

2015

A Phenomenological Study of Leaders' Perceptions and Experiences in Local Government

Janet Elerene Williams
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Janet Williams

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Walden University
2015

Abstract

A Phenomenological Study of Leaders' Perceptions and Experiences in Local

Government

by

Janet Elerene Williams

MBA, Troy State University, 1999

BS, Hampton University, 1991

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

October 2015

Abstract

An emerging crisis in the public sector of the United States is that local government organizations are unable to recruit and retain leaders. A large proportion of high-level and mid-management public administrators leave the profession within a 5-year period. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore, identify, and describe patterns in the experiences and perceptions of local government administrators to promote career longevity. The central research questions were designed to determine whether work adjustment theory accurately described the lived experiences and perceptions of the subjects' career success in local government. Data collection included in-depth interviews with 10 current high level and mid-management local government leaders in the state of Virginia. Key findings of a thematic analysis of the interviews were that altruism was a strong motivator for career longevity and progression, intrinsic rewards outweighed extrinsic rewards such as salary and compensation, and that most of the participants perceived that an advanced education supports career success. The study further found that reactive adjustment of adaptability was a key driver of the participants' career success and longevity when applied through the theory of work adjustment. This study contributes to positive social change by providing specific recommendations to municipal governments related to the recruitment and retention of existing leadership. Ultimately, this guidance for existing and future public administrators will promote career longevity by utilizing satisfaction formulas, yield career sustainability with success attributes, and frame government leadership for the future by revealing existing experiences and genuine perceptions.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to the true public servants who have been a central and influential part in my life and others. Women such as the Mrs. Regina V.K. Williams-Gates, Dr. Laverne Parker-Diggs, and Del. Daun Sessoms-Hester have been public servants and effective leaders in business, government, sisterhood, and mentorship.

To my immediate family: Berthel and Bernice Hall (mother and father), Pauline Hall Rochester and Donna Staple (sisters), and Carlton Hall, Clifton Hall and Michael Anthony Hall (brothers) — no one can divide us; we are truly the living fiber that defines family. Mrs. Clements, Deirdre Clements, and Jacquetta Drones Yee—you ladies always have my heart.

Thank you to Frank Lomeli, Kimberley Joyner-Pierce, Oliver Love, and the future Dr. Shenelle Lea Byrd, my dissertation colleague. Close friends—you define for me sustaining friendship, and in return I wish to model my future leadership behavior after the constant inspiration that you have shared and shown me over the last 20 years.

Last, but never least, I acknowledge the power and driving strength of my supportive and loving family to include David Alan Williams (husband) of 23 years, Olivia Renee Williams (daughter), and Ian Joseph Williams (son). Thank you for always reminding me at our family meetings of our credo that states, “We will do all things together, with God.”

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study provides insight on people who are committed to public service in the United States for a long-term career. In local government, success in a professional career is a link to an individual's abilities to support the priorities of the organization. However, although a city administration establishes organizational priorities and goals, they do not routinely independently support professionals' goals nor define career aspiration. The perceptions and experiences of successful leaders gathered in this study will help persuade others to pursue long-term career goals in local government.

Background of the Study

In this study, I examined career factors and evaluated their relationship to career longevity in the field of local government administration. To establish connecting experiences in literature, I evaluated which career success factors impact the goals of local government administrators. While evaluating success factors, I used relevant research questions to explore the lived experiences of local government leaders. I also determined how these administrators created career paths for future leaders. Lived experiences on both success and longevity come from the use of semi-structured interview questions.

The view of success continues to change, as an evolution in the idea of professional development (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008). I conducted career success analysis to determine if it is possible for leaders to serve others in government while trying to define their own career paths. Prior research on the succession of jobs taken by professionals suggested a predictable order for career progression (Wilensky,

1961). Professionals move from one job to another based upon income, relocation, and opportunity. In this sense, career success challenges impact an individual's decision to stay or leave an environment. As such, the responsibility to define career success factors fall upon the environment and the administrator.

Complexity factors have also become part of the definition of career success (Dries, Carlier, & Pepermans, 2008). However, the considerations of critical factors that coexist with success factors are often ignored or unconnected to decisions to dissolve career goals. Researchers agree on four main approaches to understanding administrators' jobs: (a) rational choice; (b) personal interaction; (c) network analysis; and (d) the structural approach. These approaches support career success research and the use of networking analysis around career success as a descriptive tool to collect data (Dowding, 1995; Marsh & Smith, 2000). In this chapter, I summarize preliminary findings based upon the key topics in career challenges.

This chapter addresses the need for the best tools to develop local government career paths. Exploring the participants' lived experiences through phenomenology helped identify key topics for further exploration on the subject of career success by providing:

- Predictors of career decision-making,
- Experiences with career success,
- Influences surrounding career success and career anchors, and the
- Conceptualization of achievement indicators in perceptions.

Broad-based actions applicable to organization goals lead to short-term changes in the career of a government administrator (Kotterman, 2006). This assessment requires setting different priorities for one's professional career goals. Fundamental knowledge on establishing career goals helped to establish new factors that influence career choices. This research on the gap in knowledge about local government administrators' career success factors exposed problems with career longevity.

In the past decade 2005-2015, gaps in career success data and the emergence of a substantively new public administrator have included facts about diverse demographics, educational, and business backgrounds. Unfortunately, although more people become open to pursuing government work, many of them are likely to switch professions mid-career.

Problem Statement

The U.S. public sector currently faces a crisis wherein local government organizations are unable to recruit and retain leaders. A large percentage of high-level and mid-management public administrators leave the profession within five years. With an unprecedented number of senior management at or beyond retirement age, these organizations are not prepared to replace outgoing leaders (Watson & Hassett, 2003). Attracting, developing, and retaining the local government workforce require building a robust talent pool (Smith, 2014). The average tenure of managers in a council-manager form of government has lengthened over the past decade. The average number of years in the profession for top leadership was 6–9 years in 2000 (Watson & Hassett, 2003). A recent study in 2012 by International County Management Association (ICMA) survey

showed that a high degree or 89% of its membership is 41 years of age or older (Smith, 2014).

There is specifically a gap in the literature on success factors for administrative leadership. Consequently, insight on how career success factors contribute to the field of government may provide a perspective on why local government is a good career choice. In 2013, statistics concerning job satisfaction in local government showed a 3-year downward slope, dropping by 7.2 percentage points from 2010-2013 (Jager, 2013), from 65% to 57.8% (Jager, 2013). It is not a simple matter of managing government or students in public policy administration schools (Jager, 2013). To keep the motivation and morale of this profession high, there is a need determine what is behind the problem and whether further knowledge around career success could have an impact.

The general business problem is why local government administrators experience disenchantment with their future prospects. With little focus on priority recruitment in local government (Horton, 2013), it may be difficult to compete with the private sector (Horton, 2013). More must be done to inform potential administrators about the varied career building opportunities available (Horton, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of current local government leaders to determine why they stay or leave the field. Secondly, the theory of work adjustment was helpful to gather data about career success factors. The study was designed to provide rich insight into patterns in the experiences and perceptions of local government administrators. This

study expanded viewpoints on local governmental career paths by examining predictive tools to obtain knowledge about leadership experiences and perceptions.

When public leadership expectations change, it impacts the way administrators view their job (Perry & Buckwalter, 2010). As such, the targeted population for the participants was purposefully selected from a group of current local government administrators in the city of Norfolk and state of Virginia. This population was closely aligned to the study because of availability and close proximity to local government leaders and university and college pools of prospective public policy students who could benefit from the results of this study. Past research on the experiences of administrators who sought to be successful but encountered challenges while meeting the needs of the organization has shown that goods and service outputs create invested members of the group (Pizzicanella, 2010). Local government administrators and external factors that work together is a successful formula.

In this study, I gathered information about leaders' perceptions and experiences to benefit future local government leaders performing job searches. This information will be beneficial to future local government leaders by informing them about the advantages of long-term career decisions in government.

Research Questions

In this study, I examined experience, knowledge, perceptions, and impacts related to career success to identify the impact on local government leaders in the United States.

The central research questions were:

RQ1: What are the core lived experiences of local government administrators that have impacted their career success in local government?

RQ2: Does the theory of work adjustment provide useful insight on career success challenges in local government?

The central questions chosen for this study provided the context for more clarity on the topic of local government career opportunities and insights for respondents to share perceptions and experiences. The research questions reveal in-depth views of what factors have kept local government administrators in this field. The demographic and study interview questions supported the central research questions (see Appendix H).

Theoretical Foundation

This research explored the theory of work adjustment and its implications for job satisfaction, tenure, and career success in regards to local government administrators. Bretz and Judge (1994) posited a relationship between person–environment fit, including job satisfaction, tenure, and importantly career success. In the application of this theory, the degree of satisfaction was seen as a predictor of whether someone will stay in a job, be successful, and advance in the field (Dawes, 1984). Therefore, I applied the theory of work adjustment settings to determine a direct influence on extrinsic and intrinsic measurement for career success. Career success can provide a framework to consider the benefits of a career choice in a particular field. This theoretical frame was useful in interpreting the administrators’ perceptions and experiences in their current environment that impacted career success and influenced retention in the field of government.

Theory of Work Adjustment

This concept of career Theory of Work Adjustment was developed in 1964 as a training component in industry and business. This theory aligns a person's abilities with the requirements of the role in an organization (Dawes, 1994). When these factors are clearly aligned, an employee is more likely to have perceptions of satisfaction. Although this theory is useful to study person–occupation fit, it also provides a theoretical basis for why people choose to stay in a career. An active question from this theory posits whether persons who fit a particular organizational environment achieve higher levels of career success (Bretz & Judge, 1994). *Fit* affects not only applicant preferences but also outcomes (Bretz & Judge, 1994). As a result, researchers have suggested that fit is a favorable evaluator of retention and longevity in a chosen field (Bretz & Judge, 1994). When we discuss connections literature connections as shared by Bretz & Judge (2012), we sense that “ fit implies a state of congruency between individual and environmental characteristics” (p.32). In this study, the concept of environmental fit was used to gain an understanding of career success factors.

Previous definitions have detailed constructs meanings to career success, which included linkages to historic and culturally distinct paradigms, sub-culture, socio-economic backgrounds, socializations, and life-cycles (Bretz & Judge, 1994). For this reason, the selection of this theoretical framework was useful because it looked at matching a dynamic give-and-take process from both sides of the career success paradigm to those in the organization, and others seeking to become a part of the body. The theory in this study centers on the belief that people and environments are dynamic

rather than static and the influence of successful people can help shape and mold the future (Dawes, 1994).

Nature of the Study

The selection of a phenomenological research design for this study enabled a more clear understanding of the relevance of the underdeveloped concept of career success. The phenomenology method is unique approach, and useful in capturing the underlying meaning of an individual's experience for a broader context. The study clarified opportunities for future local government leaders by providing data about the career paths and experiences of local government administrators. Administrators learn to accommodate organizational cultures in an effort to find out more about themselves. The field site of local government municipality presented an environment of tightly aligned public servants within close proximity to help gather varying perceptions and experience in the area of leadership.

The core concept in this research approach is that knowledge of the phenomenon can explain and supply information for those who live the experience and process. Through the wholeness of experience, there is an opportunity to understand the essence of circumstances, as noted by Moustakas (1994); such understanding provides resources for making decision. A worldview evolves through this approach since there is an integrated and inseparable relationship determining the phenomenon, as noted by Moustakas (1994) regarding phenomenological research.

The sample type was small for the purposes of gathering an in-depth understanding of the participants being studied and to focus on the meaning of the

descriptions within the phenomenon to achieve saturation (Simon, 2011). A study on the subject of career success provides an inductive, holistic understanding of success factors and their impact on career longevity. The study collected data from a purposeful sample of 10 local government leaders from a city in the state of Virginia. The approach identified overarching themes through interviews, as suggested by Simon (2011), to address the central research question of career success in the local government environment. The study plan aimed to assess quality outcomes, with direct quality assurance method of triangulation and trustworthiness for measurable transferability of the recommendations, as suggested by Marshall (2011). A qualitative approach had many benefits to address this study's problem; it is a useful process for evaluating sequential patterns of change (Maxwell, 2009).

Definitions

Achievement: Conditions that encourage accomplishment and progress (Dawes, 1994).

Altruism: Conditions that foster harmony and service to others (Dawes, 1994).

Autonomy: Conditions that increase personal control and initiative (Dawes, 1994).

Career: The unfolding sequence of an individual's career (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008)

Career success: This study used Arthur et al.'s (2005) definition of career success as "Accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (p. 79).

Career longevity: Length of service, tenure, and seniority (Watson & Hassett, 2003).

Extrinsic job satisfaction: Equitable pay, fair income, responsibility, and promotional opportunities (Dries et al., 2008).

Intrinsic job success: As shared by Dries et al., (2008) intrinsic job success encompasses, “Influence, recognition, competence, and personal achievement” (p. 254).

Job satisfaction: A measure of work-life balance and being satisfied with one’s work and life accomplishments (Dries et al., 2008)

Material success: Having a high salary, being able to live a healthy life, and no financial burdens (Dries et al., 2008)

Recognition: Being acknowledged for one accomplishment, being respected, and being appreciated (Dries et al., 2008)

Assumptions

The data collection for this study incorporated local government administrators sharing their perceptions and experiences with career success and longevity challenges. I assumed that the participants would be forthcoming and honest in regards to this phenomena. I further assumed that the use of the theory of work adjustment would provide insight to the challenges on career success by using an interpretive discussion approach.

Scope and Delimitations

The research design allowed exploration of the explicit meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of local government administrators in the United States

(Johnson & Turner, 2010). The study also acknowledged the benefit and impact of changes in the field of local government (Buckwalter & Perry, 2010). As a result, this study provided a model of success that should be seen in organizational norms, strategies, hiring practices, and workforce development skills.

During this study, I qualified data concurrently during analysis to help determine the embedded themes in the perceptions and experiences provided by participants. The analysis of data depended upon my ability to understand the perceptions and experiences of local government leaders.

Limitations

A qualitative sampling approach can often be challenging and at times complex. The qualitative approach enables the exploration of complex human issues. I used an iterative study plan in a flexible manner. To understand career success, the parameters established for the local government leader need to delve further into the phenomenon. Relevancy for social change and contributions to a broader, more generalized population were essential to this study. Other concerns included:

1. The small size of the data sample of only 10 leaders.
2. The differences in positions held by participants offered varying challenges.

Close scrutiny ensured identification of unique experiences and deeper insight into the phenomenon.

3. Respondents' honesty and openness to the study questions provided objective and valuable contributions. Sensitivity to this group and their experiences was at the core of the leaders' approach during the interview and once the interview was

complete. Sensitivity prompts while questioning gauged the comfort of the participant.

Using an approach to combat limitations provided more understanding of the participants' perceptions and lived experiences in the form of recommendations that are reflective of the changing global environment of the local government employee regarding this phenomenon.

To manage the issue of bias in this research, I focused on knowledge construction via the research design. I used steady reflection and analysis of personal prejudice, opinions, beliefs, and values in the process of research.

Of note is that experiential knowledge may present as *bias*; as a result, the research design included a balance of knowledge that was useful and relevant while maintaining the confidentiality of participants. To avoid bias as a result of experiences with career dissolution, I used bracketing through a self-reflective journal to allow me to release personal experiences. This method added transparency and the removal of judgments for an unbiased approach to interviews (Hatch, 2002). Member checking was used in the research (Simmons, 2011) to ensure participants could validate their experiences.

I obtained informed consent from participants as an integral part of the research process; this consent contributed to the quality of outcomes, directness, quality, and trustworthy and reliable research, as recommended by Marshall (1996). I used pseudonyms during data collection to preserve participants' anonymity.

I abided by the policies of the Walden University Institutional Review Board. Participating government administrators provided consent before the study began. A detailed interview and participant protocols were designed to ensure there was a level of consistency in the data collection. My past experiences with audit techniques enabled the deployment of audit trails and transparent steps undertaken from the start of the research project through to the reporting of findings (Simon, 2011). I collected data through a triangulated approach that included interviews, self-reflective journaling, and member checking of the interviews.

Significance of the Study

Establishing what counts as success in local government can come from setting appropriate priorities in the community. Local government leaders may view their success as secondary to the goal of meeting community needs. The study examined the gains of each person in an organization without sacrificing the working priorities of the municipality in the process. Local governments usually set priorities on an annual basis. While setting these priorities, local government administrators can consider if these priorities account for individual success in addition to the relationship between organizational success.

Researchers have examined the application of the work adjustment theory within the boundaries of government (Akerlind, 2008). This approach not only benefits the profession but also extends learning and promotes the social development of public service leaders in this chosen field. In the research literature, there remain unanswered questions about whether people who come from a different environment with which they

fit achieve higher levels of success than those who do not (Bretz & Judge, 1994). To this end, a positive social change implication for this study is in providing a connection between the theory of work adjustment and its contributions to career success. This study showed that individuals in local government who *fit* the organizational environment achieve higher levels of success when other factors are equal.

Fit is a state of symmetry between the individual and environment. In turn, specific characteristics that address fit can promote the worth, dignity, and development of individuals in the field of government.

Significance to Practice

Social change implications of this study include possible tangible improvements to individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies. Understanding how government employees work efficiently through research supporting different career success measures can be helpful in providing models that apply to organization recruitment and retention models. Organizational philosophies that encourage more understanding of the predictors of achievement have the potential to help organizations retain a workforce committed to growing, embracing their talents, and achieving long-term sustainability. If the demands of career pressure on local government keep professionals from losing sight of ambitions and goals, the business model of career success could remain unchanged. If a business model lacks incentives and competes for personal success, leadership practices will require more relevant pathways for social change.

As such, potential contributions from this study include new knowledge on career longevity in the practice of local government. Contributions also focus on enhanced hiring policies, new hiring retention models, and policies to encourage advancement and retention. Finally, contributions to the practice include new incentives that help individuals achieve career success through changing organizational philosophies and mission principles that support a commitment to individuals in this field.

Significance to Theory

The problem this research addressed was the fact that leaders may enter the field of local government and face environmental factors that impact their career longevity. While a person's abilities may correspond with the requirements of the role, it is the perceived sense of satisfaction that encourages them to perform well and achieve career success over a longer period of time (Dawes, 1984).

In this study, understanding how individuals' abilities to address job satisfaction through the right organizational fit provided significant contributions toward views on career longevity. Specifically, when the shared experiences and perspectives of leaders in local government tied their jobs with different ideas about themselves and their interaction with the working world (Careers In Theory, n.d), they were more likely to construe themselves in terms of their personal achievements and work competencies.

Thus, potential contributions to the theory of work adjustment include new knowledge outcomes that focus on the individuals' behavior, adjustability, and flexibility in a chosen field. This new knowledge addresses the work environment that encourages employees to anticipate the importance of social relationships, understanding office

politics, and preparing to learn and adapt to changes in administrative leadership (Careers in Theory, n.d).

Finally, the underlying factors that influenced career choices were examined to investigate organizational leadership and ultimately provide predictors to encourage a future local government administrator's decision to stay or leave the practice.

Summary

Creating social change is an opportunity to reinvent the current working environment, especially for public servants who started off with a plan to stay in government long-term. When choosing to discuss implications for leadership development, future research studies of this kind are primed to contribute to broader understanding of career success. The significant implications for potential public administrators and mid-level managers are to seek progression in a career from their knowledge of the environment.

This research sought to empower people and their decisions through an assessment of whether there is an opportunity to change processes for appropriate use in the area of employee retention. Fortunately, the changing behavior of leaders persuaded to work and behave differently, as suggested by Murdock (2011), in their current environment is a study outcome.

In Chapter 1, I presented the background of the problem along with a brief synopsis on the gaps in research. An identified strategy to address the research phenomenon was also included. Consequently, I explained how social change was a productive outcome of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Insight on people who are committed to public service in the United States for a long-term career is included in this study. In local government, success in a professional career is a link to an individual's abilities to support the priorities of the organization. However, although a city administration establishes organizational priorities and goals, they do not routinely independently support professionals' goals nor define career aspiration. The perceptions and experiences of successful leaders gathered in this study will help persuade others to pursue long-term career goals in local government. The next section of this chapter will include an overview of the literature review.

This literature review was designed to identify literature that would be useful in understanding the experiences, perceptions, and factors that apply to local government administrators in the United States. This examination showed that career success is typically studied along a career continuum, and revealed a gap in the literature concerning strategies for balancing career challenges in this field. It also identified career success indicators for use in this study, and revealed that most extant literature does not include coping factors specifically for local government administrators dealing with career longevity issues. An overall goal of this study was to use career success and longevity indicators to determine if the theory of work adjustment provided important knowledge on the study population's career success and longevity.

This major part of this chapter details the literature search strategy including the search databases and search engines used to identify information on career success. In

the second part of the chapter, the theoretical framework is synthesized with career success constructs to combine elements of understanding. Finally, key variables and concepts are discussed to support this study.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy focuses on techniques used to gain deeper knowledge on the topic of career success and career longevity. Career length for the purpose of describing longevity provides details on job satisfaction, public service motivation, leadership patterns, and achieving goals. The absence of a commonly accepted model for career longevity has led to several definitions as suggested by Leonia (2010). In terms of a job ones career is a sequence of events and positions (Kern, Friedman, Martin, Reynolds & Luong, 2009). The literature search strategy included consideration of these details to prompt useful results for this study.

To understand different career fields' conscientious use of career success predictors provides elements that link (Kern et al., 2009) them together. Where literature described success models for this target group, gaps exist on their perceptions and experiences with these models. Aside from the obvious careers trends that relate to social roles, self-concept, ambition, and well-being (Kern et.al. 2009), research gaps still exist in the category of achieving longevity . Finally, the term career success conceptualized by extrinsic and intrinsic patterns, as noted by Kern et al. (2009) often requires further clarity.

To review the topic of career success, I used the Ebscohost online research database through Walden University. I also included Business Source Complete Premier

and the Academic Search Premier. These databases provided assistance with precisely determining keyword searches.

Searches included customized publication dates from 2005-2013, and author names. I used document specifications that included journals, books reviews, and editorials at the full-text range to identify pertinent literature for this study. Digital libraries included the Sage Premier, the social science digital library for political science. Finally, I obtained research value from the SAGE full-text collection library, Journal Storage (JSTOR), Mendeley, ProQuest Central, and ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis. Key search terms were searched in EBSCOhost Business Premier Database to gain information on local government leadership careers. I researched fundamental concepts which include success, career success, leadership, and career longevity. I also used other combinations of keyword queries to obtain literature on the theory of work adjustment, career success, and career longevity, in order to acquire research on two factors from past career success models. I used keyword searches related to local government administrators' career success and public service careers from Sage: Political Science libraries to provide rich descriptions. Finally, the term local government career models was searched using ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis to gain additional insight on prior work. When current research limits existed, and few dissertations on the topic were available, I examined cited works from similar industries. I used ProQuest Central to broaden search elements in the search descriptions. The queried factors related to career success were then used to create a consistent definition for use in this study.

Theoretical Foundation

This study examines the foundation of career success in a local government environment. It also presents and synthesizes research on why individuals stay or leave local government fields. The theory of work adjustment describes the relationship between people and environment (Dawes, 1994). This theory describes the outcome if a person chooses the wrong career, or the employer chooses the wrong candidate. The theory of work adjustment provides origins that are rooted in the value a person seeks to satisfy through their own work (Dawes, 1984). Flexibility can help determine the extent individuals tolerate change in their careers and contribute to their own success.

Origins on career success provide an opportunity to bridge the divide between theory and empirical research studies (Dunne, 2011). Career success is a catalyst to promote considerations for career choice. This knowledge for the future local government administrator established the theoretical proposition. Theoretical propositions provided linked relationships between participant views and career success.

Literature Review

As shared by the authors Arthur et al., (2005) “career success is both subjective and objective” (p. 274). Information on the target population of local government administrators can create potential for bias if not accurately captured to highlight their challenges. These challenges include promotions, compensation, rewards, and work life balances. The duality and existence of both career success and career longevity on the career lifespan offers a platform for further study. Prior research has included gender-related challenges not principally related to local government administrators. The use of

the work adjustment theory surrounding the interdependence of success factors and impacting an administrator's career choice and longevity is helpful to connect the reason for an employee's choices.

The Local Government Administrator

Authors Perry & Buckwalter (2010) share that, "In the past decade, several scholars have noted the emergence of a substantively "new public service" more diverse in demographic, educational, and work backgrounds..." (p.128). To address factors in career span, a full view of career implications can be helpful to weigh against success factors and gain deeper insight field. Organizational politics, generational views, and accountable roles provides insight into the career of a local government administrator compared to what is relevant today about career implications. In this study special emphasis is upon positions that do not include the city or county manager. The area of concern is for the mid-management and individuals at a higher level, who seldom are acknowledge.

Organizational Politics

The term organizational politics has come to be part of the conversation in a discussion of the local government environment. However, in local government the term is a branded way to determine how to make decisions. Perceptions on organizational politics are often subjective and tied to behavior of the employees in the environment (Grimland et al., 2012). When an employee feels that organizational politics outweigh efforts to do an honest day of work, recognition challenges arise in the work environment. An example of this the work adjustment theory posits that the politics of an

organization can threaten resources, since the emphasis in the environment is on the political issue instead of the delivery of goods and services (Grimland et al., 2012, p. 1078).

Negative relationship caused by organizational politics between the employee and the politician hinder professional growth. Relationship and perceptions about organizational politics tend to create struggles in the goal to achieve career success (p. 1077). Organizational politics for the local government administrator reveal preferential treatment, unsuccessful projects, and potential harm to career success. When employees sense that organizational outcomes tie to their involvement in politics more emphasis on personal goals around career success exist. This struggle may continue for a long period of time and go unresolved, since politician terms are often unlimited (Grimland et al., 2012, p. 1078).

Generational Views

Generations of local government administrators look to retirement around the age of 65. Very few young professionals are waiting the transition into positions in local government (Benest, 2003). With the number of young people attracted to careers in local government dwindling the crisis affecting the future of the field continues. A number of political and value issues are converging upon the industry, that do not address the perceptions and experiences employees have about their current employment state (Benest, 2003). These include: (a) younger generations exhibit different values than that of their older counterparts; (b) emphasis on achieving a balanced life; and (c) gaining joy from personal interests through career advancement seem to resonate in both groups (p.

21). On the down-side, aspiring local government leaders perceive that many local government managers who solely focused on work are overwhelmed and endure abused (p. 21).

The local government administrator of the future allows new access as stated by Perry & Buckwalter, (2010) that, "... subsequent structural and ideological development of public service is to lay the framework for new projection of the public service of the future" (p.274). While articulating a vision for public service in 2020, Perry and Buckwalter (2010), provided a framework to define the role of a public administrator beyond the current day practices. Merit system principles in government help to support the development of public service careers. However, it is necessary to outlay factors that impact the progression of a public administrator. These impacts, are well argued, and drive a heightened understanding that professionalization of the civil servant can have a taxing role that is affected by the underlying factor (Perry & Buckwalter, 2010) of a reward system.

Understanding local government from a broader focus on career success reveals more relevant solutions (Akerlind, 2008) on the issue are necessary. The responsibility of an employee to take control of a career path is a part of the success formula.

Accountable Roles

For public administrators the range of issues and outside pressures requires a discussion of accountability. To achieve success, professional resilience, and self-belief are part of the winning formula (Canwell, 2010 p. 303). Literature on leader skillsets include; the attributes of individual strength, blind spot navigation, pitfall knowledge, and

a yearning for untapped resources (Canwell, 2010, p. 303). These attributes build personal style and also help the leader find the best approach to move and drive major initiatives. The team approach is absent from the conversation around leadership success. Understanding dynamics of teamwork and reflecting clearly on the needs of others is a formula many leaders have embraced to make things work (p. 303). Engaging in a work environment that is truly satisfying, and working with elements of the work culture is a useful strategy to find career success. Leaders who take on this responsibility may see a shift in the level of stress and achieve a clearly supported message of teamwork. Research efforts for this profession will require examining different responses and importantly viewpoints to attain solutions for this crisis. As stated by Arthur et. al. (2005) “career success research draws upon career theory, and therefore on the ideas underlying its definition, concepts, relationships and assumptions included in career theory” (p.303).

In recent discussions about career success, various factors connect the research questions and the gap in the literature. These include: (a) deficiencies in the acknowledgment of career success; and (a) key attributes that shift the behavior of the public servant (Buckwalter & Perry, 2010). In choosing to connect these variables for public-readiness, the desire is to resolve a crisis societal change.

Relocation career and movement has become the reason that the role of the local administrator has not been coveted (Watson & Hassett, 2003). While leaders stay in one role for a long period of time, other employees quit before they planned to leave. Some

managers faced challenges due to their adherence to the professional standards and the differing value systems of the elected official (p. 22).

In summary, the knowledge on organizational politics, generational views, and accountability provide a landscape to connect the elements of career success. Whether we can sufficiently explain the results of achievement to the global environment, practical management in the public sector (Perry & Buckwalter, 2010) is in constant need of redefining itself by accomplishments.

The Theory of Work Adjustment

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) addresses an individual's adoption to the right fit position, it also posits that a person's environment is a contributor to career circumstances (Bretz, & Judge, 1994). This theory helps determine if as shared by Bretz & Judge (1994), in the question that states, “if people who come from a particular environment can achieve higher levels of success than those who do not?” (p. 3). To expand on this topic, tenure, person-organizational fit, promotion and pathways to success are useful.

The theory of work adjustment posits work rewards and job satisfaction as contributors to career success. These two elements also influence the right environment for an individual to work long-term (Bretz & Judge, 1994). New emphasis on these two factors highlight the gaps that influence an administrators’ career. Local government administrators and theory of on work adjustment are absent from contributions to person-organization fit and career longevity factors impacting tenure.

In the theory of work adjustment tenure and term are indicative of a stable connection between a person and work setting (p.33). Understanding job tenure is a basic indicator of satisfaction and clarifies the need for career longevity. In this study, tenure becomes indicative of the shared experiences an individual has about themselves and their work environment (p. 33). When viewed from a human resource standpoint subjective perceptions apply suitability (p. 33) in this effort. When organizational fit is a connector of the theory of work adjustment a favorable evaluator of work motivation is introduced. Fit is a useful demonstrator of job involvement, work attitudes, employee preferences, and behaviors (p. 33).

The tenets of experiences, and perceptions around work-environment suggested by Bretz & Judge (1994), that “both the theoretical foundations and the related empirical research suggests that individuals will seek out, find comfort, and flourish in environments that support their preferences” (p.33) and desires. Other motivational theorist posit connections that contribute to the theory of work adjustment all with the underlying premise that predicts individuals remaining in environments that foster positive reinforcements. If these reinforcements are consistent over time, they can shape individual behavior and prompt them to stay longer. When this occurs, individuals may continue to see indicators of career success bestowed upon them (p. 34).

Person-Organizational Fit

Research has historically examined the inconsistencies that exist with public service motivations. While person-organizational fit is a very popular premise that explains the organizational and management field (Bright, 2008, p. 152) it strictly

captures individual characteristics. Moving forward, the connections between organizations and individuals is important to achieve true meaning of characteristics shared by both groups. For example if organizations aim to attract, recruit, and retain individuals with the same or similar value systems that are established, improvement is key. To say complimentary skills and values will do the job of recruitment is not sufficient.

The benefits of deploying a person-organizational fit strategy provides a longer range of improved employee attitudes and behaviors (Bright, 2008, p. 151). If the ultimate goal is to reduce turnover and motivate employees to stay in a singular environment an investment in employees becoming more satisfied is a good idea. An assessment is useful to ensure the symmetry between an individual and the organization achieves the real essence of person-organizational fit (Bright, 2008, p.152).

Promoting Success

In studies on success promotion authors predict that failure avoidance can be an outcome of promotional success (Lockwood, Marshall, & Sadler, 2005). Inspiring individuals creates a catalyst for success in an individual's career. When positive and negative role models in the work environment change, the culture of the work place may have a stronger hold (Lockward et al., 2005). Research has shown that individuals can remain inspired by a positive role model, while the negative model is irrelevant (Lockwood et al., 2005 p. 379). Existing success model findings have focused on personal achievements, aspirations, and enhancements to self-esteem (p.380). Promotion focused individuals are able to highlight a strategy that has them attuned to the pursuit of

success verses the desire be successful (p. 380). In future examinations it will be relevant to view the long term effects of promotional success. An examination of this type may lend itself to ties with career longevity and perhaps help other cope with career pitfalls.

Pathways to Success

Pathways to success in leadership is available in research on both genders. Tests of the difference in a success experienced by the genders have shown that differences in genders with similar backgrounds were quite similar (Miller & Attridge, 2011). In these cases, similar factors included; (a) the inclusion of education; and (b) years of service, which have been helpful for examinations of experiences and perceptions. The results of past studies may divide the gender contributions, but do offer profiles of successful men and women (p. 230). Moving beyond gender differences and the views of the local government administrator is an independent task to study.

This study focused on providing additional knowledge of career success factors and longevity through the benefits of theory work adjustment.

Career Longevity

Studies on local government administrators have seldom addressed concerns surrounding the entire career lifespan. A determinant of career self-management is the perception an individual has over control and satisfaction (King, 2004). To understand why individuals choose a career in public service for the long term, benefits are gained from confronting challenges and learning the nuances in the field.

Challenges with longevity include a main requirement of frequent moves and relocations (Watson & Hassett, 2003). In a most recent study, of longevity for local

government administrators some 143 high ranking leaders had achieved tenure in the same community for twenty years or more (p. 22). This number is low, when considering there are 89,055 local government units in the United States as of 2012 (ICMA, 2015). Factors contributing to longevity are a healthy benchmark for longevity in the same location but do not achieve the parallel to career success as a contributing factor (p. 22), nor explain why the number is so low especially for mid-management roles.

Political conflict continues to play a major role in the disruption of career goals of a City Manager (Watson & Hassett, 2003), who is the highest ranking local government administrator. Conflict is an outcome administrators' face serving at the pleasure of politicians. Serving at the pleasure of a politician places undue pressure upon the role of a city manager. In other leadership positions pressure is dissimilar and not felt in the same way as that of the highest ranking official in government. In the role of the city manager linkages to the current elected official are established and present obstacles to rise above elective politics (Watson & Hassett, 2003).

Factors contributing to career longevity in this field include, job satisfaction, political stability, job latitude, family desire, salary, and benefits (p. 24). Specific factors impact city managers being able to sustain longevity in a single community for a long period of time. These specific two factors may not apply to other levels of leadership in local government (p. 24) to include mid-management and higher.

The career continuum often referred to as a career lifespan or professional work experiences is often assessed by authors in terms of career development, organizational challenges, and work-life balances. Literature on new career theories has lacked

discussion about difficulties, pitfalls, limitations, and areas to avoid along the career continuum. Career self-management is a concept, it has its beginnings in literature, and academic writings, but has only just begun to illuminate the research into behavioral phenomenon (King, 2004). If primary considerations exist to access a career spectrum, it is helpful to look at accomplishments, and challenges to see the full career view. Work on job experience insight and the career continuum is similar to examining the relationships of success factors, and mortality risk (Kern et al., 2009).

The average tenure of managers that work under a city council form of management has varied over the years, with many seeing a lengthening in the time frame. While this development is interesting it also provides a glimpse into factors that keep managers serving in one locality rather than moving on to others. In government the term “push” describes the reasons employees leave their positions. On the other end of the spectrum, “pull” depicts the challenges of increase responsibility and expectations which can also be a catalyst for earlier than planned departures (Watson & Hassett, 2003). As discussed early political conflict has played a role in disrupting the careers of a professional in local government (p. 73). It is difficult to remain in the role of an administrator and not encounter the elective politics that brew each fiscal year. Linkages tied to local government administrators and elected official are vast and range over a large number of topics, to include; community support, infrastructure demands, hiring practices and much more (p. 73). Attempting to avoid the brunt of political drama can prove to be unsuccessful, and often places the administrator at a disadvantage in terms of organizational clout and attempts to get things done. Avoided the use of the term

favoritism while novel does not prevent this term entering the basic fabric of local government everyday business practices (Watson & Hassett, 2003). Long service is coveted and viewed as a career accomplishment in many local government environments.

Factors in existing studies of local government focused on a small populations of leaders in that community. Personal factors such as lobbying points seem to retain an official title for a long period of time (Watson & Hassett, 2003).

Conscientiousness, career success, and longevity (p. 154) provide a glimpse into a period professionally utilized to describe their entire career. In a conceptual study referred to as a Terman life cycle, data from a gender-specific population was used to examine the associations between career accomplishments in a stage along a career continuum (p. 154). This approach spanned multiple timeframes and addressed the requirements of both causal and moderating effects from a hypothesis (p. 162), which looked to determine what effects career success has on mortality. In the synopsis, the review demonstrated the impacts of a successful career leading to lowered mortality risk. The study also proved self-management, performance development and conscientiousness is a contributor to how individuals view themselves (p. 154).

Insight into the physiological impacts that mold career success to include midlife health, mental adjustments, impulse control, drive, ambition and markers of executive functionality (p. 161). For those who perform work on the self-management, a prerequisite for managing the future may include evaluating the second half of your career life (Drucker, 1999). A study providing insight into career success should aim to evaluate the full view of a career continuum.

Public Service Motivations and Turnover

In studies that highlight person-organizational fit, we gain insight on career success relationships to determine if job satisfaction is an important factor (Bright, 2008). When organizations develop strategies for recruiting public servants they focus on visiting colleges to reach students studying public administration.

Recruiters find it increasingly difficult to highlight success stories of local government administrators (Bright, 2008, p. 149) because perceptions and experiences are limited. If recruiters are unable to overcome the challenges to draw candidates to the field of public service, jobs will become obsolete. Failure in this effort may result in increased recruitment costs, low to no job satisfaction, and increased numbers of employee turnover, (p. 149). It is worthwhile to examine characteristics that motivate employees to stay in an organization versus depart. Factors used to influence, convince and possibly sway the next generation to look at public service as a career of choice (Bright, 2008, p. 151) need deployment now.

When authors examine outward displays of job satisfaction the correlation between retention standards and long-term career employees is absent. In past research on public administration the literature focused on job satisfaction, low-level salaries, political will, and other bureaucratic factors (Bright, 2008, p. 150). Ironically, the most influential factor of job satisfaction is intrinsic and non-monetary (p. 150). Healthy relationships in work environments forge the optimization of employee feelings towards job satisfaction.

Literature on tenure indicates that it negatively relates to job satisfaction (Bright, 2008 p. 150). In fact, the longer an employee stays with a particular organization, job satisfaction decreases. Theory on the reason for the job satisfaction level decreases include: stagnation, exhaustion, and burnout in a particular role. As indicated in research, individuals leave public service and the public sector because job satisfaction connects to public service motivations (p. 151).

Public Service Motivations (PSM). If the motivation of a public servant is relational to career longevity, it can best characterized organization leadership nurturing motivations. The altruistic intent of an individual to serve the public has been the guiding principle to enter the field of local government. Individuals with higher levels of public service motivations endure longer tenures, and desire increased monetary opportunities (p. 152). Employees with higher levels of public service motives relate to turnover intentions and job satisfaction rates. These motivations have been found to show and demonstrate a more tolerate employee, less influenced by organizational politics, and more aligned to ignore bureaucratic elements in the environment (Bright, 2008, p.151). Subsequently, when these elements exist the likelihood that employees will want to leave their jobs will be decreased (p.151).

Longevity. Factors that highlight longevity are useful to make connections of this phenomena. Job satisfaction, management latitude, family desires, salary, quality of life, and political stability arise are a contributor to a longer career in a chosen locality. Job satisfaction is at the top of a list that includes, political stability as a close second. It

is difficult to achieve career longevity without the close alignment of these factors (Watson & Hassett, 2008).

Career Success

In career success, a clear viewpoint helps to understand professional challenges. While managing one's career may seem an easy task, it is the consideration of strategies developed over a period that secure a best-made plan (Drucker, 1999). Career success as an evaluation concept is comparable to an administrative art (Chen, 2012). When career success is an administrative art the possibility of using creativity tactics to avoid challenges exists.

To define the construct of career success as a professional is a subjective means to an end (Arthur et.al, 2005). Personal career success is one's evaluation of major milestones, objective career success may refer to tangible indicators provided by an external source (Arthur et. al, 2005). This viewpoint determines as shared by Arthur et. al., (2005), sought to determine "how does existing research into career success measures up against the definitions and theoretical attribute previously described?" (p.177).

Using definitions of career success to determine the subjective and objective definitions and outcomes helps to expand research (Arthur et al., 2005). The results provide a view of outcome variables not previously considered in the definition of career success. Although varied, success variables in other target groups have similar issues that closely mirror local government administrator. If career research and career success theory are out of sync with one another a study of more required working (Arthur et al., 2003) will be necessary.

In the career success genre, there is information on the career success definitions to include intrinsic, and extrinsic outcomes. To understand the components of the formula for career success, knowledge on contributing factors highlights, networks, access to resources, and useful information. Clear goals and expectations (Seibert & Kraimer, N.D. pg. 4) around career progression, help to avoid failure reconciliation with job success factors.

Extrinsic Career Success

Authors Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, (2008) provide models of career success, which are relational to self-esteem. A tested model relationship involving self-esteem and career success included education, occupational prestige, and income. These factors display a dynamic model investigating a span of years through the social identity theory. Results revealed that career outcomes do not directly alter self-esteem, however, there are implications that extrinsic success factors can make individuals think differently about themselves and others (p.205).

Individuals who subscribe to the self-esteem impacting career success suggest that individuals are apt to seek out roles that are consistent with self-appraisals (p.205). Critical questions however remained from the, which aimed to see whether people derive self-worth from their career (Kammeyer-Mueller, et. al, 2008)? In the end, the primary theoretical basis of career success is most associated with the work adjustment theory and organization fit. Highly motivated individuals engage in the exercise of self-worth while self-esteem as an extrinsic job factor only focused on self-consistency (p. 207).

Highlighting one extrinsic factor to career success, makes it difficult to determine whether the change links to that factor. A central challenge for a study with associative connections between self-esteem and career success is the outcome of disentanglement (p. 212). Perceptions and experiences with high and low self-esteem formulate acknowledgments that job performance is critical in a particular environment. However, the factors and degree of alterations may lead people to believe their perceptions of self-esteem are the only cause (Kammeyer-Mueller et. al, 2008). Therefore, while it is clear that self-esteem relates to career outcomes such as success, there are additional predictors that gauge success measures.

The Impact of Chance and Circumstance on Career Success

In recent studies, testing models that mediate between organizational commitment and expectations (Grimland et al., 2012) draw interest between chance and circumstance. If optimal chance events have an effect on career success, the construct of chance should be included to enable and support successful careers (Grimland et al., 2012). Additional factors that appear to impact career success include the relationship between antecedents and chance. In a new model, development for career success, and luck are an important factor in life and play a role in the way careers unfold (Grimland et al., 2012). While there continues to be differing points in literature about chance and luck, as events that work in an environment towards the development of success.

A conventional view is that a chance event is an unplanned event, which can be discovered by accident or otherwise from a situation. When seen as situational, unpredictable and unintentional studies continue to show that career decisions are highly

affected by chance events (Grimland et al., 2012). Studies about chance circumstances impacting career success reveal that employees with more access to resources can utilize the chance impact more widely than those with limited access. Organizational resource access presents conditions that occur by chance events creating career success opportunities. Support of the probability concept demonstrates that employees tend to utilize the chance event factor to improve their career progress. By using this concept access to early warnings about lucrative projects, and changes in the hierarchies. In addition knowledge of certain circumstances, and the movement and shifting of roles (Grimland et al., 2012) is helpful to understand.

In the development of new models of career success, an evaluation of chance and circumstance useful for relationships directly and indirectly. The main contribution to career literature is insight on complexities affecting career success and broadening the framework (Grimland et al., 2012). For managerial awareness, the theoretical contribution of career development is addresses the number of implications on both chance and circumstance.

In the long haul, the impact of chance events being a factor of career success has employees looking to engage and exploit these opportunities when encountered in their work life (Grimland et al., 2012). The natural essence of careers is changing, it the responsibility of employees to guide, plan, and importantly manage their own career landscape. This type of leadership has its pros and cons but ultimately it is a lifetime contract designated to produce results (p.1075).

Career Success and Organizational Context

Career success connections exist between cash compensation, career progression satisfaction, and gender-related issues (Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, & Wiethoff, 2010). Work in this area has focused on the lack of concern for organizational, occupational context. Insights on where, why, and how career success contributes to a complete model is useful and relevant to the job attainment process (p.385). Despite the acknowledged importance of organizational context, ideas have not been examined thoroughly to incorporate the reasons genders may experience unique differences in the careers as a result of organizational context.

Organizational experiences are an action of status, and power relationships. When this is apparent power, perspective, and other focused markers provide insight into how the organization views its employees. The consequences of careers framed by a diverse set of traits include mentoring, support, insight and status (p.387). Previous observations about these features provide a lack of significance to what role they play in the career success model. An example of career success from a wide variety of industries demonstrates that the impact of the diverse traits varies from place to place. The attributes inclusive of industrial and organizational context differ from those highlighted in the professional arena (p. 387).

An overarching theory and framework related to career success is the impact that mentors may have on an individual in an organization. When examining this impact each gender groups exposure to more advantages comes from having an advocate(s) guiding their progression in the organization (p. 386). Some authors argue that there are signals

that sent to professionals who receive them along a path of success and progression. While these signals may be more salient in particular work environments than others, the concept and theory of signal strength is providing a basis for discussion. More importantly, revelations on who receives these messages are enlightening as to how men and women communicate (p. 386).

If the role mentoring plays is part of the organizational context, it can become a part of career success literature and provide a basis for discussion around the meaning of mentoring in the career success formula. If left unexamined the mentor relationship will be the focus of organizational context. Providing room for the impact of the mentor relationship opens the door for mentoring attributes and a better understanding of career success in the field (p. 387).

Gender differences have continued to be a major part of the conversation suggesting that career attainment is different for each of the sexes (p. 386). This unique difference has resonated as a result of an individual's ability to breach glass ceiling that has existed for many years in organizations. In fact, when posting differences between men and women there is a natural inclination to suggest that women consider their careers much more important than do their male counterparts. However, this is a biased statement that places key characteristics of conceptual differences that exist between the genders (p.386).

Gender Differences with Career Success

The differences that each gender uses to define career success can often help to (Dyke & Murphy, 2006) clarify the distinctions between men and women in our society.

There is a myriad of choices both professional and personal, which affect our career choices. These include education, employer, work involvement, career attainment, financial resources, relationships, life satisfaction, and family commitments (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). When using these traditional measurements for success, especially, power, prestige, and wealth, women have a tendency to lag behind men in this whirl. Authors argue that, the criteria used by women to define success are much broader than the criteria used by men. Women tend to add additional concerns to the success model that include relationship and balance. These attributes expand the definition of career success and the role of success on a personal and professional level becomes multidimensional (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

Past authors, emphasize the way success is a positive outcome. Increasingly over the years, it success is synonymous with the specific issues of prestige and wealth (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The role of breadwinner in a family is critical in the success formula. When the breadwinning role is a particular gender, the choices associated with career success becomes more challenging professionally. A masculine definition of breadwinner has forced males to appreciate their jobs and do their very best at keeping themselves employed.

Providing economic support is as synonymous with being a father, and the primary provider for a family (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). For the male gender, success is difficult to achieve, and even more difficult to sustain. The role of a job in the family can become a mechanism for other burdens that males tackle in their daily lives. When determining how the genders view obligations and roles, the ability to handle the final

contributions to the household lies with the male gender. The recognition that a financial contributor is an attribute of the success definition is not surprising. Most men tend to focus on success more narrowly than other life responsibilities (Dyke & Murphy, 2006, p. 358).

For many women, the expectations around success continues to center on their relationship with key members of the family unit. The values of being a good parent, and caring mother have led to personal success, having a stronger impact than that of professional success. The differences in the value equation for personal and professional success may lead the female gender to express their concerns differently than those of their male counterparts. Consequently, the female gender may take on two roles that of a breadwinner and family caretaker while at the same time remain solely responsible for their responsibilities at home (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

The six dimensions of life success include status/wealth, contributions to society, family relationships, personal fulfillment, professional satisfaction, and security (Dyke & Murphy, 2006, p. 359). Within these facets, we can see that both genders associate intrinsic job success to items such as respect, an enjoyable work environment, and support. With extrinsic job success both genders associate financial rewards and promotional opportunities as a key attribute. In assessing these two categories of success, it is clear that both genders correlate subjective achievements to relationships while intrinsic and extrinsic connect to predictor values (p. 360).

While socialization experiences become relevant in the formulation of gender values and roles, recent work on this topic suggests that expectations of each gender

continue to change substantially. Traditional results disclose that while the measures of success, wealth, position and power are changing for the genders how we define success may be more complex than original described (p. 360).

Soft Skills for Professional Success

In an era where a well-rounded professional can achieve much success, theories supporting soft skill sets support the conversation on professional success. It may be possible for some individuals to become successful solely upon their technical skills, but a combination of both soft and technical skills are highly desirable (Watson, n.d). Observations about some of the successful soft skills needed by a professional have included, people skills, mentorship, networking, brand builders, work/life balance and prioritization and execution (Watson, n.d).

Being able to address the competing priorities of an organization can come with its own set of challenges. When an individual understands the importance of the necessary skill sets that build strengths and achieve success, they are more than likely to see a successful professional career (Watson, n.d). In understanding how we succeed or fail, factor reconciliation can lead to employees being able to apply new learning outcomes to make a difference in their professional careers (Creighton, n.d).

Many contributors to the theory of professional success share that enabling ourselves and others to overcome failures can individuals repeating patterns more quickly. The greatest success strategies develop by positioning individuals to think continually about their self-worth, and also guide them to surround themselves with individuals who are willing to share knowledge (Creighton, n.d.). The career success

models that are available continue to provide relevance to a process and formula driven approach that teach individuals to trust. Finally, being true to values, recognizing the need for support, and managing ones 'own individual behavior (Creighton, n.d) is a smart approach. While examples of success and failure are readily available, the connectivity to career longevity is missing from literature.

Connections to Published Studies on Success and Goals

This literature review highlighted theorists who have focused on careers with opportunities. However, transcendent knowledge about field of local government requires capturing the ideas, topics, and closely aligned positions that exist between jobs (Arthur et. al, 2005). In joining the research effort, I weighed the constructs of career success in terms of subjective and objective rules. The theory and research on career success drew underlying definitions, concepts, relationships, assumptions and outcomes (Arthur et al., 2005). However, limitations that exist while measuring relationships to success outcomes reveal a less than broad agreement taken with the variable relationships (Kammeyer-Mueller, et. al, 2008). Contributing factors can provide connections to why occupational status does not address self-esteem. They may also determine whether the influence of self-image is a more enduring measurement for a career success outcomes (p. 219).

In terms of ambitious goals, research provides varying viewpoints on the topic of career success. In an example from presidential candidates, career success burdens candidates when the ambitious objectives of government (Kelman & Myers, (2011) appears to exist. In their view, the utilization of a conceptual reputational approach

highlights the stress brought on by ambitious roles aligned with lofty goals. The insight in these studies placed focus on political hierarchies that represent a sharp similarity to local government.

To evaluate what successful leaders' do that is different from their counterparts provides benefits to test achievement and hypotheses (p.235). The interpretation used by Kelman & Myer (2011), addressed leadership techniques which are associated with career goal execution phases. The methodology of the study included a triangulation of elements, selecting of goals, supporting an external environment and building the capacity through analyzing results. Three major process steps executed by leaders ensure successful careers, they include, (a) strategic planning; (b) goal setting; and (c) reorganization. These major steps help; transcend opportunities and work the best interests of the group (Arthur et al., 2005). As such, the goal approach becomes an important catalyst to defining career success in one's career.

In terms of gender definitions of success, most empirical research has focused on external measurements. These have included, salary level, and organizational promotional achievement. Methods utilized to expand the notion of career success for the genders included exploration through open-ended questions, posed during in-depth interviews. With the use of snowballing techniques, which are useful to test rare populations, responses show parallels in the genders in similar positions (p. 360). Results achieved some slight differences in interview responses, but overall most responses impact individual's years of experience in a particular field (p.360). Recognition among authors on this topic has led them to understand the internal and subjective differences of

success to include the concept of feelings within accomplishments and predictive values associated with success. In both cases, it has become quite difficult at times to understand what criteria individuals use as the yardstick to whether or not they are successful (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The difficulty in using empirical work on this topic is that, while authors acknowledge the need to expand definitions, there is little practical work to indicate how the results will change (p.360). Until a more comprehensive understanding is achieved on what success feels like for both men and women, our working knowledge of career choices will continue to be limited (p.360).

Implications for Future Studies on Career Success

A definition of a career is an unfolding sequence of a person's work history over time the definition of career success may change (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). Implications for future studies, could stress the importance of missing dimensions relevant to the topic of career success goal dissolution. Broader control groups provide comprehensive predictors of career goal decomposition and validate the agenda of the sustaining careers. This addresses ethical dilemmas (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 196) and impacts variables embedded in career goals. These ethical dilemmas and variables include understanding that success in careers applies differently and varies depending upon judgment goals and mission (Kelman & Myer, 2011, p.257). Further, if the judgment is a critical factor impacting a professional career progression, understanding how experience provides relevance for future work is essential (Murphy 006, p. 189). For chance and circumstances impacting career success, combinations of antecedents may have an impact and enhances the predictive power in success models (Grimland et

al., 2012). In searching for the cultural implications of perceptions of chance and effects on career success additional factors in the development of career theory will prove to be useful (Grimland et al., 2012).

Modern approaches in literature have relied heavily on cross-sectional designs and analysis compilation to define success parameters. Poor logic and inadequate research design cannot resolve the lack of theory that is applied to career success models (Arthur et al., 2005)

Therefore moving beyond the relationships of objective and subjective career success, and career theory will prompt the question about outcome variables not readily considered. It is difficult to envision the future employment opportunities for the local government leader as either objective and subjective (Arthur et al., 2005). As such the two concepts of career success and theory appear to be out of sync with one another. The void is a result of missing dimension of career success that can produce relevant assumptions, and closer examinations of interdependent factors (Arthur et al., 2005).

Implications for the Practice of Local Government Administrators

Implications for the practice of government administration includes, benefits from more closely aligned definitions of career success. To be helpful local government leaders should pay closer attention to the larger goals an organization may have in defining their successful career. Tools to help teach others in the future can enlighten those public administrators who wish to support and foster healthier career success models (Miller Burke & Attridge, 2011) in the different levels of government. To avoid method bias that could potentially enlarge variable relationships, response rates, and

differences in organizational cultures varying the benefits in each target group is resourceful (Seibert & Kraimer, n.d). Finally, when drawing a conclusion from model development, the lost unclear goals can cause a major hindrance to one's ability to exercise judgment. A pattern of clear goal formulation in research may need further implications (Murphy, 2006).

Research on career success provides variable models for the future but most importantly educates us on the organizational philosophy of a company (T. W. H. Ng & Feldman, 2010). Turnover in leadership is very disturbing for cities looking to maintain a brand as a business of choice (Clingermayer, Feiock & Stream, 2003). Uncertainty particularly with leadership turnover can be a deterrent for not only potential employees but also for outside organizations looking to partner with a company. Under this lens, the consequences of turnover draws upon political challenges and political literature (Clingermayer, et al., 2003). Individuals continue to hold different expectations when it comes to organizational loyalty. Service contracts have become a thing of the past, in many cities where the term "at will" describes the control an organization may have over the length of one's employment. It is a harsh reality to assume that the government will directly provide the commitment of job sustenance when services and needs of constituencies change from day to day. Interestingly, political turnover may have a relationship to local administrator turnover, some literature suggests that mayoral changes have a positive impact on where an organization may shift and make decisions. Starch results can factor into the decision of an administrator to stay or go based on the changes that are occurring in the political climate (Clingermayer, et al., 2003 p. 158).

Therefore, individuals should remain reasonable with the expectations to have organization play a major role career longevity (Clingermayer, et al., 2003).

In the next part, Chapter 2, research related to the constructs undergoes synthesis. This section provides a summary of literature review, the conclusions reached and implications for future research.

Synthesized Constructs

The common patterns found in the published studies of career success relate to either internal or external factors. There is a recognizable gap in writings on the topic of job failure related to goal disillusionment. The external factors came from within the environment and cultural influences and often focused on gender bias in the workplace.

The strength of the sources is that they covered a wide breadth of internal and external factors and assess the effects on career success and contributions to many various fields. Published studies have highlighted job analysis and professional development as important. These processes support individuals in modern societal environments. In many respects, the analysis is useful to gain deeper context into why the local government administrator seeks career success and longevity in the same organization. A key element of the theory of career success and career longevity is the significance of choice and challenge, the belief that individual decisions are synonymous with these elements adds depth to the conversation of outcomes. When we succeed we should consider what results lead to the development of new growth experience so much can be gleaned from a new experience especially one that is noteworthy.

A weakness of the sources is that they do not consistently indicate which internal factors and external factors have precedence over the other. In articles that discuss predictors of success; it's hard to assess which ones focus on the dichotomy of career longevity. As a result, research on the topic of achievement has experienced significant limitations due to the failure to consider manageable behaviors that provide value to career longevity. A number of articles refer to success only in terms of advancement, which when carefully examined is purely an objective term.

The sources identified in literature highlight a broad range of methods and approaches to convey their contributions to the field. The most common methods used include models, surveys and data analysis tests such as ANOVA tests and LISREL models. What's left is to examine is the impact that each different method provides along a career continuum of local government administrators.

Synthesized Research Questions

In this study a focus on the elements of career success will aide research questions responses and clarify the phenomena. These questions will examine the theory of work adjustment contribution knowledge on career success, and address perceptions around lived experiences. On the platform of career success, authors have tackled the gender issues around paths towards becoming successful. However, in recognizing obstacles around gender differences, there exists room for discussions on similar challenges faced by administrators, which will be part of this study.

It is unfortunate that leaders and decision makers have become complacent and locked into one way of finding job satisfaction. This locked mentality does not move

future generations towards greater rewards (Canwell, 2010, p. 301). Disabling the myths associated with career success and career longevity is a task that will tie the new generation of public servants towards meaningful goals.

Systematic expectations over the past several years explain why career success driven individuals have continued to do things that do not work or add to career progression. It would be quite helpful for local government leaders to choose the points that become a catalyst along their career continuum that forge change and growth.

Participants of past studies may share similar attribute and goal expectations around career success, presenting an opportunity to bridge the research questions to provide measures that can be useful. A review of career pathways and objectives has frequently addressed significant experiences (Miller, Burke & Attridge, 2011).

In summary, research questions previously used demonstrated that individuals have labored in the category of differences encountered by the genders in leadership, made contributions to the definition of success, and have include extrinsic and intrinsic types of rewards on this topic. When examining and identifying patterns of research questions, some have sought answers to the value of subjective and objective elements. Patterns of success include, aiming high characteristics, predictors of careers success, and the meta-competencies of leadership development. However, limited knowledge of different lived experiences and perception, has contributed to attitudes towards career success currently.

Summary and Conclusion

The body of research represented by career success in literature is meaningful, bridging the gaps between predictors, discloses lapses in information specific to the field of local government. In addition to this condition, the limited detail on the topic of career longevity beyond job satisfaction and political stability for this target group has become challenging. In several studies reviewed, career success includes attributes and individual perceptions of the subjective and objective context. Career Longevity, terms of tenure and the challenges the local government administrator faces to achieve this goal. While tenure is, a well-used term the unique model of the local government profession focuses on two strong attributes of job satisfaction and political climate. These two discussions have left room for more depth from a phenomenology study of leader experiences.

One of the main challenges in the local government profession has been the ability to focus on the needs of the employee versus the needs of the public. The move to address the economic changes in an organization to explain the reason for less than extrinsic rewards is standard (Canwell, 2010). This age of austerity shows the broadening budgets of a locality, and the competing priorities of its political council and boards. The importance of the individual in the exercise of organizational growth is one that has been set aside and discussed in limited amounts.

What is clear in a review of the literature is that leadership in the public sector, specifically the local government is changing. It is foolish to believe that the economic conditions of an organization will not have an impact on individual success and career longevity. These elements have been in play much longer than the status the person is

attempting to achieve for job satisfaction and stability. The question that now arises is how can a study of this type add to the conversation and research needed on career success and career longevity?

Career success is critical for people and organizations in every culture (Yu, 2012). Individuals are crafting a viewpoint of career success attempting to work logic protocols for their development of indicators to create the perfect formula. However, what is missing from an understanding of career success is the impact of environmental fit that impact an individual's performance (p. 88) and desire to stay long term with an organization. As shared by author Yu, (2012) "knowledge around the relationship of predictors of success, can be very useful in designing career systems and management policy (p. 88)." However, there is room for further study when the factors of career success help us determine why individuals may no longer consider the field of local government as a career choice for the long term.

The development of leadership is part career continuum in local government. Many leaders intensely acquire skills and are in tune to the behaviors that make them successful. However, others supplement career success with other variables to enjoy a satisfying life in the work environment. The supplemental premise will arise further in this phenomenology study. If very smart and intellectual individuals work in highly complex organizations, their behaviors and consequences have a tendency to shape the current culture (Canwell, 2010). Leadership using the definition of liberation needs a more modern effort to focus on the needs of the leader versus their defined role in an organization. If literature only focused on smart people doing the best they can, it would

be hard to determine the reason and consequences that inspire leaders to achieve success (Canwell, 2010, p. 301).

Leadership is critical and vital to the implementation of organizational goals. This revelation is not new but can often be set aside in the global goals of the organization to meet the priorities set by the public. Leadership opportunities are available for public service, which supports seeking high profile jobs around the country and the narrowing the gap between replacement leaders (Canwell, 2010). An opportunity exists to examine a study of this type that stresses that local government leadership is critical and central to the political agenda (p, 298). When posting how significant senior leadership will be in the future, the discussion around organizational fit, investments in work adjustment theories and public service motivations will add to the formula of career success and longevity.

If we left to apply lean variables to the need to reduce staff, and move organizational operations in a different direction, it will become the responsibility of leaders to make that decision a reality. What is alarming is whether individuals with this primary responsibility have the mental state to put the interests of others above the concern for themselves. Regardless of the shortcomings of local government administrators the thing that remains clear is their skills. In terms of judgment and coping strategies leaders have indicatively increased the pressure they may have in their roles (Canwell, 2010, p. 198).

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the theory of work adjustment and gather data about career success factors. The goal of the study design was to determine why local government leaders stay or leave the field by examining their perceptions and experiences. This study used an interpretive strategy for understanding and explaining human experiences and actions, as suggested by Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002). It further employed a phenomenological design so as to collect data and provide participants with opportunities to elaborate on the perceptions and explanations they deemed most useful to research about career success.

Research Design and Rationale

Social phenomenon emerged from the chosen design rationale. I used research questions to help determine what core contributors impacted participants' career success and longevity in local government. Using a phenomenological approach yielded descriptions that provided the basis for reflective structural analysis from the essence of experiences, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). In the conceptual phenomenon, the relationship between the local government administrator and the organization was important in understanding the competing goals that these administrators encounter. The objectives of the study was to provide knowledge of the internal factors and priorities encountered by individuals who work in local government. When external factors and competing priorities exist in the organization, the decisions necessary to be a successful leader are challenging.

I selected the chosen tradition after reviewing the career success models in leadership from the past century that provided insight on individual career paths. Although I considered a research design grounded in qualitative theory, an alternative path was chosen because of the limitations of qualitative theory and its emphasis on theory development. In selecting a qualitative phenomenological approach, I concluded that an extensive but less constrained application such as that described by Maxwell (2008) was more appropriate.

In the performing this research, my goal was not to collate numbers but to understand how individuals feel and think about the circumstances within their control. In building this study from a qualitative approach, therefore, my principal objectives were to capture understandings, reveal factors of success, and carefully craft the participant's voice.

The touchstone of experience is a valuable indicator for a potentially successful research endeavor (Maxwell, 2008). Selection of this research tradition provided an understanding of the goals of the study. Aligning research questions with actual activities allowed for deeper knowledge from the subject matter experts (the mid and high level local government administrators who were the study subjects). In this case, the research is on the wholeness of experience and the in depth experiences' in depth, as shared by Moustakas (1994).

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher in this phenomenological qualitative study was to determine what a particular experience meant for the people who have lived them

(Moustakas, 1994). The research effort was constructed to ensure reliable sources were analyzed and data was effectively captured. This included ensuring that the structure of the experience was based on reflection and interpretation of study participants, and to delve deeper into the general meanings that they provided, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). I used a naturalistic interviewer approach to gain a new perspective on the personal goals choices and professional experiences of the participants, as advised by Maxwell (2008, p. 220). Finally, this study approach allowed participants to engage while being exposed to an investigative interview approach, combined with a rigorous testing instrument (Chenail, 2011).

Methodology

The selection of professionals in the field of local government was specific to a group in senior leadership positions. A recruitment email inside the organization drew interest from the potential participant pool. The initial group of respondents and the final study sample members all came from one locality (Norfolk) in the state of Virginia. In selecting this research target population, I considered their knowledge, experience, expertise, and sensitivity to the subject matter, along with their accessibility. The participant group came from convenience, familiarity with study topic, and their prior investment in the field/practice of local government.

I informed participants of the semi structured, open-ended interview questions in advance by attaching them to the consent forms once arrangements for interview location were confirmed and I had all the consent agreements in hand. Once consent steps were

complete with locations established, the participants received detailed instructions to ensure the minimization of risks during the study.

Participant Selection Logic

Local government leaders in Norfolk were contacted to invite them to participate in the study from the city of Norfolk. As such, the targeted population for the participants was purposefully selected from a group of current local government administrators in Norfolk a city in the state of Virginia. This population was closely aligned to the study because of availability and close proximity to a town of local government leaders and university and college pools of prospective public policy students who could benefit from the results of this study.

Selection. The city of Norfolk is a municipality serving approximately 240,000 residents, and had approximately 4,500 employees at the time of the study and an operating budget of \$1 billion. Norfolk also hosts the world's largest naval base, an international airport, and a world-class seaport. This locality was my choice for the study because it provided a large size, convenient access to employees, and varied leadership levels in the local government structure. I ensured the anonymity of research participants occurred by assigning coded numerical names. I gained access to a small sample of leaders through the organizational email and network contacts. These email addresses and organizational charts for the study group were public record and thus did not require organizational authorization.

Instrumentation

The primary data collection instruments for this study included semi structured open-ended-focused interviews questions, memoing, and reflective journaling. Per the use of interview protocols, I recorded interview notes in a descriptive manner. This reflectivity enabled the capturing of demographic information during the interview process, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). The semi structured interviews occurred when the meeting commenced. As stated by Cohen & Crabtree, (2006), “using semistructured interviews enables the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms”. I used defined interview skills and completed reflections after each session. Interview protocols were used to complete observation sheets. I also utilized the software tool NVivo during the data analysis process, which was supported Walden Public Policy Program for development of research design and is published by the organization QSR International PTY LTD (2013).

NVivo as a tool was helpful during the data analysis phase, and I used it to demonstrate responsible interpretive analysis and to perform re-examinations of themes. The use of software helped to uncover subtle connections, and added value to the research study (Walden University, 2013). Interview questions were useful aides to gather results about career continuums and career success.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The participants receive notification via phone and email and were provided with detail about the study intent, purpose and asked if they would agree to participate. When an agreement of involvement was received, research documents to include a background

of the study, a formal letter requesting participation and the study consent form were provided to the participant for completion. The response from the intent email was useful for the study to achieve the prescribed sample size.

Documentation in the consent form was added to provide essential details of the study. Language supporting levels of commitment and efforts to protect the rights and conditions of all participants involved is present. Research activities occur once receipt of authenticated forms are validly complete. Once these protocols were complete follow-up communication via phone is done to confirm the detailed arrangements of interviews.

The leadership in the organization authorized access to various levels of the employees in the organization hierarchy. No direct/indirect power or authority over any of the participants in this study exists.

Data

Analyzed data is available by listening and transcribing the recordings of the interview through phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). This step involved organizing and analyzing the data to accommodate the development of structural descriptions along with composite textual knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Synthesis of the textual and structural meanings of data from the essences of the experiences shared by participants (Moustakas, 1994) is useful.

The aim of the qualitative study is to determine what is important, and what is ethical, and complete (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Developing codes based on the emerging

information collected is a source of data. Predetermined code use and data to help derive fit analysis on known perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.2).

Data Analysis Plan

This study relied on the integration of data from the cited methods and sources of information on the principle of triangulation first introduced by Denzin (1970).

Triangulation reduced systematic bias from the conclusions I reached and provided an assessment of validity and generality (Maxwell, 2008a). The premise of this study was to efficiently perform data analysis simultaneously with data collection to ensure a focus on the interviews was progressive and allowed for emerging conclusions (Maxwell, 2008a, p. 236). In the collection of data an Epoche process deploys and creates an atmosphere conducive for interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Interviews are informal, with open-ended questions topically guided (Moustakas, 1994). All judgment is set aside to open the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence. Phenomenological approach use in this study enables that, a researcher, “will not seek to predict or to determine causal relationships” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105). Phenomenology use allows the core focus to stem upon the perceptions as the primary source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994).

By categorizing strategies through codes to use themes with Nvivo to connect procedures, analyze narrative, and create memos and figures for a pictorial view of discussion areas (Maxwell, 2008a). The following modified model of Sevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Moustakas, 1994) was helpful to frame the data analysis approach:

1. Deployment of the research epoche;
2. Phenomenological reduction;
3. Imaginative variation;
4. Synthesis of the research data;

5. Saturation; and finally
6. Combination of textural and structural descriptions.

Treating the data with the full understanding that it is more important for fracturing the data versus correlation and counting themes. The goal was to rearrange ideas and facilitate comparisons of items in the same and a perhaps different way (Maxwell, 2008a, pg. 239). By evoking interpretive analysis gave meaning to information, inferences and to develop insight (Hatch, 2002). This approach was helpful for analyzing success and failure factors. Finally, utilizing the interview questions to draw relevant support for the study, allows delving into the phenomena by avoiding a mismatching between questions and review. Having the opportunity to contact participants after interviews to clarify concepts and details was effective to aid in the refinement of theoretical concepts. Member-checking was done to confirm the validity of interpretations.

Research Steps

To prepare for the conduction of interviews I developed an appropriate interview instruments. Technical checks were performed to ensure electronic devices were functioning properly. A backup recorder and accessories were made available, to avoid an technical challenges. Calls to the interviewee prior to the actual interview confirmed the meeting date and time. If a participant had a conflict, an interview backup time kept the study timeline on track.

Research Questions

The research questions focused on whether the theoretical construct of work adjustment theory could provide knowledge and data to support the lived experiences and

perceptions of career success. Research questions guided the revelation of in-depth views of what factors have kept local government administrators in this field. The two questions provided expanded views on the phenomena around career success. Use of demographic and study interview questions added supportive data to the study see (Appendix H).

Coding

Data analysis is through a rigorous, systematic process. All data related to career success, job satisfaction, intrinsic, and extrinsic characteristics was collected then theme analysis commenced. Listening and transcribing the recorded interviews, and deploying phenomenological reduction as shared by Moustakas (1994) is key.

The Collection of statements to cluster potential themes (Moustakas, 1994) is useful. All participants responded to the same set of questions during the 1.5 hour interview. The creation of a project database in Nvivo to capture the detailed discussions is a formula to store theme linkages. When coding was complete a created visual data displays an understanding and description of the analysis process.

Memoing and Nodes

Memos to record observations and capture non-verbal communication is useful. The documentation reviews reinforced the participants' verbal accounts and helped triangulate the data collected. With inductive analysis of data, the research approach chosen looked for critical theme emergence, to form conclusions. With the use of Nvivo storing and managing the data collection was easy. First, coding data with an open coding procedure identifies themes from the raw data. Data groupings were around key

themes and concepts. The goal was to create descriptive types of career success factors for a clear audit trail of participant discussions.

Secondly, the axial coding process determines if the data could assemble the big picture. Both processes were useful to acquire a new understanding of the phenomenon of interest and create a project database for participants' interview responses. The nodes provided two sets of attributes; phrases consistent with supporting the existence of career longevity plans, and expressions that could capture relevant work adjustment theory impact on career longevity decisions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Triangulation is a method to avoid judgment and reduce systematic bias (Maxwell, 2009). With interviews, memos, and member checking an enhanced level of internal validity is available. Sharing data with the participants through member checking provided support to validate the degree of trust in the descriptions of their experiences (Moustakas, 2008) along with additional use of daily journaling.

Transferability

To address transferability in the analysis of the data, guided values placed upon the rich contextual descriptions of challenges and issues in career longevity are useful. The data retrieved on demographics clarified the view of participants and their role in the organizations and provided thick description and variation from the member selections. Job duties of participants establish a relationship between the research effort and any other critical contextual descriptions. The importance of setting with each interview

participant ensures this research data will provide transferability for other industries at the completion of this study.

Dependability

Addressing reliability by carefully handling and retaining a clear audit trail of interview records, tapes, and observation sheets was effective. These notes are available for peer review should one be required to support the results of the study. I created audit folders to store the factual evidence and detail provided by the participants in this study. The 10 years of audit experience in the researchers background followed the appropriate audit protocols to ensure records were void of errors and omission.

Confirmability

Reflexivity and conformability ensure a rigorous sense of self-awareness is was exercised during the data collection. Conformability addresses the potential for research bias. This study contains an autobiographic sketch in the research results. To reduce the possibility of Intra and inter code reliability, I was the only person to collect data results which decreased the potential for different judgments. The questions I used were open-ended and topic focused, to ensure limited amounts of inconsistency in the analysis of data occurred due to external or extraneous reactions during interview sessions.

Ethical Procedures

The study approach was committed to a responsible and accountable methodology through all stages of data collection and analysis. To this end, the following measures were deployed to demonstrate that systematic inquiry has the safety of the participants in mind. The study addressed consent with each participated agreement written in laymen

terms. The document addressed the conditions of the interview, topic of study, description of the research questions and hypothesis (In, 2007). The consent agreement I used addressed all ethical issues prior to the engagement of the interview to prepare a transparent, honest discussion about the intent, use and approach of the study. Interview steps and the collection of data were highlighted in the informed consent forms. These forms are for the University Internal Review Board (In, 2007).

The standards of the Ethical Standards of American Educational Research Association (AERA) address the importance of participant protection. In so doing, it is clear that this educational research had emphasis on the respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research population and also the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs (American Educational Research Association, 2011, p.3). The research approach obtained direct consent from the participant group and protected the participants' interest in the study, protection from harm, and importantly privacy.

The requirements of the Walden University Institutional Review Board are available and useful prior to the conducting of field work. This board is paramount to the research study and was used to assess whether the study had considered all ethical violations before research analysis was undertaken (In, 2007). The IRB has the responsibility of reviewing critical elements of the study as it relates to pertinent benefits and risk of individuals under study requirements (Walden University, 2013).

Particular care is present to ensure the research did not encounter the potential of invalidation. A strict ethical standard occurs during this study. Further care was given to

ensure the "natural setting of the study" (In, 2007) was not disrupted or tampered with during the research events.

Particular care to ensure an ethical standard occurs during the data collection and research analysis phase is resourceful. This includes the rigors of representing facts about the purpose, nature, and consequences of the study (American Psychological Association, 2002). Special care and consideration over the participant's privacy was taken during the interview process. Participants had the opportunity's to express any level of comfort during and after the interview process. Participants may have withdrawn from the study at any time discomfort was experienced. The original audio or written transcript of the interview were made available to the participant within five business days after the interview was conducted. Any identifiable information (names, addresses, etc.) was voided from the audio transcript.

Documents related to this study are available for peer review for a period of 3-5 years, or the requirements of the State of Virginia, record retention standards and Walden University.

Anonymity of Data. This phenomenology study was performed as suggested and stated by In, (2007), "the study should present minimal risk to participants pertaining to experimental treatment or exposure to physical or psychological harm. Care should be taken to ensure that the participants fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that participation is voluntary (p.55)." In the signed statements of confidential reflections of sensitivity were detailed. The research approach took rigorous care to use techniques that would protect the participants from harm. Recruitment to ensure that the

members fully understood the nature of the study and the fact that participation in the study was voluntary occurs

Protection of Confidential Data. Relaying rich contextual detail and portrayals of social life can be quite difficult in a qualitative study. As a result, I addressed this challenge by providing considerations to the participants when conducting interviews. The method of informed consent provided a detailed level of assurance about the information, storage, and how the study would address confidentiality.

The research plan was designed to recognize the balance between keeping participants informed and maintaining confidentiality. Confidentiality occurred by asking all participants whether they would desire a final consolidated two-page report of the recommendations from the study. The commitment to distribute a summary of the research was part of the consent form to establish the engagement and intent of the research. All identifiable information (name, address) pertaining to any participants will be deleted from the study consolidated report.

Ethical Concerns. No other ethical concerns are considered to impact the study at this time.

Summary

Great care exists in the research methods section of this study. The research methods provide a clear and concise blueprint of the study. Efforts were taken to understand the protocols of data collection, research study design, tools for use and implementation, and the standards set by the University Institutional Review Board. Significant efforts were deployed to ensure the research approach is of a high moral

standard, and that participants were situated to prevent the opportunity or occurrence of harm.

Chapter 4: Results

This study provides rich insight into patterns in the experiences of local government administrators from the City of Norfolk located in the United States. The purpose of this study was to determine what core experiences and perceptions around career success impact local government administrators. It used the theory of work adjustment to interpret collected interview data to explain a selected group of these administrators' career success and career longevity. The documented experiences and generated insights are intended for use in recruiting and retaining the next generation of U.S. local government leaders.

Chapter 4 provides the results of data collection and analysis techniques. This section of the study also captures key findings from the participants perceptions of punishment from the topic on career success and longevity. Also decisions made to choose a career in government from a life circumstance verses a career choice are among the findings shared with the researcher. Finally, a view of long term commitments to the field along with adjustments to enable a productive work environment finalize points in the study findings.

Research Setting

The locality chosen and referred to as city of Norfolk is a region in the state of Virginia in the United States, with a population of some 245,000 residents and encompasses 66 square miles. Norfolk has over 4,000 employees, including both full and part-time staff. The 2015 Budget for the test site emphasizes to desire to build a government that is managed effectively.

The foundation of the Approved FY 2015 Budget continues building a Well-Managed Government. Over the next fiscal year, the Administration will continue to build a data-driven organization that provides efficient and effective programs and services that are responsive, accountable, inclusive, and customer focused... (Norfolk.gov, 2011 p. 3)

Over the next fiscal year, the Norfolk city administration confirmed that it would continue to construct a data-driven organization that provided efficient and effective programs and services that are responsive, accountable, inclusive, and customer focused.

Demographics

The study site is located in the locale with the second highest annual unemployment rates in the Hampton Roads region in 2013(UCB, 2013). In 2012, the median household income in this locality was the third lowest in the Hampton Roads region at \$42,644 (UCB, 2013). At the time of the study, the workforce in Norfolk, Virginia consisted of a diverse group of individuals living and working directly in the city and surrounding communities. This locality is the fourth largest employer in the region.

The Epoche Experience

Before data collection began, I took steps to ensure that I began with a bright and fresh perspective that ensured that I had no underlying feelings and had an acute awareness of the research topic during the study. I engaged in this to avoid being influenced by prior judgment and bias around the topic of career success and longevity. The Epoche experience enables a deeper understanding of what the future held, and posited the engagement of freedom and control for participants in this particular

circumstance over their independent dialogue (Moustakas, 1994). I used phenomenological reduction during Epoche and through a suspension of research judgments about the existence or nonexistence of the external world, as suggested by Moustakas (1994). This study collected interview data from a group of participants who had each worked in local government for more than 5 years at the time of the study.

Participants were recruited based on four traits:

- (a) knowledge of the local government profession;
- (b) concerns about retirement;
- (c) opportunities for promotion; and
- (d) years of experience in the field; and level of position.

The participants' shared knowledge of the organizational vision was also useful in this study since it provided everyone involved in the research a clearer understanding of the entity from different perspectives, as recommended by Moustakas (1994).

Participant Recruitment

After I received approval from the Walden University Internal Review Board (IRB) 01-02-15-0234660, I asked participants to review and complete recruitment emails, and to provide letters of consent prior to scheduling interviews. These recruitment emails included a copy of the cooperation authorization received from the city, which enhanced the recruitment process, by addressing permissions granted. I also sent a copy of this letter of agreement to the area Risk Manager and a Deputy City Manager responsible for human personnel issues. These individuals reviewed the document for the protection of participants and signed the document, authorizing me to commence interviews with

leadership in the organization. I also sent the study details in the letter of cooperation directly to two high ranking officials within the locality during the IRB process. Research began after IRB approval was available (Appendix A).

All of the study participants were recruited using an organizational listing of senior and midlevel managerial professional positions at the study site. Recruitment of participants took place over 5 to 10 days that was within the two weeks planned for this process. During the days noted, scheduling of appropriate time enabled ease and control over the study. I contacted the potential participants via a recruitment email and requested that they respond at their earliest convenience. Participants were eager to participate and were responsive to the recruitment process. All members are aware that the data collection process was for research purposes only and provided their written and informed consent.

Anonymity. Once selected, each member was assigned a research tag in the order of acceptance into the study, running from P01 through P10. These unique identifiers were for the purpose of research only, and the names of participants were not recorded on their the transcripts. Pseudonym use for all the members was helpful to maintain confidentiality. All research materials were stored in a secure, confidential location under lock and key, for maintenance and protection of the research data.

Data Collection

Selection of Participants: Sampling Method

The selection of participants was the initial step utilized in the data collection process, as suggested by Englander (2012). The population at large consisted of local

government administrators. In selected a purposeful sampling strategy to recruit a sample representative of the general population and that would produce generalizable results. I recruited 10 local government leaders for this study, a sample size designed to produce a saturation point in the results. The final sample consisted of mature individuals who responded to and were eligible according to the demographic questions in the recruitment email, and expressed a willingness to participate in the study. This approach best captured the diverse experiences of participants as they described their roles in local government and their experiences with career success and achieving career longevity.

The selected participants for this study shared details that matched the experiences needed to evaluate the phenomenon. Systematic responses to the recruitment email occurred and then respondents are part of the participant study group based upon a general interest to be a part of the study. Obtaining brief information prior to commencing interviews provided a general sense of expected parameters from the participant and their interest (Englander, 2012). Interview subjects represented a broad range of leadership levels, ages, levels of education, and experience. In phenomenological research this sample size represents efforts to achieve an imaginative depth strategy.

Pre-judgments and understandings of the phenomenon are set aside to ensure the interview became a useful tool to discover new meaning of the phenomenon (p.7). The point of saturation is evident by a review of each interview transcription detailing that participants had the experience and insights necessary to add to the research study.

Selection. As part of the selection process, the aim was to gain general knowledge about the phenomenon and ensured that the participants would be part of viable part of the general structure of the study (Englander, 2012). Participation includes: (a) their years of experience in government of more than five; (b) Their position held by local government under the category of senior leadership and mid-management; (c) Their interest in participating in the study topic; and (d) their concern for the field and the profession. This approach resulted in an affirmation that the participants selected had the experience that the research study required. Respondents held positions in high-level positions which include, finance, law, sports, administration, entertainment, strategic planning, emergency operations, and health. The majority of the sample selected had post-secondary education, and all participants had a bachelor's degree, with one holding a Juris Doctorate degree. Respondents randomly identify race, however interview observations indicate that the group is predominately mixed. The women ranged in age from 30 to 62. Men in this study were older and ranged in age from 50 to 63. Personal contact is useful to explain the purpose of the study prior to the commencement of interviews.

The interview schedules included information on the location, date, time and most convenient place for each participant. Meetings occurred during the second week of data collections, and transcriptions were complete within 24 hours of each collection.

Data Analysis

As shared by Moustakas, (1994), “organizing and analyzing the data to facilitate the development of individual and textural and structural description” (p. 103) is useful, .

Determining that a composite of the textural descriptions exists along with a composite structural description was useful to reach synthesis of the textural and structural meanings and essences (Moustakas, 1994, p.103). The analysis begins with the identification of themes that emerge from raw data (Simon, 2011).

Conducting face-to-face, semi structured interviews is an approach in this study. The interviews contained a range of questions concerning career success and career longevity. The interest to the current study was how career success in the field of government impacted the participants' views on career longevity. Interviews were all tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic data coding enabled study analysis to read each transcription very carefully and ensure theme emergence was detectable. As new themes emerged, previous transcripts are relevant again to ensure key relevant points enable deeper analysis.

Imaginative Variation

Variable meanings in the discussions provided opportunities to view responses from different vantage points. The use of variation through imagination is helpful to deduce the structural essences of experiences (Moustakas, 1994) around career success and career longevity. Imaginative variation through the participatory experience helps participants demonstration while engaged in the study of local government leadership experiences.

By using the exhaustive literature review on both topics success, and career longevity, benchmarks are available for discussion and context to the research questions. Participants elaborate during the analysis results with a more broadened comprehensive

point of view. Variations included asking participants to answer the questions from their own personal perspectives, and share experiences that they had with colleagues on the subject matter. Much deeper insight occurred when participants expressed their views and concerns for the public service of the future, expressing fears about what will happen to others beyond their own personal scenarios.

Description of Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological methodologies can be an assessment of the human experience and goes through the following process:

1. Verbatim Transcriptions- which included the collection of data from an audio tape and transcribed to obtain the general details from the interviews;
2. Imaginative Variation Application- which included the dissecting of data into integral part expressed nomothetic self- contained meaning;
3. Gathering Emergent Themes- which entailed utilizing research protocols to organize categories and topics from the transcripts into study sources. This process converted participant language into research language;
4. Transformation- included the culling of data to examine the meanings expressed in the experiences being shared that add to the phenomenon;
5. Descriptive Synthesis- the formation of narrative reflective of summarized data.
6. Key findings and Recommendations-contains the final distilling of meaning represented in the summaries of the study.

When the data came from interview transcripts, unstructured notes, memos and journal reflections, these tools became useful to transform the collection into a cohesive roadmap of expressions and perceptions for phenomena exploration.

Memoing

To enhance qualitative inquiry Memoing techniques are useful during this study. Nvivo software is able to capture Memoing details. Memo use was in accordance with research steps to achieve triangulation during the data collection phase. Memoing use captures material that the human mind tends to forget. Reflective note taking during the study reveals details from observations occurring at a fast rate. The creative freedom to detail observations during the Memoing phase allows the capturing of outflowing ideas, insights and observations. A level of density after each interview transcription occurs which was the goal to provide more thorough data analysis for the study results (Groenwald, 2004). Memo notation helps the review and retrieval of any explication and use for the data interpretation of the study.

Journaling

Journal reflections and thoughts occurred each day that met with the data collection plan. The use of a journal file system was habitual to ensure changes are efficient. Journal accounts provided methodological clarity and rigor to the research analysis phase. The use of a journal poised an outlet to express frustrations. Journal notations contained limited variations and captured detail descriptions that were useful to the study. Reflections were helpful during data analysis to limit omissions, and inconsistencies in this phenomenological study. Maintaining a healthy sense of curiosity

was a useful strategy for this study to enable the receipt of information from each participant. Utilizing the reflective journal process was a reminder daily to continue to encourage the participants to express themselves freely to achieve the study goals.

Member Checking

The participant is the best person to provide a working knowledge of experiences and thoughts towards individual work environments. The most useful measure adopted to ensure that findings were close to the participants' meanings is to member check the detail. Transcriptions go back to the participants to review within 24 hours, to achieve the commencement of member checking. As an additional measure, the voice recordings went back to the participants within two days of the interview, and participants review the transcription notes for any deviations in the communication exchange. Participants evaluate the following during the member checking exercise: whether (a) the research effort had accurately captured their experiences for the achievement of validity and finally; (b) had the meaning of experiences translated correctly to provide justice to their experiences. The process of member checking culminated in the partnership effort to ensure the data evolved accurately and would provide relevance to the study. The data plan occurred within 3 to 5 days following the forwarding of transcriptions. All identifiable information is void from the transcription data before the interview transcription was complete.

During member checking, participants provided additional details to their already rich descriptions of experiences. Active member-checking techniques resolved

discrepancies in phrased meanings and clarified the intent to describe responses to the semi structured interview questions.

The turnaround of transcript work allowed for the implementation of member checking and validation of the data, prior to data loading into the software. Nvivo10 data analysis software is helpful to code the research data, manage the participant responses, create memos and store the captured data. Bringing order and structure to the qualitative data collection process with rigor and close attention to detail during this study (Moustakas, 1994) is effective.

Data Coding

Data were coding listed units with relevant meaning that captured content from each interview during the study. Careful scrutiny and removal of redundant units occurred (Moustakas, 1994). To achieve this effectively a literal and figurative content of the data were assumed in terms of how many times ideas and themes occur, and when non-verbal cues that existed. The goal of data analysis through coding achieved the classification items that cut across the majority of the data (Simon, 2011). During the open coding process, the identification of themes in which the phenomenon is viable becomes resourceful. When this exercise began the collection of words, phrases, and events allowed the grouping to occur (Simon, 2011) simultaneously.

Utilizing a coding process, with auto-coding options allowed for the placement of interview question responses in an organized manner for review and data analysis. Technically, this was achievable by assigning style headings to the questions, referencing to them as heading one, and forming lines to the responses referencing them as standard

text. Auto-coded questions once sorted were dissected further by the key terms in each issue to draw out the main points from the interview prompts, and capture emerging themes. From this process emerged specific statements about the participants lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Inductive moments went from coding units to gathering a larger representation of categories and themes. This study was designed to “create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories which form[ed] a preliminary framework for detailed analysis,” as suggested by Simon (2011, p. 1).

Axial coding. This process targeted the relationships between types of career success and ideas supporting career longevity. Interview transcript questions were loaded into the software to create the extraction of phrases, words, and references. A coding system of P01 through P10 supported the identifier for the study participants. The axial coding used to identify themes and categories including the examination and crafting of the theoretical model surrounded the phenomenon (Simon, 2011).

The efforts to analyze data were calm, organized, alert, and flexible to ensure interactions with the data could come from any obscure or predictable paths. The actual inference and meanings from two different sets of variables contributed to the phenomenon understanding. This process becomes a conceptual activity in which new data became available to support the essence of the study (Moustakas, 1994). Theme analysis and retrieval are an important iterative element of this study, each time it occurs emergent findings or result not sought do not get overlooked.

Rigor. Nvivo software use allows the clustering of data, which was helpful to avoid the collection and use of redundant units of data collection. This process forged the

highest level of objectivity to be evident during the data analysis phase. Again, the complete reading of data transcriptions was a mechanism that became useful to dissect and understand the data during fieldwork. The process of open coding aided the association of puzzle dissection and supported the research effort to remain methodical and organized. This process was helpful in making relevant connections to the central research questions and synthesizing results that occurred to the phenomenon under study. Clusters of themes occur by grouping units of meaning together (Moustakas, 1994). When clusters overlapped in this study, this revelation is noticeable since this is a natural occurrence with the examination of human phenomena, significant cluster differences are critical to the overall summary.

Once all the steps in data analysis occur the next steps included the building of a composite summary which included a connection to the research questions, alignment with the existing theory, and inclusions of individual variations. Finally, by achieving the retrieval of meaningful categories (Simon, 2011) raw data from the interviews goes into logical flows to allow for the precise interpretation of codes, categories, and themes.

Structural Qualities. During discussions with participants, a listing of qualities and experiences was achieved which added to the richness of data analysis. Data analysis revealed that many of the participants entered the field by choice and circumstance. This became an essential context for the theory of work adjustment. Textural and structural descriptions coded on career success included individual goals, career paths, and the category of career longevity. Descriptions of participant unique voices resonated the need

for stability, satisfaction, and comfortable. Code descriptions came from groups of phrases, words, and references mentioned by the participants in the study.

Categories. The main types of data in this study focused on, the field of local government, and the local government administrator working within this field. As such descriptions of the individual leader came from the listed demographic questions below which asked the following:

1. How long have you worked in local government?
2. How would you describe your leadership role in the organization? What do you actually do?
3. Have you experienced career success while working in local government?

The questions about the organization environment that helped categorize perceptions on local government include:

Q10. Do you have any final statements you would like to make on your experience working in local government?

Themes

Individual theme compilation first included the identification of values related to career success (extrinsic values, intrinsic values, achievement, comfort, autonomy, status, and status). Value analysis of themes on career longevity drew attention to the participants' fear of job loss. Finally, to ensure the theoretical ideas exist, axial coding is useful to identify systematic evidence in the data that could emerge in the first round of coding, thus addressing the validity of the research results. Node structures included tags to career success, career longevity, positions held, years in public service, years in the

current locality and views towards extrinsic and intrinsic reward based systems. To delve further participant interviews drew out nodes related to personal/professional motivations, environmental satisfaction, views about the profession for the future and advice to the next generation of public leaders.

Discrepant Cases

When code transcription was complete, the study disclosed no evidence of discrepant cases in the research data.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To address credibility the method of triangulation was useful to collect opinions, perceptions and experiences of the purposeful sample of participants represented in the demographic table of this study. To ensure fieldwork occurs with rigor during fieldwork a semi structured an interview questionnaire was helpful to conduct the formal interview with each participant.

The object of this approach was to utilize a combination of methods that exhibit different weakness and strengths and enhance the level of internal validity. Sharing data with the participants through member checking further validates the degree of trust in the descriptions of their experiences along with the use of journaling (Moustakas, 2008). This process occurred within 24 to 36 hours after fieldwork interviews occurred.

Transferability

Transferability of all fieldwork interviews occurred directly after recruitment activities are complete in a systematic manner. The 10 participants' selections occurred in

order of confirmation and interest of the recruitment emails. Steps performed continued until the purposeful sample population evolved. The participants included local government leaders in various leadership positions in the locality under study. Job duties are available and listed in the audit files of the fieldwork. Interview prompts during the study are relevant to acknowledge the sensitivity of the topic and maintain an ethical stance towards the participants engaged in the meeting. Data on the demographics of the participants and their role in the organizations helped to obtain a thick description and variation from the participants selected.

Dependability

Fieldwork files exist for this study both electronically and in hard copy. These documents are available for peer review should one be required to support the results of the study. In addition, audit created folders store the factual evidence and details provided by the respondents. Electronic files and hard copied documents exist for the study and contain voice recordings, Memoing, interview transcripts, letters of consent, letters of cooperation, and data analysis sheets created using Nvivo10 software. Data is available in a manner for further or future re-analysis.

Conformability

Reflexivity and conformability enabled a rigorous sense of self-awareness during the data collection and results compilation. To specifically address conformability, an autobiographic researcher sketch is available to the 10 participants.

The collection of data results occurred independently to reduce the potential for different judgments, and avoid the study of inter and intra code reliability. The questions

used were open-ended, and topically focused to ensure there was a limited amount of inconsistency in the analysis of data due to external or extraneous reactions during interview sessions. Four demographic questions in the recruitment email helped capture demographic variables, age, race, years of local government and level in the organization.

Portrait of the Researcher

Janet Williams is a local government administrator with eighteen year of progressive knowledge in government. With a concentration in Human Resources, Finance and Business, City Administration and Program Development, Operations, Audit and Grants Management, there is an accumulation of experience that exists in her record. The current position held is the Director of Emerging Leaders and Bureau Manager of Recreation Parks and Open Space, where projects requiring knowledge of government administration and finance, program planning, budgeting, performance measurement, evaluation, and financial analysis occur. Within the Human Resource field, Janet directly impacts activities that serve the City's 4,500 employees and individually managed 35-100 staff members through the bureau and divisional assignments. As a local government leader, Janet is committed to improving internal communication and collaboration in the organization while empowering staff to make significant contributions to achieving organizational and professional goals.

Study Results

The results of the study provide a thorough review of the detailed transcriptions obtained during the analysis phases. Examining the emerging themes and clustering them together according to conceptual similarities proved to be a useful approach. The

thick and rich descriptions paint the participant stories, address research questions, and support emergent themes from research question. Most importantly, these patterns generated themes that produced a structure useful to move towards converging ideas (Moustakas, 1994). Incorporating the contextual value of the participant voices, provided the essence to the vast material and supported an evolutionary account of the study results.

In the illustrations provided in this study, significant themes and sub-themes are present alongside relevant quotes. In looking at the experiences through an idiographic lens, the analysis first highlighted themes from the research questions; secondly, themes common to the phenomenon; then thirdly, probed philosophical and universal aspects of the human experience (Finlay, 2009, p.10). Shifting back and forth, while focusing on the participants experience provided a subjective view to obtaining the needed analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

Results of the study revealed the development of individual, textural and structural description of the data (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103) from the perspective of a local government administrator. Each respondent communicated different views as they discussed the topics of career success and career longevity. Ironically, the women and men who were respondents of this study had similar thoughts in terms of career success but differed significantly on the topic of career longevity. The next section of this study provides the results from the participants, addresses the research questions, and ties the research theory to results from five emergent themes.

Participants

Participants engaged in this study had a deep sense of commitment to the profession of public service, especially towards local government. As detailed in the demographic picture from Table 1 participants held advanced degrees in the area of public administration, business administration, urban planning.

Respondents indicated that public service was not their first choice of profession. However, as a place to utilize acquired skill sets the current organization provided a sense of security and in some cases job satisfaction. When asked why the selection of local government was a choice for a career, a respondent shared, “I also believe in transparency, and my education of course impacted my ability to get this job. I would not have gotten this job without the education (PO2, personal communication, February 2, 2015).”

Theme 1: An Advanced Education Supports Career Success

All participants spoke about how they valued education significantly, and the impact that education has had on their career success. In fact, the views that the field of public service recognizes those who move beyond the bachelor’s degree were a real accomplishment. This event brought to light the first emerging theme of appreciation for post-education as a predictor of success. Participants described a consuming, relatable sense of the way they felt treated in their current organization, especially those who had pursued advanced degrees. Comments from the respondents summarized the essence of this theme in terms of its importance and relevance to the phenomenon around career success. Stating the following:

1. “I also used every opportunity I had to go to training, there are certain things when coming out of school and grad school that until you have opportunities to apply your skills you don’t know what you can and cannot do (P04, personal communication, February 3, 2015).”
2. “After graduate school, I landed here three different times with three different positions. While I didn't seek it out I have become a product of local government and all of my work history, has made me come to enjoy it (P05, personal communication, February 1, 2015). ”

Theme 1 Connection to the Theory. In assessing the theory of work adjustment, the resonating premises of educational achievements align with success goals. In terms of value, an individual is looking to increase personal control and initiative. Obtaining an advanced degree becomes an indicator that success will become an outcome in local government.

Table 1

Demographics of the Local Government Administrator

Reference	Race	Gender	Level of Education	Leadership Level	
Participant 01	White	Male	Masters	Senior	
Participant 02	White		Juris Doctorate	Senior	
Participant 03	White	Male	Masters	Senior-Mid	
Participant 04	Asian		Female	Masters	Senior-Mid
Participant 05	Black		Female	Masters	Senior
Participant 06	Black	Male	Masters	Senior	
Participant 07	Black		Female	Bachelors	Senior
Participant 08	Black		Female	Masters	Senior-Mid
Participant 09	Black		Female	Masters	Senior
Participant 10	Black		Female	Masters	Senior-Mid

Note. The term mid is a reference to middle-ranged senior leadership.

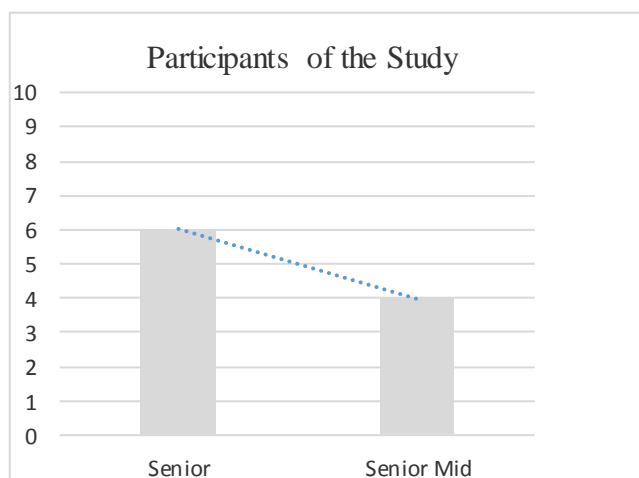


Figure 1. Number of senior and mid management participants in this study

Mid-management in the study represent 40% of participants interviewed while senior level represent 60% of the total population. A total of 10 local government leaders is part of this study. The participants consisted of 3 males and 7 females with various backgrounds and diverse educational attainments. The participants represented a population from the test site all of whom held senior level leadership positions. All members have worked in the organization over 5 years and achieved some degree of organizational success. A brief questionnaire captures demographic information.

Unique identifiers have been used and substituted for the participant names during this study. Three participants were Caucasian, 6 African American, and 1 Asian Pacific. Participants shared the life experiences that factored into their decisions to enter the field, these responses while varied, hit on a theme valued educational attributes, enabling a sense of security from job loss. One respondent stressed the, “fear of job loss was the reason that I had to seek a career in line with my education that would help me as a single mom be rewarded and be able to take care of my family (P01, personal communications, February 2, 2015).”

Research Question 1. RQ1 was designed to determine what core lived experiences of local government administrators had impacted their career success. Two definitive themes emerged from this research question:

1. Perceptions of career success rewards are varied; and
2. Motivating factors encourage career success in leaders.

The relevant connection with this theme, achieved by the research question suggests that professional definitions of success varies among the respondents.

Participant 06 shared, “my success formula is being able to understand and talk to people and know how to communicate for meaningful understanding (personal communication, February 3, 2015).”

Clearly identifiable in this theme, is the sense comfort as a measurement of success. When tied to the current literature this remains an area where the respondents may have engaged in settlement over a choice. With respondents expressing, “I fell into local government; it was the security (P09, personal communications, February 2, 2015).” In a time when the local government administrators are attempting to retain employment, the value of education has become a redeeming goal to support achieving job security.

Theme 2: Intrinsic Appreciation

A theme from career success viewpoints was that rewards for the local government administrator over the years have dwindled as a result of the economy. A combination of the two types of reward categories intrinsic and extrinsic exist. However, most expressed satisfaction with the demonstration of small acts of appreciation from the

organization. One respondent expressly stated views on the reward mechanisms by stating:

I think just in our field, there is probably more intrinsic than extrinsic. Normally when you get in this profession you are not doing it for the money, it's not like we are expensive high paid lawyers; I don't think I have ever gotten extrinsic, we don't get that kind of thing in local government. (PO3, personal communication, February 2, 2015)

All participants viewed success as a possibility in their field; however, thoughts on how to define career success rewards varied. In each case, study participants were very vague about the level of extrinsic rewards that they had personally received during their career span. However, they were comfortable sharing how they believed intrinsic rewards should be an element of the reason you decide to stay in the profession. When asked to define which factor(s) of reward based systems are more important than the other a respondent shared:

A combination of the two, with more weighted towards the intrinsic, to do this for the long term. There has to be a desire to contribute to the greater good, in local government, so I think that just my opinion, obviously, I think you're not going to get rich, so those extrinsic things at the local level are going to be quite different at the local level than the private sector. (PO2, personal communication, February 2, 2015)

In other interview question responses leaders were able to relay the expectancy that both drivers of success are necessary, however, extrinsic would come over time and

should not be an unmet need. Finally, when asked to share what core things had impacted career success through interview questions three participants summarized that much hinges on their ability to change lives, make contributions to a community and see and be a part of the organization's vision. One respondent eloquently stated:

I don't think I have ever gotten extrinsic, we don't get that kind of thing in local government, but you definitely get the pat on the back and do get to make an impact on citizens lives, and that sort of thing from this particular field is right. (PO3, personal communication, February 2, 2015)

All respondents interviewed in the study had achieved what they believed was the success in their career. Success and rewards for the respondents form in many ways. The different experiences of career success and rewards are in Table 2. Many of the respondents shared viewpoints around career success and the rewards that can be achieved from the local government environment, to include the thought as shared by PO1 that, “Basically, people want to know if there are promotional opportunities and feel as if they have value (personal communication, January 29, 2015).”

The importance of work-life balance is a dominant desire from the respondents in this study; some felt that this was one of the most important intrinsic rewards. In instances, participants expressed, that, “for me it was critical to get a job, I had to have a stable job because I had a two-year-old son, and I wanted also to pursue a master's degree and provide for my family (P09, personal communication, January 29, 2015).” The desire to achieve both goals for the job and family becomes essential in terms of work life and the need for balance.

The focus on achievement of the respondents provided deeper insight about what sacrifices have existed in lieu of monetary rewards. This is a significant contribution to the understanding that extrinsic developments may no longer be a part of the career success definition for this group since they are few and far between.

Theme 2: Connection to the Theory. The theory of work adjustment, describes the reactive adjustment made by the employee to change behaviors to suit the environment. The expressed understanding that intrinsic rewards are more readily available (Dawes, 1994), sees this definitively.

Table 2

Participant Opinions on Career Success and Rewards

Is success achievable in Local Government?		The driving force for Local Government Leaders			Extrinsic Rewards (Missed)
Reference		Intrinsic rewards	Extrinsic rewards	Both rewards	
01	Yes			x	Monetary, Administrative bonuses
02	Yes	x			Non
03	Yes	x			Non
04	Yes			x	Monetary, Paid leave
05	Yes			x	Monetary
06	Yes	x			Non
07	Yes			x	Monetary
08	Yes			X	Monetary
09	Yes			x	Monetary
10	Yes			x	Monetary

Theme 3: The Altruistic Goal

All participants address interview questions 1, 2, and 5 to share what motivating factors had influenced them during their tenure in government. In this probe, participant

expressions emerged in themes that focused on personal self-evaluations, future concerns, and transparencies in the profession. The altruistic intent of an individual to serve the public has for years been the guiding principle of an individuals' interest to enter the field of local government. As expressed by a respondent, "leaders seem to have a passion for whatever it is they do, it doesn't just nail you down to one thing. This profession is good for professionals who do not necessarily want to do long term, or who are unsure. You can use local government to determine what it is you want to do (P03, personal communication, February 5, 2015)."

For the most part, respondents had strong expressions towards motivating factors that influenced their career choices, with one participant relating, "I entered local government because I believe, or it is my belief that I had to be part of what influences my daily life and the life of my family. I also believe it is a noble cause to be a civil servant (PO2, personal communications, February 2, 2015)." Motivations for public service continue to be an admiral quality. A conscience career choice while limited from the respondents in this study, many expressed that they are satisfied with their decision to remain in the field of government. Participant 05 shared, "my personal motivation was to enhance what was already here, I have abiding passion for customer service and making the constituency happy with the events in our facilities better, this was a personal goal (personal communications, February 5, 2015)."

Table 3

Motivating Factors Influencing Public Administration Students, and Leaders

Reference	Participant Factors	To Influence Students	To Influence Other Leaders
01	Unemployment, Job searching	Undergraduate Internships	Share opinions about doing the work that matters
02	Desire to influence daily life of family and community, Social Responsibility	Quality of life initiatives, competitive opportunities	“We need to move away from the “good old boy network (PO2, personal communication, February 2, 2015)
03	To work in the industry of obtained education Sports	Present and explain the different options and choices	Discuss valuable options of the position, discuss the varied opportunities
04	To work in the industry of obtained education law	Competitive salaries, current technology, and work-life Balance	Telecommuting, innovation opportunities
05	Enhance the existing organization with participants skills	A change in the attitudes of politicians who portray working in government negatively	Change the political climate, share achievement opportunities
06	Become successful in implementation of programs	Networking and job fairs, educational sessions	Share the goals and direction of the organization
07	To make a difference	Draw them to a mission and vision.	Share the value of working with bright people
08	To be a public servant	Determine interests in public service	Share the knowledge of success ladders
09	Job security	Internships, exposure, benefits,	Define the career path, share the possibilities for growth
10	Change of careers, personal welfare	Coaching and mentoring programs, opportunities for field exposure	Share the value of working in city government

In views about the next generation, the reflections are more concise from respondents in that, “my experience is that young people appreciate their community, race, economy, equality conditions and if we put these kinds of situations in front of them they will be drawn to a mission, which will be something beyond themselves (P07, personal communication, January 29, 2015).” Since elements of the theory of work adjustment indicates that organizations use reinforcements to shape employee behavior, providing them a clear mission to be drawn to will result in a more satisfied individual. Consequently, a more satisfied person is one who more readily displays indicators of career success bestowed upon them (Bretz & Judge, 1994, p. 34).

Table 4

A Deeper Analysis of Motivating Factors

Enduring Motivations	Disabling Myths	Emerging Realities
Job Security	Government jobs have Risk aversion	Local government employees understand the term “at will”
Work Life Balance	Overloaded competing priorities prevent work life balance	Telecommuting is viable option
Social Responsibility	We are here to serve	Employees share the value and mission of the organization

Statements made in reflections about local government work required further analysis of how the administrator views their motivations in the current environment. In Table 4 above the reference to, “at will” specifies that they employee is aware that they may be terminated without just cause (UCB, 2013). When shared by Participant P04, “government is not as natural people often think, it's good enough for government work, means it doesn't have to be perfect, or even or that great. But I think that mindset has to

be changed the longer you work at it the harder you work at it things will change”

(personal communication, February 3, 2015).

Research Question 2

RQ2 is helpful in determining if the theory of work adjustment provides useful insight on career success challenges in local government. From this question, precise interrelations between the theory and career longevity are available. Reflections on experiences yielded insight into the perceptions of a career public administrator in regards to their current work environment. Participant 09 stated:

Having a defined career path is so important. I understand that might not always be available. If people on the outside know what they can expect when they come to it would be more attractive. People need to see those examples of people who have moved into leadership roles. There needs to be a view of the possibilities that are here for everyone.” (personal communication, February 3, 2015)

Table 5

The Most Critical Revelations About Career Longevity

Description	Frequency*
Education, Opportunity, and Experience	1
Work-Life Balance	2
Quality of Life	3
Comfort Level	4
Fear	5

Note. Graded using a Likert scale, with 1 representing the highest occurrence of the participant response.

Theme 3: Connection to the Theory. The Theory of Work Adjustment depicts that the person and environment communication may not exhibit a perfect fit; however, it is possible to develop skills in this environment based on the flexibility of the individual or the environment (Dawes, 1994). All the local government leaders interviewed in this study indicated that public service was not their initial career of choice upon leaving college; however, each one of them has been satisfied with the work that they produce.

1. The interrelation of the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA), as provider of knowledge on career success and career longevity; and
2. The importance of choices and circumstances impacting career longevity.

In terms of work adjustments, Participant 06 pointed out that, “it’s long lasting and sustainable working relationships, a firm belief and commitment in what you are doing and understanding the direction and mission of the organization. When you know where your place is and how you feel like part of it (personal communication, February 3, 2015).” This sentiment describes not only a culture of satisfaction, but one that is richly around relationships. The local government administrator is committed to achieving altruistic goals; these create the new definitions of success. To accomplish these task sentiments, expressions and thoughts surrounding the organization is expressing the need to serve the public good, and maintaining a good example for others to follow. The sentiment of safety is in the concept developed in Theme 4.

Theme 4: The Safety Factor

While the theory of work adjustment posits that individuals and environments impose requirements on one another (Bretz, & Judge, 1994), the results of these

adjustments made by local government administrators disclose themes of adaptable readjusted strategies, to achieve flexibility. While the theory has frequently been used to apply a person against their organizational settings, in this study participants were not initially looking for this culture and its environment to match their professional desire, but made adjustments termed safety changes. Participant reflections indicate that their current role has become a localized version of their professional goal, and supports the use of this theory with individuals who initially did not have this as an intention. When Participant 09 posed the following:

Local government employees are expected to give a lot and are not paid the same as in private industry. When I left school, my major was the business management and computer information systems. I wanted to work for a big company. I had a salary range I wanted to achieve, but I was flexible about what my position would be. I have found it very rewarding. People in this environment stay a long time, and may not have had the opportunities that I have had, so I am overwhelmed to be in this position. But I do wonder if I am capable of more and if I had gotten that other job would it have been the same experience.” (personal communications February 2, 2015)

Theme 4: Connection to the Theory. The results of this study also seem directly applicable to the theory of work adjustment in regards to a person's goal to achieve satisfaction in an environment. In terms of finding conditions that establish predictability and stability (Dawes, 1994), Theme 4 highlights the participants intent to

feel secure. This display of shared perceptions also falls into the category of reactive adjustment, whereby individuals continue to change behaviors to suit the environment.

In resonating towards contentment and safety, the personal priorities of an individual come through along with their work values. Safety in the work environment becomes an element to reinforce the existence of career longevity. The required level of connection in the work environment is a theory of work adjustment reflective action termed safety. The degree of protection in this sense becomes the contributor to career longevity.

In Table 6 of this study, strategies seen in the local government environment disclose flexible abilities that form to accommodate this reflective adjustment. These include changes in work habits, adaptability to new improvements, a deeper clearer understanding of the nuances of government and enhanced communication skills that forge more swift movements of understanding. In terms of the organization's reinforcements, they continue to reveal the items employees would like to see in the environment to include more transparency, pragmatism in decision making, and more themed awards and promotions that inspire individuals to stay. A primary factor and attribute that individuals need to possess who are committed to the career success and longevity model would be to embrace the concept of persistence (Dawes, 1994).

Persistence can be a reward of working in government. Illustrated in Table 6, are other contributors to achieving safety, from the local government administrator perspective.

The safety constraint is an essential principle of the research phenomenon. While safety is a job satisfaction criteria, it has become a condition of the times especially for

the generation of professional that fear job loss. Acknowledging a deeper rooted concern about job loss evolved reflections from the participants about taking care of themselves beyond public service.

Table 6

Theory of Work Adjustment Contributions To Career Success Through Safety Constraints

Participant Reference	Initial career choice	Strategies that promote success long term	Flexible abilities developed
01	No	Adaptability, willingness to learn new things	On the job skills, training, supervisory skills
02	No	Transparency in the decision tree, more predictability	Cultural diversity skills, broad education
03	No	Constant career development, training and workshops for best practices, keep your skills sharpened.	Networking, open-mindedness, learn as you go
04	No	Excellent compensation packages, retirement benefits, stability, work-life balance, tuition reimbursement	Clear understanding of government nuances, able to meet demands and expectations, clear focus
05	No	Pragmatism, and a good sense of humor, awareness of the changing environment	“We try to operate more nimbly, not that we do not like government, and we are attempting to enhance the way people look at government (P05, personal communications, February 3, 2015).”
06	No	Promotional opportunities, Long range plans, a substantial mission	Communication skills, tailoring services, achieving meaning understanding from customers.
07	No	Recognition and reward systems	Getting things done, focus oriented
08	No	Leadership support, feedback, constructive accolades, career development strategies.	Networking, community sponsor, getting things done, build relationships
09	No	Themed progression, bonuses, and training.	Independent skills, drive, academically strong
10	No	Time to coach individuals, awareness of the big picture,	An aptitude to systems, and processes, development of key relationships

Theme 5: Choices and Circumstances

Finally, the pivotal view in Theme 5 addresses choices and things that have impacted long-term career goals.

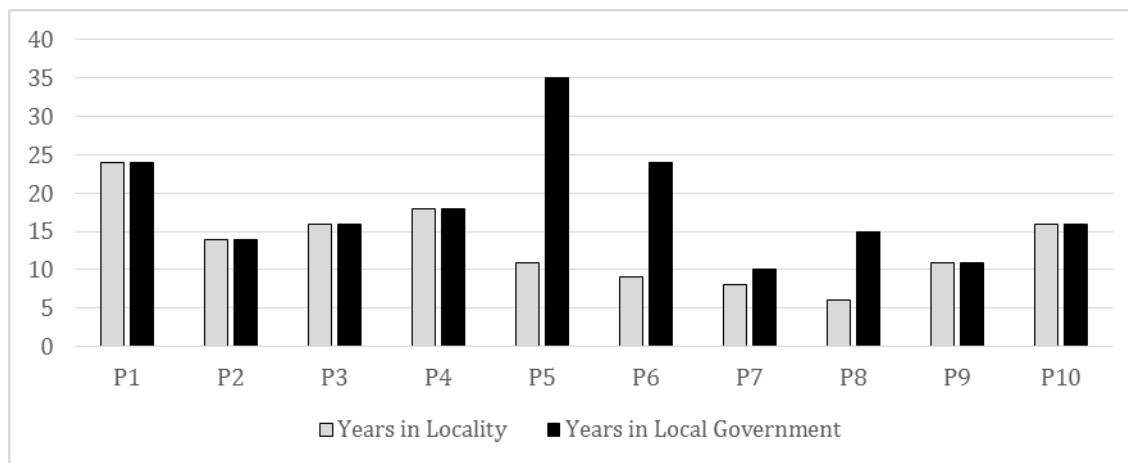


Figure 2. Participant years in the current locality compared to years in local government.

When reviewing the results of the years in the current location compared to years in the profession, it suggests that there is a connection between the individual's current environment and intentions to stay in the field. Again, this is a unique theme in this study almost ideographic since each participant did not have local government as their intended profession of choice. In addressing the problem statement, it is not a simple matter of managing government or students in public policy administration schools to keep the motivation and morale of this profession high; there is a need determine what is behind the problem and whether further knowledge around career success could have an impact.

Table 7

The Impact of Circumstance and Choice on Career Longevity

Participant Reference	Y/N	Personal Circumstance	Y/N	Professional Choice
01	Y	Fear of Job Loss in other organizations	N	Opportunity and Experience
02	N		Y	
03	Y	Being able to have hands on experience	N	
04	Y	Comfortable security	N	
05	Y	Fortunate to work for people who provide challenges	N	
06	N		Y	Long lasting sustaining relationship environment is inspiring
07	N		Y	
08	Y	Stability is appealing	N	
09	Y	Achieving work life balance	N	
10	Y	Comfortable environment	N	

Participants while satisfied in their current roles and environment remain concerned about being able to sustain the impact of personal circumstances and professional choices. The concern about the future was expressed by P01 reflecting, “people want to know where the ship is heading in the next 5, 10, 25 years. As long as you have this charted out, and people believe in the organization and the mission of the organization you will have people stay (personal communication, January 29, 2015).” In cases where personal circumstances exist, individuals stress that the professional choice has become a secondary element of a well-balanced and satisfied goal towards achieving career longevity.

Thus, if individual needs are missing in the current work environment as a result of personal circumstance or professional choice there exists opportunities to balance the reasons leaders may stay for the long term in careers. P09 indicated,

It has been the stability, it's kind of crazy with the economy that we have the stability has helped a great deal. You can make yourself marketable in local government if you get in and have a good work ethic, people come to know you as a good worker and appreciate that. (personal communications, February 3, 2015)

Theme 5: Connection to the Theory. In the theory of work adjustment, a subjective evaluation of the degree to which an individual's requirements proposes clear alignment to career longevity (Bretz & Judge, 1994). In determining whether individuals achieve higher levels of success in an organization that was original choice, the theory is affirmed by the experiences and perceptions of local government administrators. In this study, the participants shared that while local government was not their first selection or choice, in this field, and one can sustain happiness. When shared by P07, the expression is stated, "as a choice organization can keep people motivated and engaged to move up. The organization has to think enough of the path of our hard workers (personal communication, January 29, 2015)."

Summary

Descriptions of research methods undertaken for this study are included in this chapter. The rationale for using qualitative methods with the characteristics of phenomenology is evident in the steps carried out. Participant expectations and

perceptions around career longevity suggest that there is a strong linkage between career success constraints and contributions for longevity. The core research questions addressed lived experiences of local government leaders that have impacted their career success.

In this analysis, results disclosed that participants have strong thoughts about the definition of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in their current environment. Participants also viewed motivational factors as a bridge between impacting future leaders, and other professionals interested in the field. In regards to research questions, all five themes address the useful tenets of the theory of work adjustment providing added knowledge on career success and career longevity. In this study, the application of the theory supported the phenomenon of environmental fit from a review of strategies and methodologies used by the local government leader, and adaptable flexibilities demonstrated on the job to create satisfaction.

Literature Connections. The implications for satisfaction, tenure, and career success provided a glimpse into the challenges of environmental fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994). In this study, further exploration beyond the assessment of the environment helps to gain a deeper insight into the sacrifices of the local government administrator. In probing, and utilizing the data from these discussions, a genuine altruistic view has taken the place of individual desires to achieve extrinsic rewards. The theory of work adjustment posits that work rewards play a moderating role in understanding the person-organizational fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Studies have gone further to relay that the direct

influence of extrinsic rewards is often used to measure career success (Bretz & Judge, 1994); however, this is not always the case for this population

In addition to utilizing the tenets of the theory of work adjustment, the present study provided an examination of other satisfaction factors that contribute to the local government success formula. Results detail and support the usefulness of the work adjustment theory for disclose changes in the career success formula for the local government administrator.

To share further, years of service versus years in the profession correlate with one's personal and professional choices and circumstances. Consequently, a clearer understanding of leadership in the field of local government by assessing specific motivations that demonstrate flexibility and adjusted in the work environment. By drawing out the expressions and opinions of the problem under study, participants enabled a relevant probe for deeper insight and meaning of career success and longevity insights.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of current local government leaders in the United States and to determine why they stay in or leave the field. This study also was designed to examine the theory of work adjustment to determine if it useful in determining factors of career success and career longevity. This study also provided rich insight into patterns in the experiences and perceptions of local government administrators regarding successful career experience, including what factors and career success models were useful to these administrators.

Previous research on this topic has primarily focused on individuals' organizational fit; however, the present study findings supports the proposition that higher levels of motivation and intrinsic rewards lead to feelings of career success from the local government administrator. This suggests that career longevity creates a sense of safety and satisfaction crafted by an individual.

The significant findings of this study identify the motivations of individuals seeking to achieve career success in the field of local government administration. This research is especially valuable because individuals working in this field are normally prevented by political circumstances and locale from freely disclosing feelings related to this work. As a result, the study findings are an important documentation of the views, opinions, and experiences of local government administrators on their work environments. An important element of these findings was that how government leaders feel about promoting the field is connected to their career success and career longevity.

Finally, specific circumstances and choices were found to produce real satisfaction with these leaders' long-term careers.

Interpretation of Findings

The results of the study suggest and support that local government leaders' perceptions and experiences with career success and longevity vary significantly. The intent of the study is to provide findings according to themes and key topics. A major goal accomplished in this section was to be faithful to the individuals who contributed their time in this study to the field of local government. If local government organizations are unable to recruit, and retain their return on investment, a number of high-level public administrators may continue to leave the profession. The findings of this study are below:

Finding 1: Long Term Commitments May Produce Diminishing Rewards

The study participants all shared their insights on how the reward systems in their then-current work environments had changed over the years. When the U.S. economy was strong, things extrinsically were much more visible to leaders. However, more recent rewards were only described or conceived in terms of bonuses, incentives, and pay increases. Participants predicted that extrinsic rewards at the local level are going to be significantly different in the next few years as economic realities become an industry reality. In discussing the lack of extrinsic rewards particular monetary ones, viewpoints are concisely shared. P10 commented, "...some people get into this field knowing they are not going to be millionaires, they like the personal fact that they can help someone out (personal communications, February 1, 2015)." In several instances, study participants stated that they believed that local government is not an industry in which

leaders can be successful if they do not understand the value of both intrinsic and extrinsic reward categories.

Participants praised organizations that had opportunities to attend training, receive certifications, going to ad hoc meetings, receiving tuition reimbursement, have special assignments, and exposure can be an appreciative token of the work one is doing. It is mostly intrinsic rewards that sustain the leader, but a combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic would be nice. In previous studies, researchers assessing career continuums concluded that the success factors were in need of refinement since retrospective bias impacts participants and only provides them with perspectives on success (Dawes, 1994). In the case of this study, the lack of extrinsic rewards provided participants with a resonating negative viewpoint around the greater good versus collecting the values from an external reward.

Finding 2: Do Not Punish the Messenger

The interview data showed that pivotal combinations of factors are influencing leadership viewpoints about the profession of local government administration in the United States. These factors include individual motivation and personal motivations and factors that compel them to stay in the field. All of the participants strongly emphasized the importance of being able to share experiences and perceptions without retribution or punishment. This is an important finding because previous literature has found that the composition of local government leaders in the United States has become significantly more diverse in terms of demographic, education, and business backgrounds. This makes it increasingly important that individuals working in this field/industry be aware of

political versus administration issues. The relationship and perceptions about organizational politics can create struggle in the goal of individual to achieve career success (Grimland, et al., 2012, p. 1077). However, as stated by Perry & Buckwalter, "...more leaders are more open to pursuing public work in non-governmental settings; more likely to switch sectors during their careers, and decidedly committed to "making a difference in the world" (p.128)." The perceptions documented in this study also suggested that experiences and opinions about career motivations can significantly influence the profession in the future.

When asking what motivations factored decisions to enter the field, P09 shared, "I looked at the city as a stable work environment; I wanted to be stable and not worry from year to year about job security (personal communication, February 3, 2015)." The driving motivational factors cited by the study participants included: the principles they hold for getting things done, advocacy for the community, and working in the real essence of public service. Leaders make meaning from their personal experiences and pass along interpretations when the discussion topics with the next generation of public administrators.

The study participants were clear on the factors that they feel are necessary to give potential future public officials an interest in the profession. Altruism was the most commonly cited requirement, as seen in PO6's statement that "Being able to help people and provide a service for all, and the most important thing is making sure you understand everyone is a taxpayer. By that, I mean whatever you are cooking, what [ever] pie you bake, everyone deserves a slice (personal communication, February 2, 2015)."

Finding 3: Reactive Adjustment Goals for the Local Government Administrator

The theory of work adjustment posits that individuals and environments tend to pose requirements on one another (Bretz & Judge 1994). In this study, the interpretation of participant experiences demonstrated that the theory of work adjustment as guiding principle in the adoption of key drivers towards career success and longevity. The participants stated that when consistent strategies, methods, and techniques are present in an environment participant, job satisfaction is increased.

Prior literature. Questions as to whether people who fit a particular organization to which they belong gain higher levels of a career than those that do not (Bretz & Judge, 1994) were examined in this study. In examining this relationship for local government leaders, many of them indicated that this was not their organization of choice; however, adjustments made have provided them with a sustaining sense of success and longevity. Therefore, it appears reasonable to suggest that people who enter an organization make changes that fit, and remain open to longevity and career success. PO9 shared that, “in general I think professional development and having leaders support you doing things outside the box, the providing of feedback, constructive accolades, and career development is very useful, and having the support to those things is great (personal communication February 3, 2015).” All of the participants in this study appeared to be satisfied with the field they now find themselves in, and expressed that the thought of changing professions at this point in their careers was daunting. Expression and concerns about being able to make a transition from public to private industry at this stage of their careers were not something they felt they wanted to take on.

When hierarchical Administrations' change in local government, the tenets of the theory of work adjustment become more important since another iteration of changes and implementation of flexible skill and mindset must be undertaken again. This sentiment by P05 who shared, "I have seen a lot of change, and a lot of reduction in forces and cuts in budget, and having to do more with less. For some people that can be very challenging, and if you are not able to adapt to a changing environment this is probably not the right career path for you (personal communication, February 2, 2015)." Participant 01 went further by detailing, "You have to be very adaptable, because the organization just changes, different leaders come in and the leadership style changes, so you have to be willing to learn new things and adapt to new directions (personal communications, February 3, 2015)."

Consequently, active change that involves individuals shifting their values or expectations to new leadership vision and mission must be a flexible adjustment taken on by local government leaders. It appears crucial that leaders engage in the exercise of adjusting to secure the rewards of job security and career longevity with the changes the organization may undergo during their tenure. Similarly, for this phenomenon under study local government leadership may need to acknowledge environmental changes may require them to reset their priorities and work values routinely.

Finding 4: Default to Choice Versus Circumstance to Achieve Career Longevity

Participants admitted in this study the reasons why they were still working in the current locality. When comparing the length of tenure in the present region to the length of time in public service, it appears many considered this their long-term job. With

personal circumstances becoming the driver over professional choice, it seems that individualism is at the core of how leaders make decisions. From family dynamics to receiving hands-on experience, support systems, and encouragement, leaders continue to share that these factors impacted their reasons to stay initially in the current organization.

Notably, few leaders note professional choice as a factor for career success and longevity; however, those that do, were guided by mentors and advocates supporting them to enter the field. In the peer-reviewed literature on the career continuum often referred to as a career lifespan or professional work experiences. Tenure is in terms of career development, organizational challenges, and work-life balances. Interestingly enough, for those who perform work on the self-management, a prerequisite for managing the future that may your include one's career is to begin the event entirely before it arrives. When shared by P05 the reflective comment is, “my personal motivation was to enhance what was already here, I have abiding passion for customer service and making the constituency happy (personal communication, February 2, 2015).”

Consequently, it is evident that through an assessment of personal circumstances and professional choices enables leaders to become aware of what decisions they need to make to achieve career success and move towards career longevity.

Limitations of the Study

Utilizing a qualitative sampling approach is an area that can often be challenging, and at times complex. However, it was helpful to understand that the exploration of human issues no matter how they exist. A goal in understanding career success was to

define the parameters that the local government use in this phenomenon. Established parameters were achievable through the demographic query, and the probing applied through research interview questions. Therefore with this variable defined appropriately for this participant group the study approach was able to combat an original challenge that would have created limitations to the research.

Consequently, the approach of defining this variable for the local government administrator became critical to making contributions to a broader more generalized population. Additionally, the use of sample size through the selected population looks closer to the existence of saturation to avoid overburdening the participants selected and achieve the full depth of experiences and perceptions. Other limitations addressed the examination of the different positions held. Utilizing the core leadership group and accessing senior leadership at all levels provided participants with varied circumstances, and rich descriptions applicable to the phenomena.

Finally, being able to probe respondents for honest and open responses to the study questions provided objective and significant contributions to the study. Addressing the limits to trustworthiness include the sharing of transcripts to each participant through member checking. In each instance, the member was comfortable with the results or noted if they desired any changes. This method provided the participant group with an assurance that the exchanges were accurate and that the study details occurred.

Recommendations

Recommendations for this study come through a phenomenological analysis process. Recommendations focus on the lived experiences and meaning to the

phenomenon around career success and career longevity impacts on local government leaders. As such, the following recommendations convey suggestions to influence the field of local administration and move the profession towards the future as follows:

Recommendation One: Value Human Capital Contributions beyond Dollars and Sense

When measuring the economic value of an employee contribution to an organization, knowledge skills and abilities is often useful. These measurements build upon a formula comprised of input and production, and are a model formula for when attributes are equal in regards experiences and perceptions of the labor force. To understand the concept of human capital in local government acknowledges that all contributions may be different and the depth and quality of the local administrator increases with each individual investment. To translate, the motivations of work performance can help in achieving effectiveness tangible career attainments. Making sense and performing a thorough vetting of each individuals' contribution which may include type of education, years of experience in the profession, and years of experience in the field is just the beginning of the value exercise and means to understanding the value to the profession.

Connection to the Literature. There are beneficial effects of supporting individuals who are well educated and career success driven (Frederickson & Kato, 2011). Organizational specific human capital as in the case of the local government definition is once which can be used to measure career success achievement. The rigorous evidence examined on this topic discloses that local government administrators

are more amenable to other drivers to feel valued, when items such as advanced degrees and other contributions to the organization are not enough to sustain the recognition. While increased compensation is welcome, other non-monetary mechanisms are intrinsically notable to include, leadership support, constructive accolades, career development opportunities, and transparent decision making.

Connections to the Analysis. The effects of rewards in the local government environment demonstrate that they are a catalyst for why leaders stay or go. While many expressed sincere gratitude for the intrinsic value of rewards in the field, the desire for both will types of rewards make leaders stay and search for more. Conceptualizing a reward system not solely based on dollar, but on sensible recognition is important. This effort supports the behavioral reactions choices that maximize the employee. Leader perceptions around rewards primarily focused on appreciation, satisfaction, and a sense of acknowledgment. However, literature on this topic suggests that there are wider functions for these mechanisms, which include career success, satisfaction, and potential thoughts on career longevity (Schultz, 2007).

Therefore, this recommendation will balance the economic decision making of organizations by including the various intrinsic rewards that create the full value on the career success and longevity spectrum. Rewards can create situations and activities that attain positive motivational properties. While the whole context of local government rewards can be useful they should seek to, as shared by Schultz, (2007) to “increase the probability and intensity of behavioral actions leading to such objects (learning, also called positive reinforcement), (2) generate approach and consummate behavior and

constitute outcomes of economic decision-making, and (3) induce subjective feelings of pleasure and hedonia (p.2184).

Recommendation Two: Transform Goals to Architect Your Future

Having clear intentions versus falling upon chance circumstances becomes a driving element in the conversation about career success in this study. Leaders in the field of local government, take on the daunting task of supporting a community with limited resources and daily challenges. Since many of the issues that leaders deal with on a daily basis are difficult, leaders tend to be void of rhyme and reason on occasion. To regain the power of leadership and have an impact on change the local government administrator should recognize that choices whether conscious or unconscious, create the circumstances. If the desire is to stay in a location for the continuum of one's career, recognition of the choices to implement this plan must exist.

Connections to the literature. Although a younger generations exhibits different values than that of their older counterparts, emphasis on achieving a balanced life, gaining joy from personal interests through career advancement seem to resonate from perspectives about both groups (Benest, 2003, p. 21). These connections to the literature are consistent along the career continuum sought by the current local government administrators.

Connections to the Analysis. Consequently, the local government leader characteristics must incorporate values of selflessness, servitude and empathy into their decision to serve. What is unique about these features is that recruitment strategies of current organizations may not include standards designed to draw these particular

attributes out during the hiring process. The better-skilled individual who enters the field with these cultural characteristics is primed to address the needs of an ever-changing population while at the same time connect to the role of a lifelong public servant. This core recommendation will address issues and solutions with respect to the problem of difficulties in recruiting and retaining high-quality people to work in local government who have initial intentions to be in this field.

Recommendation Three: Translate Employee efforts for Human Endurance

By encouraging the development of systems through lifelong learning, there exists opportunities to enable local government leaders to support their public sector employee work. This branch of training experience can help employees entering the field, and those tasked to recruit the next wave of leaders into the existing field. Attraction strategies for decades encourage human resource professionals to keep the industry fresh. With a focus on a much healthy organization, career strategies, and engagement in the mission and vision process can help emphasize the practical mechanics of career longevity. A illustration of a blueprint for implementation is below in Figure 3.

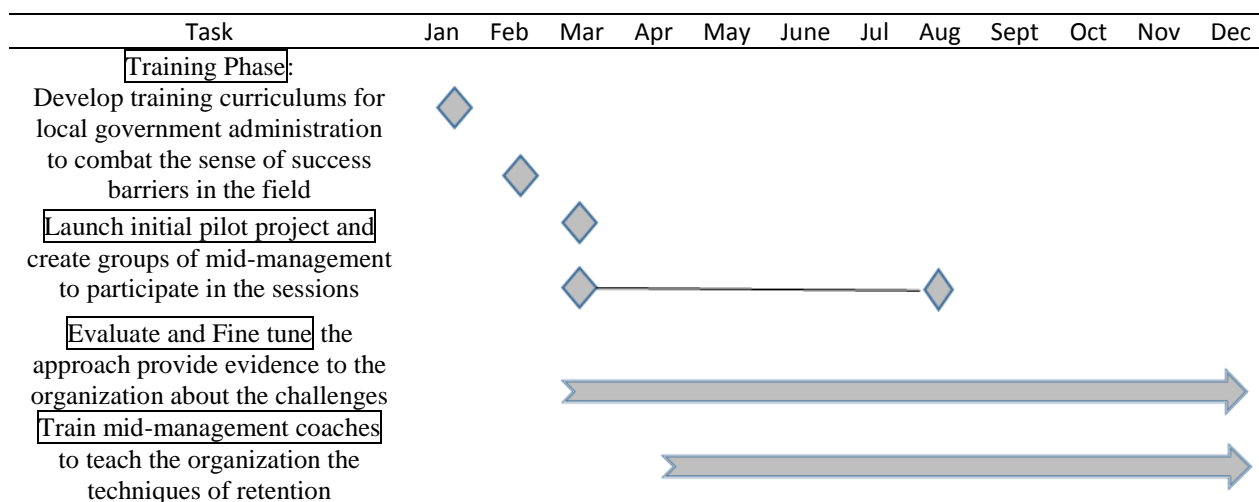


Figure 3. A timeline for training implementation in the local government environment.

Connections to the Analysis. Leadership lessons, especially those of the local government administrator consist of resiliency in an era of public service. The altruism factor shared by administrators promotes a belief in service where the vision for the profession has been rooted for years. When there is a need for a discussion point for the reason leaders choose to stay or leave a focus on key concepts expressed by participants of this study become valuable. Participants valued the autonomy to manage their spheres of influence, valued transparency and also desired a work-life balance. These recruitment factors are all easily obtainable from the current culture of local government.

Essentially, the recruitment strategy should mirror and echo the current vision and mission of the organization. However with the results of this study, target and highlight specific efforts to focus on and individual's clear intentions to be in this field.

Connections to the Literature. If recruiters are not able to overcome the lack and draw to the field of public service the task will become increasingly more difficult when failure is not an option. Failure in this task could result in increased recruitment costs, low to no job satisfaction, and increased numbers of employee turnover, (Bright, 2008, p. 149). It would be worthwhile to examine characteristics that motivate employees to stay in an organization verses the decision to leave.

Consequently, utilizing the right attraction strategies, can deliver some of the industry's best talents. Spotting the vulnerabilities of a process can be the first steps to fix issues. Organizations built of great visionaries can benefit greatly from exploring more effective strategies well-grounded in the realities of the process owners. By providing clear information on culture of the government environment, the transparent context of

rewards can yield professionals who have a genuine interest to work in the field, and perhaps stay long-term. In the development of educational training, it is important to obtain and engage prospective participants who can learn from these experiences and insight shared.

Recommendation Four: Understand the Evolution to Career Longevity

The local government leader role encompasses a broad range of interests. When probing participants in this study about their experiences and perceptions with acquired knowledge in this field, they shared the conducive nature of the environment to nurture those skills. As disclosed in this research career success factors underline the promotion of career longevity in the field. A full and rich context to factors helped leaders accept and engage in activities that support the organizations higher mission. As shared by author Yu, (2012) “knowledge around the relationship of predictors of success, can be very useful in designing career systems and management policy (p.88).”

Connections to the Analysis. Consequently, several significant factors can be used to promote career longevity in this field. These factors include transparency in decision-making, a steady stream of professional development, work life balance initiatives, themed progression steps, reliable individual mission construction and flexible work challenges.

Connections to the Literature. While career self-management is a concept, it has its beginnings in literature, and academic writings it has only just begun to illuminate the research into behavioral phenomenon (King, 2004). When we look at the work on the

self-management, a prerequisite for managing the future may include the second half of your career life and to fully begin the event before it arrives (Drucker, 1999).

This is an important shift occurring in the local government environment. The work ethic of these participants will probably be quite different from the next generation of public sector employees. Since the expectations will differ the model of career longevity must change expectations. A more mature model of how employees learn, grow, and utilize existing information is taking on the new formation of progress in the industry. Local government needs an adequate level of well-trained people to both support and use these new systems. Another approach is to address organizational readiness, which focuses on assessment of the current reward system, and an identification of improvements needed to support organizations initiatives, implementation of those improvements, and integration of extrinsic and intrinsic characteristic. Implementation of a uniform messaging standard will help the organization move forward.

Implications

While it appears that career success and career longevity have connections to decision processing for local government leaders, there are always additional lessons that can available from the way these two variables coexist. Consequently, possible avenues for future research and implications for the field could include:

1. Research for additional evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of leadership entering the profession by default;

2. The related questions of applying the theory are now whether people who have been flexible and adapted to the particular environment too will achieve success to a higher degree.
3. Develop training curricula for Local Government Administration to combat the sense of career success barriers in the field.
4. Provide further evidence that career success is a complicated process for local government leaders where more precision is needed to define satisfaction.
5. Implement fundamental principles around recruitment of the next generation of leaders through a design of management practices that include, identifying their vision for the future.
6. Determine how important it is to understand the motivation of leaders in this field as it pertains to attraction and retention principles.

A perceived sense of rewards, public service, and motivations are strong determinants of satisfaction that are likely to be more important than job preferences in this field. The role of career success in local government leaders' career has ability to cultivate a shared public service model and become more salient since it allows the leader to function in the way that implicitly demonstrate satisfaction.

Positive Social Change

Addressing the potential for positive social change at the individual level, and organizational level will challenge the advocates for this field. This problem will require a review of current trends, evaluations of flexibility to change, and demand new approaches that energize the experiences and views currently expressed in the

environment. The challenges presented to the local administrator are great but not insurmountable.

The underlying construct associated with an individual's readiness for career success hinges upon the reactive adjustments that align with measures of motivation. When there are opportunities to observe and engage in career success readiness, these moments should gauge the general interest to capture and reflect on mastering new options.

Secondary work on the concept of career success is central to the movement of discussion around other factors that create successful opportunities. It is not always reasonable to compete on a global level with private industry. Local government employees have a more uniquely refined understanding of how they support the public. However, key in the formula for career success and achievable career longevity is that persistence to achieve the goal of both which will require a high degree of perseverance.

Fundamentally, with application of the work adjustment theory, reactive adjustments have proven to move the measurement bar of success forward. These adjustments of career success are influencing the individuals work commitment and exposing satisfaction at a deeper level. To succeed in local government there must be some critical attributes present in formula for success, they include a readiness to receive rewards, a willingness to define one's own path, and a clear understanding of the new work environment with it revamped set of satisfaction factors for the individual.

Contributions to the Practice. The results of this study draw upon strategies and methods that could be utilized to enhance the feeling of satisfaction that the

administrative leaders achieve in this practice. There is a real need to try out new approaches that continue to help leaders embrace the feelings of appreciated in their careers over the long term, and not revert to satisfaction as the ultimate goal.

If the demands of a career pressure in local government keep professionals from losing sight of ambitions and objectives, the business model of career success could remain unchanged. However, when a business model lacks incentives and competes for personal success, leadership practices will require more relevant pathways for social change. It would be unfortunate if the local government administrator would need to change careers mid-stream due to unmet needs in their professional career.

Tangible improvements in the development of policies are useful when they incorporate a more honest and genuine reward-based incentives for leaders. The practice can go further by assessing cultural impacts of leaders of a certain age who share their experiences and perceptions willingly and can provide valuable knowledge on recruitment strategies, in addition to retention needs. Changes at any level would contribute to the individual need and would demonstrate an invaluable effort to nurture the professional goals of the seasoned individual.

The economic impact of the organization tends to have an underlying impact on the individual extrinsic reward system. As a result, a valuable contribution from this knowledge is to change the contextual definition of rewards for leaders at this level that include other motivators of career success and career longevity.

Contributions to the Theory. Impacts on theory, while viewed as achievements to a career achievement spectrum, help to address where we should go now? Theory

posits that if the demands of career pressure on local government keep professionals from losing sight of ambitions and goals, the business model of career success could remain unchanged. However, when a business model lacks incentives and competes for personal success, leadership practices will require more relevant pathways for social change.

Theoretical improvements come through the application of the theory of work adjustment for this population. This occurs once there is acknowledgment that the goals to support the broader organizational mission must include individual changes.. The theory adds value and holds that conditions set up in the environment to develop organizational fit for the person are impacted by a willingness to adapt.

In this study, the unique knowledge added by the theory addressed the awareness that the individual did not intend to achieve organizational fit but made initial adjustments upon entering the environment. With this contributed knowledge of the theory and its use, we are now able to support that changes made by leaders whether intentional, circumstantial or choice can be done to achieve satisfaction in an environment. The issue is around clearly defining the motivations of the leader for career success, and applying the right adapted skill sets for them to be successful in this new environment.

Conclusions

This study has reviewed local government leadership perspectives and experiences with career success and longevity in an attempt to assess the implications for the future of the profession. When local government organizations are unable to recruit, and retain their return on investment, a number of high-level public administrators may

still continue to leave the profession within a 5 year period. While emphasis placed upon theory research has provided insight into the depth of this phenomenon, it appears that motivational factors continue to influence how the leader looks at the profession.

In a domain of realism, an acceptance about the real rewards associated with the profession is now present and accounted. Benchmarks for the core motivators of an individual in this profession highlight that while the altruistic value system of an administrator remains constant their desire to achieve more than they have today is prevalent. Motivational factors continue to influence and provide predictors of career success, but these viewed singularly without the knowledge around career interests provide limited examination and exploration of the administrators work-focused choices.

While the field and the profession has sustaining value for the next generation it is possible to see that positive role-models that exist in this profession can influence career choices. Taking advantage of exposures to the field of government during internships and shadowing experiences with professionals is still a leading charge to provide the exposure necessary to support career decision-making.

Several rigorous observations about the field shed greater light on the experiences of the local government leader. These include their feelings about their education, and the choices made to work in local government along with the politically correct expression of intrinsic rewards. What is clear about the concept of career success and longevity in the field is that expectations for success provides the introductory discussion supporting readjustments and action-oriented movement. With the data collected during this study several key issues include:

- How the local government administrator can transform efforts to architect their futures,
- The value of human capital beyond just dollars and sensibility,
- The need for translation to secure human endurance, and
- Clarity towards the evolution of career longevity.

There will be instances during a career where the unique skills and knowledge of a leader, will allow them to function in ways that appear contrary to research evidence, but still be successful. In these instances, it is important the leader to hold onto an enormous amount influence that they hold over their destiny. Rather than leaving success to circumstance and choice, performing a critical examination of, "where you want to be" and "who is defining" your career success takes the power out of the organizational hands. This power can be placed squarely in the hands of the individual leader.

It is worth recognizing that there are several attributes that remain uncovered in research of this type. The deeper the lived experience the richer the expression of a research phenomenon. However, the need for reinforcement by organizations for their employees on the topic of career success and longevity as a prevailing element of the change that is needed, while being experienced by individuals. Any assumptions or congruence with career success and longevity to expand the premises shared in this study are real. However a commitment to the meaning of the experiences is worth the impacts to the quality of life sought by a public servant.

While the idea of career success and career longevity in any job appears to be mythical to some, it is a reality for the local government leaders. Acceptance of the paradigm shift occurring in the field can be an essential element to a successful journey. Ultimately, the new journey will demonstrate that career success inputs deliver and compel the individual to fill the void that exists along a career continuum.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

The IRB approval # is 01-20-15-0234660.
For the Study of Perceptions and Experience in Local Government

Appendix B: Janet E. Williams Biography

For the past (18) years, Janet has worked progressed and gained increasingly responsible and accountable positions within local government. With a concentration in Human Resources, Finance and Business, City Administration and Program Development, Operations, Audit and Grants Management. In her current position as the Director of Emerging Leaders/Bureau Manager of Recreation Parks and Open Space, she leads and directs projects requiring knowledge of government administration and finance, program planning, budgeting, performance measurement, evaluation, and financial analysis. Within the H.R. arena, Janet has directly impacted activities that served the City's 4,500 employees, and specifically managed 35-100 staff members through bureau and divisional assignments. She has directly managed and balanced budgets of \$33 - \$65 million, with exhibited cost savings. Janet remains committed to improving internal communication and collaboration. She has designed dynamic training programs, and developed focus groups that empowered staff to make significant contributions to achieving organizational goals. She invests in employee development through recruitment, and by chairing committees on employee engagement, employee relations, and diversity-harassment issues, and has developed talent management initiatives through leadership of organizational development and succession planning goals. Janet has been married to David Alan Williams for 22 years; she has (2) children Ian Joseph Williams, who is (9) and Olivia Renee Williams who is (14).

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Public Leadership: A Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions in a Local
Government

Dear Participant:

You are invited to take part in a research study "A Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions on Career Success Longevity in Local Government". The study will focus on lived experiences that lead to a career success for local government leaders. This topic will also delve into the experience and knowledge, and perceptions of local government administrator to provide potential solutions to this phenomenon, and hopefully bring about changes in this examined condition. The aim of this study is to (1) examine core lived experiences that have impacted career success in the local government environment. The researcher is inviting local government administrators past or present to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by **Janet E. Williams**, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a Bureau Manager for Recreation Parks and Open Spaces, but this study is separate from that role.

Project: A Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions on Career Longevity in Local
Government

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore, identify, and describe patterns in the experiences and perceptions of local government administrators in regards to career success.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview that will take approximately one hour and a half of your time, and be audio recorded
- The interview will take place at a designated site, a mutually agreed upon location convenient to you the participant. During this interview, you will be asked a series of questions.
- These questions are designed to allow you to share your experiences as a past/present local government administrator who worked/works in city government.
- This document of interview questions will be provided to you within two business days prior to the interview.
- The original audio of your interview will be made available to you within five days after the interview is conducted. Any identifiable information (names, address, or personal information) will be deleted from the audio transcript.
- The research plan recognizes there is a balance between keeping participants informed and maintaining confidentiality. As such you are being asked whether you would desire a final consolidated report (2) page of the recommendations from the study. Again any identifiable information (names, addresses, or personal

information) pertaining to your participation will be deleted from the study consolidated report.

Here is a sample question:

1. What was your personal motivation to enter the field of local government?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at the City of Norfolk, Virginia will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset. Being in this study would not pose a risk to your safety or well-being. The information gained from this study may help us better to understand the experiences of local government administrator, to include how the knowledge of career success factors have assisted your career longevity in the field of local government.

Other Details: A thank you, card will be provided to the participant in acknowledgment along with the audio transcript of the interview (3-5) business days after the interview.

Privacy:

The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports.

Data will be kept secure by executing the protection of confidential data and utilizing three storage methods computer hard drive, (2) USB storage devices, and hard copy manuscript of captured interviews. Manuscripts will be converted into PDF files and stored in the Mendeley Software Catalog system, which is also backed up, password protected and maintained on the world wide web; and Material will be archived on (2) storage devices and retained in stored in locked files and password-protected computer files.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By **signing below**, I understand that I agree to the terms described above.

Printed Name of the _____
Participant

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix D: Letter of Cooperation

December 15, 2014

Dear Janet E. Williams,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled **A Phenomenological Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions in Local Government** within the City of Norfolk. As part of this study, I authorize you to utilize the public email addresses of potential participants of your study. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities **will not** include access to all personnel, rooms, resources, and supervision that the researcher will require. Voluntary interviews will be conducted on participant's personal time, preferably lunch and before and after the business work day.

We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's (Janet E. Williams) supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Walden University policy on electronic signatures: An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically. Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Electronic signatures are only valid when the signer is either (a) the sender of the email or (b) copied on the email containing the signed document. Legally an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. Walden University staff verify any electronic signatures that do not originate from a password-protected source (i.e., an email address officially on file with Walden).

Appendix E: Participant Recruitment Email

Subject: Recruitment Invitation_E1

Dear Local Government Leader:

My name is Janet E. Williams, and I am local government administrator working on the completion of my Doctorate Degree of Philosophy with a concentration in Public Management and Leadership. **I** would like to invite you to participate in my study entitled: **A Phenomenological Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions in Local Government**. Thank you for taking the time to review this email and considering participating in this study, in order to determine if you are eligible to participate, I need to ask you a couple of questions.

1. How many years have you worked in a local government?

2. What is the highest position that you have held as a local government employee? _____
3. Are you over 18 years of age? _____

Based upon your responses to the questions you may be asked to move forward with the study that will only require an additional one and one-half hours of your time. The goal of this study is to add to the profession knowledge and insight about long-term careers in government and share insights on why this profession is the right chosen field for career success. If you are interested in participating in this study and its contributions to local

government, please return this email with the questions addressed above. Again thank you in advance for your commitment to the field of local government.

Next Steps: Upon review of your responses you may receive the following email:

Subject: Recruitment Follow Up_E2

Dear Local Government Leader:

Thank you for your timely responses to the questions in the email entitled “Recruitment Invitation”. Congratulations, based upon your responses to the questions in that email you are **eligible** to participate in this study, and move forward to the next step.

As the researcher, I will now mail you the consent information for this study. Please review this form for additional information and a more detailed description of the study. We can schedule a time for me to meet with you now or, if you prefer, you can contact me after you have reviewed the consent information, and we will schedule the time then. My contact information will be enclosed in the consent form. Again thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Name _____ Date _____

Email address to receive the consent form if not already provided:

Date Form was mailed: _____

Appendix F: Participant Recruitment Letter of Instructions

Participant letter of instructions for completing the: A Phenomenological Study of Leader Experiences and Perceptions on Career Success Longevity in Local Government

Dear Local Government Leader:

I would like to express my gratitude to you for agreeing to participate in my study. This letter will provide all the instructions you will need in order to participate in the study.

Prior to participating in this study, you will receive a formal participation packet, which includes this letter, a consent form, a biography about me, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Please read the consent form carefully and if you agree to participate, please sign and return the consent form to me in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope within 48 hours. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me via phone or email. If I do not receive your consent form within one week, I will contact you with a follow-up phone call or email.

After receiving your consent form, I will call or email you to set up a 60-90 minute interview in which you will answer 0ten open-ended interview questions. The location for this interview is your choice. Your interview will be tape-recorded, and you will be assigned an alias to be used throughout the study. Before our interview meeting, I will send you an email with instructions on how to open a password protected document, which contains a singular protocol scenario.

Following the completion of your interview you will receive a completed transcript of your responses. Please review your responses on the transcript and make any necessary corrections. Please send the corrections, if any, to me within 48 hours.

Sincerely,

Janet E. Williams

Appendix G: Interview Protocols

Individual interviews will be conducted in person, by telephone or email. Open-ended questions will be illustrated to allow the participant to create options for responding. The participants can voice their experiences and perspectives. The interview responds to what the participant has said, looking for clarification and more detail.

Interview Checklist: Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Discuss the purpose of the study
- Provide informed consent
- Provide structure of the interview (audio recording, taking notes, and use of a pseudonym)
- Ask if they have any questions
- Test audio recording equipment
- SMILE-make the participants feel comfortable

Interview # _____
Date _____/_____/_____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Janet E. Williams, and I am a doctoral student at Walden University conducting my research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Public Policy. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this in-depth interview process on which will take approximately one hour and thirty minutes and will include ten questions regarding your experiences, insights, and perceptions about careers success in local government.

I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will

be used to develop a better understanding of how you and your peers have viewed the impact that career success have had on your decision to work in local government. This interview will delve further into the topic by exploring any psycho-social behaviors that you view will impact future scholars from choosing a long-term career in government. The purpose of this study is to identify gaps in perceptions related to career success for local government administrators and provide valuable insight for future leaders who seek to choose long term careers in the field of local government.

At this time, I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. I am the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in the research project: "Phenomenological study of Leader Experiences and Reactions to Career Success Longevity in Local Government". You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to commence with this interview. You will receive one copy, and I will keep the other under lock and key, separate from your reported responses. Thank you.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, and please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Appendix H: Participant In-Depth Interview Questions

Interviewer Prompt: An interview process has been designed to gather your experience and experiences about career success longevity in local government. Thank you for providing the signed informed consent document so that we may proceed with this process. This ten question interview and five demographic questions will be used to gather additional perspectives and knowledge about your experiences in the local government environment.

Demographic

Participant ID # _____ Date _____

1. Gender: ___ Male ___ Female
2. Age _____ years
3. Highest Educational Level: Masters _____
4. How many years have you worked in a locality? _____
5. What is the highest position that you have held as a local government? _____

The researcher has selected these interviews prompts to stay close to the target of the experience topic to understand human behavior during the in-depth interview (Simon & Goes, 2011). The interview prompts are driven by the objectives of the research questions to achieve an in-depth understanding of what participant perspectives and experiences can be shared about career success longevity in local government:

Demographic Questions:

- A. How long have you worked in local government?
- B. How would you describe your leadership role in the organization?
- C. Have you experienced career success while working in local government?

Questions (1-5) will be used to identify the motivation and drive to excel in a career in local government.

RQ1: What are the key lived experiences that have impacted your career success in local government?

1. What was your personal motivation to enter the field of local government? How did you develop abilities to make you successful in this field?
2. In your opinion, what will it take to motivate more public administration students to enter into the field of local government?
3. Do you believe local government leaders are driven by the intrinsic or extrinsic career factors or a combination of both? What rewards have been made available to you working in this field?
4. Did life experience factor into your decision to enter into this field? If so why? Or why not?
5. Did you always desire to become a local government administrator? How satisfied are you with that decision?

Questions (6-10) will be finally drawn out perspectives about the profession and where changes in the future could have an impact on social change.

RQ2: Does the theory of work adjustment adequately predict or contribute to organization longevity in the field of local government?

6. What will it take in your opinion to motivate individuals in the future towards leadership in local government?
7. Can career success be sustained in your current organizational culture? If so, how?
8. In your opinion, what techniques, strategies, and methods can be used to encourage a long-term career in local government?

9. What act or circumstances do you believe most helped formulate your long-term career choice?
10. Do you have any final statements you would like to make on your experience working in local government?

Is there anything else you would like to add or share about this topic that you feel is important for me to know? Besides what we talked about?

Thank them for their participation. Ask if they are clear on how the results will be forwarded.

Questions will be asked in a natural progression, with the aim to end the interview with any question the participant may have to feel comfortable with the next steps in the study, and any concerns not addressed at the beginning of the interview.