>
<td>Controller (Large County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 – 1983</td>
<td>Fiscal (State Government)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Interviewee #2</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999 – Present</td>
<td>County Executive (Large County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 – 1999</td>
<td>County Executive (Medium County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978 – 1986</td>
<td>County Administrator (Small County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Interviewee #3</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991 – Present</td>
<td>County Administrator (Large County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 – 1991</td>
<td>Assistant County Administrator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985 – 1988</td>
<td>Department Director (Public Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 – 1985</td>
<td>Engineer (Public Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Interviewee #4</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006 – Present</td>
<td>County Manager (Large County)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 – 2006</td>
<td>Assistant County Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 – 2002</td>
<td>City Manager (Large City)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 – 1998</td>
<td>Senior Vice President (Private Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986 – 1989</td>
<td>General Manager (Public Sector)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Model

This research study attempted to assess the cause-and-effect relationships between political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, community instability, and select administrator profile attributes as covariates, and both general turnover and push/pull factor-induced turnover.

The dependent variable in the General Model is a dichotomous variable indicating whether an appointed administrator departed his or her position or remained in office. The dependent variable in the Push/Pull Model is also a dichotomous variable reflecting whether an appointed administrator departed his or her position as a result of push factors or pull factors. Personal reasons not associated to push and pull factors, or retirement, such as personal or family illness, or deaths, were excluded from the analyses. The measures included political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, community instability, and select administrator profile variables that are theorized to accurately measure the domain attributes.

Relational Measures, Data Collection and Sources, and Coding Procedures

The research study models provided the necessary direction on the types of data, the collection processes and sources, and coding procedures contained in this study. As a result, each of the attributes within the four domains suggested specific relational measures or variables.

The data for each variable were collected from both primary and secondary sources over a 10-month time period beginning in April, 2006, and ending in January, 2007.
collection principally focused on the trends and relationships between the dependent and variables. A summary of the primary and secondary data sources accessed during the data collection process for each of the variables is contained in Exhibit I.

Quantitative data were coded and assigned numeric values, and entered into a Microsoft Excel database. A comprehensive matrix of the dependent and covariates, including levels of measurements and codification, is contained in Exhibit II.

Qualitative data on the other hand, were structured into journals and Microsoft Excel tables. The following is a detailed account of each data variable (both dependent and independent) and their associated collection processes and codifications.

**Dependent Variables**

Two dependent variables were contained in this research study, one associated with the General Model and one with the Push/Pull Model.

**General Model**

The term *county administrator turnover* was operationally defined as whether an individual departed his or her position of county administrator or remained in office.

County administrator turnover data in the General Model were principally obtained through secondary sources, such as annually published government reference directories including:

- *Carroll's County Directory* (November 1995/April 1996, November 1996/April 1997);
• *Carroll's Annual Municipal/County Directory* (2001-2002); and


When conflicting information was uncovered during the data collection process, validation as to the true value of the data was obtained from primary sources such as personal correspondence with county officials, i.e., telephone conversations, electronic emails and letters.

The dependent variable $Y_{administrator\ turnover(a)}$ was a categorical (dichotomous) variable comprised of two values indicating whether an administrator departed or remained in office, coded as follows:

- 1 = departed office; or
- 0 = remained in office.

*Push/Pull Model*

The term *county administrator turnover* was operationally defined as whether an individual departed their position of county administrator due to push factors such as actions resulting in involuntary, coerced, or pressured removal, and pull factors such as actions resulting in voluntary exits.

County administrator turnover data in the Push/Pull Model were obtained through both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included personal correspondence with county officials; and governmental, business, fraternal and professional organization/association newsletters or releases; and meeting minutes. Secondary sources included print media (magazine and newspaper articles), non-peer reviewed reviews (interpretive accounts and histories), and biographies.
In all cases, multiple data sources were used for purposes of triangulation and to enhance the validity or true value of the data. The primary and secondary sources (excluding personal correspondence) used during the data collection process (and not specifically referenced in the body of this research study or included in the Bibliography) are contained in Appendix I.

Departure events were ordered and codified based on established principles of past researchers in the arena of leadership departures or succession (Gorden & Rosen, 1981). The dependent variable $Y_{\text{administrator turnover}(b)}$ was a categorical (dichotomous) variable comprised of two values indicating whether an administrator departed due to push factors or pull factors coded as follows:

- $0 =$ pushed from office; or
- $1 =$ pulled from office.

Covariates

Twenty-one covariates existed in this research study: four associated with the political uncertainty domain, six with the government fiscal performance domain, six with the community uncertainty domain, and five within the administrator profile domain.

Political Uncertainty Variables

The following general research question was addressed: What is the relationship between measurements of political uncertainty and county administrator turnover? The four attributes deemed as accurate measurements of political uncertainty included (a) short-term commission turnover, (b) mid-term commission turnover, (c) commission leadership turnover, and (d) commission partisanship – commission party control.
Political uncertainty data were principally obtained through the same secondary sources as those listed previously in the General Model section.

When conflicting information was uncovered during the data-collection process, validation as to the true value of the data was obtained from primary sources such as personal correspondence with county officials, i.e., telephone conversations, electronic email, and letters.

*Short-term commission turnover.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between short-term commission member turnover as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The expression *short-term commission turnover* was operationally defined as a one-year percentage change in commission board members.

The independent variable measuring a county’s short-term commission turnover variable was interval and coded as $X_{\text{short-term commission turnover}} = \text{Ratio of commission members replaced in a given year to the total number of commission members on the commission.}$

*Mid-term commission turnover.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between mid-term commission member turnover as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The expression *mid-term commission turnover* was operationally defined as a consecutive two-year rolling average, or percentage change in commission members on the commission.

The independent variable measuring a county’s mid-term commission turnover was interval and coded as $X_{\text{mid-term commission turnover}} = \text{Rolling average, or ratio of commission members on the commission.}$
members replaced in a consecutive two-year time period to the total number of
commission members on the commission.

Commission leadership turnover. The following specific research question was
addressed: *What is the relationship between commission leadership turnover as the
independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *commission leadership turnover* was operationally defined as a change in
commission leadership (or chairperson) for a given year.

The independent variable measuring commission leadership turnover,
$X_{commission\text{-}leadership\text{-}turnover}$, was nominal denoting whether a commission chairperson was
replaced by another commission member in a given year and coded as follows:

- $1 = \text{commission leadership turnover, or}$
- $0 = \text{no commission leadership turnover.}$

Commission partisanship – commission party control. The following specific
research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between non-partisan
commissions, partisan commissions with no change in party control, and partisan
commissions with changes in party control as the independent variable and administrator
turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *commission partisanship – commission party control* was operationally
defined as whether commission electoral structures incorporated partisan election
processes, and whether commission electoral structures that incorporated partisan
election processes experienced a change in party control.

The independent variable measuring a county’s commission partisanship –
commission party control, $X_{partisan\text{-}party\text{-}ctrl}$, was ordinal designating whether commission
elections incorporated a partisan process, and whether those commissions that incorporated partisan elections experienced a change in party control or not coded as follows:

- 1 = partisan commissions election processes with a change in party control;
- 0 = partisan commission with no change in party control; or
- -1 = no partisan commission election process.

**Government Fiscal Performance Variables**

The following general research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between measurements of government fiscal performance variables and county administrator turnover?* The six attributes deemed as accurate measurements of government fiscal performance included a county's (a) cost burden, (b) income growth, (c) revenue dependency, (d) financial outlay, (e) short-term stability, and (f) long-term stability.

Government fiscal performance and county population data were obtained through primary sources, such as the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the individual counties' Consolidated Annual Financial Reports (1991-2006). County bond ratings were obtained through both primary and secondary sources, e.g., personal correspondence with county officials and annually published government reference directories published by Moody's Investor Service.

**Cost burden.** The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county's cost burden, or tax revenue equity, as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?
The term *cost burden*, or *tax revenue equity*, was operationally defined as the ratio of total property tax revenue to total population in a given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s cost burden was interval and coded as

\[ X_{\text{costburden}} = \text{Ratio of total property tax revenue to the total population in a given year.} \]

*Income growth*. The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s income growth as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *income growth* was operationally defined as the one-year percentage change in tax revenue.

The independent variable measuring a county’s income growth was interval and coded as

\[ X_{\text{incomegrowth}} = \text{Ratio of total tax revenue in a given year to the total tax revenue in the preceding year.} \]

*Revenue dependency*. The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s revenue dependency (level of intergovernmental transfers) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *revenue dependency* was operationally defined as the percentage of intergovernmental transfers to total revenue in any given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s revenue dependency was interval and coded as

\[ X_{\text{revenuedependency}} = \text{Ratio of intergovernmental transfers to the total revenue.} \]

*Financial outlay*. The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s financial outlay or expenditures as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*
The term financial outlay was operationally defined as the ratio of total expenditures to total population in a given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s financial outlay was interval and coded as $X_{financial\ outlay} = \frac{\text{total expenditures}}{\text{total population}} \text{ in a given year.}$

*Short-term stability.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s short-term stability (change in total expenditures) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The expression *short-term stability* was operationally defined as the one-year percentage change in total expenditures.

The independent variable measuring a county’s short-term stability was interval and coded as $X_{short\ term\ stability} = \frac{\text{total expenditures in a given year}}{\text{total expenditures in the preceding year}}.$

*Long-term stability.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s long-term stability (county bond rating) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The expression *long-term stability* was operationally defined as the equivalent of a county’s uninsured general obligation bond issuance rating backed by the county’s ability to increase taxes if necessary to make payments on the long-term bonds as rated by Moody’s Investor Services. In cases where uninsured general obligation bonds were not issued, bond ratings were obtained from lease revenue, certificate of participation, tourism development tax, and insured general obligation bond issues, and adjusted to reflect a county’s uninsured general obligation bond issuance rating (lease revenue and certificate of participation bond issues were adjusted one credit rating higher, while
tourism development tax and insured general obligation bond issues were adjusted one credit rating lower). Exhibit III provides a summary of bond issuances (other than uninsured general obligation bond issues) used in this research study for both the General and Push/Pull models.

The independent variable measuring a county’s long-term stability, \(X_{\text{longtermstability}}\), was ordinal with 17 values indicating the perceived safety of a county’s long-term debt financing and coded as follows:

- 1 = prime with maximum safety, or Aaa;
- 2 to 4 = high grade, high quality or, Aa1, Aa2, Aa3;
- 5 to 7 = upper medium grade, or A1, A2, A3;
- 8 to 10 = lower medium grade, or Baa1, Baa2, Baa3;
- 11 = non-investment grade, or Ba;
- 12 to 13 = speculative, or Ba2, Ba3;
- 14 to 16 = highly speculative, or B1, B2, B3; or
- 17 = substantial risk, or Caa1.

Community Instability Variables

The following general research question was addressed: What is the relationship between measurements of community instability variables and county administrator turnover? The six attributes deemed as accurate measurements of community instability included a county’s (a) population growth, (b) county scope of jurisdiction, (c) ethnic diversity, (d) economic conditions, (e) affluence, and (f) poverty level.

Community instability data were obtained solely through primary sources such as the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
Population growth. The following specific research question was addressed: What is the relationship between a county’s population growth as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?

The term population growth was operationally defined as the one-year percentage change in total population.

The independent variable measuring a county’s population growth was interval and coded as $X_{population\text{growth}} = \text{Ratio of total population in a given year to the total population in the preceding year.}$

County scope of jurisdiction. The following specific research question was addressed: What is the relationship between a county’s scope of jurisdiction as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?

The term county scope of jurisdiction was operationally defined as the ratio between a county’s total population and the population residing in unincorporated jurisdictions. The population in unincorporated jurisdictions was determined by subtracting the population in incorporated areas (jurisdictions with populations of 10,000 or more based on 2000 U.S. Bureau of the Census statistics) from the total population of the county for any given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s scope of jurisdiction was interval and coded as $X_{scope\text{of\text{jurisdiction}} = \text{Ratio of total population in a county in a given year to the total population residing in unincorporated areas.}}$

Ethnic diversity. The following specific research question was addressed: What is the relationship between a county’s ethnic diversity (non-white population) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?
The term *ethnic diversity* was operationally defined as the annualized percentage of the non-white population to the total population.

The independent variable measuring a county’s ethnic diversity was interval and coded as $X_{\text{ethnic\,diversity}} = \text{Annualized ratio of the non-white population to total population in a given year}.$

*Economic conditions.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s economic condition (unemployment rate) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *economic condition* was operationally defined as the unemployment rate in the month of July within a county for any given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s economic condition was interval and coded as $X_{\text{economic\,conditions}} = \text{Ratio of the unemployed workforce to the total population of the workforce in the month of July}.$

*Affluence.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s affluence level (per capita income) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *affluence* was operationally defined as the annualized average per capita income level of the total population within a county for any given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s affluence level was interval and coded as $X_{\text{affluence}} = \text{Annualized ratio of total income to total population}.$

*Poverty.* The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between a county’s poverty level (percentage of the households living below*
the federal poverty level) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the
dependent variable?

The term poverty was operationally defined as the annualized total households living
below the federal poverty level within a county for any given year.

The independent variable measuring a county’s poverty level was interval and coded
as $X_{\text{poverty}} = \text{Annualized ratio of the total households living below the federal poverty}
level to total population.

*Administrator Profile Variables*

The following general research question was addressed: *What is the relationship
between administrator profile variables and county administrator turnover?* The five
attributes deemed relevant measurements of administrators included an administrator’s
level of (a) formal education, (b) job experience (tenure), (c) gender, (d) ethnicity, and (e)
origin of recruitment.

Administrator profile data were obtained through both primary and secondary
sources. Primary sources included personal correspondence with county officials; and
governmental, business, fraternal and professional organization/association newsletters
and releases, and meeting minutes. Secondary sources included the same annually
published government reference directories as listed previously in the *General Model*
section. Additional secondary sources included print media (magazine and newspaper
articles), non-peer reviewed reviews (interpretive accounts and histories), and
biographies.

In all cases, multiple data sources were used for purposes of triangulation and to
enhance the validity, or true value, of the data. The primary and secondary sources
Formal education. The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s level of formal education as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *formal education* was operationally defined as an administrator’s level of formal education expressed as the number of years the individual attended an accredited institution of higher education.

The independent variable measuring an administrator’s formal education, $X_{formaleducation}$, was ordinal with four values indicating the administrator’s level of formal education and coded as follows:

- 20 = Doctorate degree;
- 18 = Master’s degree;
- 16 = Bachelor’s degree; or
- 12 = High School degree.

Job experience. The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s job experience (tenure) as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *job experience* was operationally defined as an administrator’s length of time in office, or tenure, expressed as the number of years (rounded to the nearest whole year).
The independent variable measuring an administrator’s job experience was interval and coded as \( X_{\text{jobexperience}} = \) Administrator job tenure expressed in number of years.

**Gender diversity.** The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s gender as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *gender diversity* was operationally defined as an administrator’s gender, whether male or female.

The independent variable measuring an administrator’s gender, \( X_{\text{genderdiversity}} \), was nominal and coded as follows:

- \( 0 = \) male; or
- \( 1 = \) female.

**Ethnic diversity.** The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s ethnicity as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*

The term *ethnicity* was operationally defined as whether an administrator was of non-white decent.

The independent variable measuring an administrator’s ethnicity \( X_{\text{ethnicdiversity}} \) was nominal and coded as follows:

- \( 0 = \) non-white; or
- \( 1 = \) white.

**Origin of recruitment.** The following specific research question was addressed: *What is the relationship between an administrator’s origin of recruitment as the independent variable and administrator turnover as the dependent variable?*
The term *origin of recruitment* was operationally defined as whether an individual was promoted to the position of administrator from within the organization or from outside the organization.

The independent variable measuring an administrator’s source of recruitment, $X_{source_of_recruitment}$, was nominal and coded as follows:

- 0 = recruited from within the organization; or
- 1 = recruited from outside the organization.

*Cross-Sectional Interviews*

The qualitative component of this study was intended to solicit firsthand knowledge relating to the factors that may explain county administrator turnover. Also, the solicited responses were intended to indicate support (or non-support) of the design and methodology used in this research study.

Data were gathered using a semi-structured telephone interview method. By using this method, issues to be addressed in the interview were attended to, yet flexibility was maintained so that the interviewee was able to develop ideas and speak more widely on the issue of county administrator turnover.

Question selection incorporated both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions were intended to solicit alternative domains, attributes and variables that may exhibit a cause-and-effect relationship on county administrator turnover (other than those described in the quantitative component of this research study).

Closed-end questions were designed to solicit the level of agreement or disagreement regarding the choice of relational measures used in the research study. Closed-ended questions were ordinal and based on a Likert scale with five values indicating the
interviewees' level of agreement or disagreement to the question. They were coded as follows: 1 = Disagree strongly; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Unsure; 4 = Agree; or 5 = Agree strongly.

The questions posed to interviewees during the telephone interview data collection process are contained in Appendix II.

Table 5-6 provides a breakdown of the qualitative research questions as to their type, i.e., open-ended versus closed-ended.

Table 5-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a, 1c, 2a, 2c, 3a, 3c, 4a, 4c</td>
<td>Closed-ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b, 2b, 3b, 4b, 5</td>
<td>Open-ended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

System for Analysis

The quantitative component of this research study contained both categorical and continuous variables, while the qualitative component contained categorical variables and firsthand testimonials. The following are the primary analytical considerations, quantitative procedures, and qualitative procedures deemed appropriate to analyze the data in this study.

Analytical Considerations

Key analytical considerations for properly testing the hypotheses in both the General and Push/Pull Models of county administrator turnover contained in this study include the
selection of appropriate statistical software, treatment of missing data, i.e., appropriate methods of imputation, and testing for multicollinearity. A discussion of each key issue follows.

*Statistical Software Selection*

The choice of an appropriate statistical software package for use in this research study was principally dependent on its ability to perform panel data analysis that incorporates both a spatial and temporal dimension within the realm of panel data and duration analysis. As Yafee (2003) suggested, the statistical packages that perform well in panel data analysis are Stata and SAS. Further, “Stata appears to have a particularly rich variety of duration analysis procedures” (p. 7) capable of performing complex analysis modeling. SPSS, on the other hand, “is reasonably strong on ANOVA-related procedures,” however it is “the weakest of the three packages in the scope of statistical procedures it offers” (Acock, 2005, p. 1094).

Based on a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of the three statistical software packages, Stata was chosen in lieu of SAS and SPSS to test the effects of the covariates on the dependent variables in both models.

*Treatment of Missing Data*

During the data collection process, a number of values related to variables in the fiscal performance domain were unobtainable for four counties. Those values included total tax revenues, total intergovernmental transfers, total revenue, and total expenditures for three years of the study. Table 5-7 provides a breakdown of the missing data by county and study year. For purposes of obtaining accurate and reliable results of tests associated with the Cox proportional regression procedure, it was important to address
the missing data. Further, Murdaugh (2005) pointed out, "Assuring the sample size remains the same allows for the computation of statistical tests on more than one model and ensures any changes in the estimates will not be due to the use of different samples from the dataset" (p. 86).

Table 5-7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maricopa County, AZ</td>
<td>1992 - 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach County, FL</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pima County, AZ</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinellas County, FL</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fogarty (2006) suggested that four non-mutually exclusive categories exist for treatment of missing data. The first category is based on complete-case procedures, or methods, that result in the discarding of incomplete variables. This strategy, however, facilitates bias and is usually not very efficient.

Fogarty’s (2006) second category, available-case procedure, deletes data “only from those statistics that need the information” (p. 6). Available-case procedures, such as pairwise deletion, have a disadvantage over other procedures because the sample base may vary from variable to variable depending on the pattern of missing information.

The third category proposed by Fogarty (2006), weighting procedures, are based on “design weights” and operate by modifying variable weights to adjust for missing data. Weighting procedures, however, are principally used in sample survey applications.
Finally, the fourth category suggested by Fogarty (2006) for the treatment of missing data, *imputation-based* procedures, adopts a strategy to “fill-in,” or *impute* the missing data.

The fourth approach, or imputation, was deemed the most appropriate for treating missing data in this research study for two reasons. As Roth (1994) suggested, imputing missing data tends to generate less biased estimators than simple missing data techniques. Second, Roth posited that imputing missing data allows the researcher to use methods of data analysis on the complete dataset.

While there are many methods of imputation, such as mean imputation, hot deck imputation, and historical imputation, the procedure best suited for handling missing data in this research study was thought to be regression imputation. Regression imputation simply uses other variables to predict the value of the variable with missing data, and then the fitted value is imputed.

For missing data of non-consecutive years (Palm Beach County, Pima County, and Pinellas County), a simple regression imputation procedure was used, or $Y_i = a + bx_i$, where $Y_i$ was the missing value, and $a$ and $b$ are the least squares estimates obtained from a regression of known values of the given variable and study year.

For missing data of consecutive years (Maricopa County), a sequential regression imputation procedure was used. In sequential regression imputation, a regression model for a given variable is developed using all the original data. Next, for each missing data point a value is imputed. Then, the process is repeated for the next missing data point (Raghunathan, Lepkowski, van Hoewyk, & Solenberger, 2001). Following the Raghunathan et al. procedure, missing values for study year 1993 were first imputed...
using a simple regression imputation procedure. The process was then repeated for missing data in study year 1992, incorporating the imputed values for study year 1993 in the simple regression imputation procedure.

**Multicollinearity**

Multicollinearity is an important analytical consideration in any regression analysis. Multicollinearity becomes a problem when the effects of multiple covariates on the dependent variable cannot be separated. When two variables are significantly correlated, it becomes problematic when determining which of the two variables accounts for the variance in the dependent variable.

Considering the models contained in this study, it is expected that some degree of collinearity may exist between certain covariates, e.g., one-year commission turnover and two-year commission turnover; a community’s poverty rate and per capita income.

To assess the degree of multicollinearity among the 21 covariates in both the General and Push/Pull Models, bivariate correlation analyses were performed. Exhibit IV presents the results of the bivariate correlation analysis for the General Model, while Exhibit V provides the results for the Push/Pull Model.

As suspected, a relatively high degree of correlation exists in both models regarding one-year commission turnover and two-year commission turnover, or .62 and .59 respectively. Further, an elevated correlation exists between a community’s poverty rate and per capita income, or -.65 and -.71. Also, it is not surprising to see a relatively high correlation between a community’s poverty rate and unemployment rate, or .62 and .66.

Lewis-Beck (1980) suggested that in social science research, a correlation of .80 is considered an acceptable “cutoff” value. Although some bivariate correlations were
considered relatively high, none exceeded .80. Based on this knowledge, the collinearity between the 21 covariates was deemed acceptable and all variables were retained for purposes of this research study.

**Quantitative Procedures**

The quantitative data were first organized for analysis by means of the guiding data collection framework, or research study models. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were generated to analyze both the dependent variable and covariates, i.e., measurements of central tendency, distribution, and dispersion.

Next, an appropriate approach for analyzing cause-and-effect of the covariates on the dependent variables had to be selected. Because of the characteristics of the data contained in this research study and subsequent hypotheses, a form of duration analysis, the Cox proportional regression model, was chosen.

Different from parametric models, the Cox proportional regression model does not necessitate “a priori specification of the hazard function” (Demore, 2005, p. 78). Additionally, unlike parametric models that incorporate temporal attributes on the right hand side of the equation, duration models encompass time dynamics into the dependent variable through “hazard rates.”

In the General Model, the hazard rate represents the risk that an appointed county administrator will depart his or her position in any given year. In the Push/Pull Model, the hazard rate represents the risk that an appointed county administrator will depart their position in any given year due to push or pull-induced factors. For purposes of clarity, hazard rates can simply be interpreted as the increase or decrease in risk that a departure will occur, with the covariates either increasing or decreasing those occurrences.
Next, to operationalize the data in the research study models, the models' "risk set" had to be defined. A risk set is a composite of possible outcomes that could occur in the analysis of appointed county administrator turnover. In the General Model, the risk set was departure or non-departure. In the Push/Pull Model, the risk set was pushed departure and pulled departure.

Because this research study incorporated time-varying data (covariates that change their values over time), special data organization was required. First, to maintain the same risk sets across different counties and appointed administrators, the structure of the data required a single observation for every county, for every appointed administrator, for every year of the study. Second, time duration variables were needed to account for the interevent-time variant characteristics of the research study's data set, i.e., counters that measure the length of time in office (duration), i.e., start times (ISTART) and finish times (IFINISH). A hypothetical example of how the data was organized in this study is presented in Table 5-8.

Table 5-8

Research Study Data Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Administrator</th>
<th>Departure</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>ISTART</th>
<th>IFINISH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Franks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Franks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Holmes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, the factors that motivate an appointed county administrator to depart or remain in his or her position had to be defined. Important to note is that these motivating factors may or may not be interdependent. In the both the models, the motivating factors were the covariates.

Qualitative Procedures

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously so as to bring to light substantive theories supported by empirical data (Merriam, 1988). For this reason, the qualitative analyses started early on in this research study when responses to open-ended questions were transcribed and organized around the issues being investigated.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggested there were five steps in analyzing qualitative data, each involving data analysis and interpretation. These five steps consisted of (a) organizing the data, (b) generating response categories, (c) assessing emerging themes and/or patterns, (d) seeking out alternative explanations, and (e) writing the report. Merriam (1988) suggested that the use of both textual and graphic depictions, such as tables organized by categories, was a preferred method of illustrating and reporting qualitative data.

The qualitative data analyses of interviewee responses to open-ended questions therefore consisted of organizing and summarizing responses into a textual format. Similarly, descriptive statistics of the participants were summarized in table format.
CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS OF STUDY - GENERAL MODEL

County Administrator Turnover – General Model

This chapter presents the analyses and findings of the General Model, and includes the testing of the hypotheses. As stated in Chapter 1, there were three purposes of this research study; briefly:

1. To explain turnover in appointed county administrators in large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government using push and pull motivation theory.

2. To examine whether previous methods used to explain top municipality executive turnover could also be applied to explain county administrator turnover.

3. To provide a starting point for development and specification of a single plausible model that could explain appointed county government administrator turnover in American counties of varying populations.

Development of the General Model first began by incorporating similar measurements of political uncertainty and community characteristics previously used in the study of top municipality executive turnover. Next, government fiscal performance and county administrator profile measurements were added. By including these measurements, it was thought the overall explanatory powers of the General Model could
be enhanced. As previously discussed, the dependent variable is a dichotomous variable indicating whether an appointed administrator departed his or her position or remained in office. The independent variable set includes all 21 covariates identified and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Important to note is that the original data set consisted of 90 administrators and 448 observed events (32 counties over 14 years). The following analyses incorporates only 88 administrators and 438 events. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a decision was made to exclude administrator departures such as personal or family illness, or deaths, from the research study’s analyses because these events were deemed irrelevant to the study results. The data excluded from the forthcoming analyses included 2 administrators encompassing 10 events (years).

Descriptive Data Analysis

Descriptive data analysis is important in any research study because it provides a “ground level” framework in which to examine the static characteristics of the dependent variable and covariates, i.e., measurements of central tendency, distribution, and dispersion.

Table 6-1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for “all” cases of the dependent variable. In general, county administrators are highly educated with college degrees (97.7%), have less than ten years in the position (81.8%), and are predominantly white males (90.9% and 87.5% respectively). County administrators were equally dispersed (50%) between external recruitment and internal promotion.
Table 6-1  

*Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Dependent Variable “All” Cases*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(a)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for turnover:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently in office</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed induced</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulled induced</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education (highest level completed):</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job tenure:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of recruitment:</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 88 subjects representing 27 in office at the end of the study period (2005), and 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced and 18 voluntary retirement departures

Descriptive statistics for those cases of the dependent variable that represented “no change,” or county administrators currently in office, are presented in Table 6-2.

Interestingly, all county administrators currently in office had bachelor’s degrees or higher, while the majority had less than 10 years in the position (74.1%). Additionally,
county administrators currently in office are predominantly white males (85.2% and 81.5% respectively). Internal promotions were more prevalent with current county administrators (55.6%) versus external recruitments (44.4%).

Table 6-2

**Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Dependent Variable “No Change”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(a) (Code 0 = no change)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (highest level completed):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job tenure:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of recruitment:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 27 subjects in office at the end of the study period (2005) with minimum tenures of one year

Descriptive statistics for those cases of the dependent variable that represented “change,” or county administrators that departed, are presented in Table 6-3. While county administrators that departed their positions were also highly educated, with 96.7%
having bachelor's degrees or higher, a larger percentage had tenures of ten years or less (85.3%) when compared to county administrators currently in office (74.1%).

Furthermore, the percentage of white males (90.2% and 93.4% respectively) was also notably higher when compared to county administrators who are currently in office (85.2% and 81.5%).

Table 6-3

**Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Dependent Variable “Change”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(a) (Code 1 = change)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason for turnover:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushed induced</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulled induced</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (highest level completed):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of recruitment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Tables 6-4 through 6-7 summarize the descriptive statistics for the covariates (by domain) that are contained in the General Model.

Table 6-4

*Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Political Uncertainty Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term commission turnover</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ratio of commission members replaced in a given year to the total number of commission members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term commission turnover</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>Ratio of commission members replaced in a consecutive two year time period to the total number of commission members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission leadership turnover</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Change in commission leadership for a given year: 1 = leadership change; 0 = no leadership turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission partisanship</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commission elections incorporated a partisan process: 1 = partisan election process; 0 = no partisan election processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County party control</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Change in commission party majority: 0 = non-partisan commission or no change in party control within partisan commissions; 1 = change in party control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 438 events

---

As previously mentioned, the original data set consisted of 90 administrators and 448 observed events (32 counties over 14 years). The analyses contained in Table 6-4 through Table 6-10 incorporates only 88 administrators and 438 events. A decision was made to exclude administrator departures such as personal or family illness, or deaths, from the research study's analyses because these events were deemed irrelevant to the study results. The data excluded from Table 6-4 through Table 6-10 includes 2 administrators encompassing 10 events.
Table 6-5

**Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Fiscal Performance Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>Ratio of total property tax revenue to total population in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income growth</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in tax revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue dependency</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>Ratio of intergovernmental transfers to total revenue in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>Ratio of total expenditures to total population in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in total expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Uninsured general obligation long-term bond rating: 1 = Aa1 through 17 = Caa1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number observations = 438 events (see Table 6-4 footnote for details)

Table 6-6

**Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Community Instability Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population growth</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>Ratio between total population of county to the total population residing in incorporated areas within the county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>Annualized percentage of non-white population to the total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic conditions</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Unemployment rate in the month of July in any given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>31013.21</td>
<td>8775.63</td>
<td>16847.00</td>
<td>61029.00</td>
<td>Annualized average per capita income level of the total population in any given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>12.24</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>28.10</td>
<td>Annualized total households living below the federal poverty level in any given year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number observations = 438 events (see Table 6-4 footnote for details)
Table 6-7

Descriptive Statistics for General Model – Administrator Profile Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Level of formal education: 12 = High school through 20 = Doctorate degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job experience</td>
<td>6.35</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Length of time in office, or tenure expressed as the number of years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender diversity</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gender diversity: 0 = male; 1 = female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethnic diversity: 0 = non-white; 1 = white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin of recruitment</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Promoted to the position of administrator from within the organization, or recruited from outside the organization: 0 = internal recruitment; 1 = external recruitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number observations = 438 events (See Table 6-4 footnote for details)

Cox Proportional Regression Analysis – General Departure

The hypotheses contained in this research study pertain to the conditional duration of county administrator tenure and their subsequent departure given a set of 21 covariates. Using the Cox proportional hazards regression model, the effects of the covariates on general administrator turnover were further analyzed. Following are the results of the analysis from three separate and distinct standpoints; the Kaplan-Meir method of survival estimate analysis, the “full model” proportional hazard analysis, and the “restricted model” proportional hazard analysis.

Kaplan-Meir Survival Estimate Analysis

The principal purpose of using the Kaplan-Meir analysis in this research study is to estimate a population survival curve for appointed county administrators from the study’s
sample. The use of the Kaplan-Meir analysis was deemed the proper way of estimating the survival curve because it allows for estimation over time, even though events drop out and administrator lengths in office are different. Also called the Product Limit Estimator, the Kaplan-Meir estimator (see Survivor function in Table 6-8) provides a nonparametric estimate of the survivor function $s(t)$, or the probability of survival past time $t$. Simply stated, the Kaplan-Meir estimator provides an estimation of the probability that an administrator remains in office, over time.

Summarized in Table 6-8 are the estimation results using the Kaplan-Meir (1958) survival method for county administrator departures over time. Column one represents administrator tenure (minimum number of years in office). Column two represents the total number of administrators with the corresponding minimum tenures in column one. Column three represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods that departed their positions (turnover). Column four represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods that were still in office after the conclusion of the study period (year 2005). Columns five and six present the survivor function and standard error for each of the tenure periods, or time ($t$).

The Kaplan-Meir survival estimate can also be plotted. The plot consists of a series of data points (estimates of the survival function) producing a line with a series of horizontal steps declining in magnitude. Provided in Figure 6-1 is a graphical depiction of county administrator departures over time using the Kaplan-Meier survival method and the data set contained in Table 6-8.
Table 6-8

Analysis of Cumulative Departures Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Tenure in Years</th>
<th>Number of Administrators</th>
<th>Number of Departures</th>
<th>Number of Non-Departures</th>
<th>Survivor function</th>
<th>Std. error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 438 events (see Table 6-4 footnote for details)
88 subjects representing 61 departures and 27 non-departures
Earliest observed entry $t = 0$
Last observed exit $t = 14$

Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimate

Figure 6-1. County administrator general departures over time.
The full model proportional hazard analysis incorporates all 21 covariates in this research study using the Cox proportional hazard regression model. As discussed in the previous chapter, the model was stratified by year and incorporated robust standard errors.

Table 6-9 summarizes the Cox proportional hazard regression estimation results. The first column identifies each of the 21 covariates. The second column presents the main effects of each covariate on the dependent variable (general county administrator turnover). The third column provides the corresponding robust standard error. The fourth column presents the probability that the covariate was statistically significant. The fifth column represents the change in hazard rate.

Important to note is that a positive coefficient estimate increases the duration of a county administrator’s time in office, while a negative coefficient estimate decreases the time in office. Similarly, a positive hazard rate indicates that a covariate reduces the odds of an administrator leaving office, while a negative hazard rate increases the odds of an administrator leaving office. A more in-depth interpretation of the change in hazard rates follows.

In reviewing the estimation results contained in Table 6-9, the coefficient estimates for the covariates measuring commission partisanship – commission party control, long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, the county’s scope of jurisdiction, an administrator’s length of time in office or tenure, and an administrator’s origin of recruitment all were found to have statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on county administrator general turnover.
Table 6-9

Proportional Hazards – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of General Departures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>P &gt; z</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-year commission turnover</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>272.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>-63.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>-8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/nonpartisan commission – change in party control</td>
<td>-0.93**</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>238.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income growth</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue dependency</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>177.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>-1.06</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>-65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>1.33*</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>280.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>-2.96</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>-6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>-5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>-29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/external recruitment</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>77.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 438 events (see Table 6-4 footnote for details)
88 subjects representing 61 departures and 27 non-departures
Log pseudo likelihood = -222.40, Wald chi2 (21) = 28.90, Prob > x^2 = 0.1164

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1

The existence of statistically significant effects was consistent with the study’s hypotheses 4a, 10a, 12a, 18a and 21a. All other covariate coefficient estimates were found to have no statistically significant effects (p-values > 0.10), therefore nullifying hypotheses 1a through 3a, 5a through 9a, 13a through 17a, and 19a and 20a.

The significance of the Wald test, which is a measurement of the overall fit of the full model containing all 21 covariates, was considered weak (Prob > x^2 = 0.1164). Generally,
researchers strive for values of less than 0.05. Due to the weakness of the full model, further refinement and development of a restricted model of county administrator turnover was considered necessary.

**Proportional Hazard Analysis – Restricted Model**

The restricted model proportional hazard analysis incorporates only the five covariates shown to have statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on county administrator turnover in the full model. Those covariates included commission partisanship – commission party control, long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, scope of jurisdiction, length of time in office or tenure, and origin of recruitment. Table 6-10 summarizes the estimation results of the restricted model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>P &gt; z</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/nonpartisan commission –</td>
<td>-0.64**</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change in party control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>1.06*</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>188.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/external recruitment</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>62.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 438 events (see Table 6-4 footnote for details)
88 subjects representing 61 departures and 27 non-departures
Log pseudo likelihood = -226.53, Wald chi^2 (5) = 18.45, Prob > x^2 = 0.0024

**p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1

In reviewing the estimation results of the restricted model, it was found that the coefficient estimates for all five covariates had statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on county administrator general turnover. Further, the significance of the Wald test
(p-value > $x^2 = 0.0024$) suggests that the overall fit of the restricted model was strong (p-value > $x^2$ less than 0.05).

Turning first to the effects of commission partisanship – commission party control, the coefficient estimate of -0.64 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.04. The negative correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (-47.00) suggested that the covariate increased the risk of an administrator leaving office. In other words, the model indicated that the probability of an administrator departure increased by 47% as the commission structure progressed from non-partisan to partisan no change in party control to partisan with a change in party control, when all other covariates were held constant.

These results were consistent with hypothesis 4a, which theorized that administrators in counties with partisan commissions and a change in party control are more likely to depart when compared to counties with partisan commissions with no change in party control. Similarly, administrators in counties with partisan commissions are more likely to depart when compared to counties with non-partisan commissions.

Turning next to the effects of long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, the coefficient estimate of 0.07 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.07. The positive correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (0.08) suggested that the covariate decreased the risk of administrator departure. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator remaining in office an additional year increased by 8% for every one-unit a county’s uninsured general obligation equivalency bond rating decreased, all other covariates held constant. These results were contrary with hypothesis 10a, which theorized that administrators were more likely to depart their position when a county’s bond rating decreased.

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Third, the effects of the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the coefficient estimate of 1.06 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.09. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (188.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the hazard of an administrator leaving office. Specifically, administrator departures in any given year decreased by 188% for every one percent increase in the covariate (percentage of total population to population in unincorporated jurisdictions), when all other covariates were held constant. These results were contrary to hypothesis 12a, which theorized that administrators in counties with larger scopes of jurisdictions are more likely to depart their office when compared to administrators in counties with smaller scopes of jurisdictions.

The coefficient estimate (0.07) for the length of time an administrator is in office or tenure was also statistically significant at p-value = 0.04. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (7.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the hazard of an administrator leaving office. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator departure in any given year decreased by 7% for every addition year in office, when all other covariates were held constant. These results were consistent with hypothesis 18a, which theorized that administrators with longer tenures are less likely to depart their office when compared to administrators with shorter tenures.

Finally, the coefficient estimate of 0.48 that measured the effects of an administrator’s origin of recruitment was statistically significant at p-value = 0.08. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (62.00) suggested that the independent variable decreased the hazard of an administrator leaving office. In other words, the rate of administrator departure decreased by 62% for administrators who were recruited from outside the organization compared to those recruited from inside the organization, when
all other covariates were held constant. These results were contrary to hypothesis 21a, which theorized that administrators hired from outside the organization are more likely to depart their office when compared to those promoted from within the organization.

Post Estimation Test of the Proportional Hazard Assumption

A key assumption when modeling a Cox proportional hazard model is proportional hazards. The proportional hazards assumption in the Cox regression analysis "refers to the effect of any covariate having a proportional and constant effect that is invariant to when in the process the values of the covariate changes" (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones, 1997, p. 1433). For purposes of this study, the proportional hazards assumption is simply the assumption that the covariates in the models effect administrator departure rates proportionally over time, i.e., if the effect of a covariate reduces the departure rate at time 1 by 25%, it will also reduce the departure rate at time 2 by 25%, and so on.

To determine whether the restricted model violates the proportional hazard assumption relating to each of the covariates over time, a post-estimation test was required. Post-estimation testing of the time dependent covariates in the restricted model on functions of time \( t \) is similar to testing for a non-zero slope in a generalized linear regression using scaled Schoenfeld residuals on functions of time. Table 6-11 provides the post-estimation test results of the proportional hazard assumption, both globally and to each covariate in the restricted model.

In reviewing the post-estimation test results of the proportional hazard assumption, no evidence was found that the covariates in the restricted model violate the proportional hazard assumption (all \( p \)-values \( > x^2 \) exceed 0.05). In other words, none of the five covariates (when measured against the function of time \( t \)) had confidence levels of 95%
or greater. The results of the post-estimation test verifies that the interactions between the covariates and the function of time \((t)\) are insignificant, therefore, suggesting the restricted model in this study is properly constructed.

Table 6-11

\textit{Test of Proportional Hazard Assumption – Restricted Model: Predictors of Rate of General Departures}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(x^2)</th>
<th>(df)</th>
<th>Confidence level (prob &gt; (x^2))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/nonpartisan commission – change in party control</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/external recruitment</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global test</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Robust variance-covariance matrix used

Summary comments and conclusions regarding the results of the General Model analyses are provided in Chapter 8.
CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS OF STUDY – PUSH/PULL MODEL

County Administrator Turnover – Push/Pull Model

The second theoretical model developed and tested in this research study was the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover. The Push/Pull Model differed from the General Model such that it further examined the push and the pull effects of 15 of the 21 covariates on the dependent variable (county administrator turnover).

As explained in Chapter 6, the original data set consisted of 90 administrators and 448 observed events (32 counties over 14 years). The following analyses incorporate only 61 administrators and 258 events because administrator departures such as personal or family illness, deaths, and administrators currently in office at the end of the study were excluded from the forthcoming analyses.

Descriptive Data Analysis

As in the General Model, the descriptive data analysis in the Push/Pull Model provides a basis in which to examine the characteristics of the dependent variable and covariates, i.e., measurements of central tendency, distribution, and dispersion. It should be noted that the descriptive statistics contained in this chapter are not limited to the 15 covariates used in the forthcoming Cox proportional regression analyses. The descriptive
statistics contained in this chapter incorporate all 21 covariates used in the General Model. By using all 21 covariates in the descriptive statistic summaries of the Push/Pull Model it was thought that comparisons could be made to the descriptive statistic summaries contained in the General Model.

Table 7-1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for push-induced departures of the dependent variable.

Table 7-1

Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Dependent Variable Push-Induced Departure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(b)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Push-induced departure (code = 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (highest level completed):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of recruitment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 17 push-induced departures
The descriptive statistics in Table 7-1 pointed out that county administrators pushed out of office were highly educated, with 100% having bachelor degrees or higher. Further, a high percentage (88.2%) had less than ten years in the position, while 88.2% were males and 88.2% were white. Also important to note was that over half (58.8%) were recruited to the position from external sources.

Descriptive statistics summarizing the reasons for those cases of the dependent variable that represented push-induced departures are presented in Table 7-2.

Table 7-2

Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Dependent Variable Reason for Push-Induced Departure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for departure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal performance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political conflict</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal investigation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 17 push-induced departures

Table 7-3 summarizes the descriptive statistics for pull-induced departures of the dependent variable. An analysis of the results in Table 7-3 suggested similar results to push-induced departures with the exception of the origin of recruitment. Specifically, county administrators were highly educated, with 100% having associate degrees or higher; a high percentage (88.5%) had less than 10 years in the position; and 88.5% were males and 92.32% were white. Unlike administrators who experienced pull-induced departures (over half being recruited from external sources), administrators who experienced push-induced departures were predominantly promoted from within (53.8%).

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Table 7-3

Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Dependent Variable Pull-Induced Departure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(b)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pull-induced departure (code = 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (highest level completed):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of recruitment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 26 pull-induced departures

Descriptive statistics summarizing pull-induced departures are presented in Table 7-4. Interestingly, of the 26 administrators who departed office due to pull factors, 42.3% accepted positions in the public sector, 42.3% accepted positions in the private sector, 11.5% accepted positions with a non-profit organization, and one (3.9%) ran for political office.

Table 7-5 summarizes the descriptive statistics for county administrators who departed office for purposes of retirement, while Tables 7-6 through 7-9 summarize the descriptive statistics for all 21 covariates identified and described in Chapters 4 and 5.
Table 7-4

**Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Dependent Variable Reason for Pull-Induced Departure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for departure</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept position in the public sector</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept position in the private sector</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept position in the non-profit sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run for political office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 26 pull-induced departures

Table 7-5

**Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Dependent Variable “Retirement” Induced Departure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator turnover(b)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Retired” (code = 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (highest level completed):</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate degree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job tenure:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 5 Years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 Years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 Years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 + Years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of recruitment:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>55.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of administrators = 18 voluntary retirements
Interestingly, the descriptive statistics contained in Table 7-5 suggested that county administrators who chose to retire were also highly educated with 94.4% having bachelor degrees or higher. Interestingly, the percentage of county administrators with ten years of service or fewer (77.7%) was less than their counterparts who departed due to push and pull factors. Further, 94% of the administrators who retired were males, while 100% were white.

Table 7-6

Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Political Uncertainty Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term commission turnover</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Ratio of commission members replaced in a given year to the total number of commission members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term commission turnover</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>Ratio of commission members replaced in a consecutive two year time period to the total number of commission members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission leadership change</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Change in commission leadership for a given year: 1 = commission leadership turnover; 0 = no commission leadership turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission partisanship</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commission election partisan process: 1 = partisan commission election process; 0 = no partisan commission election processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County party control</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Change in commission party majority: 0 = non-partisan commission or no change in party control within partisan commissions; 1 = change in party control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events\(^{23}\)

\(^{23}\) As explained in Chapter 6, the original data set consisted of 90 administrators and 448 observed events (32 counties over 14 years). While the General Model analyses contained in the previous chapter incorporated 88 administrators this chapter also excludes administrators currently in office at the end of the study period (an additional 27 administrators and 180 events).
### Table 7-7

**Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Fiscal Performance Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>Ratio of total property tax revenue to total population in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income growth</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in tax revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue dependency</td>
<td>.427</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>Ratio of intergovernmental transfers to total revenue in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>Ratio of total expenditures to total population in a given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in total expenditures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Uninsured general obligation long-term bond rating: 1 = Aa1 through 17 = Caal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)

### Table 7-8

**Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Community Instability Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population growth</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>One-year percentage change in total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County scope of</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>Ratio between total population of county to the total population residing in incorporated areas within the county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jurisdiction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>Annualized percentage of non-white population to the total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic conditions</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>Unemployment rate in the month of July in any given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluence</td>
<td>28839.55</td>
<td>7622.47</td>
<td>16847.00</td>
<td>54195.00</td>
<td>Annualized average per capita income level of the total population in any given year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>12.609</td>
<td>4.760</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>28.10</td>
<td>Annualized total households living below the federal poverty level in any given year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
Table 7-9

Descriptive Statistics for Push/Pull Model – Administrator Profile Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. dev.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal education</td>
<td>17.67</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>Level of formal education; 12 = High School through 20 = Doctorate degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job experience</td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>Length of time in office, or tenure expressed as the number of years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender diversity</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Gender diversity: 0 = male; 1 = female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Ethnic diversity: 0 = non-white; 1 = white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origin of recruitment</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Promoted to the position of administrator from within the organization, or recruited from outside the organization: 0 = internal recruitment; 1 = external recruitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)

Cox Proportional Regression Analysis – Push Departure

*Kaplan-Meir Survival Estimate Analysis*

As in the General Model, the Kaplan-Meir analysis in the Push/Pull Model estimates a population survival curve for appointed county administrators from the study’s sample. Summarized in Table 7-10 are the estimation results using the Kaplan-Meir (1958) survival method for push-induced departures over time. Column one represents administrator tenure (minimum number of years in office). Column two represents the total number of administrators with the corresponding minimum tenures in Column one. Column three represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods that experienced push-effectuated departures. Column four represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods that experienced pull-induced departures or retired after the conclusion of the study period (year 2005). Columns five and six
present the survivor function and standard error for each of the tenure periods, or time $(t)$.

Table 7-10

*Analysis of Cumulative Push Departures Over Time*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Tenure in Years</th>
<th>Number of Administrators</th>
<th>Number of Push-Induced Departures</th>
<th>Number of Pull-Induced and Retirement Departures</th>
<th>Survivor Function</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Earliest observed entry $t = 0$
Last observed exit $t = 14$

Provided in Figure 7-1 is a graphical depiction of county administrator push-induced departures over time using the Kaplan-Meier survival method and the raw data contained in Table 7-10. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Kaplan and Meier estimator provides a nonparametric estimate of the survivor function $s(t)$, or the probability of survival past time $t$. The plot consists of a series of data points representing estimates of the survival
function therefore, producing a line with a series of horizontal steps declining in magnitude.

![Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimate](image)

*Figure 7-1. County administrator push departures over time.*

**Proportional Hazard Analysis – Full Model**

As previously stated, the full model proportional hazard analysis encompasses only the 15 covariates deemed appropriate in the Push/Pull Model. Table 7-11 summarizes the estimation results for all 15 covariates using the Cox proportional hazard regression method. The full model again incorporated robust standard errors and was stratified by year. The first column identifies each of the 15 covariates. The second column presents the main effects of each covariate on the dependent variable (push-induced departures). The third column provides the corresponding robust standard errors. The fourth column
presents the probability that the covariate is statistically significant. The fifth column represents the change in hazard rate.

Again, a positive coefficient estimate increases the duration of a county administrator’s time in office while a negative coefficient estimate decreases the time in office. Similarly, the duration of a county administrator’s tenure is inversely correlated to the hazard of an administrator leaving office: a positive correlation represents that an independent variable reduces the hazard of an administrator leaving office while a negative correlation increases the hazard of leaving office.

Table 7-11

Proportional Hazards – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Push Departures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>( P &gt; z )</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1525.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-3.42</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-97.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-67.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission change in party control</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>167.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>-6.53</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>1.79**</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>499.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1207.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>14.09</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>4.32e+09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>4.04**</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>98.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0.54***</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>0.36***</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>66.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Log pseudo likelihood = -42.86, Wald chi2(21) = 61.81, Prob > \( x^2 \) = 0.0000
*** \( p < .01 \), ** \( p < .05 \), * \( p < .1 \)
In reviewing the estimation results contained in Table 7-11, the coefficient estimates for 8 of the covariates measuring commission leadership change, partisan commission elections and change in party control, a county’s cost burden or tax revenue equity, financial outlay or a county’s expenditures, long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, scope of jurisdiction or the total population outside incorporated areas of the county, the economic conditions of the county or unemployment rate, and the county’s level of poverty, all reflected statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on push-induced county administrator turnover.

The existence of statistically significant effects was consistent with the study’s hypotheses 3b through 6b, 8b, and 10b through 12b. All other covariate coefficient estimates were found to have no statistically significant effects (p-values > 0.10) on administrator turnover, therefore nullifying hypotheses 1b and 2b, 7b, 9b, and 13b through 15b.

The significance of the Wald test of the full model containing the 15 covariates was p-value > x² = 0.0000. This was considered strong (less than 0.05) indicating that further refinement and development of a restricted model of county administrator pushed turnover was unnecessary.

Turning first to the effects of commission leadership change, the coefficient estimate of -0.94 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.10. The negative correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (-67.00) suggested that the covariate increased the risk of a pushed departure. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator experiencing a pushed departure in any given year increased by 67% when there was a change in commission leadership, all other covariates held constant. These results were consistent
with hypothesis 3b, which theorized that administrators were more likely to be pushed from office when a leadership change in the commission occurs.

Turning next to the effects of commission partisanship – commission party control, the coefficient estimate of 0.98 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.10. The positive correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (167.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the risk of an administrator experiencing a pushed departure. In other words, the model indicated that the probability of an administrator departure decreased by 167% when the status of a commission moves from non-partisan to partisan with no change in party control and further to partisan with a change in party control (non-partisan commissions = -1, partisan commissions, no change in party control = 0, partisan commission, change in party control = 1), when all other covariates were held constant.

These results were inconsistent with hypothesis 4b, which theorized that administrators in counties with partisan commissions and a change in party control are more likely to depart when compared to counties with partisan commissions with no change in party control. Similarly, administrators in counties with partisan commissions are more likely to depart when compared to counties with non-partisan commissions.

The coefficient estimate (-6.53) for a county’s cost burden, or tax revenue equity was also statistically significant at p-value = 0.02. The negative correlation and change in hazard rate (-100.00) suggested that the covariate increased the hazard of an administrator leaving office. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator experiencing a pushed departure in any given year increased 100% for every one-unit increase in the ratio of total property tax revenue to total population, when all other covariates were held constant. These results were consistent with hypothesis 5b, which
theorized that the larger a county’s cost burden, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

Turning next to the effects of a county’s financial outlay or expenditures, the coefficient estimate of 1.79 is statistically significant at p-value = 0.03. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (499.00) suggests that the covariate decreases the hazard of a push-induced departure. Specifically, the rate of a pushed departure decreased by 499% for every one-unit increase in the covariate, or one percent increase in the ratio of total expenditures to total population, when all other covariates were held constant. These results are inconsistent with hypothesis 6b, which theorized that administrators in counties with larger levels of expenditures experience a push-effected departure.

Fifth, the effects of long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, the coefficient estimate of 0.22 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.01. The positive correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (25.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the risk of a pushed administrator departure. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator remaining in office an additional year increased by 25% for every one-unit a county’s uninsured general obligation equivalency bond rating decreased, all other covariates held constant. These results were also inconsistent with hypothesis 8b, which theorized that administrators were more likely to experience a pushed departure when a county’s bond rating decreased.

Sixth, the effects of the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the coefficient estimate of -4.04 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.02. The negative correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (-98.00) suggested that the covariate increased the hazard of an administrator experiencing a pushed departure in any given year.
Specifically, administrator pushed departures increased by 98% for every one-unit increase (one percentage point) in the covariate (percentage of total population to population in unincorporated jurisdictions), when all other covariates were held constant. These results were consistent with hypothesis 10b, which theorized the larger the county's scope of jurisdiction, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

The coefficient estimate (-0.54) for the economic conditions of the county or unemployment rate was also statistically significant at p-value = 0.00. The negative correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (-42.00) suggested that the covariate increased the hazard of a pushed departure. Simply stated, the probability of an administrator experiencing a pushed departure in any given year increased by 42% for every add one percent increase in the unemployment rate., all other covariates held constant. These results were consistent with hypothesis 11b, which theorized the unhealthier a county's economic condition, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

Finally, the coefficient estimate of 0.36 that measured the county's level of poverty was statistically significant at p-value = 0.01. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (44.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the hazard of an administrator being pushed from office. In other words, the rate of pushed departures decreased by 44% for every one percent increase in the number of households below the federal poverty level, when all other covariates were held constant. These results were contrary to hypothesis 12b, which theorized that the larger a county's poverty rate, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.
Post Estimation Test of the Proportional Hazard Assumption

As discussed earlier, the proportional hazards assumption is simply the assumption that the covariates in the models effect administrator departure rates proportionally over time, i.e., if the effect of a covariate reduces the departure rate at time 1 by 25%, it will also reduce the departure rate at time 2 by 25%, and so on.

To determine whether the full model violates the proportional hazard assumption relating to each of the covariates over time, a post-estimation test was required. Table 7-12 provides the post-estimation test results of the proportional hazard assumption, both globally and to each covariate in the restricted model.

In reviewing the post-estimation test results of the proportional hazard assumption, no evidence was found that the covariates in the full model violate the proportional hazard assumption (all p-values > $x^2$ exceed 0.05). In other words, none of the 15 covariates (when measured against the function of time $(t)$) had confidence levels of 95% or greater. The results of the post-estimation test verifies that the interactions between the covariates and the function of time $(t)$ are insignificant, therefore, suggesting the full model is properly constructed.
Table 7-12

**Test of Proportional Hazard Assumption – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Push Departures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>x²</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>prob &gt; x²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission – change in party control</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global test</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Robust variance-covariance matrix used

Cox Proportional Regression Analysis – Pull Departure

_Kaplan-Meir Survival Estimate Analysis_

Summarized in Table 7-13 are the estimation results using the Kaplan-Meir method for pull-induced departures over time. Column one represents administrator tenure (years). Column two represents the total number of administrators with the corresponding minimum tenures in column one. Column three represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods that experienced pull-effected departures (turnover). Column four represents the number of administrators during each of the tenure periods.
that experienced push-induced departures or retired after conclusion of the study period (year 2005). Columns five and six present the survivor function and standard error for each of the tenure periods, or time (t).

Table 7-13
Analysis of Cumulative Pull Departures Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Tenure in Years</th>
<th>Number of Administrators</th>
<th>Number of Pull-Induced Departures</th>
<th>Number of Push-Induced and Retirement Departures</th>
<th>Survivor Function</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Earliest observed entry \( t = 0 \)
Last observed exit \( t = 14 \)

Provided in Figure 7-2 is a graphical depiction of county administrator pull-induced departures over time using the Kaplan-Meier survival method and the raw data contained in Table 7-13. Again, the Kaplan and Meier estimator provides a nonparametric estimate of the survivor function \( s(t) \), or the probability of survival past time \( t \).
Figure 7-2. County administrator pull departures over time.

Proportional Hazard Analysis – Full Model

Table 7-14 summarizes the estimation results for the 15 covariates in the Push/Pull Model using the Cox proportional hazard regression model. The full model again incorporated robust standard errors and was stratified by year. The first column identifies each of the 15 covariates. The second column presents the main effects of each covariate on the dependent variable (pull-induced departures). The third column provides the corresponding robust standard error. The fourth column presents the probability that the covariate is statistically significant. The fifth column represents the change in hazard rate.
Table 7-14

**Proportional Hazards – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Pull Departures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>$P &gt; z$</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-49.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>-42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission – change in party control</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>-54.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>16.23</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>907.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>-1.36</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-74.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>-2.72</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>-93.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>-2.63</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>-93.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>496.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>-1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>-7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Log pseudo likelihood = -85.31, Wald chi2(21) = 18.01, Prob > $x^2$ = 0.2623

"***p < .01, **p < .05, *p < .1"

In reviewing the estimation results contained in Table 7-14, none of the coefficient estimates for the 15 covariates were found to have statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on pull-induced county administrator turnover. This may be due to model misspecification, or violations of the proportional hazard assumption as reflected in the Wald test (p-value > $x^2$ = 0.2623) which is greater than 0.05. To test whether the pull-induced county administrator departure full model violated the proportional hazard assumption of each covariate, a post-estimation test was performed.
Post Estimation Test of the Proportional Hazard Assumption

As previously mentioned, one disadvantage of the Cox proportional regression model is that it assumes all the covariates effect the hazard rate consistently over time. Further, as the time of the study increases, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the proportional hazard assumption. Violations of the proportional hazard assumption can be interpreted as an interaction between one or more of the covariates and the function of time \((t)\). Table 7-15 provides the results of the post estimation test of the proportional hazard assumption, both globally and to each covariate in the full model.

Table 7-15

<p>| Test of Proportional Hazard Assumption – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Pull Departures |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission – change in party control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Robust variance-covariance matrix used
As suspected, eight of the 15 covariates were found to violate the proportional hazard assumption (p-values > \( \chi^2 \) with 95% confidence levels or greater). In other words, the results of the post estimation test suggests that interactions between eight covariates and the function of time \((t)\) are significant, and that the model may require certain interaction variables (or dummy variables) be included to control for and eliminate possible time variations. The covariates are the county’s cost burden, financial outlay, short-term financial stability, long-term financial stability, population growth, scope of jurisdiction, and economic conditions, and the origin of recruitment of the appoint administrator.

In order to determine the correct interaction variables for inclusion into the model, each of the eight covariates were interacted with time, or \((t)\) effectively creating an additional eight dummy variables. Next, the eight time-interacted dummy variables were included in the full model and the Cox proportional regression procedure run again. The results are presented in Table 7-16.

The results in Tables 7-16 indicate that only two of the eight covariates (cost burden and financial outlay) had statistical significance with regards to violations of the proportional hazard assumption as reflected in the time-interacted dummy variables \((I_{\text{finish}}*\text{Costburden} \text{ and } I_{\text{finish}}*\text{Finoutlay})\) p-values < 0.05. To control for and eliminate the time variations caused by these two covariates, the time-interacted dummy variables \(I_{\text{finish}}*\text{Costburden} \text{ and } I_{\text{finish}}*\text{Finoutlay} \text{ were retained in the model and the six time-interacted dummy variables that did not have statistical significance (p-values > 0.05) were removed. The model was then run again. The results of the Cox proportional regression analysis on the modified model are presented in Table 7-17. The addition of}
the time-interacted covariates deemed statistically significant (*\text{finish}*\text{Costburden} and *\text{finish}*\text{Finoutlay}) had an interesting effect on the original model.

Table 7-16

*Proportional Hazards – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Pull Departures Including Interaction Covariates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>( P &gt; z )</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>-37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-1.62</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>-80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission – change in party control</td>
<td>-0.80</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>-65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>-7.12*</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>4.57**</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>7.22</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1068.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>14.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>10.61</td>
<td>31.79</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>40453.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>343.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>-15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>-6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>-16.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Time-interacted dummy variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>( P &gt; z )</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Costburden}</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Finoutlay}</td>
<td>-2.15</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Ststability}</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Ltstability}</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Popchg}</td>
<td>-6.19</td>
<td>10.55</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Unincorporpency}</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Economic}</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>\text{finish}</em>\text{Recruit}</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>Non-significant effect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)

61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures

Log pseudo likelihood = -74.94, Log chi2(23) = 29.82, Prob > \( \chi^2 \) = 0.1545

\( * * * \) \( p < .01 \), \( * * \) \( p < .05 \), \( * \) \( p < .1 \)

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In reviewing the estimation results contained in Table 7-17, the coefficient estimates for the covariates measuring a county’s cost burden or tax revenue equity, financial outlay or a county’s expenditures, scope of jurisdiction measured as the total population outside incorporated areas, and an administrator’s job experience (tenure) all reflected statistically significant effects (p-values < 0.10) on pull-induced county administrator turnover.

The existence of statistically significant effects was consistent with the study’s hypotheses 5b, 6b, 10b, and 14b. All other covariate coefficient estimates were found to have no statistically significant effects (p-values > 0.10) on pull-induced administrator turnover, therefore nullifying hypotheses 1b through 4b, 7b through 9b, and 15b.

The significance of the Wald test of the modified full model containing the 15 covariates and 2 statistically significant time-interacted dummy variables was p-value > $x^2 = 0.0000$. This was considered strong (less than 0.05) indicating that further refinement and development of the modified full model incorporating time-interacted dummy variables was the proper approach. Further, the results of the Wald test indicated that a restricted model of county administrator pulled turnover was unnecessary.

Turning first to the effects of a county’s cost burden or tax revenue equity, the coefficient estimate of -4.79 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.02. The negative correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (-100.00) suggested that the covariate increased the hazard of a pull-induced county administrator departure. In other words, the model indicated that pull-induced departures increased by 100.00% for every one percent increase in the covariate (ratio of total property tax revenue to total population), when all other covariates were held constant. The results are inconsistent
with hypothesis 5b, which theorized that administrators in counties with lower cost burdens are more likely to experience a pull-induced departure.

Table 7-17

Proportional Hazards – Full Model: Predictors of Rate of Pull Departures Including Interaction Covariates with Statistical Significance (p-values < 0.05)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Robust standard error</th>
<th>P &gt; z</th>
<th>Change in hazard rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>-66.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolling two-year commission turnover</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>-47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership change</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>51.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan/non-partisan commission change in party control</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-61.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost burden</td>
<td>-4.79**</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial outlay</td>
<td>3.41***</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>2942.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term stability</td>
<td>-4.30</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-99.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term stability</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>-7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change</td>
<td>-5.21</td>
<td>13.47</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>-101.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of jurisdiction</td>
<td>2.37**</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>971.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>-11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>27.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time-interacted dummy variables

| Ifinish*Costburden                           | 2.26        | 0.59                  |       |                       |
| Ifinish*Finoutlay                            | -1.53       | 0.41                  |       |                       |

Total number of observations = 258 events (see Table 7-6 footnote for details)
61 subjects representing 17 push-induced, 26 pull-induced, and 18 voluntary retirement departures
Log pseudo likelihood = -78.10, Wald chi2(17) = 63.31, Prob > x^2 = 0.0000
*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .1

Turning next to the effects of a county’s financial outlay or expenditures, the coefficient estimate of 3.41 is statistically significant at p-value = 0.01 The positive
correlation and change in hazard rate (2942.00) suggests that the covariate decreased the hazard of a pull-induced county administrator departure. Specifically, the rate of departure decreased by 2,942% for every one percent increase in the covariate, or ratio of total expenditures to total population, when all other covariates were held constant. These results are inconsistent with hypothesis 6b, which theorized that administrators in counties with smaller levels of expenditures experience a pull-effectuated departure.

Third, the coefficient estimate of 2.37 measuring the county’s scope of jurisdiction or total population outside incorporated areas, was also statistically significant at p-value = 0.05. The positive correlation and change in hazard rate (971.00) suggested the covariate decreased the hazard of a pull-induced county administrator departure. Simply stated, the rate of departure decreased by 971% for one percent increase in the covariate (percentage of the total population to population in unincorporated jurisdictions), all other variables held constant. These results were consistent to hypothesis 10b, which theorized that the smaller the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover.

Lastly, with regards to the effects of an administrator’s job experience (tenure), the coefficient estimate of 0.08 was statistically significant at p-value = 0.10. The positive correlation and corresponding change in hazard rate (8.00) suggested that the covariate decreased the hazard of a pull-induced county administrator departure. In other words, the model indicated that the rate of departure decreased by 8% for every one-unit increase in the covariate (number of years as an appointed administrator), all other variables held constant. These results were inconsistent with hypothesis 14b, which theorized that the longer an administrator’s tenure, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover.
Summary comments and conclusions regarding the results of the Push/Pull Model analyses are provided in Chapter 8.
CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Results

This research study sought to add to the body of knowledge pertaining to appointed county administrator turnover in large American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government. To accomplish this endeavor, two theoretical models were developed: the General Model that examined general county administrator turnover, and the Push/Pull Model that explored the ways in which push and pull factors affected administrator turnover. Four general research questions were posed in both models:

• What is the relationship between political uncertainty and administrator turnover?
• What is the relationship between government fiscal performance and administrator turnover?
• What is the relationship between community instability and administrator turnover?
• What is the relationship between administrator profiles and administrator turnover?

Additionally, an assessment was made regarding the joint relationship between key factors deemed representative of political uncertainty, government fiscal performance, community instability, select administrator profiles, and appointed county administrator turnover.
A summary of the important findings from this research study for both the General Model and the Push/Pull Model follows.

**General Model**

Unlike previous empirical studies that have explored appointed municipality executive turnover (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Feiock et al., 2003; Feiock et al., 2001; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006; Renner, 1990; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991), no empirical research studies have been undertaken to explore appointed county administrator turnover.

Hence, the principal contribution to the body of knowledge relating to analysis of general county administrator turnover was to fill a “void ... in our knowledge base about the American county” (Benton, 2003, p. 471). Second, this study contributes to the body of empirical literature on appointed county administrators in large American counties. Although many studies have descriptively characterized appointed county administrators, i.e., length of tenure, gender, race, and education, no such research has attempted to explore cause-effect relationships between multiple covariates and county administrator turnover.

While the General Model of county administrator turnover contained in this study proposed 21 hypotheses (one for each of the covariates) within the four domains of interest, statistical significance was found in only five of the covariates (p-values < 0.10), i.e., non-partisan/partisan commission with or without a change in party control, a county's long-term stability measured as the uninsured general obligation equivalency bond rating, a county's scope of jurisdiction measured as the percentage of a county's total population to the population in unincorporated jurisdictions, a county
administrator’s job experience measured as the number of years in the position, and a
county administrator’s origin of recruitment (internal promotion or external hire).

Further, the results of the Cox proportional regression procedure for the restricted model
provided “directional” support for only two of the five hypotheses. No statistically
significant evidence with regard to cause-effect on county administrator turnover was
found for the remaining 16 covariates.

Unlike previous research that explored the interrelationships between similar
covariates and municipality top-executive turnover, the findings of this study on county
administrator turnover suggest stark differences.

First, DeHoog and Whitaker (1990), found that political conflict was a primary reason
for municipality appointed executive turnover, a relationship that was not strongly
supported in this research study of appointed county administrator turnover. For example,
this study found that short-term and mid-term changes in the composition of the
commission had no effect on appointed county administrator turnover. Similar non-
results were found with leadership changes in the governing body.

One possible explanation of the non-effect in counties versus municipalities is that
political conflict and uncertainty is more visible in municipalities when compared to that
of counties. The factors contributing to elevated levels of political conflict in
municipalities may be due to the more complex dynamics of local political systems.

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24 Directional support was consistent with hypothesis 4a, and 4a2 (partisan councils and changes in party
control result in higher administrator turnover) and hypothesis 18a (the longer an administrator’s job
tenure, the less likely an administrator will leave his or her position). Directional support was inconsistent
or contrary to hypothesis 10a (administrators were more likely to depart their position when a county’s
bond rating decreased), 12a (the larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the more likely an administrator
will leave his or her position) and hypothesis 21a (administrators who are recruited from outside the
organization are more likely to leave their positions when compared to administrators who are promoted
from within the organization).
Second, Feiock et al. (2001), found evidence “linking community and economic growth to (municipality) administrative turnover” (p. 106). Similarly, McCabe et al. (2006) discovered cause-effect relationships between a municipality’s income level and economic change, and top-executive turnover.

Cause-effect relationships between community instability and fiscal performance factors, and appointed county administrator turnover however were not generally supported in this general turnover component of this research study. For example, of the 12 covariates deemed representative of these two domains, only two were found to be statistically significant on appointed county administrator turnover; a county’s long-term stability and scope of jurisdiction.

The non-effects of the ten remaining covariates may once again, be attributed to the increased complexity and dynamics of local political systems. In one sense, top-executives in municipalities may be held more accountable for the successes and failures of their respective jurisdictions when compared to appointed county administrators.

Lastly, this research study suggested the majority of factors measuring a county administrator’s profile had no statistical significance on general turnover, e.g., level of education, gender and race. Interestingly, these results are contrary to the beliefs of some participants interviewed during the course of this study. For example, Interviewee #1 suggested:

I think you could find a relationship between administrator hiring practices and education, gender and ethnicity. I guess if you consider turnover as the flip side to hiring, you could make the argument.

Interviewee #2 was more adamant about the relationships between education, gender and ethnicity when they said:
I would think that the higher an administrator’s level of education, the more likely they would depart their office. I only say this because of the upward mobility factor. Individuals with advanced educations are generally highly motivated people. Therefore, one could expect that these individuals would be career driven as well (always looking for a better opportunity); and

Gender and ethnicity (female and non-white) go hand in hand. By this I mean that female, or non-white administrators have a higher propensity to be recruited to other jurisdictions. I don’t think they have a higher probability of being asked to leave.

These stark differences among the factors that contribute to municipality top-executive turnover as compared to appointed county administrators only beckons a closer examination of the similarities and dissimilarities of the institutional characteristics of local and county governments.

**Push/Pull Model**

Although several empirical studies have explored the push and pull factors that account for the length of top municipality executive tenures (Feiock & Stream, 1998; Feiock et al., 2003; Feiock et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2006), no empirical research studies have been undertaken to date to explore the push and pull factors that account for turnover of appointed county administrators. Thus, the primary contribution to the body of knowledge pertaining to the analysis of the push and pull factors that account for the length of county administrators was to fill one such void.

Unlike the General Model that characterized administrator turnover as a dichotomous event that was either departure or non-departure, this component of the research study added another dimension or second stage, furthering the body of knowledge of county administrator turnover: push-induced departure and pull-induced departure. While the General Model of county administrator turnover proposed 21 hypotheses (one for each of
the 21 covariates), the Push/Pull Model of county administrator turnover proposed only 15 hypotheses (one for each of the 15 covariates contained in the Push/Pull Model).

**Push-Induced Departures**

To summarize the analyses of push-induced departures, statistical significance was discovered in over half, or eight of the 15 covariates (p-values < 0.10), i.e., commission leadership change, partisan commission elections and change in party control, a county’s cost burden or tax revenue equity, financial outlay or a county’s expenditures, long-term stability or a county’s bond rating, scope of jurisdiction or the total population outside incorporated areas of the county, the economic conditions of the county or unemployment rate, and the county’s level of poverty. Directional support, however, was only evident in four of the eight hypotheses. No statistically significant evidence as to cause-effect on push-induced county administrator turnover was found for the remaining seven covariates in the Push/Pull Model.

As previously discussed, researchers have suggested that political conflict is a primary reason for municipality appointed executive turnover. Similar to the results contained in the General Model, this relationship was not strongly supported in the Push/Pull Model of push-induced appointed administrator turnover. In other words, this study found that short-term and mid-term changes in the composition of the commission

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25 Directional support was consistent with hypothesis 3b (changes in commission leadership result in push-induced administrator departures), 5b (the greater the county’s cost burden, the more likely a push-induced administrator departure), 10b (the larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover), and 11b (the less healthy a county’s economic condition, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover). Directional support was contrary or inconsistent with hypothesis 4b (administrators in counties with partisan commissions and a change in party control are more likely to depart when compared to counties with partisan commissions with no change in party control), 6b (administrators in counties with larger levels of expenditures experience a push-effected departure), and 8b (administrators are more likely to experience a pushed departure when a county’s bond rating decreased), and 12b (the larger a county’s poverty rate, the greater the push effect on administrator turnover).
had no effect on push-induced appointed county administrator turnover. Again, the more complex dynamics of local political systems may partially explain this phenomenon.

Interviewee #4 summed up the effects of political uncertainty on push-induced appointed county administrator turnover by saying:

When all is said and done, you have to believe that you are doing the right thing, and that you make every attempt to build good relations with council members through trust and respect. If you have a good relationship with council members, you are in a position to say no if needed and still avoid being pushed from office.

Second, the cause-effect relationships between community instability and fiscal performance factors and push-induced appointed county administrator turnover were only marginally supported, i.e., the greater the county’s cost burden the more likely a push-induced administrator departure, the larger the county’s scope of jurisdiction the greater the push effect on administrator turnover, and the less healthy a county’s economic condition the greater the push effect on administrator turnover.

Interestingly, these results suggest that while community instability and fiscal performance factors may not necessarily effect general turnover, they do contribute to push-induced turnovers. One reason for this finding may be that when a governing body or commission does eventually decide to remove an administrator from office, the reason(s) for removal are because of constituent pressures on commissioners for the economic woes of the community or the administration’s poor fiscal performance.

Lastly, an analysis of the covariates measuring a county administrator’s educational level, years in office, and source of recruitment suggested no cause-effect relationship with push-induced appointed county administrator departures. Interestingly, these findings are contrary to the interview response of Interviewee #2 who said:
I would agree that there are probably relationships between education, tenure, gender and ethnicity, and administrator turnover, especially when you compare these measurements to what you described as push and pull departures.

Interviewee #1 did, however, accurately assess the effects of administrator profiles and push-induced departures in this research study when they said:

I'm not sure whether you could really tie leadership profile measures to administrator pushed-induced turnover.

Pulled-Induced Departures

To summarize the analyses of pull-induced departures, statistical significance was discovered in only four of the 15 covariates (p-values < 0.10), i.e., a county’s cost burden or tax revenue equity, financial outlay or a county’s expenditures, a county’s scope of jurisdiction or the total population outside incorporated areas of the county, and a county administrator’s job experience measured as the number of years in the position.

Directional support, however, was inconsistent with three of the four hypotheses. Further, no statistically significant evidence as to cause-effect on pull-induced county administrator turnover was found for the remaining 11 covariates in the Push/Pull Model.

Feiock et al. (2006) suggested that pull factors refer to “opportunities for professional, financial, or personal advancement in other positions,” and that “pull factors are often outside the direct control or influence of an administrator’s current employer” (p. 101). The results of the pull-induced analyses appear to support these conclusions.

Turning first to the factors that measure political uncertainty, none of the four covariates were found to influence pull-induced appointed county administrator turnover.

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26 Directional support was consistent with hypothesis 10b (the smaller the county’s scope of jurisdiction, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover). Directional support was inconsistent with hypothesis 5b (the lesser the county’s cost burden, the more likely a pull-induced administrator departure), 6b (administrators in counties with lesser levels of expenditures experience a pull-effected departure), and 14b (the longer an administrator’s tenure, the greater the pull effect on administrator turnover).
departures. While these results were inconsistent with the study’s hypotheses in the political uncertainty domain, they are similar to the results of studies performed on top-executives in municipalities.

Second, the cause-effect relationships between all four community instability and fiscal performance factors found to be statistically significant on pull-induced appointed county administrator turnover were inconsistent with the proposed hypotheses is this research study. Interestingly, while these results suggest that factors measuring community instability and fiscal performance do appear to influence pull-induced administrator departures, the direction of the influence was opposite of what was proposed in this study. Again, as Feiock et al. (2006) suggested, pull departures “are often outside the direct control or influence of an administrator’s current employer” and therefore, difficult to measure (p. 101).

Lastly, two of the three factors in the Push/Pull Model associated with a county administrator’s profile (education and source of recruitment) suggested no cause-effect relationship with pull-induced appointed county administrator departures. With regards to the level of education, these results are contrary to the interview responses given by Interviewee #2 when he said:

I would think that the higher an administrator’s level of education, the more likely they would be pulled out of office. I only say this because of the upward mobility factor. Individuals with advanced educations are generally highly motivated people. Therefore, one could expect that these individuals would be career driven as well (always looking for a better opportunity).
Implications for Theory and Practice

The research contained in this dissertation had both theoretical and practical implications pertaining to the field of study of appointed county administrator turnover. By underscoring both the theoretical and practical implications of integrating the substantive findings of this research study with past studies of appointed municipality executives, construction of a single plausible theoretical model that could be used to explain appointed public administrator turnover in American counties of varying populations might be accomplished.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical relevance of the study findings is threefold. First, the study results illustrated the robustness of commission partisanship, a county’s scope of jurisdiction measured as the percentage of a county’s total population to the population in unincorporated jurisdictions, a county administrator’s job experience measured as the number of years in the position, and a county administrator’s origin of recruitment, as explanatory variables of county administrator general turnover. The study results also illustrated the robustness of a county’s long-term stability measured as the change in uninsured general obligation equivalency bond ratings, economic conditions measured as the county’s unemployment rate, and poverty rate measured as the percentage of households below the federal poverty level, as explanatory variables of county administrator push-induced turnover.

Second, this research extended current models of appointed public executive turnover. Specifically, this study expanded the models of turnover developed by Feiock et al., (2001) and McCabe et al. (2006) by taking into account the influence of alternative
variables of political uncertainty, fiscal performance, community instabilities and administrator profiles. Creating new measurements for constructs and providing support for the application of existing constructs fostered the potential future development of a single explanatory model of appointed administrator turnover in counties of varying sizes.

Third, this study contributed to the literature on push and pull motivation theory and appointed public executive turnover by regarding county administrator turnover as a dichotomous occurrence with regards to push-induced and pull-induced departures. By viewing administrator turnover from a push and pull standpoint, top public executive departures are more precisely explained.

**Practical Implications**

As previously discussed, top municipality executive turnover is known to have profound effects on city policy, programs and fiscal commitments (DeHoog & Whitaker, 1990; DeSantis & Renner, 1993; Renner, 1990; Whitaker & DeHoog, 1991; Feiock et al., 2003; Feiock et al., 2001; Feiock & Stream, 1998, 2002; McCabe et al., 2006). It was therefore theorized that county administrator turnover would have similar effects on county policy, programs, and fiscal commitments as well. The practical implications of this research study were primarily the identification of factors that contributed to county administrator turnover so that repeated turnover in American county government might be minimized.

The expanded roles and responsibilities of top public executives have in many ways increased their scope and position of assisting in the provision of critical public services. These expanded roles and responsibilities highlight the potential adverse effect that top-
executive turnover may have on American counties. Previous researchers have suggested that repeated top-executive turnover often precedes periods of organizational under-performance. In extreme cases, otherwise functional governmental entities with sound policies, programs, and fiscal commitments, may become non-functional, leaving the community with broken commitments and sub-par delivery of services.

Because appointed county administrators play an ever-increasing role in policy formulation and implementation, economic development, and community building, repeated turnover of county administrators in American counties can have a far-reaching negative effect on the organization’s success (Banovetz, 1995; Martin, 1990; Morgan & Watson, 1992; Nalbandian, 1999; Newell & Ammons, 1987; Renner, 2001; Wright, 1969). By addressing the factors identified in this research study that affect administrator turnover, top-executive retention rates might be increased.

Contributions of the Research Study

There is growing recognition of the importance of top-executive turnover on the performance of organizations in the public sector (Feiock et al., 2001; McCabe et al., 2006). Previous studies have explored the interrelationships among the factors that are linked to top municipality executive turnover but, as previously mentioned, they have not systematically applied similar constructs to county administrator turnover.

The contribution of this research study was to first fill this gaping hole in the study of county government. By contributing to the body of knowledge and providing a better understanding of both the general turnover of appointed county administrators and the push and pull factors that affect turnover, it is thought that both practitioners and scholars
may benefit. In many ways, the success of this research study’s contribution to literature within the study of county government will be ultimately judged by the extent to which it can be used to explain county administrator turnover in counties of varying sizes.

Second, to accomplish this research study, a particularly large amount of data was compiled. The longitudinal nature of the data used in this study meant that the total accumulation of information contained in the database was substantial and most likely unique among other academic studies of county governments. Based on this fact, the data that were collected for this research study could serve as the basis for other explorations of American counties.

**Limitations of the Research Study**

There were several limitations to this research study. First, because this study’s theoretical framework and research approach was limited to the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government, the explanatory qualities of the models may not be applicable to American counties with relatively smaller populations. It is acknowledged that it would have been particularly useful to include a more diverse dataset consisting of American counties with greater population dispersions, however because of the void and questionable accuracy of such data, it was deemed unusable in this research study.

Second, some explanatory measurements may not accurately reflect the desired cause. For example, the use of a county’s bond rating to measure government fiscal performance may only provide a summary of the overall long-term financial condition of the county.
As such, bond ratings may not reflect a county's level of fiscal performance in the short-term and mid-term time frames.

Third, this study represented an effort to broadly apply previous study models of turnover among top municipality executives to large American counties with a Commissioner-Administrator form of government. The limited success of this endeavor, particularly in capturing the underlying sources that influence county administrator turnover, is indicative of the challenges of creating an ideal explanatory model. Simply stated, this study does not fully explain the reasons that county administrators leave their positions.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

A review of the processes used in this study, as well as the resulting findings, identifies several recommendations for further research. Some recommendations are study design related, while others are intended to expand the body of knowledge and add to the literature base of appointed county administrator turnover.

First, it would be interesting to assess the effects of the model variables on American counties with mid and small populations. While this research study was limited to the 32 largest American counties with a Commission-Administrator form of government, considerably more work will be needed to determine whether the models contained in this research study are reliable in explaining appointed administrator turnover in American counties of varying sizes.

Second, further work needs to be done to establish whether the models put forth in this research study are reliable in explaining executive turnover in government entities...
with appointed top executives other than American counties. Hence, it is suggested that the association of the model variables be tested in other models of appointed top-executive turnover. Examples might include municipal governments, township governments, special district governments, school district governments, and large governmental agencies or departments.

Third, the findings in this study are directly influenced by the domains that were included (or not included) in the theoretical models. To enhance our understanding of appointed administrator turnover, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in order to incorporate additional domains not included in this study. A number of potential domains come to mind, such as compensation and benefits, organizational communication (or lack thereof), quality of life within the community, administrator attitudes and commitments towards the organization, and growth or career path deficiencies.

Fourth, future research might further identify additional explanatory measurements within the existing domains contained in this study to more accurately reflect the desired cause. For example, measurements pertaining to “internal” departmental budget allocations might afford insight into whether inner discretionary funding decisions lead to increased political conflict and, therefore, increased administrator turnover. Additionally, expanding the commission member turnover variable to a three to five-year horizon, as one past administrator suggested, might be more appropriate than the existing two-year horizon. As Interviewee #1 stated, “the seeds for the dirty deed (forced administrator departure) might take that long” only because the commission might not want to “give the public the appearance of being unstable.”
Finally, this research study did not thoroughly assess how poor relationships occur between commission members and community stakeholders, and appointed county administrators, although a mixed-methods approach was utilized. These unanswered questions might be further explored using an expanded qualitative methodology.
EXHIBIT I

MODEL VARIABLES AND DATA SOURCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model</strong></td>
<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Administrator turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push/Pull</td>
<td>Administrator turnover</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariates</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Domain</strong></td>
<td><strong>Variable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Uncertainty</td>
<td>1. One year percentage change in commission members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2. Rolling two year percentage change in commission members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Change in commission leadership</td>
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<td>4. Commission partisanship – Change in party control</td>
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EXHIBIT I (continued)

MODEL VARIABLES AND DATA SOURCES

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<th>Domain</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
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<td>Government Fiscal Performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Percentage change in tax revenue</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing annual financial results</td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. Percentage of intergovernmental transfers to total revenue</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing annual financial results</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Ratio of total expenditures to total population</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing census data and annual financial results</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Percentage change in total expenditures</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing annual financial results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Uninsured general obligation equivalency bond rating</td>
<td>Primary: Personal correspondence with county officials and Moody’s Financial Services Secondary: Annually published government reference directories</td>
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<td>Community Instability</td>
<td>11. One year percentage change in population</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing census data</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Ratio of total population to population residing in unincorporated jurisdictions</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing census data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Percentage of non-white population to total population</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing demographic data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Percentage of total workforce unemployed</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing demographic data</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Average income</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing demographic data</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Percentage of population below poverty level</td>
<td>Primary: Government documents (both in print and web-based) containing demographic data</td>
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## MODEL VARIABLES AND DATA SOURCES

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<th>Domain</th>
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<td>Administrator</td>
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<td>Profile</td>
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<td>magazine and newspaper articles; non-peer reviewed interpretive accounts and</td>
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<td>histories; evaluative commentaries; biographies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Job tenure</td>
<td>Primary: Personal correspondence with county officials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary: Annually published government reference directories; print media,</td>
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<td>histories; evaluative commentaries; biographies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Gender</td>
<td>Primary: Personal correspondence with county officials</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary: Annually published government reference directories; print media,</td>
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<td>histories; evaluative commentaries; biographies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Ethnicity</td>
<td>Primary: Personal correspondence with county officials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Secondary: Annually published government reference directories; print media,</td>
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<td>histories; evaluative commentaries; biographies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>21. Origin of recruitment</td>
<td>Primary: Personal correspondence with county officials</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary: Annually published government reference directories; print media,</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>histories; evaluative commentaries; biographies</td>
</tr>
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</table>
EXHIBIT II

MODEL VARIABLES AND DATA CODING

1. **General Turnover Model**: Dependent variable is a categorical (dichotomous) measure of administrator turnover, 0=non-departed, 1=departed

2. **Push/Pull Model**: Dependent variable is a categorical (dichotomous) measure of administrator turnover, 0=pushed out, 1=pulled out

Matrix of Covariates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Method and Level of Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Uncertainty</td>
<td>1. Short-term commission turnover</td>
<td>1 year change in commission</td>
<td>Percentage change (interval/ratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mid-term commission turnover</td>
<td>2 year change in commission</td>
<td>Percentage change (interval/ratio)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Commission leadership turnover</td>
<td>1 year change in chairperson</td>
<td>0=no change, 1=change; (nominal)</td>
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EXHIBIT II (continued)

MODEL VARIABLES AND DATA CODING

Matrix of Covariates

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BOND ISSUANCES (OTHER THAN UNINSURED GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS)

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**GENERAL MODEL BIVARIATE CORRELATION**

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EXHIBIT V

PUSH/PULL MODEL BIVARIATE CORRELATION

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APPENDIX I

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA SOURCES

Note: Primary and secondary data sources not specifically referenced in the body or Bibliography Section of this research study.

Primary Sources


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County of Palm Beach (n.d.). *County administration.* Retrieved May 10, 2006, from the Palm Beach County (FL) Web site: http://www.pbcgov.com/PubInf/Admin/index.htm


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*Secondary Sources*


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APPENDIX II

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1a. Do you think political uncertainty affects county administrator turnover?
1b. Why?
1c. Do you think short-term commission turnover, mid-term commission turnover, commission leadership turnover and commission partisanship are good measures of political uncertainty?
2a. Do you think government fiscal performance affects county administrator turnover?
2b. Why?
2c. Do you think a county’s cost burden, income growth, revenue dependency, financial outlay, short-term stability, and long-term stability are good measures of government fiscal performance?
3a. Do you think community instability affects county administrator turnover?
3b. Why?
3c. Do you think a county’s population growth, ethnic diversity, economic conditions, level of affluence, and level of poverty are good measures of community instability?
4a. Do you think administrator profiles affect county administrator turnover?
4b. Why?
4c. Do you think an administrator’s level of formal education, tenure, gender, ethnicity, and origin of recruitment are good administrator profile measures?

5. Do you have any thoughts or ideas to share with regards to the factors you think affect county administrator turnover that are not included in this research study?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Consolidated Annual Financial Reports (1991-2005) for all counties contained within this research study.


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presented at the 57th National Conference of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), Atlanta, GA.


Wiseman, W. M. (2004). The role of counties in local government reform. In P. C. McLaurin, Jr., & J. N. Fratesi (Eds.), *County government in Mississippi, Center for Governmental Training and Technology*. Retrieved November 6, 2006, from


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Dissertation Title:

Turnover of Appointed County Administrators in Large American Counties

Dissertation Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Dr. Christopher Stream, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Lee Bernick, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Thom Reilly, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. David Damore, Ph.D.