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APPLYING A FIT PERSPECTIVE TO COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL TURNOVER AND SELECTION

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The role of college presidents has become increasingly critical, yet their tenure as institutional leaders has decreased over the last half century, leading to institutional instability and an expensive search process for new presidents. Scholars have sought to understand this phenomenon by focusing on either presidential characteristics, or institutional characteristics, with few approaches that examine both.
Contribution	This article posits that our understanding of presidential departure and selection is in need of a more holistic and theoretically sound approach. This paper presents a structured literature review college presidential turnover that illustrates the limited approaches taken to understand this challenge.
Recommendations for Practitioners	The conceptual framework presented here provides practitioners with specific areas to focus on when seeking to measure fit with their current/ future presidents. This is beneficial as it leads to intentional defining of goals, values, skills, and experiences desired in a new president and clarifies expectations for the incoming leader. In addition, this article argues that such models could enhance presidential evaluations.
Recommendation for Researchers	This model can help illuminate underlying causes of presidential turnover, and offers a theoretically robust model for building on past research in a cohesive way. Further, researchers should seek to apply this model in to many professions in higher education as a way to both understand challenges created by employee is fit, and the benefits of strong fit on efficiency and effectiveness.
Keywords	college presidents, turnover, presidential tenure, person-organization fit

INTRODUCTION

The role of college and university presidents has become increasingly complex and demanding as these institutional leaders are expected to oversee fundraising, manage budgets, interact with their local community, mediate campus conflict, engage in strategic planning, and lobby on behalf of their institutions to the state and federal government (Cook, 2012; Eckel & Kezar, 2011; Fisher, & Koch,

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2004). Commensurate with their increasing responsibilities, presidential compensation has continued to rise at unprecedented rates (Monks, 2012; Padilla, 2004). Even during the economic recession of 2008 the median salary for presidents increased by an average of 4% each year between 2007 and 2013 (Stripling, 2015), compared to an average 1.9% rate of inflation over the same period of time. Yet despite their critical role and rising salary, college presidents are leaving their institutions at a steadily increasing rate and our understanding of why is surprisingly limited (Monks, 2012; Padilla & Ghosh, 2000).

For decades, scholars and practitioners alike have argued that presidential efficiency and stakeholder rapport required longer tenures, with some claiming a decade as the ideal amount of time for these institutional leaders (Kerr, 1970; Korschgen, Fuller, & Gardner, 2001). Decades of research has substantiated this claim by outlining benefits of longer presidential tenures and the costs of premature presidential departures (Davis & Davis, 1999; Howells, 2011; Kerr, 1984; Ogilvy, 1963). One benefit, identified by Korschgen and colleagues (2001) is that longer presidential tenures are associated with innovative institutions. Specifically, they found that exceptionally creative colleges had an average presidential tenure of 13 years, which was nearly double the national average at the time they conducted their analysis. In contrast, premature presidential turnover has been found to result in significant direct, and indirect, costs to institutions (Howells, 2011). For example, many colleges incur large direct costs in recruiting new presidents because of the use of expensive search firms and the resource intensive interview processes that most institutions employ (Cook, 2012; Howells, 2011). Indirectly, presidential turnover, especially frequent turnover, has been associated with institutional instability (Lougue & Anderson, 2001; Vaughan, 1996), employee insecurity (Davis & Davis, 1999; Wolverson, Wolverson, & Gmelch, 1999), and lack of long-term vision (Martin & Samels, 2004; Padilla & Ghosh, 2000).

Despite the argued benefits of long presidential tenures and the costs of frequent presidential departure, presidential tenure has been in a slow and steady decline over the last 100 years (e.g., Cook, 2012; Padilla & Ghosh, 2000; Reed, 2002). In fact, the current average tenure of seven years is well below the ten year average tenure of only a half century ago. Moreover, many predict that college presidential tenures will continue to decline over the next decade (Cook, 2012; Hennessey, 2012).

Although short tenures are believed to be problematic, and the trend of declining longevity is evident, we know very little about why college presidents leave office (Jones, 1948; Monks, 2012). Further, the information we do have is limited due to the theoretically insufficient implicit and explicit conceptual frameworks (Langbert, 2012; Tekniepe, 2013). Specifically, research on presidential turnover and tenure has primarily focused on either the organizational (e.g. Röbbken, 2007) or individual characteristics (e.g. Padilla & Ghosh, 2000), and there have been few attempts to account for how the interaction, or fit, of individual and organizational characteristics together contribute to presidential turnover (e.g. Langbert, 2012). In a recent qualitative study, Trachtenberg and colleagues (2013) found compelling evidence that premature presidential turnover was linked to the inability of new presidents to adjust to the culture of their new organization.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a conceptual framework that will provide guidance in two critical ways. First, the framework will account for the interaction of individual and organizational characteristics, which will provide a strong conceptual foundation for researchers of presidential turnover. Second, it will be a tool for presidents and search committees to utilize when reflecting on institutional fit. Building on the foundation of interaction theory, which states that neither the traits of individuals nor characteristics of organizations alone are the primary predictors of behavior such as turnover (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007), this paper presents a modified version of the person-organization fit (POF) framework, as an avenue for studying college presidential turnover. With strong theoretical roots, POF serves as a conceptual guide that can be used to define and measure how presidents fit with their organizations, while coalescing past research in this area.

REVIEW OF PRESIDENTIAL TURNOVER LITERATURE

Presidential turnover has long raised the sound of alarm for higher education scholars. In 1970, Kerr conducted an analysis of presidential departure and posited that the growing organizational complexity and subsequent stress of the position was leading to shorter tenures and increased turnover. Alton (1971) provided a contrasting perspective to Kerr after interviewing 44 departing presidents when he found that turnover was often personal in nature, with presidents citing feelings of accomplishment or a desire for a new challenge. The differing conclusions between these two scholars (e.g., organizational and personal) highlight how scholars have had inconsistent views on the problem of presidential turnover for decades.

Research that articulates plausible reasons for presidential turnover, even when untested like that of Kerr (1970) and Alton (1971), has been helpful in developing directions for further study of college presidential turnover. However, for decades scholars have been calling for theories of presidential tenure that are more complex and robust in order to further justify previous research and to better understand issue of these critical institutional leaders (Langbert, 2012; March & Cohen, 1974). In their seminal work, *Leadership and Ambiguity*, March and Cohen (1974) stated that we needed frameworks “more complicated than the implicit one(s) currently used to justify assertions about the changing average tenure” (p.157). Unfortunately, this early trend of focusing on either individual or organizational characteristics has been perpetuated in presidential turnover and tenure scholarship.

INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Creating the first predictive model of how long a president could serve, March and Cohen (1974) used a graphical representation of tenure called a “career surface.” Utilizing the president’s personal characteristics of age and years in office (i.e., completed tenure) their model predicted when a president would turnover by retiring, resigning, or being dismissed. While based on the assumption that tenure is correlated mainly with age and completed tenure, this early approach was validated in subsequent studies (Glen & March, 1975).

While some scholars continued to focus on age and length of service (e.g., Padilla & Ghosh, 2000) as predictors of turnover, Reed (2002) used t-tests to analyze whether gender, race (i.e., being a white or non-white president), or career path would lead to statistically significant differences, but found no such result. Reed’s study, however, was limited because the method failed to control for other significant personal and organizational factors that could have also contributed to presidential turnover, such as presidential age, institutional type, and public or private institutional status. Research focusing on presidential characteristics laid an important foundation for future research. However, it illustrates the need to move beyond just analyzing personal characteristics of presidents to consideration of organizational characteristics when studying college presidential tenure.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS

While the work of March and Cohen (1974) hinted that organizational factors influenced presidential tenure, they were not included in their predictive model and subsequent research. Most recently, however, Rökken (2007) analyzed the influence of such organizational factors in a study of German university rectors, using an implicit conceptual model that accounted for organizational size, resources devoted to teaching, resources spent on research, and environmental reform pressures. He found that significant differences in tenure were related to institutional size and expenditures on teaching; namely, that rectors at larger institutions and institutions that have higher spending on teaching tend to have longer tenures.

Howells (2011) hypothesized that the way institutions select a president (i.e., internal search committee, external search committee, or national search firm) was related to presidential tenure, and found statistically significant relationships for the most recent presidents in her study. However, this study had several troubling limitations including a small non-representative sample, weak guiding theory,

few control variables, and inconsistent methods for measuring tenure. Though she did not account for both organizational and personal characteristics, she did demonstrate the importance of considering the organizational and contextual side of the equation when studying presidential tenure.

INTEGRATED FRAMEWORKS

Arguing for analysis that was more conceptually sound, research on presidential tenure, particularly in the last ten years, has begun to integrate individual characteristics with those of their respective institutions. These integrated frameworks have typically involved increasingly complex statistical methods and more explicit theoretical foundations compared to previous research (e.g., Langbert, 2012; Tekniepe, 2013). For example, in a study on private college presidents, Langbert (2012) hypothesized that socially matched presidents would have longer tenures. In his social matching model, he posited that people are drawn to, and prefer to be with, people who are like themselves, and thus will be drawn to places that they are familiar with, either because they grew up in that location or because the place has similar characteristics to them (Langbert, 2012). Langbert measured the social match by accounting for the proximity of their current institution to their baccalaureate institution, whether the president was hired internally, whether the president attended a public institution, whether the president had alumnus status at the institution, and whether there was a match of religious affiliation, if applicable. He found that social matching, particularly whether the president was an internal hire, was related positively to tenure.

Taking a different perspective by focusing on compensation, Monks (2012) utilized a unique data set that contained salary, institutional, and demographic information. A total of 787 four-year institutions were used to test an implicit conceptual framework to identify factors that influenced presidential tenure, which included presidential compensation, among other organizational and personal variables. This implicit framework was based on evidence that private college presidents were paid more than their public college counterparts, and that there is a relationship between presidential remuneration and college presidential tenure.

Monks also found that the odds of public university presidents leaving their job during the first five years were 50% higher than presidents of private colleges. Additionally, presidents of public colleges received lower compensation and smaller increases in pay over time than private college presidents (Monks, 2007). Monks found that lower compensation led to shorter tenures, which he argued was why public college presidents were more likely to take a second presidency, and to switch institution type to do so. In Monk's sample, no private college president took a second presidency at a public school, but some public college presidents moved into the private college market, providing further evidence that public presidents may be seeking higher compensation (Monks, 2012).

Scholars have also studied how personal characteristics and organizational characteristics influence tenure by using theories that focus more on external actors. Using push-pull motivation theory, Tekniepe (2013) studied the tenure of community college to understand how presidential preferences and institutional demands effected turnover. Tekniepe studied the responses of 101 sitting presidents and found that most felt pushed out of their jobs, stating that they felt their leadership style or policy direction was not in line with institutional values. Tekniepe argued that intentional governing board training, stronger employment contracts, better faculty interaction, increased administrator interaction, less community pressure, and an increase in the general operating budget would decrease the likelihood of presidential turnover.

LIMITATIONS OF TURNOVER RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While limited, past research on college presidential turnover has highlighted characteristics of presidents and institutions that are associated with premature departure. However, there are three core limitations to this research that will be critical to remedy if our understanding of this challenge is to improve.

First, the empirical research on presidential turnover has been sporadic at best with little cohesiveness. In fact, higher education historian David Labaree argues that this has been endemic to the field because educational researchers are unable to “construct towers of knowledge on the foundations of the work of others” (1998, p.5). While each study enhances our knowledge, we are still left with many unanswered questions of how this work intersects with other scholarship, and there have been few efforts to build on past research that go beyond replicating past studies (e.g., Padilla, 2004).

Second, focusing on either personal or organizational characteristics alone results in a limited understanding. For example, personal frameworks have not accounted for contextual influences, nor the institutions that select these leaders (Kerr, 1970). Further, even those studies that do account for presidential characteristics have focused on demographic profiles of presidents, but they do not provide a strong proxy for the values and views of the presidents, nor how they match with their institution.

Finally, even in models that integrate personal and organizational characteristics to study presidential turnover are limited by methods that do not account for the interaction between who the president is and the identity of the organization. The characteristics identified present a one-dimensional view, or at best a two-dimensional view, of presidential turnover as they do not allow for a complex understanding of how a president’s skills complement those needed by the institution, or how the values of the institution align with those of the incoming president. These complex comparisons, require sound theoretical grounding, of which research on presidential turnover has not utilized.

In summary, scholars have only scratched the surface of college presidential turnover and have only recently begun to analyze turnover by accounting for both individual and organizational characteristics in the same model. However, they have not employed a robust way to conceptualize the interaction between those two sets of characteristics. As research on turnover moves forward, these limitations and unanswered questions need to be addressed using theoretically sound approaches. The POF framework offers one potential direction to address some of these conceptual problems by focusing on the “fit” between leaders and their organizations, thus allowing for further insight into the complex merging of presidents’ skills and values, with those of their institution (e.g., Barrick, Bradley, Kristof-Brown, & Colbert, 2007; Colbert, Kristof-Brown, Bradley, & Barrick, 2008).

PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT AS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Given the limitations of research on presidential turnover in higher education, and promising application of POF for framing future research, it is important to discuss the theoretical backdrop of the theory. Scholars (Kristof, 1996; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990) contest the conceptual origin and precise definition of POF. However, most agree that the POF framework stems from an interactionist perspective, which proposes that neither individual characteristics nor organizational characteristics alone fully explain the variance in a person’s behavior or decisions (Bolton, 1958; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Pervin and Lewis (1978) described the purpose of interactional perspectives in psychology to explain human behavior “beyond what can be explained by a biological-genetic explanation” (p. ix) through focusing on the interaction between individuals and their contexts (Ostroff & Judge, 2007).

While the interactionist perspective is important because of the strong theoretical foundation it provides to help, further construct fit frameworks, it does not explicitly specify how a person or their environment are to be defined (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). Given the ambiguity, scholars have sought to differentiate ways to conceptualize interactions, many based on environmental contexts. Person-environment fit (PEF) became an umbrella term for various dimensions of fit that focused on specific environmental contexts, including a person’s job, group, vocation, culture, supervisor, and organization (Kristof, 1996; Lindholm, 2003; Ostroff & Judge, 2007). These dimensions are not always mutually exclusive and many scholars find it difficult to differentiate between them (Cable & Judge, 1996). However, each of these dimensions of fit are theoretically and statistically different, and each

has its own additional theoretical foundation that has informed its development (Kristof, 1996; Lindholm, 2003; Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

Despite the utility of other dimensions of PEF, POF's organizational orientation is found to be most effective at predicting employee performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover (for reviews see Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Kristof, 1996). For example, in a study using biodata scores, Schneider (1994) found that even in instances where vocation (e.g., skills and work role) was held constant, an individual's biodata score (i.e., past work experience and family situation) could predict which specific law firm or accounting firm the individual chose. In addition to predicting organizational selection, Chatman (1991) found that after controlling for vocational fit, organizational fit was still predictive of turnover and performance, thus illustrating its importance.

MULTIPLE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF POF

While not the only conceptualization of POF, Figure 1 (Kristof, 1996) is used as a point of reference for understanding the multiple ways POF is viewed and has been used by many scholars to frame their studies (e.g., Ishola, 2014). For example, Lauer and Kristof-Brown (2001), using the Kristof conceptualization, found that POF was a better predictor of employee tenure, when comparing person-job fit variables, such as cognitive ability. In addition, Moynihan and Pandey (2008), using Kristof's conceptualization of POF, found that there was a statistically significant relationship between having high value congruence between individuals and organizations, and long-term commitment to an organization.

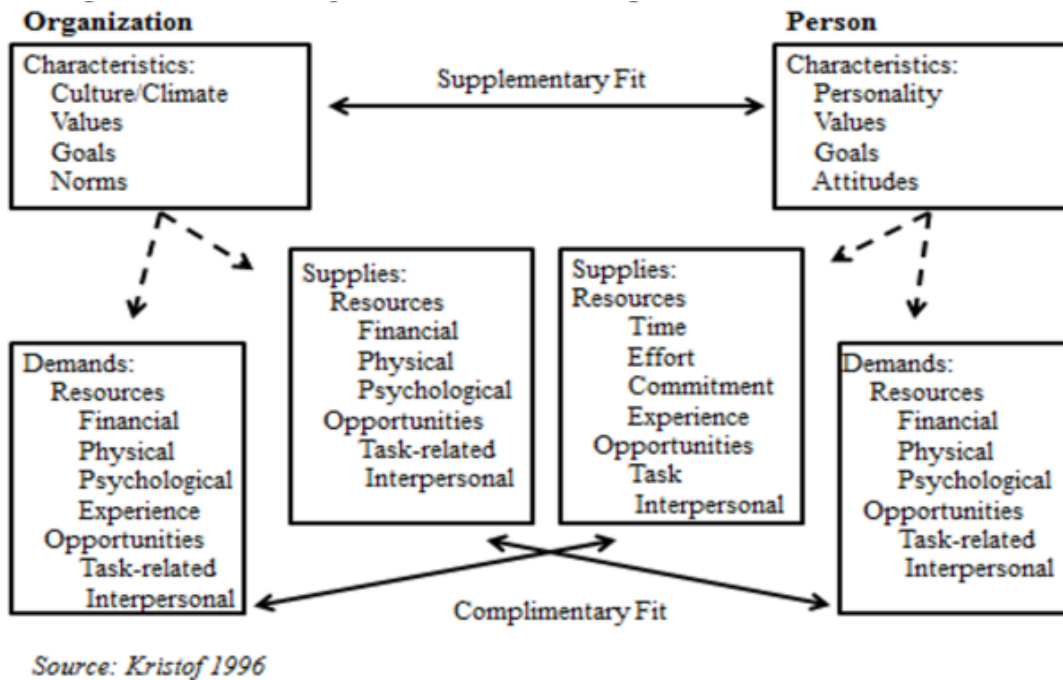


Figure 1. Various conceptualizations of person-organization fit

Each component of this conceptualization can be used in different ways. Figure 1 presents various characteristics/aspects of individuals (e.g., goals, values, skills, abilities) and their commensurate organizational characteristics for researchers to consider. Kristof (1996) follows the guidance of Muchinsky & Monahan (1987) and differentiates organizational fit into two main conceptualizations: supplementary fit and complementary fit. The following subsections will discuss these two conceptualizations.

Supplementary fit

Kristof (1996) illustrates supplementary fit using a solid line at the top of the Figure 1, connecting the individual's characteristics to organizational characteristics. She also denotes that individual and organizational characteristics are associated with the demands and supplies of individuals and organizations, illustrated by the dotted lines. Supplementary fit happens when characteristics of a person are similar to, or amplify, the characteristics of the organization (Ostroff & Schulte, 2007).

Studies that focus on supplementary fit have been guided by the premise that individuals have values and goals that are enduring, and that organizations also have values and goals that are typically manifest as culture (Chatman, 1991).

Complementary fit

Illustrated by the two solid lines near the bottom of Figure 1 connecting the demands and supplies of the organization, complementary fit differs from supplementary fit because it refers to the congruence of individual's characteristics (e.g., aptitudes, skills, experience) that make the organization whole, or vice versa (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). For example, supplementary fit happens when a person who joins an investment firm with goals that are congruent with the organizations goals, like increasing wealth, whereas complementary fit occurs when a person has goals or skills that "complement" the organization, such as a technical aptitude that an organization needs to enhance production. To illustrate, a dentist may hire someone who has skills in accounting (individual) because of a recognized need for that specific skill to "complement" their dental practice (organization). While there may not appear to be fit between the dentist and accountant, the specific skills of the accountant exemplify complementary fit.

Complementary fit, in essence, is congruence between the supplies/abilities of the individual and demands/resources of the organization, which is best achieved when the abilities of a person fulfill the demands of the organization and vice versa (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). For example, the needs of a person and the supplies of the organization could be measured by congruence in compensation packages where a person desires a specific pension plan, and the organizations offers that plan. There are, however, many ways to operationalize the complementary fit between organizations and individuals (e.g., professional development, emotional support, work environment, wages).

Each conceptualization of POF is different, interconnected, and explains a unique amount of variance in turnover (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). For reviews on the variety of ways these conceptualizations have been utilized see Edwards (2008), Kristof-Brown and Jansen (2007), and Ostroff and Schulte (2007). The rich history of POF, its use in the management literature, its interactional focus, and its ability to predict turnover make a strong case for it to be the conceptual foundation for studying presidential turnover in higher education.

UTILIZING POF TO STUDY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL TURNOVER

Some Scholars have utilized POF to study other outcomes in higher education. For example, Lindholm (2003) used POF to study how faculty develop a sense of fit within their institutions. Rutherford (2016) utilized POF to study how fit is associated with organizational performance. In this paper, I provided a discussion on how the use of POF to study presidential turnover could enhance research by providing a well-developed theoretical framework that can promote new ideas and coalesce past research. I will now provide a hybrid conceptual framework and discuss how POF can be merged with past research on presidential turnover. Specifically, using the college president turnover literature, I argue that in addition to the two main dimensions of fit discussed by Kristof (1996) (i.e., supplementary and complementary), an additional dimension should be added (i.e., characteristics) that accounts for some aspects of the current body of presidential turnover.

CONCEPTUAL COMPONENTS

Figure 2 is represented by the shape of a funnel. This is to signify that studying turnover starts with a broad focus and becomes more refined as we move into more abstract concepts like goals and values. Said another way, individual and organizational characteristics provide us with information about what is associated with turnover (e.g., age, institutional control), but delving into abstract concepts like goal congruence will provide us with a richer understanding of what leads to presidential turnover or longevity. The funnel is divided vertically by a gray dotted line with individual and organizational attributes associated with turnover listed on their respective sides, which emphasizes the importance of studying turnover using both individual and organizational attributes. While both sets of attributes are important on their own, it is equally significant that researchers account for the interaction between the two.

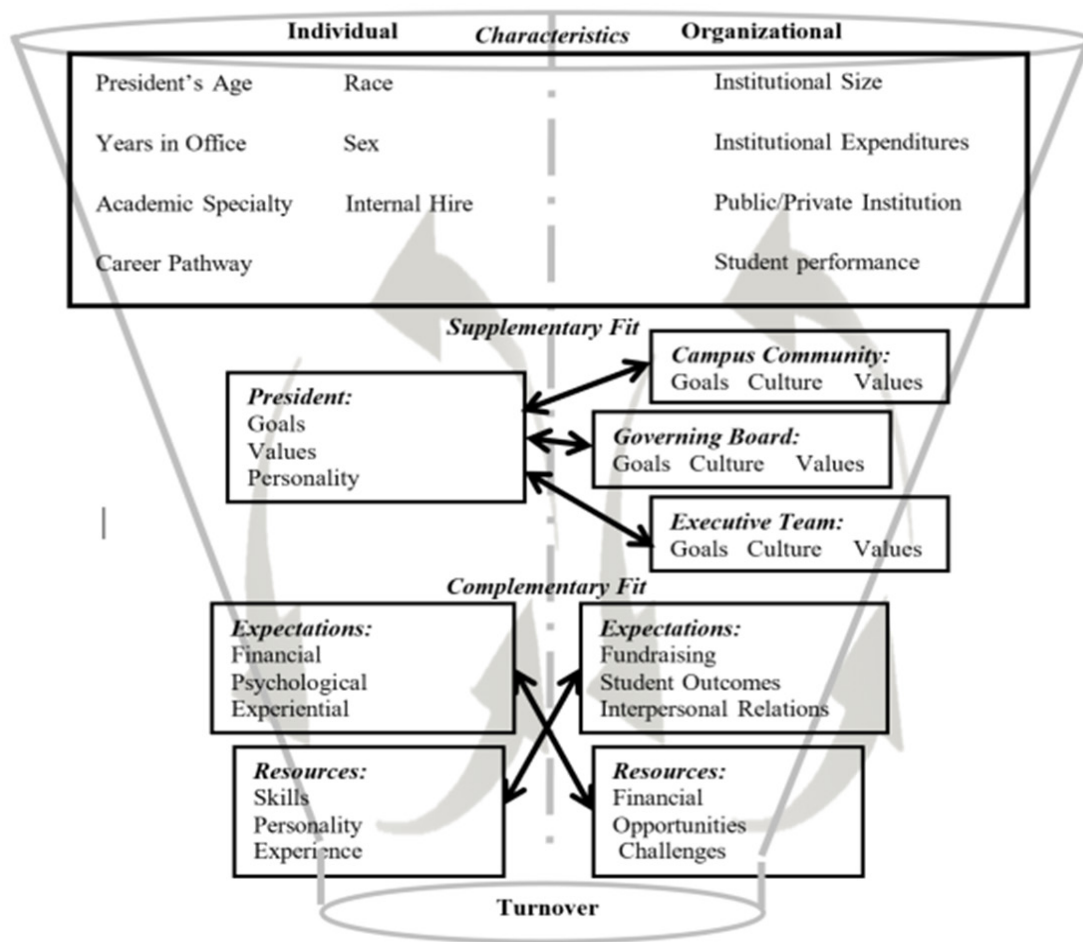


Figure 2. Hybrid conceptual framework for studying turnover in higher education

Individual and organizational attributes are further divided into three broad conceptual components (e.g., characteristics, supplementary fit, and complementary fit). These three components are organized in a hierarchical fashion with the most broad and basic components at the top of the funnel and the more narrow and abstract components at the bottom. Additionally, the included characteristics of the individual and organization are at the top of the funnel because they directly influence the other two conceptual components of supplementary and complementary fit. For example, on the individual side of the funnel, a president's age likely influences their individual goals/values (supplementary fit) and their expectations/resources (complementary fit) (Kristof, 1996; March & Cohen,

1974). Likewise, on the organizational side of the funnel the institution's size, student characteristics and expenditures likely influence the supplementary and complementary components of fit.

The supplementary fit conceptual component is placed before the complementary conceptual component in this framework because attributes of supplementary fit are more likely to influence complementary fit attributes (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). However, there is some evidence that the inverse may be true (Kristof, 1996). For example, the resources (i.e., experiences) of the individual president or organization will influence the goals and culture/personality within the supplementary fit conceptual component. This point is emphasized by the circular arrows which illustrate that while the supplementary fit conceptual component is to be considered more influential than the complementary fit conceptual component, there is vertical interaction taking place within the framework. It is important to note, that while this type of interaction may be difficult to measure, it allows scholars the flexibility to build models that emphasize some aspects of the fit over others.

As previously mentioned, the funnel provides a graphic representation of how existing research on presidential turnover, which focuses on characteristics of individuals and/or organizations, but does not allow for a more complex understanding of why presidents might depart prematurely. The dearth of existing explicit theoretical frameworks for studying college presidential turnover has led to broad and shallow approaches to understanding what causes presidents to leave office, which almost exclusively emphasizes characteristics (Langbert, 2012). The funnel shows that using POF conceptual components (i.e., supplementary and complementary fit), researchers will be able to delve deeper into the phenomenon and more accurately predict turnover. The three main conceptual components (e.g., characteristics, supplementary fit, and complementary fit) will be explained in greater detail below with potential examples of use in research.

Characteristics

The inclusion of the characteristics component is based on existing college presidential turnover research (e.g., Langbert, 2012; March & Cohen, 1974; Reed, 2002). On the individual side, apart from race and sex, the characteristics included were found to be associated with presidential turnover (e.g., Monks, 2012; Reed, 2002). However, as the presidency becomes increasingly diverse, researchers argue that the characteristics of race and sex are increasingly relevant (Reed, 2002), justifying their inclusion in this framework. Likewise, the included organizational characteristics (e.g., institutional size, expenditures, and type) have been found to have a relationship with college presidential turnover (e.g., Langbert, 2012; Röbbken, 2007), and are thus included.

While past presidential turnover research has been limited because it primarily focused on either organizational (e.g. Röbbken, 2007) or individual characteristics (e.g. Padilla & Ghosh, 2000), research that accounts for both can better explain what leads to turnover (e.g., Langbert, 2012; Monks, 2012), which this framework demonstrates. Likewise, the interaction between individual and organizational aspects, illustrated by the supplementary and complementary fit components, is critical to further understanding of turnover.

Supplementary Fit

The supplementary conceptual component is based on the idea that individuals and organizations have specific values, goals, and personalities that, when congruent, lead to higher fit and positive outcomes (e.g., lower turnover) (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). The new conceptual framework (Figure 2) uniquely recognizes, however, that the president's values, goals, and personalities are not singularly connected to one united organization in higher education, but rather many distinct groups, such as the campus community, executive team, and governing board (Alton, 1982).

This type of fit may be the most overlooked in higher education, as many presidents leave prematurely or are forced to leave by institutional leaders with ambiguous reasons offered about having different goals for the college. In some cases, it seems like there is strong supplementary fit, like the

case for President John Wilson of Morehouse. As an alum, and advocate for HBCUs across the country, Wilson knew the industry and had a passion for the institution. However, four years after his appointment in 2013, Wilson's contract was not renewed (Stirgus, 2017). At the time of Wilson's hiring, he was tasked to enhance graduation rates and solve some of the financial challenges facing the college (Diamond, 2013). When the board of trustees voted to not renew his contract, most pundits cited his lack of transparency and unpopular decisions around increasing revenues (i.e., tuition increases and mandatory on-campus living). This example, demonstrates that even broader goals, like solving financial problems, can be tackled in different ways. In this case, the institution had a different expectation of transparency than Dr Wilson. One cannot help but wonder if there would have been better analysis and discussion about goals and values throughout Dr Wilson's short tenure if this presidency could have been extended.

Given the potentially unique perspectives in higher education from the many different populations (e.g., students, faculty, and staff), the overarching campus community is the natural "organizational representative" to be included in typical POF frameworks, because it includes all populations and represents the organization (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). However, when considering other higher education populations, it may make sense to focus in on smaller groups, such as faculty or students.

This aspect of the model, may be best illustrated by the 2012 debacle at the University of Virginia, where President Teresa Sullivan was ousted by the board of trustees after only a few short years as president, but then reinstated after a large amount of student and faculty support (Rice, 2012). This example provides evidence that the goals and values of the trustees may often be different, or at odds, with other campus constituents. Presidents and institutions alike need to consider ways to measure the interests of these various groups when making both hiring, and presidential evaluative decisions. As stakeholders across campus are able to better understand the values of the different constituents, better fit could result in longer presidential tenures and more effective decision making.

Complementary Fit

The complementary fit conceptual component is derived from the POF framework presented by Kristof (1996) and from person-job fit frameworks (Edwards, 1991). Many prior scholars' complementary fit conceptualizations are focused on needs/supplies and demands/abilities congruency (for a review, see Ostroff & Schulte, 2007). While similar, in this framework they are referred to as expectations and resources because that more accurately represents the concepts in higher education. This section will discuss included and excluded aspects in the new framework based on these conceptualizations.

The needs/supplies perspective is illustrated in Figure 2 as the expectations of the individual and the resources of the organization (Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). This conceptualization of fit is primarily based on financial expectations, given the relationship found between presidential compensation and turnover (Monks, 2012); psychological expectations, given the relationship found between completed objectives and the desire to leave an organization (Alton, 1971, 1982); and experiential expectations, because presidents have varying desired experiences (Fisher & Koch, 1996).

Michael K. Young illustrates one example of this type of fit. Having served as dean of George Washington University Law School, Young understood the expectations and values of Research I institutional leadership. In 2004 he became the president of the University of Utah and served there for the national average of seven years. In 2011, he became president of the University of Washington and by 2015 he had already jumped ship to Texas A&M. Given the seemingly lateral move, many believe that this was simply a misalignment of expectations. Young had served as president of Research I institutions for 11 years and Texas A&M offered a higher salary. However, another dimension of fit may be at play in this example. The University of Washington went through five presidential transitions from 2000 to 2015. Each president went in with big visions and ideas for change, only to leave prematurely. Stripling (2015) posited that one of the challenges these new presidents faced

was, in fact, their desire for changing, citing the potential that the University of Washington should have been looking for a leader that would bring continuity in turbulent times. Their new president, Ana Cauce, has been at Washington since 1986 and potentially offers that kind of expectation alignment.

When comparing this hybrid model to Kristof's (1996) framework, there were some concepts that were deemed irrelevant from the needs/supplies. Specifically, the time and effort required for the job were not included, given that fit strives to match qualifications that vary between candidates, and college presidents unvaryingly choose the position knowing that they will be expected to work long hours and be committed to the institution (Duderstadt, 2009; Kerr, 1984, Muller, 1994). However, for other populations in higher education, time and effort would likely need to be included.

The demands/abilities conceptualization is represented in Figure 2 by the resources of the individual and the expectations of the organization. This framework focuses on the categories of expectations that organizations typically have for college presidents, including fundraising (Nehls, 2008), student outcomes (Langbert, 2012), and interpersonal relationships (Davis & Davis, 1999; Kerr, 1984, Tekniepe, 2013), because of evidence of their relationship to turnover in both POF (e.g., Edwards & Shipp, 2007), and higher education literature (e.g., Langbert, 2012). In this perspective of complementary fit, congruence between the president's resources and the aforementioned desired expectations would measure fit. Approaching demands/abilities fit by focusing on specific expectations differs from prior POF frameworks, but better aligns with a demands/abilities approach to presidential turnover.

Figure 2 provides a framework and illustrates key ideas for scholars studying presidential turnover. Conceptual ideas including the structure (e.g., shape of figure) of the new framework and the identification of three specific conceptual components will advance future research on college presidential turnover, while allowing for modification across models.

LIMITATIONS TO THIS CONCEPTUALIZATION

While this new framework has many benefits, researchers should consider three primary limitations. First, fit theories are complex and can be used in many different ways, which could lead to conflicting results (Judge, 2007). Given the vast quantity of research, differing viewpoints are to be expected (Edwards, 2008). In fact, Edwards (2008) argued that despite the many decades of research utilizing different dimensions of fit, there is a surprising lack of theoretical agreement and progress. Thus, the new integrated conceptual framework would lead to more coherent and consistent findings, but results may vary given the complexity of POF, and many different ways to conceptualize fit.

A second limitation is the varying environmental contexts within higher education (e.g., private/public, two-year/four-year, systems, and non-profit/for-profit). Even with a more comprehensive framework, diverse contexts make it difficult to make generalizable claims across studies. While some contexts are accounted for in the integrated framework, like institutional size and type, the differences that exist between states and regional cultures cannot be fully accounted for in this conceptual framework. Even among institutions of the same type, there may not be identical environments or needs.

The final limitation of this hybrid framework is that it was developed using college presidential turnover as the focus. This should give rise to caution for researchers in two ways. First, the guiding outcome for the framework was to predict turnover, so other outcomes like job satisfaction or presidential effectiveness will need further basis in the literature. However, it should be noted that POF frameworks in general has been found to predict professional creativity, job satisfaction, and performance (Edwards & Shipp, 2007).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Despite the limitations of the framework, utilizing a fit perspective has been shown to be beneficial when studying corporate leaders (Colbert et al., 2008) and other employees (Kristof, 1996; Lindholm, 2003). Unfortunately, the use of the POF framework has been sparsely used in the context of higher education. Given the widespread use and complexities of the POF framework, there is a great deal that can be done with this new conceptual framework, both for practice and research.

Practice

The hiring of college presidents is increasingly complicated and expensive (Howells, 2011). Given the substantial investment of time and resources to hire new institutional leaders, selecting presidents that have good fit with the institution should be of utmost importance because strong fit leads to longer tenures (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007). Longer tenures, in turn, have been found to correlate with higher productivity and innovation (Davis & Davis, 1999; Korschgen et al., 2001). For example, Michael Crow stands out as a president that has remained at their institutions for over 15 years, almost double the national norm. Taking office at Arizona State in 2002, Michael Crow has almost doubled its enrollment, created unparalleled partnerships with industry, and more than doubled the institutional research budget (“Reshaping Arizona State,” 2015). His longevity and subsequent sustained changes are an example of what can happen when there is a fit between a selected president and their institution.

Crow came to ASU with a wealth of experience in growing online offerings, globalizing higher education, and developing interdisciplinary departments (“Michael Crow leaving Columbia,” 2002). He was open with his values, goals, and skills when seeking the ASU presidency and there was immediate fit. Both ASU and Crow were seeing the opportunity to be innovative and become a leader in the developing world of online learning and interdisciplinary education. In his inaugural address, which is entitled *The New American University*, Crow (2002) outlined how the goals of ASU meshed with his own skills and values of innovative education. Though Crow’s years at ASU have not been without controversy and opportunities to leave, both Crow and ASU have remained loyal to each other. The high level of fit from the beginning seen in this pairing represents both the results that can occur when presidents and their respective institutions are aligned, in addition to the potential benefits of long-term presidents with innovative vision.

While much research has found that individual/organizational characteristics are associated with declining tenure, ASU’s success with selecting a president with both a skill-set and vision that aligned with that of the institution demonstrates the need for a new way for researchers to study presidential turnover. The new conceptual framework presented in this article can be used in four different ways to help increase the quality and longevity of a presidency.

First, the new framework provides practitioners with specific areas to focus on when seeking to measure fit with their current/future presidents. This is beneficial in two ways. First, it will help the institution to be intentional in defining the goals, values, skills, and experiences desired in a new president. Second, they will be able to focus on specific questions that will illuminate the level of fit between the new president and the institution. This reflective process will help to ensure that there is a transparent expectation for the new president and a subsequent alignment with the new leader and the desired direction of the institution. Korschgen and colleagues (2001) posit that the best way to slow down declining tenure is to “... make certain there is a fit at the outset” (p. 4). Measures of fit start at the beginning of a president’s tenure and are evident throughout their time in the organization (Howells, 2011).

Second, the new framework also can be used for evaluations by providing greater structure and intentionality to the process. As Davis and Davis (1999) found, the current evaluations had little impact on performance or decisions to fire a president. The new conceptual framework, however, could provide a way for institutional stakeholders to assess who they are and what they expect from their

leader, and could also provide the new leader with better feedback and a clearer vision of institutional expectations.

Third, the new integrated framework could help to identify areas of poor fit throughout a president's tenure by providing a structured vocabulary to discuss differences. For example, Touzeau (2010) found that problems with interpersonal relationships, failure of the employee to adapt to the institutional culture, and difficulty working with key constituencies, all had roots in a poor fit between the employee and the organization – all of which this framework takes into account. Further, presidential compensation in comparison to the resources the organization has may be at odds.

The final use of this framework for practitioners is for cultivating culture within the institution. Clear organizational goals and values, accompanied by specific expectations of the skills required for jobs in higher education, will help current presidents find areas of congruence and develop stronger ties to their organizations using coherent training and transparency.

Research

In addition to practical implications, there are also many opportunities for this framework to enhance research on presidential turnover. Scholars have argued for decades that identifying why and when presidents leave office could help universities deal with and prepare for institutional changes (Kerr, 1970). The same sentiment is still echoed today (Langbert, 2012), and our understanding of this phenomenon has not progressed sufficiently (Langbert, 2012; Tekniepe, 2013). Given that turnover is a natural part of organizational life for all employees in higher education (Horn & Kinicki, 2001), having a better understanding, especially in a college's highest office, is needed (Howells, 2011). The new conceptual framework can be especially helpful in four ways.

First, the conceptual framework will help to illuminate drivers of college employee turnover because it focuses on the interaction between the individual and their respective organizational characteristics. This builds on the work of Langbert (2012), who used variables tied to the location of the employee and found that social matching, specifically being an internal hire, led to longer tenure. The new conceptual framework asks scholars to go deeper and define specific individual and organizational characteristics, goals, values, and needs. Utilizing the new conceptual framework encourages scholars to test multiple components of fit and develop a sound understanding of what type of fit is needed to retain leaders.

Second, the new conceptual framework can be used to develop our understanding of how diverse experiences shape who presidents are and how their development leads to organizational and personal outcomes, like turnover. While research on college presidential turnover has shed light on whom presidents are and from where they come (e.g., Cook, 2006, 2012), we do not fully comprehend how their backgrounds influence their identity. Further, there is even less of this research conducted on other sub-sections of employees in higher education.

Third, the design and suggested dynamic use of this model will provide a foundation for more longitudinal studies on employees that can be used to see how fit changes over time and how organizational shifts effect employee's decisions to leave their organization. While evidence suggests that the longer presidents are in their position the more likely they are to depart (March & Cohen, 1974; Paddilla & Ghosh, 2000), we do not understand why that is the case, or if this is true for other employees in higher education. The integrated conceptual framework can further illuminate the why behind a president's departure.

Finally, the new conceptual framework moves research forward on presidential turnover by focusing on relationships with various campus constituencies (e.g., trustees, executive teams, students, and faculty). Scholars have identified different institutional stakeholders as having an impact on the turnover of college presidents (Tekniepe, 2013; Touzeau, 2010), but as of yet those relationships have not been compared to each other. Specifically, the fit between the president and those constituencies has been studied, but not in a cohesive framework that could further enhance our understanding of how

those relationships influence presidential turnover decisions. For almost all other employees in higher education, a similar challenge exists as not role in higher education exists with is a vacuum.

CONCLUSION

As critical actors in higher education, the declining tenure of college presidents presents a host of challenges to institutions across the country. There seem to be daily examples of presidents leaving institutions, or being asked to leave, after short tenures. Each of the instances of presidential departure is complex, and the model presented in this article offers one perspective on how presidents, hiring committees, and researchers can conceptualize fit. Further, I posit that this conceptual framework can account for the fit between colleges and institutional leaders both for institutional hiring committees, and throughout a presidency. Davis and Davis (1999) argue that presidential evaluations have little impact, nor purpose and there are not many who disagree with this sentiment in current research. This framework could be used to see how fit changes over the course of a presidency to ensure that institutional stakeholders and presidents can discuss how to best move the organization forward.

As a researcher, this framework provides specific ideas for how to think about fit both from a skills/ability lens, and that of goals and values alignment, while maintaining a focus on the characteristics of institutions and leaders. Howells (2011) argues that “institution(s) should select the person best fitted for their particular mission and culture in order to maximize the chances of contentedly keeping them for an optimal number of years” and that individuals should “find an institution that satisfies his or her expectations and empowers him or her to fulfill its vision” (p. 6). While fit is an elusive concept, the framework presented here provides conceptual ideas for defining fit, and this approach to presidential selection has the potential to lead to positive individual and organizational outcomes. Whether presidential tenure remains stagnant, or continues its decline, researchers need to expand the current understanding of turnover to decrease cost and stabilize the trajectory of institutions.

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BIOGRAPHY



Jon McNaughtan is an assistant professor at Texas Tech University where his research focuses on leadership in higher education from multiple angles. First, his work seeks to understand the tenure of college presidents and the role that organization fit and positive leadership practices play in the tenure and efficiency of these leaders. Further, he is seeking to provide more transparency and clarity into the presidential selection process. Second, he studies presidential communication and how presidents interact with the many stakeholders of higher education. He uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches in his research.

He completed a PhD at the University of Michigan where he worked with world-renowned education and business faculty. During his time at Michigan he served as a leadership consultant with aspiring corporate and educational leaders to identify and cultivate practices designed to expand the capacity of both their organization and employees. He also holds a Masters from Stanford University and a BS from Southern Utah University, where he served as the President's Fellow working with the executive leadership team to transform the university from a regional comprehensive institution to the state designated liberal arts and sciences college.