

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
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SUCCESSION AND THE POLICE CHIEF: AN EXAMINATION OF
THE NATURE OF TURNOVER AMONG FLORIDA POLICE CHIEFS

By

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ABSTRACT

Executive succession has been defined as the planned or unplanned permanent change of the formal leader of a group or organization (Gorden & Rosen, 1981). The scholarly work in this area can be traced back to 1952 and the publication of a study of managerial succession at a gypsum plant by Alvin Gouldner, one of several students of Robert K. Merton at Columbia University, who contributed to emerging empirical work of the time on organizations as a field of interest.

The body of literature that has emerged since that time has examined succession in a variety of public and private contexts and at all levels of public governances. Unfortunately, the literature remains a fragmented collection of works that do not cohere as a single theory or even a collection of theories regarding succession.

This research contributes to the body of scholarly work to date by examining this phenomenon among an important and under-examined group of public sector executives: Florida municipal police chiefs. Specifically, this study proposes a theory of succession among police chiefs that suggests that there are both social relations variables and institutional context variables that affect the odds of police chief succession will occur as a result of involuntary dismissal, coercion or pressure, or voluntary separation from office.

The findings in this study support the influence of certain social relationships in determining the likelihood of involuntary succession and succession due to coercion or pressure when compared with voluntary separation, but found no evidence to support the influence of institutional context variables in affecting the odds of one type of succession event over another.