

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2016

Topping The Queue: A Mixed Methods Exploration Of Principal Selection In Mississippi's Public School Districts

Angela Dawn Elder Quinn
University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Quinn, Angela Dawn Elder, "Topping The Queue: A Mixed Methods Exploration Of Principal Selection In Mississippi's Public School Districts" (2016). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 518.
<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd/518>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

TOPPING THE QUEUE:
A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATION OF PRINCIPAL SELECTION
IN MISSISSIPPI'S PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Educational Leadership
The University of Mississippi

by
Angela E. Quinn

April 2016

Copyright Angela E. Quinn 2016
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

As a result of the competitive principal market and the varying qualities of a perfect job applicant, information is critical to job candidates, educational leadership program developers, and superintendents or members of school hiring committees. Informed by research from the fields of industry and education, this study utilizes explanatory sequential mixed methods design to identify and describe the process, the participants, and the prominent factors involved in the selection of principals for k-12 schools in Mississippi. Non-parametric quantitative analysis and qualitative thematic coding were used in seeking to answer four critical, related questions for those seeking to find effective school leaders, those candidates seeking to fill these leadership roles, and the educational leadership program developers preparing candidates to present themselves as capable and ready to lead schools: What factors are most significant as superintendents select a principal candidate for recommendation to hire? Do leaders of districts lower in the work queue—low-achieving or high poverty districts—make selections in a different manner or with a different set of expectations than districts higher in the work queue? How do some districts utilize human resource or personnel directors regarding the selection of principals? How do human resource or personnel directors involved in the selection process perceive their contributions?

DEDICATION

for Perry Kenneth Quinn
July 26, 1939-May 13, 2011

my father-in-law, friend, and mentor
who believed the only way to improve our schools is to improve ourselves

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The list of those who supported me on a journey longer than most anticipated but worth every step is extensive, including family, friends, and educators from Mississippi to Sweden. I begin with my God who has provided a way through finances, supporters, and personal peace in difficult decisions for me to complete what I prayed to begin. May He always guide my leadership and my life.

Thank you to my family, many of whom are educators, for believing I could, believing I should, and believing I would. Chuck Quinn, Lavaughn and Geraldine Elder, and Kenneth (deceased) and Anna Quinn, thank you most of all. To Annabel Quinn, who arrived in the midst of the work and provided welcome breaks of joy as her mommy worked to become a “papers doctor,” you are the most self-entertaining, rational, adaptive three-year-old I know. Behind these pages are too many meals, baby-sitting hours, cups of afternoon tea, venting sessions, Candyland games, and expressions of love to describe.

Many educators encouraged me—teachers and district leaders who worked with me in two school districts during my coursework and dissertation hours; my educational leadership cohort—Anthony Barnes (deceased), SuzAnne Liddell, Jeremy Stinson, and B.J. Walker--from whom I truly learned the power of the cohort; Jay Hughes, the human resource director in my own district who was instrumental in developing the questions of study and providing valuable resources from his field and guidance in the development of the interview protocol; and the two most supportive, understanding superintendents a Ph.D. candidate could have, Kenny Roye and

Karen Tutor. I owe a special thank you to Dr. Lynnice Carter, who is a friend kind enough to always make time for lunch and stern enough to remind me as we ended lunch this task would not complete itself. Also, to the women educators of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, especially those members in Zeta State (MS) and the Alpha Psi chapter, I appreciate the prayers and prodding you've offered. Particularly, to the international scholarship committee of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and the scholarship committee of Alpha Psi chapter, your financial contributions during my coursework and the completion of this study have been greatly appreciated.

For this study, I thank Mr. Barry Olhausen for his assistance with piloting the survey utilized in the quantitative phase of this study; thanks also to the superintendents who completed the surveys and the human resource/personnel directors who took the time during busy spring school days to participate in the interviews. I am grateful to the professors of The University of Mississippi whose courses informed the study and those who have served on my committee and offered valuable, honest feedback and continued encouragement. Dr. Douglas Davis, Dr. Kerry Holmes, and Dr. Susan McClelland--without your advice, encouragement, pre-defense feedback, careful reading, thoughtful suggestions, and gracious scheduling, the process would not have been as professional or as enjoyable. Most of all, to my chair, Dr. Dennis Bunch, whose unwillingness to accept an All-But-Dissertation resulted in hours of reading; afternoons of questioning, refining, and coaching; quarts of blue ink; and a project I know terrified him at times but of which I hope he, in the end, can be proud. On my first night in our first educational

leadership course, Dr. Bunch told our cohort we must not merely seek a degree but embrace a journey. I thank all of those who made mine a meaningful, beautiful trip.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE	
ABSTRACT	ii	
DEDICATION	iii	
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv	
LIST OF TABLES	xi	
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii	
CHAPTER I: BACKGROUND FOR STUDY	1	1
Introduction	1	
Past Research	1	
Deficiencies in Research	5	
Framework	8	
Supply and Demand	8	
Queuing Theory	9	
Statement of the Problem	10	
Significance	13	
Outline of the Study	17	
Purpose	17	
Approach	17	
Design	18	
Mixed Methods Hypotheses and Questions	19	
Quantitative Phase Hypotheses	19	
Qualitative Phase Research Questions	21	
Mixed Methods Phase Central Questions	22	
Limitations	22	
Delimitations	24	
Conclusion	24	
Organization of the Study	25	
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	27	
Introduction	27	
Context of Need for Well-Prepared Leaders	29	

Socioeconomic Context	29
Accountability Context	34
Job Market Context	38
Impact of Leaders	45
Impact on Organizations	45
Impact on Schools	47
Employability Factors	53
Queuing Theory	53
Hiring Trends	57
Variables of Study	61
Independent Variables	62
Demographics of Superintendent	62
Demographics of District	65
Dependent Variables	70
Applicants for Position	70
Components of Leadership	71
Activities of Human Resource/Personnel Directors	77
Conclusion	80
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	81
Introduction	81
Mixed Methods Research	82
Definition and History	82
Rationale for Use	85
Quantitative Phase	87
Subjects	87
Instruments	88
Variables of Study	90
Independent Variables	90
Dependent Variables	94
Hypotheses	96
Data Collection	98
Data Analysis	99
Qualitative Phase	102
Subjects	102
Instruments	103
Research Questions	108
Data Collection	108
Data Analysis	109
Mixed Phase	110
Central Questions	110

Discussion	110
Threats to Validity	111
Confidentiality and Data Storage	112
Conclusion	112
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS OF STUDY	114
Introduction	114
Results of Pilot	114
Completion of Pilot Survey	116
Subjects of Pilot Survey	116
Findings of Pilot Survey	117
Results of Quantitative Phase of Study	125
Completion of Survey	125
Subjects of Survey	126
Findings of Survey	128
Results of Qualitative Phase of Study	145
Selection of Interview Participants	145
Subjects of Interview	146
Findings of Cross-Analysis of Interviews	166
Results of Mixed Methods Phase of Study	176
Conclusion	188
CHAPTER V: IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY	191
Summary of the Study	191
Summary and Discussion of Findings	191
Quantitative Findings	191
Qualitative Findings	204
Mixed Methods Findings	210
Significance of Findings	214
Contribution of Knowledge	214
Recommendations for Research	214
Recommendations for Practice	218
Conclusion	223
LIST OF REFERENCES	224
LIST OF APPENDICES	244
Letter to Survey Participants	245
Mail-out Survey	247
Letter to Interview Participants	250

General Interview Protocol	252
VITA	254

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Pilot Data—Mean Ranking of Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal in Order of Influence	119
2	Mean Ranking of Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal in Order of Influence	129
3	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Gender of Superintendent	130
4	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Race of Superintendent	131
5	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Years of Experience of Superintendent	132
6	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Size of District	132
7	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Congressional District	132
8	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Manner in which Superintendent Is Selected	134
9	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Current Official Accountability Rating	135
10	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage (Initial Results)	136
11	Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Candidates by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage (Outlier Excluded)	137

12	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Superintendent Gender	140
13	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Superintendent Ethnicity	140
14	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Years of Experience of Superintendent	141
15	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Size of District	142
16	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Congressional District	142
17	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Manner in which Superintendent is Selected	143
18	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Current Official Accountability Rating	144
19	Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage	145
20	Difference in Superintendent and Human Resource/Personnel Directors' Perceptions of Important Factors Influencing the Selection of Principals for Recommendation to Hire	184

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Satisfaction with Quality of Principal Applicant Pool	128
2	Mississippi Human Resource/Personnel Director Activities During Principal Selection	139

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND FOR STUDY

Introduction

In Chapter I, background for the study is provided and the significance of the study is addressed regarding hiring effective building-level principals, improving district hiring practices, and informing principal candidates of behaviors found to be most valued by districts seeking a school-level leader. The deficit in research on the practices involved in hiring public school principals, with particular attention given to the lack of research on the roles of human resource/personnel directors in school settings, is highlighted. Limitations and delimitations of the study are described in addition to measures to neutralize the limitations. Further research is also recommended. Chapter I concludes with the organization of the dissertation.

Past Research

In “The Speech,” described by Vince Lombardi’s son as being delivered hundreds of times from its first delivery from a red folder in the 1960’s to a well-worn version by Lombardi’s death in 1970, the coach described leadership as “the distinction between great and little men” (Lombardi, 2001, p. 40) and listed the qualities of such men with the same terms he uses earlier in the speech referring to the game he loved: “Leadership lies in sacrifice, self-denial, love, fearlessness, and humility” (p. 40). The belief organizational leadership matters to businesses, industries, athletic programs, non-profit groups and other organizations, particularly at

challenging points in an organization's history and development, is widely accepted yet difficult to quantify (Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008; Bryman, 2004; Collins, 2001; Collins & Hansen, 2011; Irwin, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2010; Lombardi, 2001; Murphy, 2012; O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapid, & Self, 2010; Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011; Yukl, 1998). O'Reilly, et. al (2010) determined that studying leadership at different levels is critical to understanding the effects of leadership on the outcomes of an organization.

Obiwuru, et. al (2011) agreed with Messick and Kramer (2004) that leadership is dynamic, and therefore, personal traits and abilities, as well as situations, influence the effects of a leader on an organization. Obiwuru, et. al proposed that traits and behaviors associated with a transactional style of leadership produce greater effects than traits and behaviors associated with transformational leadership within small-scale organizations.

In addition to studies on the effects of leadership, including specific leadership styles, in business and industry, leadership research extends to social sector and other non-profit organizations. Collins and Hansen (2011) acknowledged work in the social sector differs from profit-seeking organizations; however, many principles of leadership and organizational effectiveness, including concepts related to thriving in uncertain, fast-moving, disruptive environments, are directly relevant within the social sector, such as k-12 education. Research has shown (Brookover, 1979; Bryk, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Lezotte, 1992; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) leadership is vital to successful schools. Effective performance of district and school leaders is associated with improved school culture and student performance (Cooper, Ponder, Merritt, & Matthews, 2005; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Marzano & Waters, 2009; McEwan, 2003).

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) recognized the importance of school culture in very plain terms: “Just about everything that goes on in a school is a function of the school’s culture to some degree” (p. 27). Gruenert and Whitaker cited Hofstede (1997), defining culture as “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another” (p. 4). The researchers claimed that without a leader’s clear communication of goals and attention to the actions of the people in the school, the prevailing culture will determine the school’s direction and its teachers’ and students’ actions—“culture wants to manage schools” (p.29). Therefore, school leaders’ decisions, as they confront aspects of culture, are of primary importance to the school’s performance. The authors supported the findings of Deal and Peterson (2009) and encouraged those responsible for selecting candidates to recommend for hire to capitalize on the “leverage point” (p. 136) of hiring a new principal by selecting a candidate with qualities affording him or her the ability and intentionality required to initiate “cultural breakthroughs” (p. 128). According to Gruenert and Whitaker, “[d]eveloping an awareness of what culture is—being able to understand it, measure it, and change it” (p. 166)--is a critical task of the principal.

School improvement and student achievement also are correlated with school leadership (Bryk, 2010; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Mascal, 2008; Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Orr, 2007; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). In a qualitative case study focused on the high school setting, Cooper et al. found that factors critical to improved school performance such as relationships, data-driven decision-making, strong content departments, and collaboration stem from effective leadership. Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) studied value-added student achievement, or average gains, and determined that while effective school leaders raise achievement by as much

as seven months of learning over the course of a school year, those who are ineffective lower achievement by an equal amount.

Marzano, et. al (2005) linked school leadership with factors related to effective schools as well: school mission and goals, climate, teacher attitude, classroom teacher behavior, curriculum and instruction, and student opportunity to learn. Through meta-analysis and correlation studies, Marzano et al. further identified 21 responsibilities of a school leader correlated with student academic achievement (Marzano, et al., 2005).

Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2014) utilized past school effectiveness research, including Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson's Wallace Foundation Study (2010) and 21 responsibilities identified by Marzano, et al. (2005), to develop the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model. The Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model focused on actions that are necessary for the enhancement of student learning. Marzano and his research team identified 24 critical actions of school leaders and assigned those actions to five domains within the model: data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, guaranteed and viable curriculum, cooperation and collaboration, and school climate (Marzano, et al., 2014).

Increasing reported stress levels of school principals and lack of appeal of the principalship, reported by Fullan (2014), may be attributed to legislative changes, accountability demands, and low confidence in education explored in depth for almost half of a century (Coleman, et. al, 1966; NCEE, 1983; Tucker, 2011; Wagner, 2009). Fullan cited a Metropolitan Life study finding 90% of principals hold themselves personally accountable for teacher and student morale and student performance. Called to select leaders with the "blend of many qualities" (Lombardi, 37) to deliver positive results in stressful environments without

succumbing to the stress, superintendents and district selection committees require knowledge of factors considered by their peers to be associated with school effectiveness and of practices utilized by school districts and other high-performing organizations to improve hiring practices.

Deficiencies in Research

Selection of Principals. Cowie and Crawford (2007), researchers for the International Study of Principal Preparation who examined leadership in schools across nine countries, contended, “We do not know if it is possible to make effective school leaders and we do not know what difference training and development programmes make” (p. 132). Cohen, Darling-Hammond, and LaPoint (2006) asserted that “existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified leaders is sparse” (p. 1). In addition to disagreement as to how to prepare and develop strong leaders, agreement does not exist as to the factors or qualities a strong principal needs (Campbell, deArmond, & Denice, 2014; Cotton, 2003; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; DuFour & Marzano, 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Stronge, Xianxuan, Leeper, & Tonneson, 2013).

Cruzeiro and Boone found superintendents and human resource administrators from the same geographic areas differed in their assessments of an applicant pool for a principal position. The researchers attested, as did Wallace Foundation researchers (2003), that the principal hired often does not resemble the principal candidate the superintendent or hiring committee “set out to find” (p. 3). Cruzeiro and Boone proposed greater involvement of human resources department personnel in recruiting (Caliskan, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Vlachos, 2009; Wright & Stewart, 2010) and selecting principals with a previously determined set of personal and professional characteristics (Katz, 2015; Odden, 2011; Rammer, 2007; Ulah, 2010).

Involvement of Human Resource Directors in Hiring Processes. According to Davis (2008b), effective human resource development leadership greatly impacts organizations, including districts and schools. Recruitment, assessment and selection of the most qualified people, induction, and professional assessments and growth practices support the improvement of teaching and learning. Although little published documentation exists concerning human resource leadership in schools, principal selection practices or involvement in school districts of human resource directors in the principal selection process, involvement of human resource directors, often called HR or HR managers, is common in business and industry to navigate hiring, employment's "least understood aspect" (Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004, abstract). O-NET Online, an occupational information network, defined a human resource specialist's primary responsibility as screening, recruiting, interviewing, and placing workers. Benedict and contributors (2008) in a survey report by the Society for Human Resource Management listed recruiting and staffing as top functions of HR, in addition to maintaining a human resource system that meets personnel needs of the organization. Survey respondents reported that participating in the selection process for new hires was the most strategic contribution human resource managers/personnel directors make to an organization. O-NET research explains this strategic contribution. In an O-NET listing of tasks related to human resource managers, tasks were rated according to several factors including importance, level of skill necessary, and the proportion of workers in the job who rated the task relevant to his or her job. Ratings for each category were then standardized on a scale 0-100. Assessing the qualities of people relative to an organization rated 81 on the scale; recruiting, interviewing, and selecting applicants rated 78; providing expert advice on systems-related decisions rated 76; and identifying the best candidate for a given position rated 75 on the scale. These ratings depict the important role and the

contribution of human resource personnel in assessing, interviewing, and selecting workers for organizations of various types (O-Net, 2015).

In “From Bunker to Building: Results from the 2010 Chief Human Resource Officer Survey” from Cornell University (Wright and Stewart, 2010), Chief Human Resource Officers at Fortune 150 companies and partner companies revealed how their time was spent and the perceived value of their roles to the organization. The most commonly identified roles were talent architect, leader of human resource functions, and identifier of human capital for present and future needs. According to survey data, these HR officers, spent 19% of their time in the talent architect role and 24% as HR function leader. The role of talent architect was also reported to be the role those surveyed believed to be most impactful on the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. Ironically, those surveyed identified “building a talent culture” (p. 14), one of the duties related to the role of talent architect, as the biggest challenge of their jobs.

Impact of Human Resource Officers on Organizations. Despite studies articulating the extensive duties of human resource managers and their role in recruiting, hiring, and retaining workers, studies quantifying a direct correlation between HR activities and productivity are limited. Some researchers, however, have linked the activities and practices of the human resource managers or directors to higher operating performance of organizations (Jiang & Liu, 2015; Magee, 2007; Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003). Huselid (1995) investigated the effect of using High Performance Work Practices, including recruitment and specific selection procedures, on the performance of more than 3000 businesses from a wide variety of industries. Huselid contended an organization’s ability to acquire and develop its human capital had a significant statistical and economic impact on turnover and productivity. Vlachos (2009) also connected selective hiring practices and the involvement of human resource managers to

firm growth. In studying businesses in the food processing and trading industry, Vlachos found five practices related to growth; of the five, selective hiring was determined to be of the highest significance as related to an increase in the perceived value of market shares. Caliskan (2010) also traced the study and growth of research related to strategic human resource management and, further, identified the positive relationship between strategic human resource management and the operational performance of organizations, including productivity, quality of product or service, and financial growth.

Framework

Supply and Demand

When superintendents consider the extensive research supporting the use of human resource/personnel directors in reviewing a supply of applicants and assisting with a determination as to whom the most effective employee for a position in an organization is most likely to be (Caliskan, 2010; Huselid, 1995; Vlachos, 2009; Wright & Stewart, 2010) in conjunction with Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin's (2013) finding that the principal labor market does not "weed out," but rather re-locates into disadvantaged schools, principals who have been unsuccessful in raising student achievement, the importance of exploring the process by which principals are selected takes on even greater significance. Baker, Orr, and Young (2007) addressed national and state employment supply and demand for district- and school-level leaders. To identify how degree production patterns had changed over the ten-year period, Baker et al. compiled data from seven national data sets for the years 1993-2003 and integrated the data sets into one database containing information on institutions offering advanced degrees in educational leadership; opinion and attitudinal research from persons earning doctoral degrees; school staffing/climate data; student enrollment survey data; as well as U.S. Census data. In

projecting future needs based on the current ratio of administrators currently available in each state to each state's current student enrollment, Baker et al. found, in most cases, an over-production of administrators. However, the intensity of the over-production varied significantly from state to state. A significant paradox emerged from the research: the implication that degree over-production will answer the recurring question of how school districts will recruit and retain qualified leaders at the district and school levels. Baker et al. argued the increased distribution of graduate degrees from lesser institutions would not guarantee the available certified candidates would be well prepared to lead.

Queuing Theory

Conflicting views of supply and demand (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010; Davis, 2008b; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Jensen, 2005-2006; Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009) may best be explained by Evans (2010). Evans explored hiring issues in education by employing queuing theory as a framework for investigating teacher certification and the education labor market. Evans outlined queuing theory: "Workplaces and workers form imaginary, parallel lines, with the most desirable workplaces and preferred workers standing at the top and the least desirable workplaces and workers at the bottom" (p. 2). Evans contended, "The market demands of school districts, both in terms of employment needs and client expectations, operate to shape the work opportunities of beginning teachers" (p. 23). According to queuing theory, Evans proposed districts or schools with low performance and high percentages of free and reduced lunch program participants were not as able to be selective during the hiring process as high achieving, low-poverty schools.

Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng (2010) proposed "one of the greatest differences in resources across schools is that of human capital" (p. 205) noted by Davis (2008b) to be an

economic construct. The researchers cited multiple studies documenting inequities in teacher quality between economically disadvantaged, predominantly minority schools and those schools which serve predominantly white middle- to upper-class students as a foundation for their argument that the same kind of inequity has occurred in principal quality. Loeb et al. found high-poverty, minority school districts were more likely to be led by first-year principals. Loeb et al.'s research also showed principals with fewer years of administrative experience were more likely to be hired to lead lower-performing schools. Although ACT/SAT scores, degree beyond master's, and years in district were not found to be significantly different for principals by school, new principals in economically disadvantaged schools were found to lack a master's degree and to have attended less selective colleges than principals from non-minority, non economically disadvantaged schools.

Compounding the problem, an examination of principal and assistant principal preferences for school characteristics revealed a preference among job applicants for "schools that are considered easier to serve" (Loeb et al., 2010, p. 222). More than 10% of those surveyed responded they would not want to work in an economically disadvantaged school. Applying queuing theory to Loeb et al.'s research, disadvantaged districts rank low in the work queues of applicants and, therefore, have more difficulty filling job openings with quality applicants.

Statement of the Problem

School administrators are being called upon to lead schools in a climate of unmatched focus on accountability for student achievement at federal and state levels (Chilcott & Guggenheim, 2010; Friedman, 2005; Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015; Mississippi Department of Education, 2010b; Steingart, 2008; Tucker, 2011; Wagner, 2008). With the current concentration on accountability, superintendents need to recommend for hire the most effective,

best-prepared leaders to guide Mississippi schools. According to the Director of the Office of Licensure for Mississippi Department of Education (personal e-mail communication, 2010), approximately 1300 administrative licenses are awarded annually to men and women in the state. Realistically, all of those licensed will not be employed as administrators. While some of those licensed will decide to remain in classrooms or in non-administrative roles, others will apply for jobs in educational leadership and fail to be hired due to poor fit, personality traits, and perceived lack of judgment (Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009).

Although research concerning school leaders and cultural fit specifically was limited, research from industry and the social sector supports the idea that fit is of great importance to a leader's success and an organization's retention of effective leaders (Bridgespan, 2009; Magee, 2007; Sinek, 2009; Rivera, 2012; Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). Sinek (2009) describes a company as a culture. "[N]ot products or services . . . not size and might" (p. 90) but the culture, which according to Sinek is "people brought together around a common set of values and beliefs" (p. 90), is essential to organizational success. The goal, therefore, is to hire for beliefs that match those of the culture. Sinek proposes that what all great leaders share is the ability to identify candidates with attitudes, values, and beliefs that are "good fits" (p. 93).

Research conducted by the Bridgespan Group (2009), a national non-profit advisory group for social sector, non-profit organizations, focused on leadership development, echoed Sinek's assertions. Bridgespan surveyed a random sample of 443 executive directors of non-profit organizations with at least three years of financial data to determine what trends, if any, existed in relation to securing high-quality leadership. For 75% of respondents, "fit with the culture of the organization" (p. 17) ranked as very important, more important than professional references and recommendations. The Bridgespan authors offered two definitions: "like us" (p.

17) and “ability to establish credibility, alignment, and trust” (p. 17) and addressed assessing fit, described as both difficult and a “deal-breaker” (p. 17), as the responsibility of both the employer and the applicant.

Beyond the elusive concept of fit, many studies have examined the qualities being sought in candidates to lead schools and districts. Research includes quality identification, as well as research on perceptions of novice building leaders as to the importance and level of preparation they received in specific areas related to an effective school leader’s skill set (Petzko, 2008). Few, however, have focused on Mississippi, or have identified a common set of characteristics vital to the role for districts with a particular demographic set.

As a result of the competitive market and unconfirmed qualities of a perfect job applicant, information is critical to job candidates, educational leadership program developers, and superintendents or members of school hiring committees. This study sought to answer four critical, related questions for those seeking to find effective school leaders, those candidates seeking to fill these leadership roles, and the educational leadership program developers preparing candidates to present themselves as capable and ready to lead schools: What factors are most significant as superintendents select a principal candidate for recommendation to hire? Do leaders of districts lower in the work queue—low-achieving or high poverty districts—make selections in a different manner or with a different set of expectations than districts higher in the work queue? How do some districts utilize human resource or personnel directors regarding the selection of principals? How do human resource or personnel directors involved in the selection process perceive their contributions?

Significance

With 22.7% of its population living below the poverty level and a median household income of \$39,031 compared to \$53,046, nationally, Mississippi had the highest poverty rate in the United States in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau). At 35%, Mississippi also had the highest percentage of children below the poverty level. District poverty levels ranged from 12.1% in Madison County to 63.3% in Shaw County. According to the *Mississippi Kids Count Fact Book*, as of June 2011, the majority of the state's public school students (70%) qualified for the free/reduced lunch program. With a state unemployment rate of 8.6% (Kids Count), 40% of children in Mississippi live in households with parents or guardians who do not have full-time employment, and 28% of children live in high-poverty areas. Furthermore, 48% of children in Mississippi enter the state's limited state-funded pre-k programs not on target for school readiness (Kids Count).

Developers of Mississippi's Adequate Education Program (MAEP) funding formula recognized the state's widespread poverty and the effects of poverty on student achievement and school effectiveness (Jensen, 2009; Jensen, 2013; Mississippi Department of Education, 2010a; Parrett & Budge, 2012; Payne, 1996; Payne, 2009). The formula includes a component of additional funding for "at-risk" students, calculated as students who qualify for free lunch through application to the Child Nutrition Program. Due to the wide range of economic conditions across districts, the state's funding formula also accounts for differences in local tax contributions (MDE, 2010a). Because local poverty has been linked to school staffing (Loeb et al, 2010), the state from which this sample will come is particularly important to examine.

A May 2015 Mississippi Equitable Access Stakeholder Engagement Meeting sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) addressed inequities of access in the state to

highly qualified, highly effective, experienced teachers and principals (MDE, 2015a, p.

2). According to data presented to stakeholders, students in high minority/high poverty schools are more likely to be taught by a teacher with fewer than three years of experience and inadequate licensure; schools with high minority/high poverty populations also suffer from much higher teacher turnover. Under the guidance of representatives from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL), stakeholders were challenged to discuss possible causes for the inequities and suggest strategies for addressing the inequities in teacher quality and supply throughout the state.

This study, which examines differences in factors influencing superintendents' selection of principal candidates for recommendation to hire and differences in human resource/personnel director involvement in the selection process, is significant for a variety of readers. Although the study is limited in scope and design, the current body of knowledge for superintendents, educational leadership program developers, and school leader candidates are expanded. In turn, the expanded knowledge and greater understanding are beneficial to those desiring to improve practices and policies related to hiring quality principals and those preparing school leaders to present their knowledge and skills fully during the interview and recommendation process.

Knowledge. The knowledge base for selecting educational leaders who are likely to be effective and to remain in a school district is inadequate. Therefore, the information gained from this study will be an important contribution to the body of knowledge concerning educational leader selection for researchers in the field of educational research and a wide range of practitioner audiences. Superintendents will become more aware of critical factors successful districts employ in selecting school leaders; research supporting those factors, or choices; and knowledge of practices in districts across the state. District leaders will also increase their

knowledge of improved staffing decisions and processes, as attention will be given to the role of human resource/personnel directors in Mississippi school districts. Candidates seeking a leadership position will also gain information from the study by learning of the role of specific factors in securing a desired job in a school district.

Practice. Improved practice is a direct result of increased knowledge. Therefore, this study has great potential to improve practice for its audiences. Understanding the possible contributions an active human resource/personnel director may provide to the district will allow the person in that role to be fully utilized and recognized for making significant contributions to the administrative team. Further, becoming aware of demographic patterns provides an opportunity for superintendents and/or human resource/personnel directors to emulate districts of similar demographics that have produced higher achievement results or have shown a stronger, more positive school culture.

Principal candidates and those charged with preparing those candidates are likely to benefit, as well. By providing principal candidates with information concerning the critical factors sought by superintendents and others involved in the selection process, candidates will have the opportunity to better prepare themselves for the selection process and fully show the knowledge, experiences, and skills that have been found to be most desired by similar districts or by high-performing districts. Candidates may be able to improve their positioning in the job queue by incorporating the knowledge gained into their current leadership practices. Educational leadership program developers and professors may also gain a better sense of the current hiring trends and mind-sets; the knowledge of current practices will help those preparing principal candidates to provide seminars or lead discussions pertaining to the current job market, interview/hiring process in specific districts commonly served by the area in which the program

is located, and probable expectations of district leaders. An increase in the quality of applicant pools for districts combined with an improved, consistent, research-based application and selection process that incorporates enhanced selection methods will go far to ensure that Mississippi school districts hire leaders who will be effective in improving school culture and student achievement.

Policy. According to Mississippi Department of Education’s (2012) Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES) training module, the goal of the MPES is “to achieve a higher level of academic success for every student through improving school leadership.” The theory articulated in the MPES training materials is an improved evaluation system leads to improved educator quality, which, in turn, yields improved student achievement. Extending this line of logic, an improved selection process would yield improved student outcomes, as well. The evaluation system involves setting quantifiable goals for English language arts, mathematics, and the organization and measures of leader effectiveness by certified personnel, a self-evaluation component, and the principal’s immediate supervisor—most commonly, the superintendent. The principal is also required to set and track professional growth goals. Because the foundational principle of the model is to “highlight learning-centered leadership,” this study, which explores hiring practices relative to district demographics, has the potential to illuminate issues within the evaluation model and identify possible improvements to the goal-setting process, particularly pertaining to the organizational and professional growth goals.

Outline of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods study for its audience of both researchers and practitioners was to determine whether a significant difference exists, by superintendent or district demographics, in the factors influencing superintendents' decisions to recommend a principal candidate for hire and to explore the differences in the practices of human resource/personnel directors during the selection process. The study employs a sequential mixed methods approach supported by a pragmatic approach to research in an applied field (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Approach

Because the topic of this study is one for which a rich knowledge base does not exist, a pragmatic approach which triangulates quantitative and qualitative data is well suited to the research. Investigating a real-world problem requiring a practical response within education, a field in which random assignment and control is impractical and virtually impossible also suits a pragmatic approach. According to Creswell (2014), pragmatic research is appropriate when research occurs in a certain social, historical, or political context and addresses a specific problem. Creswell also supported the inclusion of qualitative data in a primarily quantitative study when research on the topic is new or limited or if the topic has not been investigated with a particular sample. Also, selecting a pragmatic approach is appropriate when considering the audiences for the study. The key audiences for this study--school leader candidates, superintendents, and human resource/personnel directors--are seeking meaningful, consumable information to be used in "real world practice" (Creswell, 2009, p. 6).

Design

Sequential mixed methods research is characterized by chronological quantitative and qualitative phases of study, in which the questions or procedures of the second phase are dependent upon the first phase data and in which the hypotheses and research questions are related to a common topic or issue. For this study, the first phase methodology is quantitative in nature. The independent variables, superintendent and district demographics, have multiple levels for each demographic. Two separate dependent variables are utilized: 1) ranking of factors influencing selection of a principal for recommendation to hire (Carbaugh, Marzano, & Toth, 2015; Mississippi Department of Education, 2014a) and 2) practices that define involvement of human resource/personnel directors during the selection process (Clement, 2008; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Doyle & Locke, 2014; Macan, 2009; O-Net; Odden, 2011; Rammer, 2007; Ulah, 2010; Vlachos, 2009; Wright, Gardner, & Moyihan, 2003). The study utilizes survey data collected from a sample of persons serving as public school superintendents in Mississippi.

The study consists of the chronological collection of quantitative and qualitative data, with the purposive sample for the qualitative component dependent upon quantitative data collection. Interviews with human resource/personnel directors representing various school demographics and state accountability ratings were conducted to obtain information used to expand upon the results of the quantitative analysis. In addition to expanding the information available concerning practices district leaders seeking to refine their own principal selection process may wish to implement, the qualitative data is especially important in neutralizing limitations associated with sample size differences among groups.

To address the limitation of non-parametric analysis, qualitative data is expected to be beneficial in addressing limitations to the study. Combining qualitative and quantitative data “as

two different pictures that provide an overall composite assessment” (Creswell, 2009, p. 214) combat the lack of extensive quantitative findings. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), mixed methods research, which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, is superior to a single approach design as mixed methods design “address[es] a range of confirmatory and exploration questions” (loc. 577), “provides better (stronger) inferences” (loc. 578), and “provides the opportunity for a greater assortment of divergent views” (loc. 579). The use of a sequential mixed methods design enables qualitative findings to strengthen the explanation of initial quantitative findings.

Mixed Methods Hypotheses and Questions

Quantitative Phase Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by race of superintendent.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Eight: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Hypothesis Nine: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent.

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of district.

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Sixteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Qualitative Phase Research Questions

1. To what extent are human resource/personnel directors involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?
2. What perceptions of their contributions to the selection process exist among human resource/personnel directors?

Mixed Methods Phase Central Questions

1. How do the themes resulting from the qualitative interview process clarify or expand upon the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?
2. How do the perceptions of human resource/personnel directors regarding factors that influence selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board, as evidenced through a qualitative interview process, compare to the ranking of factors by superintendents, as measured quantitatively from survey data?

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the possible imbalance in sample size across groupings. Years of superintendent experience and congressional district representation were expected to be comparable in size while gender, ethnicity, manner of selection, and free/reduced lunch populations of groups were expected to differ. However, the subject size of groups was expected to be representative of those groups in the general population of administrators. Because the number of representatives from each group is such that conditions for parametric tests are not possible, quantitative survey data was analyzed using two non-parametric statistical measures: Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance and Chi-Square contingency tables.

A second limitation of the study is in design. The study did not employ experimental design; therefore, no attempt was made to explain reasons for the relationships identified or attribute causes to any significant differences identified. However, findings from this study, as Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated is often the case with descriptive or causal-comparative

research, establish the need for further, more time-intensive, expensive experimental, parametric research.

A final limitation of the study is the lack of sufficient trend data, as the study was conducted with one group, current superintendents for the spring semester of the 2015-2016 school year, and utilized data from a combination of state accountability models. Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Research and Statistics (2010b) presented a timeline of accountability measures in the state. The first statewide assessment and accountability system was used in Mississippi in October 1988. The Office of Research and Statistics attested that the system, created in response to the *Education Reform Act of 1982*, was one of the first statewide accountability systems in the United States. Due to increased rigor required by 1994 legislation, the system was revised; the second system was utilized from 1995-1999 when further legislation led to a third system (2003-2007) that included criterion-referenced assessments, as well as a measure of student growth.

According to Mississippi Department of Education (2014a), MDE and the Commission on School Accreditation, following the *Administrative Procedures Act* of 1946, developed and implemented Mississippi's fourth accountability model, which incorporated achievement and growth measures and added a measure of school completion in assigning an accountability status to each school and district serving students in grades three through twelve. Further, a fifth—the current—accountability model with a focus on the performance of students represented by the district or school's lowest 25% of scores was in effect for the 2014-2015 school with a waiver providing districts the opportunity to hold the 2013-2014 rating if that rating were higher than the new rating which would have been received. Five districts implementing innovative programs, referred to by the Mississippi Department of Education as Excellence for All districts,

hold ratings from the previous model, as well. After a minimum of five years' trend data within one accountability system is available, future research will be important.

Delimitations

Several factors delimit the study, all associated with location. First of all, the sample and eventual subjects of this study were obtained exclusively from Mississippi's superintendent pool. The investigation of differences by geographic areas was also delimited by the state in which the study occurred. In addition, the study utilized data from a newly developed, state-specific rating system.

Delimitations should be addressed in future research. Replication studies are recommended to examine data across time and location. Replication in other states is recommended to establish how the results of this study will generalize to other states, particularly those states sharing similar socioeconomic composition and states utilizing an elected/appointed model for the selection of public school superintendents.

Conclusion

The importance of leadership and the link between leadership and organizational effectiveness, the association of school leadership effectiveness with school culture and student achievement, the process by which school leaders are selected, and specific behaviors of the principal associated with school effectiveness are discussed in Chapter I. In addition, evidence is presented in Chapter I of challenges superintendents document they face in securing effective leaders for high poverty and/or low-achieving schools. Past research and present conditions described in Chapter I further support an examination of the process of selecting school administrators for recommendation to hire and provide a rationale for exploring the implications

of hiring practices and preferences on policy and practice for educational leadership preparation program developers, superintendents, and principal candidates.

Little published data or external research is available concerning school leader selection processes or superintendent preferences for specific attributes or behaviors. Therefore, this study, which examines the differences by superintendent and district demographics in the ranking of factors influencing a superintendent's recommendation of a principal candidate for hire, is significant for a variety of readers. Although the study is limited in design and scope, the study expands the current body of knowledge for educational leadership program developers, superintendents, district human resource/personnel directors, and school leader candidates.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, readers are provided with an introduction to the study, an explanation of the problem to be addressed, and a discussion of the study's significance. The purpose statement, hypotheses, research questions, and central mixed methods question are introduced. Limitations, delimitations, and pertinent definitions are included in the first chapter, also. Chapter II contains a review of literature concerning the impact of leadership on organizations, including the impact of principals on k-12 schools; the context of public school environments in need of effective leaders; the process of selecting effective school leaders, with attention given to the role of superintendents and human resource/personnel directors in public schools; and qualities associated with effective principals. Related topics, such as queuing theory and the Marzano School Leader Evaluation domains, will be included in Chapter II, as well. The methodology of the study, including research design, participants, instruments, and procedures for collecting and analyzing data are outlined in Chapter III. A reporting and detailed examination of the study's

results with supporting graphical representations of the results are presented in Chapter IV, with implications and suggestions for further research proposed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Hanushek and Woessmann's (2015) claim "knowledge is the key to economic development" (p. 1) clearly reinforces President Ronald Reagan's elevation of education in the seminal document *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). "Certainly there are few areas of American life as important to our society, to our people, and to our families as our schools and colleges" (n.p.). President Reagan was not the first, nor would he be the last president, to acknowledge the importance of education to the state of the nation (Roosevelt, 1938; Kennedy, 1961; Clinton, 2000; Bush, 2003; Obama, 2009).

In President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Address Before the National Education Association, he appointed teachers as "the ultimate guardians of the human capital of America." John F. Kennedy also linked education to our military, scientific and economic strength. "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource" (Kennedy, 1961). Higher standards, America Reads, Goals 2000, and educating for a "twenty-first century knowledge economy" all earned mention in President Clinton's State of the Union Address (2000). President Bush acknowledged not only the importance of education but the critical factor of a strong building-level leader in his judgment "you know that you can find excellence in schools where you've got a good principal. . . an innovative, smart, capable person, who is motivated and dedicated and who believes every child can learn" (Bush, 2003). Finally, current President Barack Obama impressed upon students

the importance of education to their personal lives and the future of science, medicine, politics, and social sector causes in his Back to School speech (Obama, 2009).

As our nation's leaders, Democrat and Republican, have historically stated, one of the most important aspects of a productive society is a successful economy demanding a quality workforce provided through education. Public schools serving students from kindergarten to twelfth grade are largely responsible for preparing individuals for college and career venues providing the workforce. Just as leaders are important to an organization's culture and productivity (Bryman, 2004), as measured by goods produced and profit margins, principals are important to a school's culture and student achievement (Orr, 2007), as measured by assessment data and accountability ratings. Candidates, therefore, are sought for leadership positions who best meet the organization's needs and are willing to accept the work conditions offered. To combat the trend of dissatisfaction with applicant quality, superintendents must identify the most effective hiring practices to ensure the employment of effective leaders. Looking to the field of business and industry, superintendents may find two practices useful: selection based on established criteria and utilization of human resource managers throughout the hiring process.

Informed by research from the fields of industry and education, this study utilizes a mixed methods explanatory sequential design to identify and describe the process, the participants, and the prominent factors involved in the selection of principals for k-12 schools in Mississippi. In Chapter II, a review of literature concerning the rationale and variables for this study exploring the selection of principals in Mississippi school districts will be presented. The review will also include research on the impact of organizational leadership and school leadership, particularly conclusions by Marzano, Warrick, and Simms (2014) and Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2014); research on human capital in schools, with focus given to Evans

(2010) and Loeb et al. (2010); and research on hiring of principals for districts with specific demographics, including Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell (2014), and Mississippi Department of Education (2015), relative to the exploration of the recurring dilemma superintendents in some Mississippi districts too often find themselves--with principal positions but unsatisfactory candidates to lead their schools.

Through economic context data, explanation of the high-stakes accountability focus in the state, and studies related to the job market for principals, the review shows the need for principals in Mississippi schools with effective leadership skills. The review builds a rationale for the study with an examination of research verifying the impact of leadership on organizations and, particularly, the impact of effective school leadership on school culture and student achievement. Also discussed are queuing theory as well as trends and processes related to the employer selection processes in business, industry, and social sectors. Finally, research related to the study's independent variables-- superintendent and district demographics --as well as research related to the dependent variables--number of applicants for positions, components of leadership, and activities of human resource/personnel directors during the selection of principals--is addressed.

Context of Need for Well-Prepared Leaders

Socioeconomic Context

National. According to Murphy (2012), leadership matters and “in difficult times, leadership matters even more.” An effective educational system and, therefore, strong educational leadership are necessary at any point in a country's history and development. However, a strong educational system has perhaps never been as critical as in today's socio-economic context and information-driven society. Qualman (2009) discussed the

roles of technology and social media in a people-driven, global economy. According to Qualman, information in the past was controlled by a minority of people and distributed to the masses, but today the opposite is true. Information is created, owned, and distributed by the masses. Evaluating the accumulation of information available requires that people within an information-rich world obtain critical thinking skills. Darling-Hammond (2010) asserted, “In the knowledge-based economy we now inhabit, the future of our country rests on our ability, as individuals and as a nation, to learn much more powerfully on a wide scale” (p. 35).

Hanushek and Woessman (2015) in their extensive measurement and regression analysis of cognitive skills and economic growth highlight human capital as “extraordinarily important for a nation’s economic development” (p.2) and claim, particularly in today’s knowledge economy, education is imperative to equipping workers with skills for the workplace and supporting the adoption and creation of innovative ideas that “ensure future prosperity” (p. 1). Wagner (2008) argues, because 85% of existing jobs and almost 90% of the fastest-growing, best-paying jobs require post-secondary education, today’s college, career, and citizenship demand all students possess new skills.

Friedman (2005) theorized technology and communication advances have flattened the world and the economic playing field. According to Friedman, America’s need to reform its educational system is critical to maintaining “the world’s greatest dream machine” (p. 571). In the past, training a skilled workforce and funding education for the middle-upper class was effective; however, in a flattened world, the model will no longer work. As evidence of the past model’s deficiencies in a changed context, Friedman reported only 10% of workers entering the global economy’s workforce have the education and connectivity to compete

successfully. Friedman proposed how the United States educates its populous is more important than how much education Americans obtain.

Additionally, Friedman (2005) claimed a more level playing field within the nation's educational system was essential to competing economically in a flattened world. Such change will involve inspection and revision of current federal and state policies regarding education. Steingart (2008) purported "[g]ood policies begin with the ability to recognize reality" (p. xii). Building on the premise, Steingart sought to clarify the reality of current economic conditions in Western society by describing the effects of globalization on Western economies, politics, and the American workforce. In outlining historical events leading to globalization and current responses to globalization, Steingart discussed the role of education. According to Steingart, growing interest in education by the poor and unemployed following the Civil War resulted in tripled college enrollment. In contrast, Steingart claimed interest in education is currently low among the poor, resulting in outsourcing of jobs and "economic erosion" (p. 200).

In his argument for education reform, Friedman (2005) presented a short history of school, district, and school board formation. Friedman noted the manner in which school districts were established significantly impacted economic development and student achievement in those schools and districts. According to the author, districts comprised of members with higher earnings attracted a higher quality faculty, and parents in the higher socio-economic districts were both more demanding of the schools and more willing to contribute as parent organizations. Conversely, "the poorest districts attracted the weakest teachers and principals and parents who had to work three jobs to survive" (p. 346). Tucker's (2011) research surrounding the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results supported

Friedman and Steingart's (2008) claims and triggered further research comparing the United States to international education systems purported to better educate their populations. In a demanding context, well-prepared leaders are necessary to determine the most effective ways in which to educate all of the nation's students to compete in a global economy and an information-rich society.

Mississippi. Nichol (2011) refers to the South as the "native home of American poverty" (p. 185), offering details to support his claim, many details and much of the data shared is for Mississippi--the state having the lowest median income in the country, the least number of residents with health care coverage, and the highest percentage of children living in poverty. Gitterman (2011) traces Mississippi's beginning to seriously address the issue of changing educational needs for a changing economic base to the 1980's and Gov. William Winter. Winter's stances on kindergarten, teacher assistants for reading instruction, compulsory attendance, higher standards, and educator pay, according to Gitterman, reflect the governor's understanding incomes and economies are dependent upon an area's commitment to education. Gitterman and Reid (2011) attribute the primary mode of acquiring human capital to formal education, with experience and training playing lesser roles. The authors explain in greater detail how education facilitates new skills and knowledge increasing productivity, which increases income in households and in a region to an extent experience and training do not. Gitterman contends the low-cost, less skilled labor force drawing manufacturing plants to the South actually "prohibited the region from attracting or developing higher skilled jobs" (p. 39).

According to 2012 U.S. Census Bureau data, Mississippi suffers the highest poverty rate in the nation, having 22.7% of its population living below the poverty level and earning a median

household income of \$39,031 compared to \$53,046, nationally. The state also posted the highest percentage (35%) of children below the poverty level. District poverty levels ranged from 12.1% in Madison County to 63.3% in Shaw County. According to the *Mississippi Kids Count Fact Book*, in 2011, an unemployment rate of 8.6% resulted in 40% of children in Mississippi living in households with parents or guardians who do not have full-time employment and 28% of children living in high-poverty areas. As of June 2011, the majority of the state's public school students (70%) qualified for the free/reduced lunch program, a federal meal program administered by the Food and Nutrition Service aimed at providing nutritionally balanced meals at free or reduced cost for students whose family incomes fall at or below 130% or 131%-185% of the poverty level, respectively. The majority of qualifying students received free meals (63%), a percentage rising each school year since 2008-2009 (U.S. Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2015). According to the Mississippi Department of Education (2015d), 80% of the state's schools are classified as school-wide Title I schools, serving 40% or more students who meet the criteria for free/reduced lunch program.

Stallings (2011) presents the idea of the "two-Souths dilemmas" (p. 48). With wealth increasing overall in the region, Stallings found impoverished students to be, for the first time, the majority of students in public schools. Stallings suggestion for the South as a region is certainly applicable to its most impoverished state. "Ensuring that every student in the South gains equitable access to educational opportunities is critical to the region's efforts to remain competitive not only academically but also economically on both the national and international levels" (p. 49).

Payne (1996) and Payne (2009) acknowledge the differing resources and "hidden rules" (Payne 1996, p. 3) of high-poverty or as Payne (2009) prefers, "under-resourced" (p. 7) learners

in public schools. Building on earlier research focusing on resources and rules, Payne (2009) extends the argument to maintain under-resourced students require not simply a higher number of minutes, mental models, and materials but different supports and strategies to increase their opportunities to succeed. The challenges and needs of these students require leaders with skills and belief systems to support the difficult leadership tasks awaiting them (Payne, 1996; Payne, 2009; Jensen, 2009; Cruzeiro and Boone, 2009).

Mississippi's Adequate Education Program (MAEP) funding formula developers' recognize the demand of meeting these students' needs, the state's widespread poverty, and the effects of poverty on student achievement and school effectiveness. The formula includes a component of additional funding for "at-risk" students, calculated as students who qualify for free lunch through application to the Child Nutrition Program. Due to the wide range of economic conditions across districts, the state's funding formula also accounts for differences in local tax contributions (MDE, 2010a).

Accountability Context

National. In addition to difficulties stemming from uncertain economic patterns, Marzano, Warrick, and Simms (2014) note a "wave of pessimism" (p. 2), as educational leaders face heightened scrutiny of student performance during the students' k-12 years and graduates' preparation for college and careers beyond high school. Irwin (2014) described an overall lack of trust in leaders of business, political, even religious organizations as evidence of a "leadership crisis" (p. 53). With only military and medical groups purporting above average confidence in leadership on the Harvard Kennedy School National Leadership Index 2011, educational leaders are not exempt from demands for accountability and transparency. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) conducted an instructional leadership "Reality Check" (p. 58) survey in spring 2009; results

show educators' confidence in their own leaders is low, as well, with 39% of respondents indicating school leaders were "generally not adequately prepared or not prepared at all" (p. 59) and 51% of respondents reporting "little or no confidence that strong and qualified candidates would be available" (p. 59) to replace retirees.

Since the 1966 Coleman Report and the release of findings from *A Nation at Risk*, the commonly cited study of high schools directed by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), American education has been heavily criticized in international comparisons of achievement, literacy, graduation rates, college readiness, and job preparedness (Friedman, 2005; Wagner, 2008; Guggenheim & Chilcott, 2010; Tucker, 2011). Criticism has even extended beyond research and mainstream non-fiction. The documentary film *Waiting for Superman* (2010) opens with Geoffrey Canada, an educational researcher and producer of a documentary highlighting examples of quality teachers in public schools, driving his children past public schools to a private school, "betraying the ideals [he] thought [he] lived by." *Waiting for Superman* uses terms such as "drop-out factory," "academic sinkhole," "turkey trot," and "dance of the lemons" to describe schools and the processes by which education—as a field—tolerates and fails to rid itself of poor instruction and poor instructional leaders.

Zhao (2009) contests the rampant negativity and asserts the gaps explored in *Waiting for Superman*, within-school gaps and within-district gaps, are far more worthy of attention than the gaps between the United States and other countries. Zhao calls the relationship purported to exist between students' performance on international assessments and measures of a country's well being "speculative" (p. 16). Zhao evidences his trust in American education by noting the country's Global Competitive Index, the high number of patents issued, the majority of the

world's most highly rated universities, and the employment of 70% of the world's Nobel Prize winners in science and technology.

Using the analogy of honeybees, Zhao attests the key to adapting to a changing environment, or economy, is diversity—specifically, talent diversity—and, according to Zhao, the United States far outperforms other nation's in the area of diversity or creativity. In *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?: Why China Has the Best (and Worst) Education System in the World*, Zhao (2014) accuses those who believe the answer to American education's problems lies in Asian systems with being guilty of misinforming the American public about education in China and Shanghai, misinterpreting China's achievements, and misguiding educators to mimic the Chinese system Zhao claims has attempted for over a century to replace its system with elements from “more developed economies in the West” (p. 184). Although Zhao and Tucker agree Chinese education poses a threat to the economy of the United States, Zhao describes the threat posed by Chinese education quite differently from Friedman and Tucker. “China does present a dangerous threat. . . . The threat comes from the West's current infatuation with China's educational system and from the actions that countries such as the United States and Great Britain have taken to emulate that system. . . . The only way China will win the global competition of the future is for the West to begin educating the way China does” (p. 38).

Mississippi. In response to federal pressures such as Race to the Top federal grants, state economic industry criticism, and district-specific or non-existent performance measures of administrators (Carbaugh, Marzano, & Toth, 2015), Mississippi Department of Education implemented the state's first attempt at consistent measurement of principal's effectiveness, the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES), dependent on aggregated and disaggregated state assessment data and school organizational data such as attendance, discipline referrals,

participation in professional learning communities, or measures reflective of organizational or principal growth in select areas (MDE, 2012). The system’s guiding assumption-- an improved evaluation system leads to improved educator quality, which, in turn, yields improved students achievement—is further articulated in the system’s goal “to achieve a higher level of academic success for every student through improving school leadership.”

During the 2012-2013 school year, Mississippi piloted, refined through focus groups, and prepared for full implementation in 2013-2014. According to Murphy (2012), the system, with its construction heavily reliant on the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Leadership Standards, meets federal requirements and addresses current problems with principal evaluation, including lack of consistency in evaluation design, lack of feedback, insufficient attention to “leadership for learning,” and lack of focus on professional and organizational growth. MPES applies to building-level administrators of traditional, alternative, and career/technical schools and consists of four components: English language arts learning goals, mathematics learning goals, organizational goals, and an online Circle Survey which provides feedback from certified staff about the leadership and professionalism of principals and assistant principals.

The model is only one component of accountability for the state, which utilizes a consistent model for teacher evaluation, Mississippi Statewide Teacher Appraisal Rubric, and a school and district rating system (Mississippi Department of Education, 2014a). According to Mississippi Department of Education’s Office of Research and Statistics (2010b) the first statewide assessment and accountability system was used in Mississippi in October 1988. The Office of Research and Statistics (ORS) attested the system, created in response to the *Education Reform Act of 1982*, was one of the first statewide accountability systems in the United

States. Due to increased rigor required by 1994 legislation, the system was revised; the second system was utilized from 1995-1999 when further legislation led to a third system (2003-2007) including criterion-referenced assessments, as well as a measure of student growth.

In the spring of 2010, Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Research and Statistics presented a timeline of establishing new accountability measures in the state. MDE and the Commission on School Accreditation, following the *Administrative Procedures Act*, have, over the course of the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years developed and implemented Mississippi's fourth accountability model incorporating achievement and growth measures for all assessed students and for the students with the lowest 25% of scores for an assessment as well as including a measure of school completion in assigning an accountability status to each school and district serving students in grades 3-12. For schools serving students below grade 3, districts may choose between two options: to accept the rating of the school to which the majority of students from the school will attend in grade 3 or to participate as a stand-alone school with scores undergoing a statistical equating process prior to use in the same model as grade 3 schools.

Job Market Context

National. With Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin's (2013) finding the principal labor market does not "weed out," but rather re-locates into disadvantaged schools, principals who have been unsuccessful in raising student achievement, the importance of exploring the process by which principals are selected takes on even greater significance. Baker, Orr, and Young (2007) addressed national and state employment supply and demand for district- and school-level leaders. To identify how degree production patterns had changed over the ten-year period, Baker et al. compiled data from seven national data sets for the years 1993-2003 and integrated the data

sets into one database containing information on institutions offering advanced degrees in educational leadership; opinion and attitudinal research from persons earning doctoral degrees; school staffing/climate data; student enrollment survey data; as well as U.S. Census data. In projecting future needs based on the current ratio of administrators currently available in each state to each state's current student enrollment, Baker et al. found, in most cases, an over-production of administrators. However, the intensity of the over-production varied significantly from state to state. A significant paradox emerged from the research: the implication degree over-production will answer the recurring question of how school districts will recruit and retain qualified leaders at the district and school levels. Baker et al. argued the increased distribution of graduate degrees from lesser institutions would not guarantee the available certified candidates would be well prepared to lead.

Although the need for well-prepared leaders in today's economic market and accountability-driven educational field is apparent, the existence of these leaders is not (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009;). Fullan and Mascall (2000) succinctly identified the problem: "The challenge for the profession is to attract a high number of applicants, and to ensure that the qualifications of the applicants are sufficiently high to meet the standards of the profession" (p. 10). According to Fullan and Mascall, job appeal is low so "few good candidates apply" (p. 13).

Jensen's (2005-2006) quantitative online survey research pertaining to California school administrators addressed the notion of good candidates, as well. Jensen examined the willingness of California superintendents to hire applicants who received licenses by earning a passing score on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), which is based on ISLLC Standards, rather than by completing a traditional degree program. Of the random sample of

105 practicing California administrators ,52% responded yes, that they would recommend a candidate who had obtained licensure by examination only for a building-level administrator position, and a little less than half, 48%, of the superintendents responded no, they would not recommend a candidate who had obtained licensure by examination only. In open-ended question responses, respondents commented on the lack of trust in a written assessment to judge leadership traits, the perception associated with the process as being a shortcut, and the weakening of professional standards by offering an optional path to licensure.

Based on the study, Jensen (2005-2006) reported that job candidates who licensed by examination were viable applicants at somewhat of a hiring disadvantage without further professional development courses, mentoring, and quasi-administrative experience. A brief issued by Learning Point Associates (Clifford, 2012), a non-profit regional organization conducting educational research and providing assessments and consulting for k-12 schools, also documented a shortage in a “new generation of school principals” (p. 4) and described an aging, experienced profession increasingly opening to women and minorities and becoming more susceptible to leader mobility than in previous decades. The brief addressed the lack of accurate predictors for principal performance and no “algorithm” (p. 5) for determining candidate/school match. Central to the recommendations set forth in the brief are knowledge of school needs and consideration of research related to candidate evaluation.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (2010), approximately 445,400 school administrators were employed in 2008, with 230,600 in public or private k-12 institutions. Considering the slow increase in school enrollments, increased duties and demands of school leaders, as well as slight pay increases, BLS predicted an eight percent job growth by 2018, an average rate of growth for all occupations. The education administrator’s work is

rewarding, but school administrators also experience a great deal of stress associated with personnel coordination, demanding schedules, and heightened accountability. Many leave the profession. According to School Leaders Network (SLN) (2014) nearly one in three of 500 principals surveyed reported actively considering leaving the profession; those who do leave are costly to replace. School Leaders Network's exploration of the costs associated with churn, the loss of experience principals and replacement with novice, often less effective, principals, estimated the cost of time, funds, and resources at \$75,000 for each principal. SLN presented the savings for improving retention in turnover in high-poverty districts to the rate of turnover (20%) of non high-poverty districts, claiming the change would result in \$163 million in annual savings.

Pijanowski, Hewitt, and Brady (2009) addressed the issue in reporting results of survey research conducted to describe superintendents' perceptions of applicant pools for school leadership positions and their views on recruitment and retention. The authors discussed factors deterring people from applying for school administrator positions, such as additional time required away from family, increased job stress, rigorous expectations regarding accountability, and low salary and benefits compared to increased work load. Of 245 Arkansas superintendents to whom Pijanowski et al. sent surveys, 80%, or 197 superintendents, responded. The respondents expressed concern the applicant pool for school leadership positions had decreased by as much as 41% in the last 15 years. The mean number of applicants for a principalship in the state was 10.3, with less than half of those candidates being considered qualified for the job. In rural schools, the numbers are even lower. Approximately eight fewer candidates apply in rural schools than in urban or suburban schools, and an average of five persons apply for principal openings in small rural districts.

Ironically, many states have certified more candidates than are needed, yet superintendents in those states continue to claim a shortage of applicants (Hess & Kelly, 2005). According to Hess and Kelly, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) predicted the retirement of over 40% of k-8 principals by 2010, and the lack of quality applicants to replace the retirees. In a national survey, 80% of superintendents reported finding a desirable, qualified candidate to lead at the school or district level is a moderate or major problem.

Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010) discussed the conflicting views of supply and demand (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010; Jensen, 2005-2006), illustrating Evans' (2010) queuing theory. The authors maintained the problem lies not in quantity or in quality but in the quantity of quality certified administrators willing to work in high-need schools and districts. Darling-Hammond and colleagues offered three contributing factors, which are in agreement with Pijanowski, Hewitt, and Brady's (2009) and Loeb et al. (2010)'s explanations for applicants seeking employment first in those schools easier to serve; of the unwillingness of many traditionally prepared candidates to serve where needed; time demands of longer hours and more paperwork high-needs schools are perceived to require; and a sense of unpreparedness to turn around high-need schools.

In light of research supporting shortages in quantity and quality, multiple and often conflicting approaches have been implemented. Cohen, Darling-Hammond, and LaPoint (2006) asserted "existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified leaders is sparse" (p. 1). Cowie and Crawford (2007), researchers for the International Study of Principal Preparation who examined leadership in schools across nine countries, agreed, "We do not know

if it is possible to make effective school leaders and we do not know what difference training and development programmes make” (p. 132).

Levine (2005) offered a brief history of educational leadership programs. According to Levine, higher education courses were first offered in the late nineteenth century, with the growing number of public schools from 1890 to 1910 resulting in the addition of degree programs in school administration. By 1946, educational administration programs were available in 125 U.S. colleges and universities.

Despite differences in how to educate school leaders, according to Levine, college and university programs for school leaders thrived until the programs came under aggressive attack in 1983 with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, which announced that America’s children were not receiving a quality education. Levine (2005) argued that “[t]he reform movement put a spotlight on school leadership, highlighted its importance for school success, made student achievement the measure of school performance, and demanded accountability from leaders for results” (p. 17). Growing public dissatisfaction with school and school leaders brought condemnation to educational leadership preparation programs, as well. In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration published *Leaders for America’s Schools* and recommended, as cited in Levine, that “fewer than 200 of the country’s 505 graduate programs in educational administration” (p. 18) should be allowed to continue to prepare school leaders. Since 1987, many college and university programs have experienced significant reform.

Many states have reformed certification and licensure policies to include more stringent guidelines for licensure [often including the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC)], expanded provisions for becoming certified, supported a broader array of backgrounds

of educational leaders, and acknowledged alternative providers of educational leadership preparation. Hess and Kelly (2005) identified Mississippi and North Carolina as the first two states to critically examine their educational leadership preparation programs and to take aggressive action in leadership preparation reform.

Mississippi. Unfortunately, published research is limited in examining how reform has affected the candidate pool in Mississippi. Researchers, for now, must rely greatly on word-of-mouth from those involved in the hiring and evaluating of existing principals and pair available data with responses to specific inquiries from the state department of education. According to the Director of the Office of Licensure for Mississippi Department of Education (personal e-mail communication, 2010), approximately 1300 administrative licenses are awarded annually to men and women in the state. Mississippi Department of Education's response to a separate query initiated by a former State Superintendent of Education for Mississippi reported the state's pool far exceeds the number of administrators required by the state. According to the query, Mississippi candidates holding a 486-administrator licensure numbered 6,300 to serve 1083 schools.

Quality of the supply must be considered, as well. Based on a national sample of 1086 principals, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr (2010) presented survey data comparing California, New York, Connecticut, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, Delaware, and North Carolina leadership preparation programs. The states selected represent states with educational leadership programs identified as exemplary. Compared to other states' principals, those surveyed from Mississippi were most likely to believe themselves well prepared and to have participated in internships with a variety of school leadership experiences; these principals also reported receiving regular evaluations, developing a leadership perspective of school

improvement, and working in schools with students of a wide range of socioeconomic levels. Mississippi's principal candidates were far more likely to respond they were prepared to use data to monitor student learning and to guide instruction based on differences in how students learn. It would seem, according to Darling-Hammond and colleagues, Mississippi's supply of quality candidates is strong, despite communication with superintendents and human resource personnel in the state revealing dissatisfaction with most principal applicants.

Impact of Leaders

Impact on Organizations.

Yukl (1998) summarized the controversy between writers/researchers who defend the importance of leaders to organizations and those researchers who purport the influence of leaders on an organization's performance level is minor compared to external factors, political and economic forces, and the culture and systems present within the company. Yukl further explained changes in leadership preparation and development in a variety of organization types in response to increasing "leadership competencies" (p. 466) and contends leadership development in the form of formal education, on-going programs, and short-term site-specific training has become a lucrative business. The widespread use of development and training programs and degrees focused on leadership in fields such as business and education evidence the acceptance of the importance of effective leaders as critical to the state of an organization.

Collins (2001) supported Yukl's (1998) claim leadership is important to organizational effectiveness. Collins identified 15 companies of varying sizes and purposes which moved from above industry standard results to sustained industry-leading results and matched those companies with companies which either failed to move to great results or failed to sustain progress over time. During a five-year study, Collins identified three traits the good-to-great

companies shared the paired companies in the study did not: disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action. Collins discovered one of the most vital components of a great organization is Level 5 Leadership, which he defines as “build[ing] enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will” (p. 20).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) acknowledged the importance of leadership to an organization by claiming, “People follow first the person, then the plan” (p. 16). Through research on leadership best practices in a variety of industries, Kouzes and Posner identified five practices apparent in effective organizations, despite unique leadership experiences and situations. According to the researchers, “leadership is not about personality; it’s about behavior” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 15). Specific behaviors forming a pattern of leadership effectiveness were modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. “Leadership is not about who you are or where you come from. It’s about what you do” (Kouzes & Posner, 2010).

Expanding Collins’ (2001) prior research, Collins and Hansen (2011) explored the factors setting apart the leaders of young or small companies rising to uncommonly great performance from early vulnerability within “extreme environments” (p. 2) characterized by political and financial instability, fast-moving change, and uncertainty. Collins and Hansen utilized a matched-pair case design to examine archival data consisting of journal and news articles, books written about the companies, financial reports, and other materials received directly from the companies. Within-pair, cross-pair, financial, event-history, and concept generation analysis resulted in the identification of high-performing “10Xer,” (p. 2) cases, companies out-achieving their industry indices by a minimum of ten times. Collins and Hansen’s research identifying patterns exhibited by 10X leaders affirmed Kouzes and Posner’s (2007) findings leader

behaviors are more critical factors than personality traits or knowledge sets. In Collins and Hansen's study, the 10Xer leaders possessed Level 5 ambition, an abnormally strong drive to impact a cause beyond themselves and practiced three behaviors in common: highly consistent actions based on a relentless focus on established goals, reliance on directly observed empirical evidence, and extensive, deliberate, systematic preparation even during periods of calmness and company success. During the matched case study with for-profit organizations, Collins and Hansen also examined leadership within the social sector; the researchers attested their claims to be relevant to social sector organizations--churches, government agencies, orchestras, non-profits, and schools--as well.

Although researchers studying all types of organizations concur leadership matters, most have found it difficult to quantify (Collins & Hansen, 2011; Irwin, 2014; Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, & Nwankwere, 2011; O'Reilly, Caldwell, Chatman, Lapiz, & Self, 2010). O'Reilly, et. al (2010) studied leadership at different levels to understand leaders' effects on an organization's outcomes. Obiwuru, et. al (2011) agreed with Messick and Kramer (2004) a leader's influence relates to personal traits and abilities, as well as situations and proposed, further, traits and behaviors associated with a transactional style of leadership produce greater effects than traits and behaviors associated with transformational leadership within small-scale organizations.

Impact on Schools

Impact on School Culture. Regardless of sector, leadership is a highly influential factor on organizational effectiveness. Ardichvili and Manderscheid (2008) claimed "given the importance of leadership in contemporary organizations, it is not surprising leadership development gets the largest percentage allocation from training and development budgets of most organizations" (p. 620). Eilers and Camacho (2007) employed mixed methods design to

study the effects of a proactive leader on the school culture and student achievement at a low-performing elementary school. Pre- and post- survey data, as well as comprehensive state assessment scores, increased significantly over a 2-year period. School- and district- level support of collaboration, evidence-based practice, and communities of practice are credited with the reform.

Many researchers have built upon Eilers and Comacho's work, especially in recent years. DuFour and Marzano (2011) synthesized the work of other researchers in explaining how principals impact school culture and improve schools. According to DuFour and Marzano, connecting to people through shared or understood needs, appealing to followers through both minds and hearts, and exhibiting "genuine affection" (p. 197) for the students, teachers, and communities in which schools are located are critical to successful leadership, and in turn, positive learning environments.

Fullan (2014) also discussed the impact of school leaders on school culture and school success in his book exploring a principal's impact on student learning. Fullan referenced McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) in his depiction of principals as one of the most important factors contributing to the integrity of professional learning community implementation, the functions of the communities, and the effects those communities have on student learning. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) found leadership to be a critical factor "in all instances of significant school culture change" (p. 40). Talbert (2010) identified, through ten years of research at Stanford University's Center for Research on the Context of Teaching, three behaviors of principals critical to supporting professional learning communities and improved instruction: "developing new conceptions of professional work and relationships in the system,

building partnerships and networks to support professional learning, and limiting damage from federal and state accountability systems” (p. 564).

Fullan’s research also relied on Bryk (2010) with a description of the longitudinal research in 477 elementary schools in Chicago, Illinois by Bryk and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. According to Bryk (2010), “How we organize and operate a school has a major effect on the instructional exchanges in its classrooms” (p. 24). Bryk’s research, stemming from noted improvements among some high-minority and high poverty elementary schools while other school improvements remained stagnant, resulted in the finding the “internal workings and external community conditions that distinguished improving elementary schools from those that failed to improve” (p. 23) was largely due to the principal’s ability to provide “instructional and inclusive-facilitative leadership” (p. 25). Bryk described school leadership as a change driver for the remaining four interrelated “essential supports” (p. 24): coherent instructional guidance and feedback, the professional capacity of teachers, school/parent/community ties, and a climate of ambitious academic work.

Reiterating the significance of leaders, Parrett and Budge (2012) explored how schools “disrupt the cycle of poverty” (p. 15) and the role of leadership as the “linchpin” (p. 14) of the process. The study’s resulting Framework for Action: Leading High Poverty Schools to High Performance illustrated the actions, spheres of influence, and school culture necessary to systematically improve student achievement and sustain school success. Parrett and Budge admitted the issue and the process are complex and schools are affected by different dilemmas and climates; however, “one feature stands out from the understandings gained from the hundreds of high poverty/high performance schools studied: significant student gains will not be sustained without effective leaders who serve as catalysts for the specific actions that in turn

drive the success of these schools—actions that build further leadership capacity; focus on student, professional and system learning; and foster safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments” (p. 33).

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) asserted school leaders know the degree of effort and fidelity of implementation for new ideas and initiatives are susceptible to “something” (p. 27) influencing working methods beyond the leader himself or herself--culture. Gruenert and Whitaker utilized the definition resulting from Hofstede’s (Hofstede Centre) comprehensive analysis of culture and values in the workplace, “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one organization from another” (p. 4). and supported the finding of Deal and Peterson (1999) “where the culture did not support and encourage reform, that improvement did not occur” (p. 5). Acknowledging the effects of an organization’s culture on change and reform, Gruenert and Whitaker, extend Deal and Peterson’s findings and point out legislation, funding, the predominant socioeconomic status of a school, and parental involvement are all contributors to school culture; however, strong leaders can effectively manage those contributions and, therefore, the cultures of their schools.

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) also referenced Deal and Peterson’s (1999) finding attention to “gnawing issues” (p. 114) is an advantage of a change in leadership. For this reason, Gruenert and Whitaker suggested a school’s culture, or collective mind-set and “framework for solving problems” (p.4), is most susceptible to change at the hiring of a new principal. Through processes outlined by Deal and Peterson (1999), including shaping a student-centered mission, strengthening positive elements of the school’s current culture, building on traditions and values of the school and community, and hiring faculty to sustain elements of the existing culture while

supporting necessary change, Gruenert and Whitaker recognize a new principal's first days on the job as "the softest leverage points for rewiring a school culture" (p. 137).

Impact on Student Achievement. Few argue a principal's commitment and capacity to build a positive learning community influences school climate and culture. Research (Cooper et al., 2005; Hattie, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010) has shown school leadership is also strongly linked to the degree the success of teachers and students is evidenced through school efficacy, teacher performance, and student achievement. Cooper et al. (2005), in studying "cases of success" (p. 3) found the five consistent themes critical to both high performance and improved performance across diverse North Carolina high schools—relationships and connections, safety nets and collegiality, data-driven decision-making, strong discipline-based departments, and collaboration throughout the school—stem from effective leadership. McEwan's (2003) definition of a principal clearly depicts a school leader's impact on school improvement: a person who "either helped bring about the renaissance of a failing school, brought a good school to greatness, or [has] been able to take over a highly effective school and maintain or even boost its level of achievement" (p.xxvii).

Recent research continues to support previous findings. Rowe (2007) found sufficient evidence to support a strong positive relationship between effective school leadership and school improvement. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) articulated an "unprecedented international interest in the question of how educational leaders influence a range of student outcomes" (p. 636). Robinson et. al examined the impact of a variety of leadership styles on academic and non-academic outcomes through a dual meta-analysis study and found educational leaders who focus on teaching and learning have a positive impact on student outcomes. In his comprehensive synthesis of 491 meta-analyses related to the principal's effect on student

achievement, Hattie (2009) argued, differentiating between instructional leaders and transformational leaders, “It is school leaders who promote challenging goals, and then establish safe environments for teachers to critique, question, and support other teachers to reach these goals together that have most effect on student outcomes. School leaders who focus on students’ achievement and instructional strategies are the most effective” (p. 83). Fullan (2014) focused on a principal’s influence on student outcomes, as well, identifying three keys to maximizing the impact of principals through three leadership keys: leading learning, being a district and system player, and becoming a change agent.

Arguably, one of the most prominent contributors to the study of leadership and leadership’s effect on schools and student outcomes is Marzano. Marzano et al. (2005) conducted quantitative research greatly expanding on the identification of traits of highly effective principals proposed by McEwan (2003) based on qualitative research. Marzano et al. linked school leadership to aspects of schools associated with effective schools and increased student achievement (Brookover, 1979; Lezotte, 1997; and Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992). Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 responsibilities of school-level principals directly and significantly correlated with improved student achievement.

Marzano and Waters (2009) extended the findings of Marzano et al. (2005) by exploring the contributions of district leadership to student achievement and, through meta-analysis, finding the contributions of district leadership, which had previously been characterized as having little impact on student achievement, are statistically significant. The authors also identified five statistically significant district-level responsibilities or behaviors: “ensuring collaborative goal-setting, establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction, creating board alignment with and support of district goals, monitoring achievement and

instructional goals, and allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction” (p. 6).

Continuing to explore the aspects of leadership contributing to high levels of student learning, Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2014) synthesized past research on school effectiveness, including the Wallace Foundation Study by Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom and Anderson (2010) and the research identifying the 21 responsibilities in Marzano, et al. (2005), as well as research on the practices of high-reliability organizations outside education such as air traffic control stations and nuclear plants (Marzano, Warrick, & Simms, 2014) to develop the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model. The Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model focused on actions necessary for the enhancement of student learning. Marzano and his research team identified 24 critical actions of school leaders and assign those actions to five domains within the model: data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, guaranteed and viable curriculum, cooperation and collaboration, and school climate (Marzano, 2014). Each of these domains is addressed in detail in the Variables section of this study.

Employability Factors

Queuing Theory

National Application. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) claimed impressions about schools by persons outside the schools are commonly formed on the basis of the socioeconomic status of the students. Peske and Haycock (2006) studied three “proxies for teacher effectiveness” (p. 3) and found high-poverty schools to employ teachers and principals with less experience, less education, and less skill than low-poverty schools. Jensen’s (2013) research showed children from poverty are ten percent less likely to be taught using highly engaging, quality instructional practices in multiple grades (p. 2). Jensen accused, “There are no failing students; there are only

schools that are failing our students,” (p. 1) citing unsafe environments, inadequate funding, lower salaries, larger class sizes, and more demanding needs of students as evidence of school characteristics that hinder quality teacher recruitment and retention. Darling-Hammond (2010) pointed out the disparity in U.S. school funding, reinforcing education inequality in high-poverty communities, and the “most inequitably distributed school resource” (p. 40)--teachers. Darling-Hammond’s research also showed the most common reason for teachers to remain in a high-poverty school or to seek a position in another school is the quality of administrative support. Unfortunately, according to School Leaders Network (2014) high-poverty schools are 50% less likely than their counterparts to be led by the same principal for six years.

Jensen (2009) and Darling-Hammond’s (2010) findings are also supported by a theory borrowed from human resource management and industry. In his inquiry concerning teacher certification and the education labor market, Evans (2010) provided a visualization of queuing theory: imagined vertical parallel lines of workers and workplaces, with the most desirable of each highest in each line. Evans applied the theory to early career teacher candidates and school, explaining, “The market demands of school districts, both in terms of employment needs and client expectations, operate to shape the work opportunities of beginning teachers” (p. 23). According to queuing theory, Evans proposed districts or schools with high student achievement data and low percentages of free and reduced lunch program participants were able to be much more selective than low achieving, high poverty schools. Evans also discovered a preference among more selective districts for traditionally certified teachers. According to Evans, teacher candidates perceived to be less qualified are at the bottom of the work queue and are offered positions in “disadvantaged districts at the bottom of the job queue” more frequently than candidates perceived to more qualified (p. 23).

Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng (2010) also explored hiring practices in schools varying socio-economically and propose “one of the greatest differences in resources across schools is that of human capital” (p. 205). Documenting with multiple studies the teacher quality inequities between economically disadvantaged, predominantly minority schools and schools serving predominantly white middle- to upper class students, the authors contended the same kind of inequity occurs in principal quality. Loeb et al.’s study showed high-poverty, minority school districts were more likely to be led by first-year principals, principals with fewer years of administrative experience, principals lacking a master’s degree, or principals having a degree from a less selective institution than principals from non-minority, non economically disadvantaged schools.

Exploring the worker queue, Loeb et al. (2010) also reported principal and assistant principal applicants prefer “schools that are considered easier to serve” (p. 222). More than 10% of applicants surveyed reported they would not want to work in an economically disadvantaged school. More recently, Campbell, DeArmond, and Denice (2014), conducted research sponsored by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation concerning school leadership. Utilizing 2007-2008 U.S. Department of Education Schools and Staffing Survey data for the state of Washington, Campbell, DeArmond, and Denice shared principal turnover data, showing turnover is highest in rural schools and in districts with higher free and reduced lunch rates. The researchers’ finding supported the claims of Payne (1996), Payne (2009), Jensen (2009) and Cruzeiro and Boone (2009) rural and high-poverty schools pose special challenges, and therefore, require leaders with special skill sets and talents.

Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), through qualitative analysis of interviews with superintendents of rural districts from two states, 23 from Nebraska and 20 from Texas, asserted

the best way to address the disparity in the principals superintendents seek and the principals they tend to hire is to more closely attend to recruitment procedures and hiring practices, including involvement of human resource personnel. Superintendents who participated in Cruzeiro and Boone's research articulated a number of soft-skill qualities easily applied to leaders in any field: capable, cooperative, goal-oriented, organized, enthusiastic, and self-assured. Also mentioned by the superintendents were the general skills of interviewing well, possessing a skill set complementing the superintendent's, and a possessing a history or reputation of honesty and integrity. The superintendents sought principals, as well, who had teaching experience and leadership experience; Nebraska's superintendents noted knowledge of curriculum and assessment was particularly important, while Texas's superintendents sought a candidate familiar with the state's accountability system and experience working with diverse populations.

Mississippi Application. As of May 2015, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) acknowledged the inequities of access in the state to highly qualified, highly effective, experienced teachers and principals (MDE, 2015a, p. 2). According to data from the Institute of Education Sciences and the USDE Office of Civil Rights provided to stakeholders, "Students of color, students from low-income families, rural students, students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and students who are behind academically are less likely than their peers to have access to great teachers and school leaders" (p. 2). Specifically, students in high minority/high schools are disproportionately taught by teachers with fewer than three years of experience and by teachers with out of field, emergency, expert citizen, or no licensure; teacher turnover is also disproportionately higher in schools with high minority and/or high poverty populations. Under the guidance of

representatives from the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL), the Mississippi Department of Education sponsored a stakeholder engagement meeting in May 2015 to clearly identify the hiring and staffing inequities, explore causes for the inequities, and propose strategies for addressing the inequities in quality and supply throughout the state.

Hiring Trends

Processes. Due to the high level of inferencing that must be made by both parties; the amount of ambiguous, often unsubstantiated, information available; and the highly social nature of the manner in which much of the information is shared and collected, Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel (2004) described the hiring process as “the least understood aspect of the employment relationship” (abstract). Ulah (2010) described hiring as a “3D Process” (p. 106) involving development, discussion, and decision phases, with preparing, conducting, and analyzing the applicant’s interview to “select the right candidate for the right job” (p. 106) as the most integral component. Ulah further claimed the interview, “a specialized [conversation] conducted for a specific task-related purpose” (p. 107) is often taken more lightly than necessary and frequently interviewers do not take steps to ensure that the selection process is not dependent on rapport and bias instead of measurement of pre-determined skill and fit criteria.

Macon (2009) also found the interview to be popular, effective, and integral in supporting and better defining the hiring process. However, Macon’s research also indicated structured interviews with focused constructs and defined distinctions by which to measure the constructs in candidates, although more effective than unstructured, open interviews, are much less frequently utilized. Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel’s claim understood in the context of Ulah’s cautions and Macon’s finding provides a strong rationale for Rammer’s (2007) assertion that a

superintendent's ability to identify the necessary skills of a principal and to, then, identify the related abilities in applicants determines "the success of the principal selection process" (p. 75).

Problems. Unfortunately, according to superintendents themselves, this ability is not easily gained or commonly possessed. Of the 200 Wisconsin superintendents surveyed by Rammer (2007), 136 responded, with 92% strongly supporting the importance of the responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. as critical for student achievement. However, respondents did not describe specific, purposeful means to assess the responsibilities in principal applicants. Interviews, review of documents, and checking references were all named as components of the selection process, but attention to the responsibilities was not stated or suggested in the narratives provided by the superintendents concerning their decision-making processes. Rammer credited the selection process as being most significant to improving principal quality; for Rammer, selecting a quality principal does not rely on applicant quality as much as on superintendents' intents in selecting applicants with a research-based set of behaviors. Rammer suggested interview questions specifically pointed at gaining information about the candidate's experiences with the responsibilities and tools to measure the responsibilities in candidates should be developed and utilized.

More recently, Doyle and Locke (2014) in asking, "What do districts do to hire the best people to do the toughest job?" (p. 37), reported superintendents and other school district leaders involved in hiring process are "more self-aware and thorough in collecting and using data for principal hiring and placement" (p. 5). The researchers contended, however, recruitment in most areas is passive or informal rather than strategic and talent-oriented; also, interview questions tend to be broad and hypothetical rather than designed to elicit responses based on behaviors, competencies, and experiences. The authors credited districts with improved practices to reduce

“cronyism” (p.4) but fault districts with lacking reliable data on candidate’s prior effectiveness with student achievement and growth and with failing to identify and measure critical competencies of principals. Applicants’ past experiences and actions regarding instructional expertise, people management, cultural leadership, and problem solving, for Doyle, et al. should be critically evaluated during the selection and hiring of principals as these are indicators for future performance in the district.

In another recent study conducted to explore the processes of public school districts during the search and hiring of a school principal, DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell (2014) surveyed 215 superintendents (78% of population) in the state of Washington to explore hiring practices and satisfaction with hires. DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell’s study showed few districts employ a strategic, formal, consistent process for determining which of a group of candidates is most qualified to lead a school. A strong majority (85% or greater) of the surveyed superintendents reported using personal statements from the applicants, interviews with the superintendent or school staff, interviews with district staff, or meetings with parent and student groups as ways of assessing a principal candidate’s skill and fit for a job.

Regarding skill, findings (DeArmond, Denice, & Campbell, 2014) showed superintendents consider three leadership skills most important in a principal candidate: “their ability to improve overall student achievement, to build a culture of continuous improvement for staff and students, and to build a shared vision of instruction across the school” (p. 2). Of those applicants with the desired skill set, all, reasonably, will not be what researchers from industry and social sector organizations also refer to as “fit” and deem necessary to recruitment, retention, and effectiveness of leaders (Bridgespan, 2009; Doyle, Locke, and Public Impact, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2010; Magee, 2007; Rivera, 2012; Sinek, 2009; Ulah, 2010).

Magee explored fit as a characteristic setting apart the world's leading automobile manufacturer from its competitors. Magee attributed Toyota's success, in part, to its hiring practices: "How the company handles its new hires is just as important to its overall success as how the company manages parts flow at assembly plants" (p. 8). Sinek (2009) asserted, "[N]ot products or services . . . not size and might" (p. 90) but the culture is essential to organizational success; therefore, Sinek suggested hiring for beliefs aligned with those of the culture distinguishes great leaders. From the social sector, research conducted by the Bridgespan Group (2009), a national non-profit advisory group for social sector, non-profit organizations, focused on leadership development, echoes Sinek's assertions. Bridgespan's survey of executive directors of non-profit organizations revealed several trends in securing high-quality leadership. For 75% of respondents, "fit with the culture of the organization" (p. 17) ranked as very important, more important than professional references and recommendations.

Kouzes and Posner (2010) offered an explanation of the importance of fit possibly explaining the Bridgespan authors' elevation of the importance of fit beyond Magee and Sinek's assessment to "deal-breaker" (p. 17). Kouzes and Posner stated, "People won't fully commit to the group and organization if they don't sense a good fit with who they are and what they believe" (p. 42). Unfortunately, superintendents reported, for low-performing schools, the supply of leaders with both skill and organizational fit is fewer than the need.

Hiring Principals. The importance of well-prepared leaders in American schools is widely accepted as critical to the state of education in the United States. However, dissenting opinions exist in what constitutes well prepared. At the forefront of the debate is the question as to what factors evidenced through the selection process best predict a principal candidate's success (Campbell, deArmond, & Denice, 2014; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Cruzeiro and

Boone's (2009) findings echoed Louis, et. al's observation the principal hired often does not resemble the principal candidate the superintendent or hiring committee "set out to find" (p. 3). With research that 12% of poor performing principals "shuffle" (p. 11) among under-performing schools rather than leave administration, School Leaders Network (2014) presented another aspect of the problem of hiring ineffective principals. Inability to predict success, dissatisfaction with the applicant pool, and lack of an internal "weed out" (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013) process contribute to the significance of the process by which principals are selected.

Recruitment, selection, and retention, particularly in high poverty/high performance schools are a top priority. Cruzeiro and Boone (2009) also found superintendents and human resource administrators from the same geographic areas differ in their assessments of an applicant pool for a principal position; the researchers proposed greater involvement of human resources department personnel in recruiting and selecting principals with a previously determined set of personal and professional characteristics. Odden (2011) addressed the importance of identifying key competencies required for widespread improved instructional practices and hiring or reassigning employees based on those competencies. Parrett and Budge (2012) also suggested behavior-based interviewing.

Clement (2008) proposed the most accurate predictor of future actions are past actions, therefore, interviews based on questions specifically related to an applicant's skills or behaviors in a past situation offer the best assessment of the job candidate. Clement claimed "a person who can describe experiences with a particular topic is equipped to deal with that topic" (p. 45). Furthermore, using a rubric to assess responses numerically or as simply "unacceptable, acceptable, or on target" (p. 47) supports interviewers in systematically and professionally determining which candidate is best suited for the position.

Katz (2015) described competency-based interviewing as “a system to define and measure which employees possessed the competencies needed for specific roles” (p. 57). Katz recommended relying on open-ended questions to identify behaviors in candidates that profile a successful employee for a specific position or set of tasks and measuring candidates based on the profile criteria. Katz credited the process, commonly used by Fortune 500 companies, with improving quality of employees, reducing turnover and terminations, and saving costs associated with hiring and training new employees.

Variables of Study

Independent Variables

Demographics of Superintendent

Gender of superintendent. Accepting “women’s ways of knowing” are identifiable from men’s (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Khine & Hayes, 2010), numerous researchers have supported the notion, although evaluations and other measures of effectiveness do not differ significantly (Giuliano, Levine, & Leonard, 2006; Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007), women and men lead differently (Cotton, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kelsey, Allen, Coke, & Ballard, 2014; Keohane, 2007; Proudford, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). Participatory, interpersonal, collaborative, and transformative describe women’s leadership styles (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Kelsey et. al, 2014; Keohane, 2007; Proudford, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007), with the terms task-focused (Keohane, 2007; Proudford, 2007; Sandberg, 2013) and democratic (Carli & Eagley, 2007) leadership, as well. Kelsey et. al’s grounded theory research offered three strategies that female superintendents cite as the most critical strategies for leadership development in women: “networking with other people, staying current in the field, and leading

by servant leadership” (p. 7). All of the aforementioned descriptions are reflective of Belenky, Clinchy, Golderber, and Tarule’s (1986) finding women come to know and make decisions through listening to the voices of others, reflecting on one’s inner voice, trusting personal experiences as a valuable truth—“truth that is personal, particular, and grounded in firsthand experiences” (p. 113), and integrating personal intuition with knowledge gained through experiences of those with whom they share relationships.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) acknowledged studying the “how” of women’s leadership is difficult, with a lack of reliable data, predominantly self-reported and focused on perceptions. In fact, according to the authors, “there is a more accurate account of reindeer in Alaska than of women in educational leadership at the pre k-12 level nationwide” (p. 103). Grogan and Shakeshaft relied on a deep review of literature and thorough examination of current social science research and trends to identify five approaches typifying ways women lead schools: 1) leadership for learning, supported by Cotton’s (2003) and Kelsey et al.’s (2014) findings of a strong link between female principals and instructional leadership behaviors; 2) leadership for social justice, 3) relational leadership addressed by Rhode and Kellerman (2007) and Carli and Eagly (2007); 4) spiritual leadership, and 5) balanced leadership also identified by Rhode and Kellerman (2007), Carli and Eagly (2007), and Pittinsky, Bacon, and Welle (2007).

Citing research concerning females’ length of time in classrooms, democratic leadership styles, and elementary pedagogy-focused backgrounds as possible explanations for the link, Grogan and Shakeshaft’s (2011) synthesis resulted in finding female leaders more likely than males to implement strong professional development, to place a greater emphasis on instructional competence, to filter decisions through the priority of student learning, and to outsource areas they personally did not value. Males, on the other hand, were found more likely

to outsource instructional decisions. Women more often mentioned changing lives, creating a fairer world, and changing institutions for all children as reasons for entering teaching and administration.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) attributed these tendencies to both historical and present-day work conditions for women. First of all, Grogan and Shakeshaft found through reading historical accounts of women's entry to the teaching profession women were more likely than males to be employed in schools serving immigrant, female, and working class students, while male teachers were more likely to teach "children of the elite" (p. 89). Another possible cause for learning and equity being more prominent in women's leadership approaches may be the process by which women learn leadership--through curriculum, instruction, and instructional coaching positions. As research shows women's reasons for selecting educational careers, processes for making decisions, and ways of knowing and leading differ from their male counterparts, examining the ways the genders select school leaders is expected to reveal notable differences, as well, particularly in the use of human resource/ personnel directors.

Race of superintendent. Race matters (Giuliano, Levine, & Leonard, 2006; Macan, 2009; Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004; Rivera, 2012). Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel (2004) in examining patterns of hiring in large California service company found preferences to hire whites to be "small but clear" (p. 15). Giuliano, Levine, and Leonard's (2006) research with a retail-based population echoed that of Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel. Giuliano and colleagues determined race of the interviewer was a significant indicator of the racial composition of persons hired, particularly in the South. The researchers offered three explanations for this propensity: 1) racially segregated social networks supported by Macan's (2009) claim the hiring process is a highly "social interaction" (p. 215) and Rivera's (2012) description of a job

interview as an interpersonal process; 2) similarities described by Rivera as “one of the most powerful drivers of attraction and evaluation in micro-social settings, including job interviews” (p. 1001); and 3) the perception of greater efficiency and easier transitions in same-race relationships validated by Rivera’s finding cultural compatibility is considered one of the most important criteria assessed during an interview. Rivera further indicated “subjective impressions of candidates that employers develop through interviews are strong drivers of hiring decisions, often, carrying more weight than candidates’ resume qualifications” (p. 1000). Because studies concerning hiring decisions in education with attention to race have not been conducted to the extent of those in business and industry, this study will extend the knowledge base as to the ways superintendents of different races make hiring decisions and expand the current research on race and hiring practices overall.

Years of experience as superintendent. Little research exists concerning leadership decisions and the length of time school leaders have served as superintendents. However, this study provides a forum to begin exploration and examination of comparisons or connections existing among superintendents with similar lengths of service for factors sought or for use of human resource/personnel directors.

Demographics of District

Size of school district. According to Whitehurst, Chingos, and Gallaher (2013), only 1%-2% of variance in student achievement relates to district-level factors; however, differences between districts in performance over time represent a half-year’s learning for students. Pennington (n.d.) described an Iowa Department of Education study to determine the characteristics of school districts associated with student achievement, as measured by junior year state standardized assessments. The examination of the effect of three contextual

independent variables, including district size, on math, reading, and science scores, revealed mixed results. Therefore, Pennington recommended future inquiry regarding district size.

By examining the effects of school and district size in West Virginia, Howley (1996) found size of school and district to influence student achievement. Howley acknowledged the need for further study beyond West Virginia and suggested exploring the role of size as it interacts with socioeconomic status and other school and district variables. Abbott, Joireman, and Stroh's (2002) also examined the complexity of size as a factor on student achievement. The researchers utilized Washington state assessment data for fourth and seventh grade reading and math to determine the influence of school and district size and the interaction of district size with poverty level on student achievement. Abbott, Joireman, and Stroh's research determined size in itself is not a consistent factor; however, in equity analyses, large district size was found to "strengthen the negative relationship between school poverty and student achievement" (p. 16).

Boser (2013) analyzed National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and previous research to investigate cost-benefit in small school districts designated by Boser as those districts serving "fewer than 1000 students that are not classified by the U.S. Census Bureau as rural remote or town remote" (p. 1). Boser claimed 2000-4000 students is optimal economically related to "providing a sufficient education" (p. 2)--an education "reaching state and federal standards" (p. 2). Investigating the dependent variables for this study as related to district size builds on existing research and extends the examination of size in a rural, high-poverty state and a high-accountability context.

Congressional district of school district. According to a map of Mississippi's congressional districts (US Elections-MS, 2015) and data collected and published by Southern Echo (2014) in the form of graphs as well as state maps, districts are delineated by accountability

rating, poverty, congressional district, and a variety of school- and economic-related factors. Examining districts by achievement, measured by state accountability ratings, as well as poverty, measured by free/reduced lunch percentages showed differences existed by congressional districts. Therefore, investigating differences influencing selection of leaders for the schools by Mississippi's four congressional districts is relevant and appropriate to examine within this study.

Manner of selection as superintendent. Mississippi, the state in which this study will be conducted, is unique in its process for selecting local school district superintendents: popular elections and school board appointments. According to state department of education websites, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi are the only three states continuing to employ elected superintendents. More specifically, Phillips (2015) of Rethink Mississippi reported of 14,500 superintendents superintendents in the United States, only 154 are elected. According to the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents records in fall 2015, 58 of these are in Mississippi. Recent legislation has changed the selection process for some districts, but predominantly elected superintendents are likely to lead county districts with superintendents of city, or municipal, districts appointed by local school boards. Because the selection process for the superintendent varies greatly from that across nation, the use of the demographic as a variable of study for the state is not only appropriate, but also likely to result in differences in the dependent variables.

Current official accountability rating of school district. As of the most recent release of accountability data for the state (MDE, 2015b), 151 school districts were reported. Nineteen districts (12.58%) currently hold an A level rating. B-level and C-level districts number 43 (28.48%) and 48 (31.78%), respectively, with the number leading D-level districts at 39, or

25.83%. One district (0.01%) is currently labeled a failing district, with one district's status pending an Office of Student Assessment investigation. Excellence for All districts were excluded from calculations. Examining how superintendents select school leaders for recommendation to hire in various accountability rated districts is of interest and importance, as patterns in the findings may inform district leaders of ways to improve the hiring process for critical need districts as well inform superintendents and principal candidates of similarities and differences in the manner in which various rated districts conduct the hiring process and view principal candidates.

Free/Reduced Lunch Program participation in school district. Parrett and Budge (2012) provided historical background for discussing poverty in schools. The formula, called the “thrifty food plan” (p. 39), was first developed in 1963 as a statistical measure approximately three times the annual food cost for a family of three. Specifically, discussion of school poverty levels indicate the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, the determination largely based on the poverty level at the time a lunch application is filed. A United States government office continues to set a threshold to identify people or homes with income insufficient to meet the basic needs of the household (Jensen, 2009).

Lezotte and Snyder's (2011) identification of poverty as the “single most accurate indicator on which individual and organizational expectations turn in public schools” (p.43) amplifies Jensen's (2009) definition of poverty as “a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul” (p. 6) and assertion those risk factors compound the academic problems of children in poverty and, to combat those problems, specific acts by schools and school leaders are required. Jensen identified five SHARE factors found to positively impact student achievement in high poverty

schools—support of the whole child, hard data, accountability, relationship building, and enrichment mind-sets—and links those factors to the extent to which the building administrators commit to high expectations and high “360 degree wraparound support” (p. 70). Unfortunately, Cotton’s (2003) extensive review of literature revealed principals in high poverty schools are more likely to exhibit managerial than instructional leadership behaviors such as those identified by Jensen.

Jensen’s research on poverty’s risk factors (emotional challenges, chronic stressors, cognitive lags, and health and safety issues) also offered an explanation for Tucker’s (2011) synthesis of data concerning student performance in reading, mathematics, and science from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’s global database concluding poverty to be a significant predictor of the variance in student performance on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). According to Tucker’s research, 17% of the degree to which student scores differ is attributable to socioeconomic status. Tucker advanced his investigation to compare the variances by socioeconomic status in the United States and five countries with sustained high PISA performance and educational systems characterized by Tucker as “high participation, high quality, high equity, and high efficiency” (p. 15). Results indicated the greatest variance in the United States followed by Singapore (15.3%), Shanghai (12.3%), Canada and Japan (8.6%), and Finland (7.8%). For this study, comparing the results for dependent variables by socioeconomic status of school districts is aligned with the research of Jensen and Tucker, as well as with the common knowledge shared by practitioner superintendents in the state.

Dependent Variables

Applicants for positions. Mississippi Department of Education and Great Teachers and Leaders' data (2015a) represent the realities Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) described and Mississippi superintendents face each year. Superintendents and human resource/personnel directors involved in hiring principals for Mississippi schools in one congressional district shared openly on the applicant pools for their districts.

A human resource director for one A-level school district in north Mississippi shared a comparison of candidate supply and demand. The district utilizes an online application system, as of May 2015, showing 52 candidates holding administrative certification. Of those, 43 had applied specifically for administrative positions within the school year. Having hired one principal for the 2014-2015 school year and having no advertised or expected principal positions and only one assistant principal vacancy at the time, the district clearly has an applicant pool exceeding its need. Interestingly, when asked about quality of those applicants, the human resource director shared because those involved in selecting an assistant principal weren't satisfied with the skills and fit for any of the candidates, the district had postponed hiring—even beyond the beginning of school (Personal communication, May 2015).

Another A-rated district in the region reported typically receiving 10-20 applicants of a wide range of qualifications; the superintendent pointed out that the quality of applicants in the district was stronger in early spring (March/April), but he was not as satisfied with applicants still available during the summer months (Personal communication, June 2015). A superintendent of a neighboring B-rated district with a similar socioeconomic level reported being dissatisfied with the majority of the district's 15 applicants for one position but shared a within-district hire was made; the same superintendent shared the district had recently hired an

assistant principal from a pool of 12, with few “strong applicants” and noted the lesser pay for the assistant principal’s position as the main reason for fewer quality applicants (Personal communication, June 2015). Receiving 8-10 applicants for administrative openings from candidates with little or no experience or who “had problems elsewhere” was reported as typical of a D-level district with a significantly higher poverty rate in the same congressional district (Personal communication, June 2015).

Components of leadership. Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2015) reinforced the judgment of superintendents finding candidates who match post-interview expectations is difficult. “What has been difficult to achieve is charting a clear course to ensure that school leaders have the support, training, vision, and tools to facilitate performing at the highest levels of effectiveness” (p. xvii). Building on the work of Marzano et. al’s (2005) linking school leadership with factors related to effective schools, Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth utilized past school effectiveness research, including Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson (2010), to develop the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model focused on actions necessary for the enhancement of student learning. Marzano’s (2014) research culminated in the identification of 24 critical actions of school leaders and the assignment of those actions to five domains: data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, guaranteed and viable curriculum, cooperation and collaboration, and school climate. The five domains, though named differently, comprise behaviors and characteristics identified by many educational researchers, including DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005), Lezotte and Snyder (2011), Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), McEwan (2003), Murphy (2012), Stronge, et. al (2013), and Whitaker (2003). For the purpose of this research, the domains of the Marzano School Leader

Evaluation model will serve as 5 of the 6 factors serving as dependent variables in the quantitative phase of research.

Community connections. Community involvement, outreach, positive home-school relations, people skills, ensuring community input—the phrasing differs, but educational researchers agree in acknowledging the importance of leaders connecting to the school community (Cotton, 2003; Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Marzano, Warrick, & Simms, 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McEwan, 2003; Murphy, 2012; Whitaker, 2003). According to Lezotte and Snyder, “In an effective school, parents and other members of the community are familiar with the school’s mission, and the leadership provides a variety of opportunities for them to support the mission” (p. 115). Marzano, Warrick, & Simms included the measure “students, parents, and the community have formal ways to provide input regarding the optimal functioning of the school” as a leading indicator of a safe and collaborative culture in their handbook for evaluating the reliability of schools. Murphy (2012), in his identification of six components of a high-quality school for which a principal is responsible, specifically highlighted the importance of connections to external communities to a school leader.

Further, Maxwell (2010) affirmed the necessity for leaders to connect, “to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases [their] influence” (p. 3). Maxwell noted four of five qualities researchers have found successful presidents to possess rely on communication and connection. Connecting with members of an organization and gaining credibility with a group of followers depends on limited factors: insight, success, ability, sacrifice, and perhaps most important, relationships. Maxwell proposed borrowing credibility from someone who already possesses credibility with the group as a convenient, expeditious way to develop a connection

with an individual or group. The extent to which the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System is based on Murphy's research and the special significance of community and connections in Maxwell's theory of borrowed credibility for Mississippi superintendents merit the examination of the component as a distinct factor in selecting a school leader and, therefore, has been included as a variable for this study.

Continuous improvement of instruction. According to Lezotte and Snyder (2011), strong instructional leadership is an essential correlate of an effective school. "[T]he principal must be a well-informed student of teaching and learning" (p. 51). Further, the researchers noted the importance in education of "effective leading through effective teaching" (p. 53). Hattie (2009) pointed out behaviors strongly associated with instructional leadership, and therefore, with student achievement: "promoting and participating in teacher learning and development" (p. 83), "planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum" (p. 83), and "strategic reasoning" (p. 84). Marzano, Warrick, and Simms (2014)'s work also supported continuous instructional improvements as they emphasize the primary focus of evaluations should be development, rather than measurement.

Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2015) highlighted a principal's interest in pedagogy as most influential in the continuous improvement of instruction in a school (domain two of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model.) Clear visions, timelines, models of instruction, and strength/weakness-based feedback aimed at improving not only individual classroom practices but also complete learning experiences throughout a student's courseload. Principals who hire, retain, and if necessary recommend terminating faculty with pedagogy and growth as a first consideration strengthen both school culture and student achievement.

Cooperation and collaboration. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) named positive home-school relations as an effective schools correlate and discuss how critical making this relationship trusting and authentic is to achieving the common goal of school and parents--“a quality education and a successful future for every child” (p. 119). Domain four of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model supports not only gains in achievement but also “the responsibility of Culture” (Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth, 2015, p. 93). Cooperation and collaboration behaviors by building leaders optimize functioning and foster cohesion among a school’s stakeholders. Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth emphasized the importance of professional learning communities and strong channels of communication and participation between leaders within the school daily and parents and community members with lesser access to the school’s daily activities. Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth’s research is extended by Marzano, Heflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, and Grift (2016). The authors described every person in an organization as affecting and being affected by every other person in the organization; no one acts independently. With that assumption, the researchers recommended research-based practices for increasing “instructional competence” (p. 3) and coordinating school or district efforts through collaborative teams. According to the researchers, curriculum, assessment, instruction, teacher development, and leadership for second-order change can be best transformed when principals are directly involved in organizing team members; ensuring mutual, intentional support; modeling an inquiry-based approach and use of evidence; and influencing the collaborative professional learning communities to focus on student learning and teacher growth.

Data-driven focus. Lezotte and Snyder (2011), in identifying the essential correlates of an effective school, pointed out the importance of data analysis, particularly the disaggregation of achievement data to examine quality “high overall levels of performance” (p. 19) and equity

“no gaps in the distribution of that performance across major subsets” (p. 19). A data-driven focus on student achievement is the first domain identified in the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model (Carbaugh, Marzano, & Toth, 2015), encompassing the identification of school and student achievement goals, data analysis, and subgroup as well as intervention group data analysis. Goals focused on critical needs and approached as non-negotiable are essential to the success of schools. Clarifying these goals, establishing measurements, and using formative data to communicate with school faculty, students, and parents is a key principal behavior impacting student achievement.

Guaranteed and viable curriculum. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) noted the importance of aligning the intended, taught, and tested curricula of a school and focusing on “power standards” (p. 83) offering student learning endurance, leverage, and readiness. Hattie (2009) concluded three aspects of curriculum influence student learning: balancing surface and deep understanding within each content area, focusing on strategies that supporting students’ ability to construct meaning from text, and planning deliberate, explicit strategies for a specific skill or purpose. Marzano, Warrick, and Simms (2014) distinguished between guaranteed and viable. The authors tied *guaranteed* to the assurance every student across multiple classrooms is afforded the opportunity to engage and master grade-level content appropriate to the content area taught and linked *viable* to the assurance time is available to teach the content outlined in the curriculum.

A guaranteed and viable curriculum is the third of the five domains of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model. Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2015) provided three assurances strong school leaders must make concerning curriculum: “1) The school leader ensures that the school curriculum and accompanying assessments adhere to state and district

standards; 2) The school leader ensures that the school curriculum is focused enough that it can be adequately addressed in the time available to teachers; 3) The school leader ensures that all students have the opportunity to learn the critical content of the curriculum” (p. 76). Marzano, Heflebower, Hoegh, Warrick, and Grift (2016) explained, “Without a guaranteed and viable curriculum, assessment tasks and the measurements based on them become inconsistent, invalid, and unreliable” (p. 33). Ensuring a guaranteed, viable curriculum requires principals’ active leadership regarding curriculum, assessments, content standards, school and grade-level critical needs, and instructional strategies.

School climate. Lezotte and Snyder (2011) attributed to effective principals “the ability to shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes that are necessary to promote a stable and nurturing learning environment that in turn positively impacts student performance” (p. 44). The researchers furthered the claim, utilizing the adverbs “consistently” (p. 44), “stubbornly” (p. 44), and “persistently” (p. 51) to depict the extent to which leaders of effective schools must promote, commit to, and reinforce high expectations for safe and orderly environments.

With shootings in multiple states, including Mississippi, from early 1997 through fall 1999, Cullen (2009) declared the trend of “the suburban menace of the school shooter” (p. 15) a “full-blown epidemic” (p. 15). Unfortunately, Dodson (2009) possessed a unique perspective on the beginning of the trend Cullen identified. Dodson described the October 1997 attack at Pearl High School in Rankin County, Mississippi as the beginning of “an unsettling national wave of violence in otherwise placid neighborhoods and schools—in statistically safe suburbs and small towns” (p. 1). Although Pearl was not the first school to have students fall victim to attack from within, the school was the first in most Americans’ memories and the first in a line of student-on-student attacks. Dodson relayed the role of assistant principal Joel Myrick, also a member of a

National Guard combat unit, in ending Luke Woodham's attack in Pearl High School Commons and Myrick's thoughts of failing at his perceived job, monitoring the Commons and taking care of the students. Resolving student conflicts, overseeing natural disaster drills, meeting with disgruntled parents, and breaking up occasional fights--typical tasks in a school administrator's day--are no longer the first thoughts of a principal when school safety is mentioned. Dodson (2009) shared the change, evidenced by his former student housed in Parchman Penitentiary's Unit 32 requiring the highest security in the state's correctional system, as one critical for school leaders to understand and to be knowledgeable to address.

According to Lezotte and Snyder, "in a chaotic environment, principals can't lead, teachers can't teach, and students can't learn" (p. 101). Although physical safety comes to mind more readily in regard to Lezotte and Snyder's correlate, positive school climate, the fifth domain of Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth's model, is comprised of a great deal more and more easily aligned to Deal and Petersen's (1999) work concerning school culture, with safety being only one element of the model's measurement of the domain. The domain in totality includes being recognized as the school leader, improving professional practice, trusting faculty and students, ensuring a safe, orderly environment, managing resources to focus on student learning, and celebrating successes.

Activities of human resource/personnel directors. Odden (2011) pointed out "education is a people-intensive proposition" (p. 8) and, with 85% of school budgets allocated to salaries and benefits, talented personnel and strategic management of talent are critical to a district's success. Davis (2008b) identified human resources as an economic construct such that professional educational practitioners must function "as a resource in the delivery (production) of teaching and learning services" (n.p.). According to Davis, the process by which educators

engage in human resource development leadership requires a “holistic, comprehensive, and all-inclusive effort” (n.p.) to be successful. Benedict (2008) in a survey report prepared for the Society for Human Resource Management listed recruiting and staffing as top functions of human resource managers or directors, in addition to maintaining a human resource system that meets personnel needs of the organization, with 52% of human resource manager survey respondents reporting staffing as the most critical function of their jobs. An overwhelming majority (94%) reported that participation in the selection process was the most strategic contributor to the organization’s effectiveness. The occupational information network O-NET Online defined a human resource director’s primary responsibility as screening, recruiting, interviewing, and placing workers. In an O-NET listing of the occupation’s duties, importance, level of skill necessary, and the proportion of workers in the job who reported the task relevant to his or her job were rated on a scale 0-100. Assessing the qualities of people relative to an organization rated highest on the scale (81); recruiting, interviewing, and selecting applicants (78) and providing expert advice on systems-related decisions (76) rated closely behind; and identifying the best candidate for a given position rated 75 on the scale. These ratings depict the contributions of human resource personnel in assessing, interviewing, and selecting workers for organizations of various types (O-Net, 2015).

Wright and Stewart (2010) revealed how human resource officers for Fortune 150 companies and partner companies spend their time and how much value they perceive their roles to be to their organizations. Most identified serving as talent architects, leaders of human resource functions, and builders of human capital for present and future needs. The role of talent architect was reported to be the role those surveyed believed to be most impactful on the effectiveness of the organization. Ironically, those surveyed identifying “building a talent

culture” (p. 14), one of the duties related to the role of talent architect, as the biggest challenge of their jobs.

The extensive duties of human resource managers and their roles in recruiting, hiring, and retaining workers are frequently documented; some researchers have discovered links between those activities and practices and the operating performance of organizations (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003; Yan Jiang & Liu, 2015.) Wright, Gardner, and Moynihan highlight the selection and staffing process as the beginning of human resource managers’ impact on employee commitment, the organization’s talent, and the work environment. Huselid (1995) and Jiang and Liu (2015) investigated the impact of using High Performance Work Practices including recruitment and proven selection procedures, on the productivity of organizations. Huselid studied more than 3000 businesses across a range of industries and found an organization’s ability to obtain and develop human capital has a significant statistical and economic impact on turnover and productivity. Jiang analyzed the practices in light of effects on social capital of organization and proposed the practices improve the organization in three key areas: work environment, knowledge transfer within the organization, and innovation within the organization.

In studying the food processing and trading industry, Vlachos (2009) also linked selective hiring practices and the involvement of human resource managers to growth. Vlachos found that of the five practices related to growth, selective hiring has highest significance related to an increase in the perceived worth of market shares. Caliskan (2010) reviewed existing research and historical literature on the topic of human resource management to trace the growth of research related to strategic human resource management and, further, identified a positive relationship between strategic human resource management and the operational performance of

organizations, including productivity, quality of product or service, and financial growth. No research was found on the impact of human resource directors in the educational setting; however, researchers have sampled from this population to explore the selection of principals and to evaluate the supply of quality certified administrators (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, and Orr, 2010; Cruzeiro and Boone, 2009).

Conclusion

Research from this study is applicable for k-12 practitioners, including the superintendents seeking to recommend for employment effective school leaders, candidates seeking to fill these leadership roles, and educational leadership program developers preparing candidates to gain employment and lead schools. This study will seek to answer several critical questions related to the research presented in this chapter regarding the selection of principals in Mississippi school districts: What factors are most significant as superintendents select a principal candidate for recommendation to hire? Do leaders of districts lower in the work queue—low-achieving or high poverty districts—make selections in a different manner or with a different set of expectations than districts higher in the work queue? Are there other ways in which superintendents differ in considering a variety of job candidate factors? How do some districts utilize human resource or personnel directors regarding the selection of principals? How do human resource or personnel directors involved in the selection process perceive their contributions to selecting principals?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Providing schools with building-level administrators likely to lead improvements in school climate and student achievement is a critical issue at local, regional, state, and national levels. In Chapter I, a rationale is presented for the study as responding to a gap in literature regarding public school superintendents' practices for selecting principals for recommendation to hire and human resource/personnel directors' involvement in securing high-quality school leaders. Chapter II includes research on leadership, attributes of effective principals that public school district superintendents and hiring committees seek through evidence during the application and hiring process, and hiring practices in industry, business, and education. Queuing theory as related to public school employment is highlighted.

This chapter contains the research methods used in each phase of the mixed methods research proposed in Chapter I. A research design is outlined for determining if a significant difference exists between superintendent and district contextual variables and the ranking of factors influencing a superintendent's recommendation of a principal candidate for hire. Quantitative procedures and measurements related to the contributions of human resource/personnel directors to the recommendation process are presented. In addition, qualitative methods designed to expand understanding and meaning to the quantitative data are discussed. Procedures for collecting, analyzing, and storing data are described. In this chapter, quantitative hypotheses, qualitative research questions, and a mixed methods central question is

specified. The mixed methods research design, subjects of the study, quantitative instruments, qualitative data collection methods, procedures for statistical and thematic analyses, and methods of reporting are provided. The process of developing and piloting the quantitative instrument used during the study is summarized. Additionally, measures to ensure confidentiality in reporting are explained.

Mixed Methods Research

Definition and History

Ukiwe (2011) traced the 25-year history of the growing use of mixed methods, or “the systematic combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in research” (p. 1). Ukiwe noted mixed methods involves induction, deduction, and abduction in discovering patterns, testing theories, and determining the best explanations for a set of findings. Ukiwe attributed the increasing use of mixed methods to the complex, interdisciplinary nature of contemporary research topics and settings.

According to Creswell & Plano Clark (2011), the earliest definition of mixed methods research evolved in the field of evaluation from Green, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) and encompassed the use of at least one quantitative (measurement) data collection and one qualitative (narrative) data collection. The definition has been refined over time to mean research designed to include qualitative and quantitative methods mixed at multiple phases of research. Although the focus of how mixed methods researchers have defined the term differs, most agree on the use of mixed methods research for studies conducted around phenomenon, problems, or inquiries calling for deep understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) advocated the use of mixed methodology, with its roots in pragmatism, when a social science study necessitates divergent views, balanced evaluation, and

the use of multiple methods to increase the depth of understanding of a single issue. The acceptance of pragmatism as a research paradigm has resulted from a movement, especially in practitioner-based research environments, away from a mono-method period to the use of methods from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Pragmatists select research design, data collection methods, and processes for analysis based on the purpose of the research and the nature of the questions. Teddlie and Tashakkori proposed that mixed methods research is most appropriate for practitioner-based research projects in which researchers seek realistic utility of findings, as well as reliability and validity of research.

According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), mixed methods allow researchers to confirm and explore theories or questions. Mixed methods research supports two goals: to discover if particular variables will have a predicted effect or relationship with another variable and to answer how and why questions about that relationship. Mixed methods research also may counteract deficits of a single research design. Teddlie and Tashakkori contended that due to the field of education's interdisciplinary nature and its close relationship to psychological theory, mixed methods research is appropriate for studies in the field.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner's (2007) research resulted in a definition of mixed methods design. The researchers began with a general definition of mixed methods research as "an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research)" (p.113). The authors examined 19 definitions of mixed methods research by respected leaders in the field of multi-method research and, using Greene's Domains, developed the following definition of mixed methods:

Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm. It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced results. (p. 129)

Although researchers differ as to the criteria most significant to include in defining the methodology, many concur the need exists for a methods design utilizing the strengths of measurement as well as narrative-based information.

Similarly, Creswell (2014) agreed and advocated mixed methods strategies to neutralize limitations of any single method and to reinforce single method findings. Mixed methods procedures are beneficial in addressing complex questions encountered in education, as combined use of qualitative and quantitative procedures “provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either by itself” (p. 215). According to Creswell, mixed methods strategies allow researchers to use qualitative interviews to explore a topic or phenomenon more deeply than with quantitative or qualitative methods alone.

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) explained that sequential mixed designs require the use of multiple methods across chronological phases. In sequential mixed methods research, sampling and/or procedures in the second strand depend upon the findings of the previous strand. The use of both numeric and narrative data collection and analysis, provide the researcher with the ability to draw stronger inferences from the data and to more fully comment upon initial findings.

Ukiwe (2011) echoed the assertions of Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) maintaining that words and images deepen the meaning of statistics and multiple methods increase the generalizability of results by confirming or disconfirming mono-method evidence. Ukiwe

further contended that the use of qualitative and quantitative procedures and findings result in “more complete knowledge” (p. 43). Although mixed methods research is often more difficult, expensive, or time-consuming than the use of one method, the ability of mixed methods researchers to produce complete, expanded understanding is of great importance for informing both theory and practice.

Creswell (2014) acknowledged that, at times, neither a pure qualitative or quantitative study is adequate to answer a question. According to Creswell, when a research problem or question demands the strength of both quantitative and qualitative methods to “provide the best understanding” (p. 20), mixed methods is most appropriate. Creswell also note two main challenges with the design: a) identifying the specific quantitative results requiring clarification or elaboration and b) analyzing data from unequal sample sizes. Explanatory sequential design will address the challenges. The design is named “explanatory because the initial quantitative data results are explained further with the qualitative data” (p. 15) and “sequential because the initial quantitative phase is followed by qualitative phase” (p. 16).

Rationale for Use

Although Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) recognized the utility and validity of mixed methods research in any content field, the authors acknowledged “not all situations justify the use of mixed methods” (p. 7). The authors recommended selecting method based on type of research problem rather than on specific content topics as has been the case in some disciplines. Specifically, Creswell and Plano Clark maintained a need exists if one data source is insufficient; initial results are not expected to sufficiently explain the question of study; questions, variables, or guiding theories need to be confirmed prior to deep analysis; or multiple methods and/or phases are critical to examining complex questions. Creswell and Plano Clark

cautioned, “Combining methods is challenging and should only be undertaken where there is a specific reason to do so” (p. 61).

A mixed methods explanatory sequential design with quantitative emphasis was followed for this study represented as QUAN → qual (Creswell, 2014). Mixed methods is an appropriate design for this study due to the complexity of the question, the insufficiency of quantitative data to fully respond to the question, and the familiarity of narrative and anecdotal data to the audience for the study. Selection of principals is not only a critical topic in the field of education, it is a complex decision requiring investigation and reflection beyond the limits of measurement of self-reported demographics and behaviors. Examining how principals are selected and the roles of human resource/personnel directors who in business, industry, and other fields are vital to employment decisions requires exploring both superintendent and human resource/personnel director preferences and perceptions outside the confines of strictly quantitative research, but necessitating a quantitative measurement to determine where varied, deeper knowledge is most likely to be found not provided by qualitative research as a stand-alone design. Further, often in working with school data, random sampling or experimental design is not feasible; therefore, statistical inferences are limited and qualitative data is needed to supplement or expand upon quantitative findings.

Including a qualitative component in analyzing the role of human resource/ personnel directors in the process by which superintendents recommend principals for hire aided in identifying factors involved in the study that were not revealed through statistical analysis of survey data. For this study, the imbalance of the number of members for each independent variable and the use of ranked scores makes non-parametric analysis necessary. Exploring the initial non-parametric findings and investigating the qualitative sample’s perceptions of the same

process represented by the quantitative sample's survey responses provides an extended view of principal selection. Also, use of explanatory sequential mixed methods research allows application of inductive analysis to the situation and development of a more holistic narrative account of selecting leaders for employment in Mississippi schools relevant and accessible to practitioner superintendents and principal candidates.

Quantitative Phase

Subjects

Subjects for the quantitative portion of the study were those from a sample of 146 Mississippi public school superintendents responding to a researcher-created survey measuring perceptions in two areas: a) factors that influence selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board, and b) activities that reflect the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection process. According to *Mississippi School Superintendents and Districts*, male superintendents outnumber female superintendents, 110 (75.34%) to 36 (24.66%), respectively (MDE, 2015b). Personal e-mail communication with a Mississippi Association of School Superintendents representative revealed of the 146 superintendents, 58, or 39.73%, are elected, and 88, or 60.27%, are appointed. According to the most recently released accountability data (MDE, 2015b), ratings were released for the 151 existing districts at that time. Nineteen superintendents (12.58%) lead A-level districts, with the number leading D-level districts much higher at 39, or 25.83%. B-level and C-level districts number 43 (28.48%) and 48 (31.78%), respectively. One district (0.01%) is currently rated at the failing level; however, one district's rating is pending as of April 2015. Using a Mississippi congressional district map, the number of superintendents represented in each congressional district range from 29 in the 4th congressional district, which includes the group commonly

referred to as coast districts, to 45 in the 2nd district, which includes the group commonly called delta districts (U.S. Elections, 2015). Superintendents of record serving special schools, such as the Mississippi School of Math and Science or Mississippi School of the Arts, function as principals; these administrators are typically appointed by the state department of education or school-level committees and will not be surveyed.

Instruments

Design. Each phase of the study utilized an instrument. The instrument for the quantitative phase of this study was a researcher-created survey designed to obtain demographic information about the participants and represented districts for the study and to obtain a quantitative ranking of applicant attributes influencing selection by superintendents or district interview committees.

Rea and Parker (2014) contended “there is no better method of research than the sample survey process for determining with a known level of accuracy, detailed and personal information about large populations” (p. 5). Generalizations and inferences, timely collection, and general acceptance are three advantages of survey research. Further, applied to this study, Rea and Parker cited multiple advantages of the web-based survey, including convenience, easy follow-up, and security. Although the authors identified disadvantages related to limiting populations to those who have computer/e-mail access, possess a reading and computer literacy ability required of the survey, and are able to complete the survey with no personal instruction, those limits should not reasonably apply to the superintendent sample for this study.

The instrument developed for this research is concise, following guidance of Fowler (2014) and requires little time and effort. The questions of the survey are mainly knowledge-based demographic and opinion questions expected to require fewer than ten minutes to

complete. In wording and organizing questions, Fowler's advice was followed to increase answer reliability through the use complete questions, reduce lack of knowledge errors by pairing respondents to questions they are likely to understand and recall the answer, and combat non-response by focusing on wording questions and conducting the survey in a non-threatening manner. Fowler suggested avoiding jargon and employing simple, clear wording with few multiple response items and few questions requiring more than a moment's thought. Jargon has been reduced for this survey and Fowler's caution is not as applicable since the sample shares a common profession and, therefore, language of the profession.

Identification of problem areas and any clarifications needed by survey respondents were expected to be identified through the pilot process with Tennessee superintendents prior to the survey's distribution in Mississippi. Superintendents in Tennessee were a logical sample for the pilot as the state is a Southern state with similar curriculum standards. Tennessee superintendents were selected through an elected-appointed system until recent years, so superintendents in the state would understand the language and the significance of the question to a study conducted in Mississippi. While statewide poverty rates for children are not similar to Mississippi's, the state is similar to Mississippi in its distribution of wealth and high free/reduced lunch rates in specific geographic areas and, therefore, school districts. A final reason for selecting the superintendents of the state for the pilot sample was Tennessee's principal evaluation model serving as a strong basis for the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System.

Content. For the survey portion of the study, participating superintendents were asked to self-report independent classifying variables: gender, ethnicity, size of district (reported as a range), congressional district, years of experience in a superintendent position (reported as range), and manner in which the district represented selects the superintendent. District

accountability rating and district free/reduced lunch percentage (reported as a range) were also requested. In addition, superintendents were asked to identify from a list of typical human resource/personnel director job tasks the manner in which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of principals for the district. Survey responses were used in analyzing quantitative data, informing sample selection for the qualitative phase, and addressing the mixed methods questions of the study.

Rankings of multiple school leaders actions associated with effective school performance (dependent variable) were requested as opposed to the use of a Likert scale or other rating for individual attributes. The request for ranked data in the quantitative phase of this study is supported by Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007) who note ranked data was found to be useful in surveying participants who might be reluctant to discriminate among factors, assigning many factors the same or similar ratings and by Fowler (2014) also argued direct rating and ranking have more validity than agree/disagree or Likert scale questions, especially when the items to be considered are not present or absent in extremes or when differentiating or discriminating among a set of items is the goal of the researcher.

Variables of Study

Survey data collection provided information relevant to eight independent and two dependent variables.

Independent Variables

Gender of superintendent. Accepting “women’s ways of knowing” are identifiable from men’s (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Khine & Hayes, 2010), numerous researchers support the notion, although evaluations and other measures of effectiveness do not differ significantly (Giuliano, Levine, & Leonard, 2006; Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004;

Rhode & Kellerman, 2007), women and men lead differently (Cotton, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kelsey, Allen, Coke, & Ballard, 2014; Keohane, 2007; Proudford, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011), through a deep literature review, acknowledged studying the “how” of women’s leadership is difficult, with less reliable data on women in educational leadership, according to the authors, than exists regarding “reindeer in Alaska” (p. 103). As research shows women’s reasons for selecting educational careers, processes for making decisions, and ways of knowing and leading differ from their male counterparts, the ways men and women may differ in selection of school leaders, particularly concerning the participatory nature of the involvement of human resource/personnel directors, is worth investigating.

Ethnicity of superintendent. Ethnicity is a factor meriting investigation in the selection of school leaders, as well (Giuliano, Levine, & Leonard, 2006; Macan, 2009; Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004; Rivera, 2012). Giuliano, Levine, and Leonard’s (2006) research with a retail-based population echoed that of Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel in determining race of the interviewer was a significant indicator of the racial composition of persons hired, particularly in the South. Because studies concerning hiring decisions in education with attention to race have not been conducted to the extent of those in business and industry, this study extends the knowledge base as to the ways superintendents of different races make hiring decisions and expand the current research on race and hiring practices overall.

Years of experience as superintendent. Research regarding the length of time school leaders have served as superintendents and the decisions they make is sparse. However, the examination of superintendents with similar lengths of service for factors sought or for use of human resource/personnel directors is appropriate in the context of the study.

Size of school district. According to Whitehurst, Chingos, and Gallaher (2013), only 1%-2% of variance in student achievement relates to district-level factors; however, differences between districts in performance over time represent a half-year's learning for students. Howley (1996) found size of school and district to influence student achievement in rural, high-poverty schools. Pennington's (n.d.) description of an Iowa Department of Education study revealed mixed results regarding the influence of district size on student achievement. Abbott, Joireman, and Stroh's (2002) determined size in itself is not a consistent factor; however, large district size was found to "strengthen the negative relationship between school poverty and student achievement" (p. 16). Through his research, Boser (2013), claimed 2000-4000 students is optimal economically related to "providing a sufficient education" (p. 2). Whitehurst, Chingos, and Gallaher, Howley, Pennington, as well as Abbott, Joireman, and Stroh recommended future inquiry regarding district size. This study's examination of the dependent variables for this study as related to district size builds on existing research and extends the examination of size in a rural, high-poverty, high-accountability state.

Congressional district of school district. Examining poverty rates of districts (Southern Echo, 2014) reveals the existence of disparity across the state in poverty rate, accountability rating, and teacher shortages. Southern Echo findings collected and published in the form of state maps viewed along with a map of congressional districts (U.S. Elections-MS) shows congressional districts to vary by achievement, measure by state accountability ratings, as well as poverty, measured by free/reduced lunch percentages for districts. Investigating differences influencing selection of leaders for the schools by Mississippi's four congressional districts is relevant to examine and appropriate to include in this study's examination of related factors.

Manner of selection as superintendent. According to state department of education websites, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi are the only three states continuing to employ elected superintendents. Further, Phillips (2015) reports of 14,500 superintendents in the United States, only 154 are elected. According to fall 2015 records of the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents, 58, or 37.7%, of those elected nationally serve a Mississippi school district. Current unsigned legislation proposes Mississippi superintendents be appointed for all districts. Due to the unique selection process for the superintendent, the use of the demographic as a variable of study for the state is not only appropriate, but also likely to result in differences in the dependent variables.

Accountability rating of school district. The most recent release of accountability data for the state (MDE, 2015b), reports data for 151 school districts, with Excellence for All districts excluded from the report, as well as one district with pending rating due to an investigation of assessment procedures within the district. Of those 151, 19 districts (13%) received the designation of A; 43, or 28%, are designated B; 48, or 32%, are designated C; 39, or 26%, are designated D. One school district (1%) was labeled a failing district. An examination of the process by which superintendents select school leaders for recommendation to hire in various accountability rated districts is of relevance for the audiences of this study, as patterns in the findings inform district leaders of possible improvements to made to the district's hiring process, particularly for critical need districts low in the worker queue. Superintendents and principal candidates also benefit from this study's results since similarities and differences in the manner in which various rated districts conduct the hiring process and view principal candidates are identified.

Free/Reduced Lunch Program participation in school district. Lezotte and Snyder's (2011) identification of poverty as the "single most accurate indicator on which individual and organizational expectations turn in public schools" (p.43) amplifies Jensen's (2009) definition of poverty as "a chronic and debilitating condition that results from multiple adverse synergistic risk factors and affects the mind, body, and soul" (p. 6) and assertion those risk factors compound the academic problems of children in poverty and, to combat those problems, specific acts by schools and school leaders are required. Peske and Haycock (2006) identified three "proxies for teacher effectiveness" (p. 3): experience, education, and skill. The authors noted in all three cases students in high-poverty schools are more likely to be served by teachers with less experience, less education, and less skill than student counterparts in low-poverty schools. Peske and Haycock also pointed out the need and lack of high quality principals in these schools. According to Mississippi Department of Education (2015d), 720 schools in Mississippi operate Title I school-wide schools, meaning for 80% of the state's schools a minimum of 40% of students receive free or reduced lunches. Comparing the results for dependent variables by socioeconomic status of school districts is supported by research, state data, as well as by the common knowledge shared by practitioner superintendents in the state.

Dependent Variables

Components of leadership. Building on the work of Marzano et. al's (2005) linking school leadership with factors related to effective schools, Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth utilized past school effectiveness research, including Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson's Wallace Foundation Study (2010) , to develop the Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model focused on actions necessary for the enhancement of student learning. Marzano's (2014) research culminated in the identification of 24 critical actions of school leaders and the

assignment of those actions to five domains: data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, guaranteed and viable curriculum, cooperation and collaboration, and school climate. For the purpose of this research, the domains of the Marzano School Leader Evaluation model serve as 5 of the 6 factors serving as dependent variables in the quantitative phase of research. An additional factor, community connections, was chosen to examine due to the unique manner in which superintendents are selected in some districts. Therefore, the study examines superintendent ranking of six factors in assessing principal candidates for recommendation to hire: community connections, continuous improvement of instruction, cooperation and collaboration, data-driven focus, guaranteed and viable curriculum, and school climate.

Activities of human resource/personnel directors. Benedict (2008) for the Society for Human Resource Management reported recruiting and participation in the selection process for new hires as the most critical functions of human resource managers or directors. In a field, described by Odden (2011) as “a people-intensive proposition” (p. 8) and with 85% of school budgets allocated to salaries and benefits, talented personnel and strategic management of talent are critical to a district’s success. Wright and Stewart (2010) revealed how human resource officers for Fortune 150 companies and partner companies spend their time and how much value they perceive their roles as talent architects, leaders of human resource functions, and builders of human capital to be to their organizations. Although the impact of these functions has been studied in many industries, no research was found on the impact of human resource directors in the educational setting; therefore, the inclusion of this variable provides applicable information for practitioners and a new area of study for researchers.

Hypotheses

The study seeks to test 16 hypotheses related to each variable discussed in the previous section.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Eight: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Hypothesis Nine: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent.

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district.

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Sixteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Data Collection

Upon obtaining approval from dissertation committee members, as well as the University Institutional Review Board, and the subsequent piloting of the superintendent survey, I sent via e-mail a letter of explanation of the study with a short Qualtrics® survey (see Appendix A). Responses are confidential and are reported in compiled form only. A large sample size was desired to provide a representative sample across independent variable; therefore, non-responders were contacted by e-mail reminder and by postal mail.

Use of a Qualtrics e-mail survey originally distributed on February 26, 2016 facilitated contacting non-respondents and identifying districts to contact during the qualitative phase of the phase. Fowler (2014) stressed that while internet surveys do not yield complete, reliable data for all samples, the method does have distinct advantages when surveying participants who “have virtually universal access to e-mail and [use] it routinely” (p. 53). Fowler also contended that response rates are affected by the sender being known or representing an institution that is well-known or of which the respondents are members. An e-mail survey suits this study in its ease of

delivery, as well as in its fit for the target population, public school superintendents for whom computer and e-mail use are common activities. The familiarity of the survey recipients with the researcher or the university represented was also expected to support a high response rate.

Fowler (2014) suggested multi-mode surveys are helpful in increasing response rates and in enabling researchers to reach participants who may be difficult to contact with one particular method. Therefore, a mailed copy of the survey was sent to non-responders after a reminder email following non-response of the initial survey. The use of e-mail and traditional mailing in attempting to gain participants improved the response rate and data collection from initially unmotivated or forgetful sample members.

Responses from surveys collected by March 25, 2016 were compiled into a data set, as they were received, for ease of data-entry into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Chi-Square analyses. As recommended by Fowler (2014), only positive numbers were used, and non-responses were assigned (9) a specific, easily identifiable value for recognition. For example, non-responses were coded with a specific number (9) used for identification only, for ease of exclusion from calculable data in the set. Data analysis for each phase began as soon as all data for the phase were in place.

Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data was descriptively analyzed for two main purposes:

a) to identify the most frequently ranked high, most frequently ranked low, mean rank of each factor, and outlier factors influencing the selection of a principal candidate; and b) to identify the most frequent, least frequent, and other visible patterns in the activities in which human resource/personnel directors engage during the selection process. In addition to descriptive analysis, statistical analysis for differences across groups was conducted.

The quantitative phase of this study involved a set sample, based on job description at the time of the study. Because contextual variables in the population represented are not normally distributed, it is also known that contextual variables (gender, race, district accountability rating, district size, etc.) in the sample are not normally distributed, are unequal, and do not meet assumptions required for parametric analysis. When research data is not continuous or violates parametric assumptions, non-parametric analysis is necessary. According to Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs (2003), behavioral science and educational research often involves studies of a limited number of participants. When the number of subjects is limited for a comparison group, parametric assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance may be impossible to meet. The results from the quantitative instrument include ordinal data with unequal intervals in the form of ranked scores and nominal data in the form of a checklist of activities depicting involvement of human resource/personnel directors. Therefore, the quantitative component of this study involves two non-parametric tests: a Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance (H) and a chi-square (χ^2) frequency distribution.

Kruskal-Wallis Analysis. Quantitative data was impossible to present as matched sets due to fixed, varying group sizes. Survey responses from the unmatched groups related to factors influencing a superintendent's recommendation of a principal candidate for hire were in the form of ranked data. According to Hinkle, Wiersma, and Jurs, to identify significant differences in ranked data (ordinal) among unmatched groups, the appropriate one-way analysis of variance statistical test is the Kruskal-Wallis. The ability to correct for tied ranks is a further consideration in selecting the Kruskal-Wallis test for data in this study. Data for the Kruskal-Wallis test was each independent variable for demographic categories—gender of superintendent, ethnicity of superintendent, size of district, congressional district, manner in

which superintendent is selected, accountability rating of district, free/reduced lunch percentage of district--and the ordinal dependent variable distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board.

Chi-Square Analysis. Survey responses related to the activity levels of district human resource/personnel directors during the principal selection process resulted in frequency counts for nominal variables. As with the ordinal data set previously discussed, the nominal data set was from unmatched groups of different sizes. Due to the existence of nominal variables and unmet parametric assumptions, two-way chi-square (χ^2) contingency tables were used in analyzing the data. The chi-square (χ^2) “nonparametric statistical test to determine whether research data in the form of frequency counts are distributed differently for different samples,” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, p. 325) is commonly used in educational research causal-comparative studies.

Rea and Parker’s (2014) description of the chi-square test as appropriate and common for analyzing nominal data also supports its use in this study. The categories for the two-way chi-square were each independent variable for demographic categories—gender of superintendent, ethnicity of superintendent, size of district, congressional district, manner in which superintendent is selected, accountability rating of district, free/reduced lunch percentage of district--and the nominal dependent variable human resource/personnel director activity level during the selection process. Each subject fell into one level of each of the self-reported independent variable categories and was assigned a numeric code denoting the presence (1) or absence (0) of each dependent variable. The resulting contingency coefficient “provide[d] an estimate of the magnitude of the relationship between the variables in a chi-square table” (p. 325).

Qualitative Phase

Following the quantitative phase of the study, a qualitative phase dependent upon rich interviews and thick description occurred. A credible, relatable voice conveys “authenticity and trustworthiness” (Patton, p. 41) and requires a balance of authentic depiction of the topic studied with consciousness of the elements of one’s self that is brought to the study. Patton pointed out that to the qualitative researcher, voice is of critical importance.

Patton’s explanation of third person passive voice to communicate work concerned with procedures, objectivity, authority, and researcher-control informs the choice of using multiple points of view to document this study, with the personal first person voice more appropriate for the phase of work focused on people, interactions, and more prone to subjectivity and mutual participant/researcher-control. To clearly delineate the qualitative phase discussion and to achieve a credible, self-aware voice, I have chosen, in outlining the qualitative phase, to use the personal voice of a qualitative researcher who “acknowledges the humanity of both self and others” (p. 64) and wishes to conduct a study that respects “relationship, mutuality, and genuine dialogue” (p. 64). The language, as the study, is a balance of the procedures and sense of objectivity expected in the quantitative research community with the trustworthy, personal voice necessary to conduct research in a qualitative phase, or setting.

Subjects

As subjects for the qualitative component of the study, I selected four human resource/personnel directors from Mississippi school districts, according to purposeful sampling. Human resource/personnel directors who represent districts in which superintendents report human resource/personnel directors’ involvement in the selection of principals for recommendation to the school board were selected. Attention was given to district demographics

and accountability rating of district. Interviews and constant comparison were conducted until saturation was achieved and emergent themes met sufficiency described by Richards (2015).

Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined saturation as the point at which no new data emerges to inform the development of categories, their properties and dimensions, and variation within categories; the point at which no additional categories are necessary to fully describe the phenomenon studied; or the point at which the relationships among categories are recognizable and established. Corbin and Strauss advocated theoretical sampling, which is concept-driven “when studying new or uncharted areas” (p. 145). For this study, I transcribed, coded, and analyzed interview data following each interview and formulated categories as all interviews were cross-analyzed. Interview data also provided the context for descriptions of each interview participant, or case. After four interviews, constant comparison revealed no new concepts or dimensions of the identified categories, so I suspended sampling; however, if categories and dimensions of those categories had continued to develop, additional participants would have been selected according to the same sampling procedure and criteria as the initial cases.

Instruments

The instrument utilized during the qualitative phase of the study was an interview protocol used while conducting interviews with human resource/ personnel directors. Three school administrators from two Mississippi school districts and a professor with extensive experience in qualitative research and interviewing reviewed the protocol for clarity and bias. Glesne (2006) identified the interview as one of the most prevalent methods of gathering data for qualitative research. Kvale (2009) defined the interview as an “inter view, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest” (p. 2). Kvale further differentiated interviews and conversations by noting interviews are conducted in a manner of

structure of purpose, with thoughtful questioning and responsive listening between unequal partners, as the researcher/interviewer should control the interview to achieve the stated purpose. In addition to becoming a mainstay of information gathering in today's popular culture, qualitative interviews have become an accepted method in qualitative research, particularly in the social sciences, including the field of education.

Protocol Instrument. For the qualitative phase of this mixed methods study, I used an interview protocol based on Kvale (2007) consisting of semi-structured, depth-probing questions described in Glesne (2006). The protocol was developed with the guidance of a professor in the Education Leadership department with extensive experience in conducting qualitative research and reviewed for clarity and bias by a small sample of school administrators. The guiding research questions will anchor the directed conversations with human resource/personnel directors.

Patton (2002) recommended probe questions to deepen responses, increase richness of data, and provide cues about the desired level of responses in future questions. According to Patton, probing is a skill of knowing what to look for in an interview, listening carefully to what is and is not being stated, and offering moment-specific feedback using verbal and non-verbal cues. Anchored by the guiding research questions of the study, probing and elaboration cues were used to encourage interview participants to explain or elaborate upon answers they provided to the core questions of the protocol and to re-direct participants as needed.

Researcher Instrument. According to Flick (2009), the researcher and the communicative competence of the researcher are the main instruments in a qualitative study or in the qualitative phase of a mixed methods design. Knowledge, roles, and skills of the researcher are important to the strength of the study. Kvale (2009) noted essential characteristics of an

effective interviewer, including knowledge of the topic, organized and structured by nature, mastery of communication skills, ability to support the narrative through conversational flow, probing questions, and quick decision-making of “what to ask and how” (p. 166), as well as a natural sense for interview participants’ language style.

My personality, educational background, past experiences with interviewing, and role as a district-level administrator support my serving as a researcher/instrument. According to a *Leading from Your Strengths* (Trent, Cox, & Tooker, 2004) personality survey conducted with members of a previous administrative team, I possess a people and information-centered personality with a tendency toward intuitive decision-making. In addition to my personality, my educational background is an asset for the researcher/instrument role. Completion of a bachelor’s degree in English and Spanish, a Master of Arts in English, as well as completion of English as a Second Language teacher certification evidences my fluency in the English language and my ability to articulate ideas orally and in writing to a wide variety of audiences. Publication of action research and interview-based articles in peer-reviewed educational journals [*English Journal* (2001) and *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin: A Journal for Professional Educators* (Fall 2014, Spring 2014)] also supports my communication abilities.

I have completed a variety of coursework that included experiences with interviewing. I conducted interview and survey research during an ethnographic study concerning Hispanic parents and white and African-American teachers in completing English as a Second Language teacher certification. As a participant in University of Mississippi Writing Project’s Action Research seminar, I interviewed students of varying performance levels regarding classroom instruction and assessment preferences. Finally, as a student in the educational leadership program, I have taken coursework in both quantitative and qualitative research design and

completed a research project in courses tailored to each method. The qualitative course project included individual interviews with local school district superintendents and a focus group interview with participants in non-traditional school leader preparation programs.

I am currently in my fourth year of service on the editorial board of an international education journal with both print and online publications. During my appointment to the editorial board, I have gained further experience with interviewing. Articles I wrote framing my interviews with the organization's international president as well as with notable researcher and author Dr. Robert Marzano were both selected for publication.

My role as a pk-12 administrator also supports my role as a researcher in the field of education. I am familiar with the vocabulary, time constraints, and political climate of school administration. My position also affords me the advantage of knowing many school district administrators in the state; as Director of Instruction for an A-level school district, I also benefit from the flexibility of schedule to meet with administrators representing other districts at their convenience.

Reflexivity. With the experiences and education that enable me to be an effective qualitative researcher also come experiences, perspectives, and methodological and ideological biases that will influence decisions guiding the research process and interactions with participants in the study. Examining researcher beliefs, biases, and expected results is critical, as qualitative research is a social endeavor. Schwandt (2007) noted the importance of reflexivity in research design that involves “a social network of informants and participants in a study” (p. 260) to collect and analyze data Richards (2015) described as “collaboratively constructed.” Glesne agreed “what [researchers] know about [their] research—reflected in [their] interpretations—is intertwined with what [they] know about [themselves]” (p.

194). Beyond the basic need in qualitative studies, Finaly (2002) contended, particularly for research involving interviews, reflexivity is necessary to increase integrity and trustworthiness, not to eliminate any researcher belief or bias but to provide insight into how the researcher will move “back and forth” (p. 533) between experience of interviewer and awareness of personal views, as well as between the simultaneous roles of researcher and member of the community studied. To approach “the rigor that is required of good, qualitative research” (p. 32), Etherington (2004) argued the “capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts inform the process of inquiry” is required. Etherington contended the consciousness of the researcher to his or her own influences in the collection, transcription, and analysis phases of the qualitative research decreases misrepresentation of data and deepens the basis of interpretation, strengthening the findings.

My experience teaching in districts with both high and mid-range free/reduced lunch percentages, having worked in district administration for male and female, as well as elected and appointed, superintendents, and having held jobs in education in multiple congressional districts certainly informed my selection of variables to examine. My role of Director of Instruction in a district holding a high accountability rating and heavily influenced by the district’s work with Marzano strategies and evaluation criteria can be seen in the design of the quantitative instrument (survey). Currently working in a district administration with an influential, active human resource director with experience as a principal in a high-poverty school and as a human resource manager in the furniture industry influenced my topic selection for this study and the design of the qualitative instrument (interview protocol). Journaling is likely to reveal what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) referred to as “contributions as a researcher to the production of knowledge” (p. 242) by which my perspectives influence my data collection and data analysis.

Research Questions

1. To what extent are human resource/personnel directors involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?
2. What perceptions of their contributions to the selection process exist among human resource/personnel directors?

Data Collection

Following analysis of quantitative data, purposive sampling was utilized to identify “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). According to Patton, “The underlying principle that is common to all the strategies is selecting information-rich cases—cases from which one can learn a great deal about matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study” (p. 242). Criterion purposive, or purposeful, sampling was used to select cases that meet predetermined criteria; in the case of this study, involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the process by which principals are selected for recommendation to the school board.

Four human resource/personnel directors were identified from the quantitative phase of this study. Those administrators were contacted with a request for interviews. The interview process occurred in March 2016. Timing of the interview process was selected in consideration of school schedules; August is particularly busy with beginning of school demands on administrator time, early winter is a time of extensive assessments in many districts (particularly those on a block schedule), and late spring is associated with heightened discipline and a full assessment calendar. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed following each interview.

Data Analysis

The four phases suggested by Flick (2009) guided data analysis: initial phase characterized by intuition; conceptual-theoretical phase with an emerging systematic process and utilizing memo-writing; confirmatory-selective phase involving selective coding for central themes and relevance; and a reflexive phase characterized by saturation and theory development. Saldaña (2009), claiming coding to be a “problem-solving technique” (p. 8) defined a code as “a word or phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Saldaña’s method of pre-coding prior to identifying descriptive and *in vivo* codes was utilized for this study. Initially, I reviewed interview transcriptions for resonating quotes; then, I used open-coding, with particular notation of comments that reveal preferences in factors influencing principal selection, the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the process, and the perception of human resource/personnel directors of their contributions to selecting principals for Mississippi schools; and re-coded using *in vivo* coding, or with the participants’ own words. *In vivo* coding provided a representation of the data in the participants’ own words and verified the codes I had selected. Codes were sorted into common topics or patterns of thinking. After these processes, central themes were identified through selective coding referred to by Saldaña as lean coding. Labels for themes were evaluated and revised to arrive at themes answering the research questions and meeting sufficiency, according to Richards (2015): simplified, complete, robust concepts organized to be sensible to all audiences and communicated in well-crafted language.

Spreadsheets and memo writing were also used to capture and organize analyzed data into narrative form. Corbin and Strauss (2008) argued that memos and diagrams are essential “storehouses” (p. 120) to qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis involved time-consuming, complex thinking; according to Corbin and Strauss, memo writing is beneficial in tracking thought processes and documenting needed information or emerging questions. “[Memos] force the analyst to work with concepts rather than raw data . . . [and] enable analysts to use creativity and imagination, often stimulating new insights into data” (p. 120).

Mixed Phase

Central Questions

1. How do the themes resulting from the qualitative interview process clarify or expand upon the information gained from the quantitative survey data concerning the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?
2. How do the perceptions of human resource/personnel directors regarding factors that influence selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board, as evidenced through a qualitative interview process, compare to the ranking of factors by superintendents, as measured quantitatively from survey data?

Discussion

For this study, the mixed methods analysis followed the side-by-side method outlined by Creswell (2014). Quantitative findings are reported; qualitative findings are discussed as the findings relate to the quantitative results, whether supporting or diverging. Areas in which results are in opposition are noted in the limitations section of this study, as well as in

recommendations for further research. Finally, a comparison of the two data sets was made and the mixed method investigation questions are addressed.

Threats to Validity

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) supported the use of the term *validity* despite the availability of and advocacy for other terms in mixed methods research “because of its acceptance by both quantitative and qualitative researchers” (p. 239). According to Creswell and Plano Clark, validity must be strengthened in all phases of research: selecting knowledgeable appropriate participants capable of giving the information requested, using separate data collection procedures to gain a wider view of the topic, developing a joint display of qualitative and quantitative data, using non-parametric statistics when appropriate, involving multiple researchers or reviewers with experience in each methodology, and addressing mixed methods questions in addition to questions related to the topic of study.

Verification procedures recommended by Creswell (Glesne, 2006, pp. 36-37) were used to address issues of validity. Data comparison, clarification of researcher bias, and member checking increased the validity and credibility. Strategies recommended by Shenton (2004) that combat four areas of threats--credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were also incorporated into the qualitative design of the study. Confidentiality and the mode of reporting findings will be discussed with each interview participant.

The use of probes for details and a focus on thick description in reporting findings further increased the credibility of the findings presented. Patton (2002) discussed the importance of thick description as the “bedrock” (p. 438) of qualitative research. Patton pointed out that description—detailed, organized, full descriptions of critical events, processes, and issues must be presented before a researcher can attach significance to particular results, answer *why*

questions, or interpret data patterns. Schwandt (2007) clarified that the purpose of thick description is not to simply record as much detail as possible but to lead to interpretation by characterizing an event, problem, or issue through a record of circumstances, intentions, and situations.

In addition to credibility, other threats identified by Shenton (2004) were addressed. Transferability was addressed through a clear description of the context of this study and the demographics of participants. A detailed description of research design, “operational detail” (p. 72), and self-reflection throughout the process yielded dependability. Confirmability of the research is supported through conscious reflection in memos, “admission of researcher’s beliefs and assumptions” (p. 73) in published or unpublished reports of findings, and comparison between the methods and data in the two phases of the study.

Confidentiality and Data Storage

All research was conducted with respect, trust, and cooperation. Risks and benefits were clearly outlined along with procedural details in an informational cover letter and informed consent form. Only adults were involved in the study. No covert research or coercion was involved. Further, identities have been protected in reports of findings. Digital files of surveys, interview transcripts, completed surveys, as well as resulting notes and documentation used for coding and matching, are stored in a locked file cabinet accessible only to me during the research and for a minimum of five years after completion of the study.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presents methodology for studying the differences among superintendents in ranking of factors that influence the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board and the extent to which human resource/personnel directors

are involved in the selection process. A description is included of analysis of dependent variables across multiple demographic categories of both the superintendent and the district represented. The chapter addresses subjects and application to a larger population, data collection procedures, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and storage of documents resulting from the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF STUDY

Introduction

Data collected and analyzed according to the design described in chapter three provides additional knowledge in response to the questions posed in chapter one related to the selection of principal candidates for Mississippi's public schools. A description of a pilot study for the survey used during the quantitative phase is included, as well as the findings of the pilot and the survey evaluation resulting from the data collected. The findings of the study presented in this chapter and discussed in greater detail in chapter five increase the knowledge base and provide guidance for superintendents, principal applicants, and school leadership preparation program personnel in preparing applicants both instructionally and practically to interview and gain employment in the state.

Results of Pilot

Small-scale pre-testing of questionnaires or surveys with a sample from the population prior to use in a research study is highly recommended (Creswell, 2014; Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2007; Rea & Parker, 2014). Rea and Parker (2014) described piloting surveys or other instruments as essential to fine-tuning the instrument and the process to be used in the actual research study. The authors pointed to wording, format, balance of question types, length of instrument, and time investment as components to be examined during a pilot to produce “unbiased, well-structured questions that will systematically obtain the information identified in stage 1 [identifying the focus of the study and method of research]” (p. 31). In addition to the

actual questions of the survey, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) argued a process for making criticisms and recommendations should be apparent in the pilot process. Examining these criticisms and recommendations in addition to the pilot study results supports a researcher in revising questions to clarify the questions' meaning or to ensure the necessary data is gathered. Other valuable information from a pilot study includes expected response rates and feedback concerning the expected time for surveys. The authors described three key purposes of a pilot study: to develop and refine data collection methods, to identify possible problems in a time frame where problems can be solved easily prior to in the midst of the main study, and to try out training or experimental procedures. Creswell (2014) further supported the importance of piloting instruments "to establish the content validity of scores on an instrument and to improve questions, format, and scales" (p. 161).

Piloting of the survey used to collect data for the quantitative phase of this study prior to the survey's distribution in Mississippi occurred with superintendents in Tennessee. A Southern state with similar curriculum standards, high free/reduced lunch participation rates associated with geographic areas, superintendents' familiarity with an elected-appointed system, and the use of Tennessee's principal evaluation model as a basis for the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System made Tennessee a logical state from which to sample, as those surveyed from the state could understand the language and the significance of the study's question in Mississippi. Twenty superintendents were selected by an external contact with the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents and distributed an anonymous link to the Qualtrics® researcher-developed survey. Pilot results were reviewed to evaluate ease of use of survey, quality of survey questions, probability of response selections or scales to offer the most accurate

data, and the ability of responses to fulfill data requirements for study, as well as to make any general improvements to the survey for ease of use by both participants and the researcher.

Completion of Pilot Survey

Of the twenty Tennessee superintendents surveyed, seventeen completed the survey for a response rate of 85%. A question response rate of 100% was achieved on the completed surveys; 14 respondents completed all multiple-choice items, and three completed all multiple-choice items and additional comment boxes suggesting components or choices not listed they found pertinent to include. Of the three surveyed who recommended choices be added to the survey, two suggested factors related to principal selection, and one suggested an additional activity of human resource/personnel directors. Respondents spent an average of three minutes, 44 seconds completing the survey, with the time ranging from two to seven minutes. The majority of respondents spent three minutes, 30 seconds completing the survey. Therefore, the survey was found to be easy for superintendents to understand and complete.

Subjects of Pilot Survey

Superintendent Demographics. Eleven, or 64.7%, of the seventeen superintendents surveyed during the pilot study were male, and six, or 35.3%, were female. All of the participants were white. The majority of those responding had served as a superintendent four years or fewer (8) compared to five participants serving between five and twelve years and four participants serving more than 12 years in a superintendent's position. All seven of Tennessee's congressional districts were represented, and all of the superintendents were appointed (which was expected as Tennessee no longer elects its superintendents.)

District Demographics.

Accountability Ratings. Taking into account the differences in state nomenclature for accountability ratings, superintendents were asked to align their Tennessee rating with a Mississippi accountability rating of A, B, C, D, and F. Districts holding A, B, and C ratings were reported. The greatest category reported was for A districts (7).

Size of District. Superintendents reported data from districts of each size listed on the survey. The distribution of superintendents serving in districts with 4,999 students or fewer and 5,000 students or more was comparable at nine and eight participants, respectively. Only one superintendent's district was smaller than 999 students, and four superintendents reported data from districts of 10,000 or more students.

Free/Reduced Lunch Percentages (FRLP) of Districts. Free/reduced lunch percentages were listed on the survey as ranges. Tennessee superintendents surveyed did not represent the high or low end of this measure, as no respondent reported representing a district with a 0-20% FRLP or a 91-100% FRLP. The vast majority (15) represented districts having 41%-90% FRLP; two districts reported the 21%-40% range. Although the lack of use of two categories could indicate a lack of need for those on the survey for the study, the lack of use does delineate clearly the cut points needed for the group surveyed, suggesting the categories initially developed are most likely the categories needed to obtain the most accurate data.

Findings of Pilot Survey

Principal Applicants.

Tennessee superintendents reported satisfaction (10 participants) with the quality of the applicant pool and reported the pool as ranging in size from 2-15 applicants. No district reported no applicants or one applicant or more than 15 applicants. The majority of superintendents

(nine) reported typically receiving two to five applications for a principal's opening. An additional six respondents reported six to ten applications, and two respondents reported usually selecting from 11-15 applicants for a principal's position. Chi-square analysis revealed no significant differences in applicant satisfaction and few significant differences in the number of applicants, with the only difference found in the pilot data occurring for the independent variable *size of district*.

Survey Evaluation for Applicant Number and Satisfaction Questions. The questions on the survey regarding the number of principal applicants and the satisfaction of the superintendent with the quality of those applicants revealed important descriptive statistics important to the expanded discussion of the implications of the study's findings in chapter five. Chi-square analysis is also expected to reveal patterns in the data and to offer possible explanations for some districts' greater appeal to applicants. Therefore, the questions concerning applicant number and quality are of interest to the researcher and are expected to explain findings related to some hypotheses.

Factors Influencing the Selection of Principals for Recommendation to Hire.

Descriptive Findings. Superintendents were asked to rank, with 1 being most influential and 6 being least influential, 6 components of leadership influencing the selection of principals for recommendation to hire (community connections, continuous improvement of instruction, cooperation and collaboration, data-driven focus, guaranteed and viable curriculum, and school climate). Continuous improvement of instruction was most frequently selected as most influential, with nine of the 17 superintendents ranking it first among the six factors listed. Continuous improvement of instruction and school climate were the components least frequently selected as least influential, with no superintendents ranking either factor last among the six

factors listed. A data-driven focus also ranked high, with five superintendents selecting it as the most influential factor and only one superintendent ranking it as the least influential factor. The range of ranking for data-driven focus and for cooperation and collaboration were the most extensive; each ranking (1-6) was represented for the two factors. The factor community connections was reported to be least important, ranking no higher than third. Table 1 shows the mean ranking of each factor studied with the lower rankings found to be the more influential factors studied.

Table 1.

Pilot Data--Mean Ranking of Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal in Order of Influence (lower being ranked as more influential)

Influencing Factor	Mean Ranking
Continuous Improvement of Instruction	1.88
Data-driven Focus	2.53
School Climate	3.29
Cooperation and Collaboration	3.65
Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	4.47
Connection to Community and/or District	5.18

Kruskal-Wallis Findings. Further analysis of the factors was completed using the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test to test for multiple hypotheses related to superintendent and district demographics:

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by race of superintendent.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Eight: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

The data performed as expected in the Kruskal-Wallis statistical tests, and a significance measure to be compared to a .05 significance level was achieved. For the limited sample, a statistic could

not be computed for two independent variables. For the independent variable *race*, all participants were white, and for *manner of selection of superintendent*, all participants were elected. However, neither of these issues is likely to recur with the wider sample of 141 superintendents in the actual study.

Survey Evaluation for Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal Questions. In addition to ranking the factors listed, superintendents were asked to complete a comment box with any factors not listed but believed to be pertinent to principal selection for inclusion in the study. Two superintendents offered responses: “we v. I” and “building management v. student learning.” The existing category cooperation and collaboration was determined to encompass “we v. I,” with the suggestion seen as a possible identifier in an applicant’s language of the factor listed on the survey. The suggestion “building management v. student learning” was considered; however, building management is a feature of understanding and improving school climate and student learning is represented in three factors: continuous improvement of instruction, data-driven focus, and guaranteed and viable curriculum. Therefore, no changes or additions were made to the factors listed on the survey prior to the final study.

With all question responses fulfilling data requirements, all activities listed being utilized, no suggested activities mentioned within the comment box following the question, the survey questions concerning leadership components were found to be sufficient to produce the information needed for the research. Further, because all resulting data performed as expected in statistical testing, the survey structure was found to support the collection of data necessary for the statistical test planned to address each hypothesis related to factors influencing superintendents in the principal selection process.

Human Resource/ Personnel Director Involvement in Selection Process.

Descriptive Findings. An examination of the activity level of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of principals for recommendation to hire revealed the majority of superintendents surveyed utilized the directors in their process. Of the seventeen respondents, five reported their human resource/personnel directors were very active in the process and eight reported their directors as active. Only four superintendents reported not utilizing the directors in the process at all.

Superintendents were provided with a list of six activities associated with human resource/personnel directors in business and industry and asked to select all in which their human resource/personnel director participates as part of the district's principal selection process: recruiting applicants, checking references, participating in an interview with the superintendent, reviewing applications for the purpose of narrowing, participating in an interview as part of a committee, and face-to-face meetings with applicants. The most commonly reported activity for human resource/personnel directors during principal selection was checking references, reported by 16 of the 17 superintendents. Recruiting applicants (12), screening applications for the purpose of narrowing (12), and participating in interviews either with the superintendent (11) or as part of a committee (11) were also reported as frequent activities for the human resource/personnel directors. Of the activities listed, face-to-face meeting with applicants was the least frequently reported activity, utilized by approximately half (8) of the 17 superintendents. Only two superintendents reported involvement of the human resource/personnel directors in only one category; one superintendent reported the human resource/personnel director was only involved at the recruiting applicants level, and one superintendent reported utilizing the human resource/personnel for checking references only.

Chi-Square Findings. Further analysis of the factors was completed using the non-parametric Chi-Square test for multiple hypotheses related to superintendent and district demographics. The data performed as expected in the chi-square statistical tests, and an asymptotic (2-sided) significance measure to be compared to a .05 significance level was achieved.

Hypothesis Nine: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent.

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of district.

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for

recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Hypothesis Sixteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Survey Evaluation for Human Resource/Personnel Director Questions. Outlier responses regarding the naming of human resource/personnel directors were found during the pilot. One superintendent reported each director of schools served as its own human resource/personnel director and fulfilled all of the activities listed with assistance from the superintendent. The phenomenon was anticipated to occur at some point in this study due to the state's multiple small districts. The respondent's ability to complete the survey was not hampered by the non-existence of a separate human resource/personnel director. Another superintendent chose to not include the name but the job title of the human resource/personnel director; however, activities were marked as being conducted by the unnamed person. Because all reported human resource/personnel directors are not intended to participate in the qualitative phase, neither phenomenon, if appearing on the research study survey as isolated cases or outlier responses, will affect the second stage of the study. With all questions containing a response that fulfilled data requirements, all activities listed reported as being utilized, and no suggested activities mentioned within the comment box following the question, the survey questions

concerning human resource/personnel directors were found to include the activities needed for superintendents to best represent the involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the main study. Further, because all resulting data performed as expected in statistical testing, the survey was found to support the collection of data necessary to produce the statistical measure necessary to address each hypothesis related to human resource/personnel director activity in the principal selection process.

Results of Quantitative Phase of Study

Completion of Survey

Of 140 Mississippi superintendents surveyed, 82 completed the survey for a response rate of 58.8%. Of those responding, 56 completed the survey online, and 26 completed the mailed survey for those not responding to the online survey. A question response rate of 100% was achieved on the completed online surveys; and a question response rate of 87.5% was achieved on the completed mail surveys, as three participants did not respond to all questions. Two participants did not respond to questions regarding their congressional district, and one participant did not complete the question regarding current official accountability rating of district. For the 56 online respondents, 100% completed all multiple-choice items, and sixteen completed all multiple-choice items and additional comment boxes suggesting components or choices not listed they found pertinent to include. Of the sixteen surveyed who recommended choices be added to the survey, thirteen suggested factors related to principal selection, with most suggestions being “soft skills,” related to work ethic, appearance, loyalty, and personality traits; three suggested an additional activities of human resource/personnel directors: verifying experience, scheduling interviews, and initiating background checks. Mail survey participants did not include further comments for any write-in question. Online respondents’ survey times

ranged from two (one participant) to 40 minutes (one participant). According to Qualtrics® analysis, 41, or 73.21% of the 56 participants completing the survey online did so in fewer than ten minutes, the time estimated in the information distributed to participants prior to their participating in the survey. Outlier times may be explained by a superintendent's being interrupted during the survey and leaving the survey open rather than closing.

Subjects of Pilot Survey

Superintendent Demographics. 57 or 69.5%, of the 82 superintendents surveyed during the pilot study were male, and 25, or 28.75%, were female. For the race variable, the majority of participants were white, as expected from the Mississippi superintendent population data collected prior to the survey. Of those completing the survey, 21 (25.6%) were black and 61 (74.4%) were white. The majority of those responding had served as a superintendent four years or fewer (40) compared to 31 participants serving between 5-12 years and eleven participants serving more than 12 years in a superintendent's position. All four of Mississippi's congressional districts were represented, with the highest response rate coming from Congressional District 1. The higher response rate may be attributed to name recognition, as the researcher has been an educator in the congressional district's public schools for 18 years. Of the 80 superintendents responding to the survey, 51 (62.2%) were appointed and 31 (37.8%) elected.

District Demographics.

Accountability Ratings. Considering the changes discussed in previous chapters concerning assessments and accountability models in the state, as well as Mississippi's current waiver agreement districts may be held harmless--able to maintain a previously earned rating or to accept the most recently assigned rating based on 2013-2014 student data (2014-2015 student

data unreleased as of March 2016)--superintendents were asked to report their current official state accountability rating of A, B, C, D, or F. Districts with A, B, C, and D ratings were reported. The greatest category reported was for B districts (28); the fewest, A districts (11.) However, the response rate for A districts is quite high, as 11 of 19 (57.89%) A-rated districts responded to the survey.

Size of District. Superintendents reported data from districts of each size listed on the survey. The distribution of superintendents serving in districts with 1000-4999 students and districts with 5,000-9999 students was comparable at 32 and 28 participants, respectively. Only one responding superintendent's district served 10,000 or more students, and nine superintendents reported data from districts of 999 students or fewer.

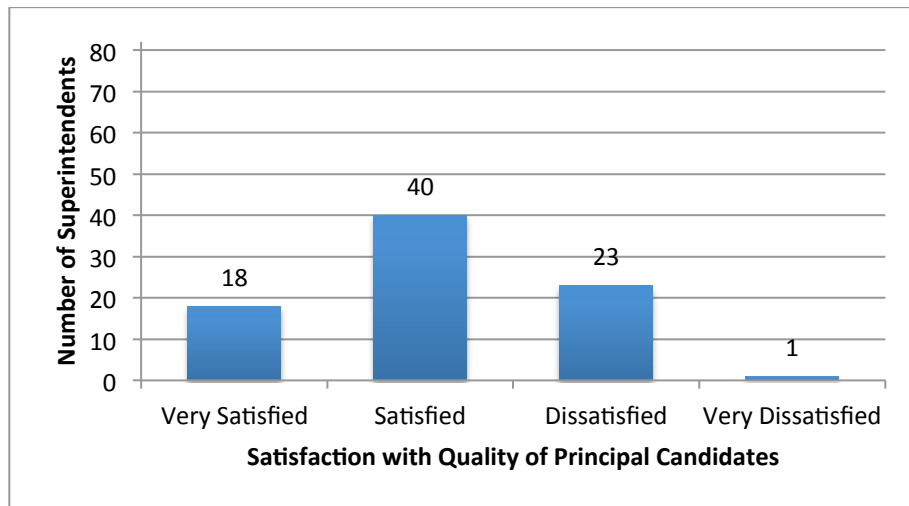
Free/Reduced Lunch Percentages (FRLP) of Districts. Free/reduced lunch percentages were listed on the survey as ranges. Mississippi superintendents surveyed did not represent the high range of this measure, as no respondent reported representing a district with a 0-20% FRLP. The vast majority (81) represented districts having an FRLP above 40%, anticipated due to 80% of the state's schools qualifying for Title I federal funding. The majority of those in the 40% and above category, 57 (69.5%), reported an FRLP of 41%-90%, most likely due to the wide range of the measure. One district reported the 21%-40% FRLP range.

Principal Applicants.

Mississippi superintendents reported satisfaction (58 participants) with the quality of the applicant pool, with 70.7% reporting being very satisfied or satisfied with recent applicant quality; of the 70.7% reporting satisfaction, 22% reported being very satisfied. Only one district (1.3%) reported being very dissatisfied. Figure # shows the satisfaction with the principal applicant pool for superintendents surveyed.

Figure 1.

Satisfaction with Quality of Principal Applicant Pool.



Survey participants reported the number of applicants for their districts as ranging in size from two to 15+ applicants. No district reported no or one applicant, and six districts reported more than 15 applicants. The majority of superintendents (36) reported typically receiving six to ten applications for a principal’s opening. An additional 31 respondents reported two to five applications, and nine respondents reported usually selecting from 11-15 applicants for a principal’s position. Chi-square analysis revealed only significant difference in applicant satisfaction (for race), but three cells showed an expected count less than five; therefore, a larger sample is recommended.

Findings of Survey

Factors Influencing the Selection of Principals for Recommendation to Hire.

Descriptive Findings. Superintendents were asked to rank, with one being most influential and six being least influential, six components of leadership influencing the selection of principals for recommendation to hire (community connections, continuous improvement of instruction, cooperation and collaboration, data-driven focus, guaranteed and viable curriculum,

and school climate. Responses varied with at least five superintendents ranking each factor as most influential and at least one superintendent ranking each factor as least influential. Data-driven focus on student achievement was most frequently selected as most influential, with 26 (31.7%) of the 82 superintendents ranking it first among the six factors listed. Continuous improvement of instruction and school climate were also frequently reported as most influential with 23 (28.1%) and 21 (25.6%) participants selecting those factors, respectively. Connections to the district and/or surrounding community was the component least frequently selected as least influential, with five superintendents ranking it most influential and 49 (59.8%) ranking it least influential in their selection of principal candidates. Table 2 shows the mean ranking of each factor studied with the lower rankings found to be the more influential factors studied.

Table 2.

Mean Ranking of Factors Influencing Superintendent Selection of Principal in Order of Influence (with lower ranking being more influential)

Influencing Factor	Mean Ranking
Data-Driven Focus on Student Achievement	2.42
Continuous Improvement of Instruction	2.70
School Climate	3.11
Cooperation and Collaboration	3.50
Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	3.91
Connections within the District and/or Surrounding Community	5.05

Kruskal-Wallis Findings. Further analysis of the factors was completed using the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis to test for multiple hypotheses related to superintendent and district demographics.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a difference approaching statistically significant in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent for the School Climate factor, with a mean rank of 38.61 for 57 males and 48.08 for 25 females. Therefore, research failed to reject Hypothesis One; the substantial difference will be discussed in chapter five. The lower ranking of males in the study suggests males are more attentive than females to climate during the selection process. Table 3 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for gender.

Table 3.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Gender of Superintendent.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.276	.450	.682	.217	.381	.090

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by race of superintendent.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by race of superintendent for the Connections and Data factors. For the Connections factor, with a mean rank of 51.76 for 21 black superintendents and 37.97 for 61

white superintendents, white superintendents reported connections to the district and/or surrounding community more influential than their black peers. For the Data factor, with a mean rank of 32.5 for 21 black superintendents and 44.6 for 61 white superintendents, black superintendents reported Data-driven focus on student achievement more influential than white superintendents. Therefore, Hypothesis Two is rejected. Table 4 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for race.

Table 4.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Race of Superintendent.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.011	.266	.214	.038	.304	.364

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years experience as superintendent. Therefore, research failed to reject Hypothesis Three. Table 5 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for years experience as superintendent.

Table 5.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Years Experience as Superintendent.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.468	.464	.840	.680	.382	.299

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of district. Therefore, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Four. Table 6 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for size of district.

Table 6.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Size of District.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.378	.338	.713	.415	.405	.216

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district. Therefore, research failed to reject Hypothesis Five. Table 7 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for congressional district.

Table 7.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Congressional District.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.703	.866	.760	.144	.118	.970

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by manner in which the superintendent is selected for the Connections factor and approaching statistical significance for the School Climate factor. For Connections, a Kruskal-Wallis statistical test resulted in a mean rank of 45.79 for 51 appointed and 34.44 elected superintendents. For School Climate, the test resulted in a mean rank of 44.97 for 51 appointed and 35.79 for 31 elected superintendents. With the lower ranking indicating the factor is more influential, data suggests elected superintendents consider connections within the district and/or surrounding community and school climate more important factors in selecting a principal than their appointed peers. Therefore, Hypothesis One is rejected. Table 8 reports the significance

values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for manner in which superintendent is selected.

Table 8.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Manner in which Superintendent is Selected.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.020	.174	.675	.378	.199	.083

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a difference approaching statistical difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating for the factors Connections and Curriculum. Therefore, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Seven, discussed in chapter five and considered a substantial difference for further study for Guaranteed, Viable Curriculum and Connections to District and/or Surrounding Community.

For the factor regarding curriculum, the mean rankings for the factor are as follows: A, 45.59; B, 48.30; C, 34.58; and D, 32.71. No F ratings were reported. Analysis suggests schools holding a lower rating consider curriculum as a more influential factor during the principal selection than peers in districts with higher accountability ratings. Regarding connections to the district and/or surrounding community, A-(46.09) and D- (45.68) rated district reported the highest rankings, suggesting district connections are not as influential at the extremes of the

measurement as in B and C districts. Table 9 reports the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for manner in which superintendent is selected.

Table 9.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Current Official Accountability Rating.

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.075	.310	.335	.917	.060	.496

Hypothesis Eight: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Initial analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free and reduced lunch percentage for the Connections and Cooperation factors and a difference approaching significance for the Curriculum factor. For the Connections factor, a mean rank of 3 was achieved for the district with an FRLP 21%-40% but not comparable to other data due to only one district reporting in the category. A mean rank of 38.94 was achieved for 57 districts with an FRLP of 90% and below; a mean rank of 49.19 was achieved for 24 districts with an FRLP above 90%, suggesting districts located in areas of the highest poverty do not report connections to the district and/or surrounding community as influential as their counterparts. For the Cooperation factor, a mean rank of 15.5 was achieved for the one district reporting 21%-40 FRLP; 38.10 for 57 41%-90% districts; and 50.67 for 24 districts with an FRLP above 90%. Cooperation is, thus, reported to be less important to superintendents of districts in the areas of highest poverty than other factors. With a mean rank

for Curriculum of 75.00 for 21%-40% FRLP, 44.25 for 41%-99% FRLP, and 33.58% for the 91%-100% FRLP, data suggests curriculum is a more influential factor in high-poverty districts. It must be noted again that only one participant reported being superintendent of a 21%-40% district.

Summarizing the findings for this demographic, curriculum is reported to be more influential to superintendents of the highest poverty districts; whereas, connections to the district and/or surrounding community and cooperation and collaboration are reportedly less influential to those superintendents' selection of a principal candidate than those factors are to their peers. A second Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to eliminate the outlier case. Analysis of the second test also revealed a statistically significant difference for Cooperation and for Connections and a difference approaching significance for Curriculum. Therefore, Hypothesis Eight is rejected. Tables 10 and 11 report the significance values achieved on the Kruskal-Wallis testing ranked factors for manner in which superintendent is selected.

Table 10.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage. (Initial Results).

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.028	.479	.047	.401	.061	.476

Table 11.

Significance Levels for Ranked Factors Influencing Selection of Principal Candidates by Free and Reduced Lunch Percentages. (Outlier Excluded).

	Connections	Instruction	Cooperation	Data	Curriculum	Climate
Significance Value	.046	.261	.027	.680	.060	.891

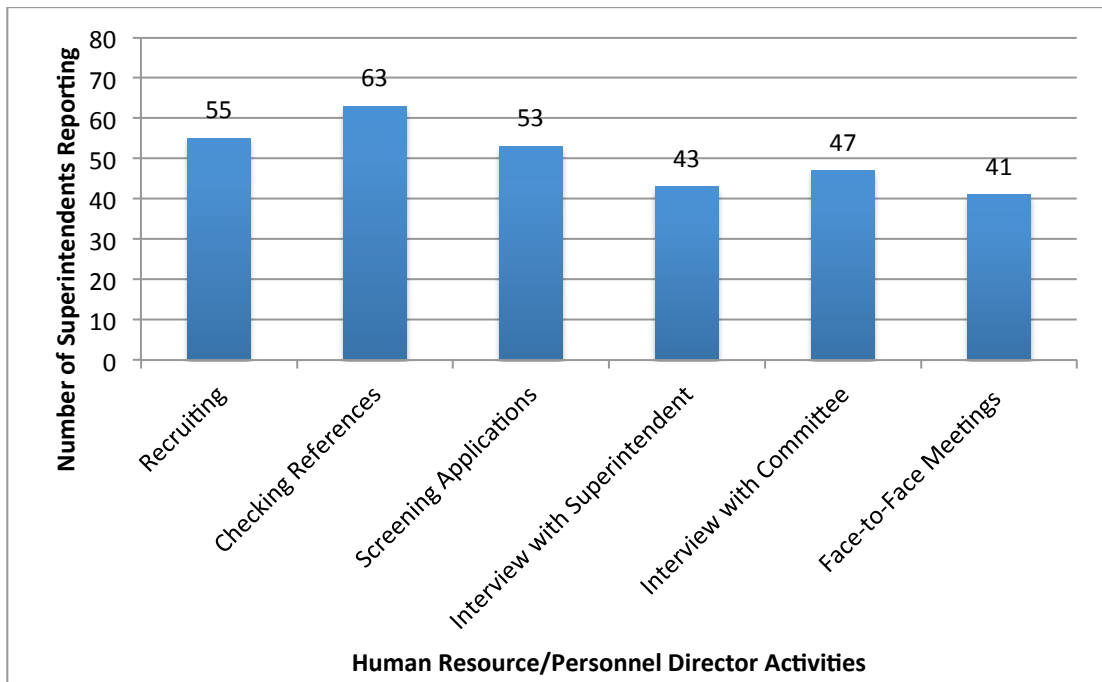
Human Resource/ Personnel Director Involvement in Selection Process.

Descriptive Findings. An examination of the activity level of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of principals for recommendation to hire revealed the majority of superintendents surveyed utilized the directors in their process. Of the 82 respondents, 28 (34.1%) reported their human resource/personnel directors were very active in the process and 24 (29.3%) reported their directors as active. The remaining 30 (36.6%) superintendents reported not utilizing the directors in the process at all. Of the 30 superintendents reporting non-use of a human resource/personnel director, the majority (20), or 24.3%, of the 82 superintendents responding to the survey noted their district did not employ a human resource/personnel director or employed a payroll clerk or administrative assistant for paperwork or financial issues related to personnel. Several of these superintendents listed their own names as the human resource/personnel director designee and/or included comments to the effect that they were solely responsible for the application and selection process.

Superintendents were provided with a list of six activities associated with human resource/personnel directors in business and industry and asked to select all in which their human resource/personnel director participates as part of the district’s principal selection process: recruiting applicants, checking references, participating in an interview with the superintendent, reviewing applications for the purpose of narrowing, participating in an interview as part of a

committee, and face-to-face meetings with applicants. The most commonly reported activity for human resource/personnel directors during principal selection was checking references, reported by 63 (76.8%) of the 82 superintendents. Recruiting applicants (55, or 67.1%), screening applications for the purpose of narrowing (53, or 64.6%), , and participating in interviews either with the superintendent (43, or 52.4%) or as part of a committee (47, or 57.3%) were also reported as frequent activities for the human resource/personnel directors. Of the activities listed, face-to-face meeting with applicants was the least frequently reported activity, utilized by half (41) of the 80 superintendents. Eight superintendents reported involvement of the human resource/personnel directors in only one category; three superintendents reported the human resource/personnel director was only involved at the application screening level; two superintendents reported utilizing the human resource/personnel for checking references only; two superintendents reported human resource/personnel directors only participated at a recruitment level; and one superintendent reported having utilized a human resource/personnel director to serve on an interview committee. Activities suggested, but not listed on the survey, were secretarial in nature: verifying experience, scheduling interviews, and initiating background checks. Figure 2 reflects the reported activities of human resource/personnel directors during the principal selection process in Mississippi school districts represented in the quantitative phase of this study.

Figure 2. Mississippi Human Resource/Personnel Director Activities During Principal Selection Process.



Chi-Square Findings. Further analysis of the factors was completed using the non-parametric Chi-Square test for multiple hypotheses related to superintendent and district demographics. The data performed as expected in the chi-square statistical tests, and an asymptotic (2-sided) significance measure to be compared to a .05 significance level was achieved. However, low expected counts were reported in the areas of years experience as superintendent, size of district, congressional district, and accountability rating. For those categories, more than 30% of cells had expected counts below five, suggesting a larger sample is needed in future research. Analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in the activity level of human resource/personnel directors.

Hypothesis Nine: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent.

Chi-square for gender of superintendent was calculated at 1.632 with an alpha level of 0.442; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Nine. Table 12 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by gender of superintendent.

Table 12.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Involvement by Superintendent Gender.

	Male	Female	
Very Active	19	9	28
Active	19	5	24
Not Active	19	11	30
Total	57	25	82

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent.

Chi-square for ethnicity of superintendent was calculated at .434 with an alpha level of 0.805; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Ten. Table 13 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by ethnicity of superintendent.

Table 13.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Involvement by Superintendent Ethnicity.

	Black	White	
Very Active	8	20	28
Active	5	19	24
Not Active	8	22	30
Total	21	61	82

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent.

Chi-square for years of experience as superintendent was calculated at 4.568 with an alpha level of .335; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, research failed to reject Hypothesis Eleven. Table 14 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by years of experience as superintendent.

Table 14.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Superintendent Years of Experience as Superintendent.

	<4 years	5-12 years	>12 years	
Very Active	17	10	1	28
Active	10	10	4	24
Not Active	13	11	6	30
Total	40	31	11	82

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of district.

Chi-square for size of district was calculated at 5.726 with an alpha level of .678; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Twelve. Table 15 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by size of district. With only one district with 10,000 or more students participating and small districts reporting no human resource/personnel director, 50% of cells have an expected count lower than five.

Table 15.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Size of District.

	999 or fewer	1000-2499	2500-4999	5000-9999	10,000 or more	
Very Active	4	12	9	3	0	28
Active	1	10	7	5	1	24
Not Active	4	10	12	4	0	30
Total	9	32	28	12	1	82

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district.

Chi-square for congressional district was calculated at 4.195 with an alpha level of .839; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, research failed to reject Hypothesis Thirteen. Table 16 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors' in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by congressional district. Three participants did not report congressional district.

Table 16.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Congressional District.

	1	2	3	4	Non-Reporting	
Very Active	10	7	4	6	1	28
Active	6	6	6	6		24
Not Active	10	9	5	4	2	30
Total	26	22	15	16		82

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for

recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district.

Chi-square for manner in which the superintendent is selected by the district was calculated at 2.018 with an alpha level of .365; thus, with an alpha level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Fourteen. Table 17 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by manner in which the superintendent is selected.

Table 17.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Manner in which Superintendent is Selected.

	Appointed	Elected	
Very Active	20	8	28
Active	15	9	24
Not Active	16	14	30
Total	26	22	79

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating of school district.

Chi-square for current official accountability rating was calculated at 10.945 with an alpha level of .362; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Fifteen. Table 18 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors' in the selection of a principal candidate, as

measured by activity level, by current official accountability rating. One participant did not report accountability rating.

Table 18.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Current Official Accountability Rating.

	A	B	C	D	F	Non-Reporting	
Very Active	5	11	5	6	0	1	28
Active	1	9	7	7	0	0	24
Not Active	5	9	12	4	0	0	30
Total	11	29	24	17	0	1	81

Hypothesis Sixteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Chi-square for free and reduced lunch percentage was calculated at 3.212 with an alpha level of .523; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Sixteen. Table 19 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors' in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by free and reduced lunch percentage.

Table 19.

Descriptive Statistics for Human Resource/Personnel Director Involvement by Free and Reduced

Lunch Percentage.

	0%-20%	21%-40%	41%-90%	91%-100%	
Very Active	0	0	18	10	28
Active	0	1	17	6	24
Not Active	0	0	22	8	30
Total	0	1	57	24	82

Results of Qualitative Phase of Study

Selection of Interview Participants

Quantitative analysis required further exploration of differences in human resource/personnel director involvement in principal selection not revealed through quantitative data concerning human resource/personnel director activity but suggested by employment research regarding high poverty and/or low-achieving districts. North Mississippi provided the opportunity to interview human resource/personnel directors reported as active or very active by superintendents and employed by districts holding an A, B, C, and D official accountability rating and representing mid- to high free and reduced lunch percentages. A variety in demographics for superintendent gender, race, superintendent manner of selection, and district size were also possible to be represented. Variety in race and gender of human resource/personnel director designees were also possible to represent. Four human resource/personnel directors were selected and interviewed to further explore their involvement in the principal selection process, their perceptions of the contributions they make to their districts during that process, and differences in factors they find critical for an effective principal and those identified in the quantitative phase by their superintendents. Conversations with the

participants also included a discussion of the candidate pool for principal positions, pipeline or grow-your-own programs within districts, and suggestions for improving the principal selection process in their districts and the state.

Four themes emerged in analyzing the transcribed interviews of the four human resource/personnel directors participating in the qualitative phase of the study related to their contributions during the principal selection process: improving the application and selection process, influencing school and district culture, initiating principal support, and impacting the district and state candidate pool. Further, the suggestions for process and candidate pool improvements offered by the participants are also categorized by the identified themes. The following section provides a description of each case relevant to the themes identified.

Subjects of Interview

All four of the participants verified multiple responsibilities in their districts in addition to their human resource/personnel director roles are typical. Although the titles differed, the duties in each instance were numerous. Each of the participants had been an educator for more than 15 years and had served as a building-level principal or assistant principal prior to his or her current district-level position. Three of the human resource/personnel directors selected were male, and one was female. The majority of participants did not have a background in human resource/ personnel management or training in the area prior to assuming their current positions.

CASE A: “The right people are out there; we just have to find them.” With a copy of *HR Magazine* lying atop a folder of intent forms and transfer requests, CASE A’s desk left no question to whom it belonged. CASE A is a veteran school administrator in an A-rated district of 1000-2499 students, receiving Title I funds; the district’s superintendent reported a free and reduced lunch percentage in the 40%-90% range. CASE A’s interview in time and transcribed

pages was the shortest of the four; however, he provided a very thorough description of the district's process and, without being asked outright, made clear how he perceived his role in the district and the importance and "attention" he believed the role required. When asked how human resource duties fit into his workday, he immediately shared, "That is the reason I am here."

CASE A was the only participant interviewed who, in addition to having served as a building principal, spoke of human resource experience prior to being assigned the duties for his district. "I was hired because I worked in a human resource capacity for a large furniture manufacturing company. I spent more than 20 years in that environment." He described specific roles in human resource departments to which he had been exposed during his time in private industry, and, speaking confidently about his skill in the area, credited his skill and the district's "streamlined" process, "easier and fairer for everyone," to that experience and exposure. If his reading material was not clear enough, his language with phrases such as "qualify a person as a candidate," "avoid liability," "investigation," "cost/benefit," and "management team" made clear why he was in the district's human resource/personnel director role, as well as why he felt five years ago when he returned to the field of education from private industry, he "had to be retrained for this environment." Having been an employment manager in a "profit-making," "no frills" workplace with 600-700 adults, and "adult issues," he discussed how difficult success in a "service industry" such as education is to measure compared to cost/benefit and profit measures. Clearly, he differed from the other participants, despite contending that what he does and the process to which he consistently referred with his responses and explanations are "not unique."

His co-workers joke, "all jobs go through" him, and he responds by saying, "Well, that IS my job." His comments focused on the district's process and his role in selecting a candidate for

a position he contended “a critical vacancy.” In discussing the pool of candidates for those critical vacancies, he succinctly claimed, “The right people are out there; we just have to find them.”

Improving Application and Selection Process. CASE A, early in the interview before asked, shared his background in the furniture industry as an employment manager and as a school administrator at both the building-level and district office. Throughout his interview, he referred to the process, procedures, interview forms, and decisions made at certain checkpoints. He did not use qualifiers within his statements concerning his actions: “We post . . . , I am the one . . . , I select” His tone changed when describing a time an applicant had broken the process by contacting the superintendent before applying or making the “initial contact” with him. The process and improving the selection process—for principals and other staff members—had clearly been a critical factor when he was hired as the district human resource/personnel director.

Although a great deal of our conversation centered around screening out unlicensed, unqualified, or lesser candidates, CASE A’s interview also provided insight into his serious, concerted efforts to recruit, identify, and select the best applicant available. CASE A obviously devotes a great deal of time to the process of selecting a principal for one of the five schools in his district, and he includes budget planning and recruiting ahead of job openings in that time he shared is 80%-90% of some days during early and late spring. “We are always recruiting. Period. And we are all recruiters. Period.”

As he explained his district’s process, he discussed collaborating with the superintendent to develop criteria for the position to interview for specifics needed by the school or district at the time of the selection. He emphasized background checking prior to interviewing far beyond

ensuring applicants possessed the appropriate licensure, terming the phase an “investigation.” “I like to do a lot of background checking. I like to know more about the person before I or we sit down with the person than they think we know. I do those to qualify the person as a candidate.”

After his application review and screening out phase, he and the superintendent meet to determine “three to five people who meet the criteria” and call those applicants for interviews with either him or both he and the superintendent. “We ask them to come in and talk with us, or me. . . . We’ve done interviews at their sites; we’ll drive if we have to if we need to go somewhere to interview people we feel will be the best person for the job.” During the interview, listening and questioning experiences from his past support him in his role. “My experiences have really helped me. I don’t mind sitting and talking to somebody. I don’t need to ask a lot to find out a lot.” However, he did mention later in the interview he or his superintendent might need up to three visits with a person to get “comfortable,” to “get the right person in that job.”

CASE A described the district as a “team environment” with “a lot of input, a lot of giving and taking,” in which his superintendent listens and he feels heard “whether it’s my same opinion or not,” but in the end, “[the superintendent] has to weight out all the options and make a call on the best for the whole district.” When asked if he would be surprised to learn his attention to the process and his deep and consistent involvement in the process of selecting principals may be unique, he shared he was “unclear” about the past selection process for his district when he and a new superintendent were hired but now, “I’d say I do what I think I was hired to do—to make the process streamlined and work for everybody.”

Influencing School and District Culture. CASE A described a “team environment” in his district with committees, multiple views during planning and decision-making, and service

common for the district's administrators he referred to as "management team members." In outlining his district's selection process, CASE maintained applicant fit and faculty morale are factors in the decision-making process. He discussed fit in terms of personal values and appearance, and district climate and need. Building on fit, he described how transferring employees within the district who "are good matches" for administrative positions supports the morale and climate of the district.

Describing a fit, or match, he referred to personal factors difficult to assess outside the calls and interviews he perceived to be so essential and informative multiple "talks" with the person might be necessary. "I like to find a person with poise. . . . I want to see someone clean and neat. I don't need someone flashy in that position. I need a salt-of-the-earth type person." The applicant's fit into the district's culture includes understanding the need for safe schools where students want to study and teachers want to work, as "learning doesn't take place without it;" supporting the district's mission *reaching higher levels of learning*, "continually striving to get better;" and collaborating with other school and district administrators. In addition to personal traits and "soft skills," CASE A emphasized an applicant's fit also related to being knowledgeable in areas of focus for the district. "If they aren't knowledgeable in an area we focus on every day, they are unlikely to be successful." By investing time and attention to find applicants who fit the climate, mission, and focus of the district, human resource/ personnel directors can support the stabilization of a district or school culture while improving teaching and learning.

Initiating Principal Support. Beyond serving as a point of contact for questions concerning the selection process or the district, CASE A's support for principals during the selection process was not directly stated during his interview. However, he commented on

assignments varying “based on the needs of the district” and concern for employee skill and morale. Further, CASE A’s view of education as “a service industry,” willingness to travel to interview qualified principal candidates, and his availability to the schools speaking to classes or assisting with school-level interviews suggested support would be provided for apparent needs.

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. CASE A perceived the state candidate pool to be strong and his district’s goal to recruit, “screen down, and narrow that pool.” He described people “outnumber[ing] jobs,” waiting for openings to be posted, and quality candidates being “out there.” Ironically, for a district he viewed as having a sufficient and satisfactory pool of applicants, he emphasized the importance of recruitment to the district. Through website postings, recruiting visits to universities, and postings on other educator websites, such as that of the Mississippi School Board Association, CASE A’s focus was on continuously gaining both in number of applicants and in qualifying information about those applicants in order to select the best from a larger pool than might be obtained through district or community word-of-mouth or advertisement. He argued emphatically constant recruitment is the responsibility of all district leaders, especially those in his position. “Interviewing is an on-going process. Someone may file an application when we don’t have an opening, but I always talk to those people because in three months we may have an opening. We are always recruiting. Period. And we are all recruiters. Period.”

Another source of candidates we discussed was the internal pool of licensed administrators currently teaching or serving as assistant principal and of teachers pursuing degrees in educational leadership. According to CASE A, faculty and community morale improve with transfer and internal promotion. “Transferring people who want to do that helps with morale because more people are involved.” In his district, however, he clarified, transfer is

not “a given,” contending the criteria for a position and the selection process are the same. “The criteria would be the same as it is for those from outside, but we’ve used the position of assistant principal as a training ground for them to get their feet wet with the intent of getting a full-time job. It could be in that building or another building. It could be somewhere else in another district.”

CASE B: “Everything I do is personnel-related.” CASE B, a Deputy Superintendent for a district of 1000-2499 students holding a B-level accountability rating, also serves the district in multiple capacities, including k-12 curriculum, accreditation, and strategic planning. CASE B has also served as a principal in multiple districts in Mississippi and as a federal programs coordinator prior to being named Deputy Superintendent of the district. The district is a Title I district, qualifying due to its free and reduced lunch percentage in the 40%-90% range.

CASE B began our interview by asking me to remind him to share the online curriculum resource site he was working on for teachers and principals in his district. As our conversation regarding principal selection in his district continued, I noticed the extent to which his comments regarding applications, interviews, and continued support for new hires or transfers were curriculum-based, and learning-centered. The transcription of his interview revealed repeated uses of words evidencing his perspective of his role and of the role of the district’s selection process to students. He reported “making sure all our people are highly qualified in the subjects they are assigned to;” “keeping check” and reminding personnel about licensure renewal; “making sure” candidates will be a fit for the content and climate needs of school faculty and students; observing in candidates what “we [the district] expect” in regard to instruction and data; the need, during and after the hiring process, of “ensur[ing]” programs and strategies currently implemented are continued and understood by new principals; and holding attendance

principals “accountable” for entry-level position hires (assistant principals and elementary principals) for which they are “responsible.”

CASE B’s interview required the least guidance or re-direction of the four, as he spoke freely and easily about his district’s process, his contributions to the process, and his district’s capacity to hire quality school leaders. Having many responsibilities he admitted took a lot of time management and planning to fulfill, but he did not view human resource/personnel as an extra set of duties, instead, as the factor that connected his responsibilities. “Everything I do is personnel-related,” he explained.

Improving Application and Selection Process. Immediately after listing his duties in the district, CASE B discussed his most significant contribution to the application and selection process for all employees. He described a recently purchased software product for which he had led implementation and is currently the contact. The product replaced paper copies, inconsistent delivery, and incomplete records of applicants with online submissions; completion checks for applications; reference transmittal; and easy, consistent access for administrators across the district. CASE B noted his responsibility for the implementation and application process now evolved from his response to a need for structure and procedures. “[B]efore the current superintendent and I came here there was no structure for [collecting and sharing applications across the district.]”

CASE B reported little turnover in his district had resulted in a principal not being hired through an external process in eight years. “One of our directors had 46 years in [the district] before he retired, and the person who transferred [to the vacated position] came from another school after 17 or 18 years.” Little turnover for the district limited his involvement in the pre-screening phase of the process.

However, a second focus of our conversation concerning improvements to the selection process was CASE B's contribution to the interviewing phase. He reinforced his attention to detail and accountability with his questioning applicants based on "specifics for the job" and asking many behavior-based questions focusing on a specific situation or event, often high-stress in nature. "I want a full description. . . . How did you deal with that? What did you do?" CASE B also emphasized the importance of multiple perspectives during interviews and the effects on his district's process of a well-developed relationship he shared with the superintendent. "We are at the point in our relationship I feel like I have full freedom to express my opinions on things, and he knows I'm always coming at things from the standpoint of what is best for the district as a whole and not looking personally at things."

Influencing School and District Culture. CASE B did not talk specifically about culture; however, a deeply ingrained culture in his district was obvious. Clarifying early in the interview his district had little administrative turnover and, therefore, had more transfers across the district than external hires, CASE B discussed accountability and fit. He argued knowing the character, instructional quality, and district, school, or community "investment" of current teachers or administrators in the district as advantages in selecting a principal to fit.

"Good, quality, nurturing folks that have a personality and know how to get there," is the way he described character traits he desires "whether it's a teacher assistant, a teacher, or a principal." Although he discussed fit encompassing knowledge and skills especially if a school needed assistance or leadership in a specific content or special populations area, he shared personality, work ethic, communication, and fit were more critical in some instances than skills. "If they have the personality, I feel like I can get them where they need to be on their skills. We can't train personality, but we can train skills." By transferring from within or seeking specific

personality and knowledge bases from outside the district, CASE B viewed the principal selection process to be a significant contribution to the maintenance of his district and school culture.

Initiating Principal Support. Due to more transfer and movement within the district that hiring from outside the district's current faculty, CASE B shared ways he contributed to principal support in his district beyond the selection phase. Admitting "I was awful my first year," CASE B sees a need for assistance for new principals, whether new hires or transfers. "I'm the support person. I get them everything they need, update them on all the different programs and strategies in place we expect to continue in that building instead of everything starting over." Further, he places responsibility on district leadership for ensuring principals know what they need to know to be successful at the building-level. "I hate to be in a position to ask for something and a person says, 'Well, I didn't know anything about that.' Well, that's our fault." CASE B perceived support mechanisms offered through his human resource/personnel director contributions as critical to school and district success.

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. CASE B expressed no concern for the candidate pool in the state or his district. Pointing out the district had very little turnover and long-time administrators, his focus was on the district's internal pool, believing what he and his superintendent knew of internal candidates lessened much of the risk associated with hiring. "We allow [educational leadership students in the district] to get most of their mentoring, internship hours here. Their observation hours are here. We know about their character; we know about their instruction; we know about their investment in the county. If we believe, character-wise, they're a good fit for that staff, then we consider them." He commented transfers

and internal promotions were not always the best fit, but acknowledged, “we do like to give our own folks a chance.”

CASE C: “I believe this is God’s work; it is a calling, and if you don’t’ do right by it, then you will be punished.” CASE C, wearing a warm-up with the district-logo, greeted me in the foyer of the main office and explained he was participating in a faculty/student ball game later in the day. I waited in the foyer as he moved through the area, greeting everyone, asking about one colleague’s “shows” from the previous night and another about her child’s game. He returned for me, stopped briefly to listen to a maintenance worker’s facility concern that needed immediate attention, and as we sat to begin, he moved a stack of papers and a book, Mark Miller’s *The Heart of Leadership: Becoming a Leader People Want to Follow*. During the interview, his positive attitude and appreciation for his work was evident but did not diminish the serious nature he brought to his role in what he described as a “high poverty district,” reported by his superintendent to have a free and reduced lunch percentage in the 90% and above range and holding a current official rating of C on the state’s accountability model. During the interview, CASE C proved to be the most extroverted of my interviews and his comments focused on the need for positive, courageous personalities “especially in this district.”

CASE C concluded his personal experience growing up privileged and working in “heart-breaking” environments motivated him and influenced his interviewing style. “I had everything. I had good parents. I went to private school. Went to college. Had everything. Taught school. Became a principal at 28. Everything.” He went on to share the problems he had seen students experience in districts in which he had worked in Mississippi and Tennessee, “things you can’t imagine happening to a person.” CASE C shared that having so much and seeing students who came to school struggling with problems difficult to imagine created a sense of humility,

appreciation, and gratitude in him he seeks in principal candidates because “that’s how I change culture.” He expressed the need for positive, courageous principals. “If you’re not that [positive and courageous], you may fit someone else’s team. I’m not going to say there’s not a team out there for you, but you won’t fit mine.”

CASE C’s interview was the longest in time and pages when transcribed; he frequently moved between responding to my questions concerning principal selection and his contributions to the selection process and connecting those responses to his own concerns about the pool of candidates from which to select. Citing applicants’ inattention to their licenses, degree recipients’ failure to pass “the test” [School Leaders Licensure Assessment], and applicants’ intentions--“looking for job, looking for a check, looking for a stepping-stone”—CASE C voiced dissatisfaction with the quantity and quality of applicants in his district. He also argued external factors, such as community opposition, society’s general treatment of leaders, and current media attacks create an applicant pool “not going to be as great as it once was or could be.” Calling hiring and building an in-district pipeline or grow-your-own program both “gamble[s],” CASE C expressed the greatest concern and, although he is clearly a positive person, the most doubt of the human resource/personnel directors I interviewed that quality, effective principals could be found for all Mississippi schools. The gravity of the work of schools, his role in selecting leaders for schools, and the level of dedication, courage, and ability to satisfy CASE C are best exemplified by his own claim, “I believe this is God’s work; it is a calling, and if you don’t do right by it, then you will be punished.”

Improving Application and Selection Process. Analysis of CASE C’s interview revealed his contributions to improving the principal selection process are primarily in the areas of assisting applicants and the superintendent in a pre-screening phase and in assessing

candidates through the interview process. The process in CASE C's district, though it exists, varies. CASE C used the words "may," "sometimes," and "can" in outlining his district's application and selection process.

He shared his main tasks prior to interviewing were assisting applicants with paperwork, or licensure, issues and checking backgrounds for "whatever baggage people have." Pertaining to his second task, reference and background checking, he showed distrust of listed references, offering his opinion, "I'm not saying people can't change or people won't do a good job for you, but if people have some baggage, it will directly affect the leadership in the building. It's a great GREAT possibility it's going to get unpacked."

For CASE C, "leadership is a character trait" and "hiring is a gamble." With these assumptions and knowledge "adults say things they should say . . . do things they shouldn't do," CASE C's contribution to interviews with principal candidates appeared to focus on ensuring his superintendent is aware of concerns, baggage, and possible future problems. "I am the pit bull," he described himself. "I try to see things he possibly can't see." CASE C's description of participating in interviews offered evidence of the type and focus of his questions. "You have to ask questions about how people have specifically done things to show you what you want to know. A typical interview may not show you that if you don't ask for examples of when this person showed courage or how they dealt with people." Asked if he saw differences in what he and his superintendent desired in a candidate or gave more attention during the selection process, he responded he looked for the stronger, more courageous individual, "gear[ing] questions more toward personality." Of any differences in his and his superintendent's views on principal applicants, he shared, "I tell him the truth. If I think something's not going to work out, I WILL

tell him. Then, if he goes that route, I respect he's the boss, and I have no issue with his decision."

Influencing School and District Culture. CASE C's positive demeanor was evident throughout our interview, and he expected the same attitude from applicants. We discussed at length the importance of caring, appreciative personalities and positive, courageous attitudes to school leaders. "If a person lacks courage . . . they are probably not going to implement the changes that really need to take place. . . . Courage is the most valuable place to start. If a person lacks that, especially in this district, they're never going to get off the ground." CASE C discussed school improvement processes he had led as the principal of different schools by building relationships, taking risks, showing courage, and accepting "trying to improve schools, someone's going to be uncomfortable along the way." He extended the definition of courage to include being honest with self and admitting mistakes when things go wrong. "We had days when we lost, and as an administrative group, we'd have to sit down and say, 'Well, we lost big today.' . . . But I always followed that with 'How are we going to win tomorrow?'" In sharing his personal stories of school leadership and his experiences selecting school leaders, CASE C spoke with confidence and clarity of the importance of the principal to the culture of the school. "People take on the character of people who lead them."

CASE C suggested improving his district's interview phase of the selection process to influence culture through the use of "a panel, a more open process with parents, teachers, and people in the community to help with the process." According to CASE C, participation in the selection process would "build ownership and loyalty." He viewed the process of selecting a principal as the prospect of changing culture and as a key opportunity to create pre-hire support

from different stakeholders, particularly promoting trust in a new principal needing to implement new procedures, structures, and relationships to support that change.

Initiating Principal Support. CASE C's interview revealed support for applicants during the application process. He explained some applicants have not completed all of the state's licensure requirements, most likely passing the licensure assessment. Of those who have degrees and passing assessment scores, CASE B shared some have not completed the final submission of documents for the earned endorsement to be listed on their educator licenses. In addition to helping them complete the licensure process, CASE C discussed his encouragement of in-district employees in whom he sees administrative potential, "always encouraging those we think possess leadership skills to go back and get their leadership degree."

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. "How can I put this?" CASE C asked. "Our pool has been shallow as of late." To compound the dilemma of a shallow pool, he added, "We lose a lot of good people." CASE C reported four or five applicants for the last principal opening in his district; he and the superintendent interviewed all of the applicants.

CASE C discussed many reasons he believes his district often lacks quality applicants, including candidates' achieving a passing score on the state's licensure examination, failure to apply for appropriate licensure, and high turnover in a high-poverty district. He spoke at great length concerning the treatment of leaders in today's society, often receiving deep opposition and criticism from community members and suffering frequent media negativity and attacks.

"People shy away from leadership because of the way they're treated."

CASE C stated outright his distrust in the information and applications and on more than one occasion during the interview referred to the selection process as risky. He compared the

issue to personal advice he recently offered a recently divorced friend in his forties, “I told him, ‘Look, being honest with you, if they’re good, they’re taken.’

... Now think of it in schools. A couple of good people are out there, and some good districts are out there, but those are taken.” When asked about a pipeline or grow-your-own program for his district, he reinforced his opinion internal systems would improve the broader candidate pool across the state but was unlikely to remedy the problem of quality applicants in specific districts:

“I wanted to start something like that. I even had scheduled a meeting to meet with some people in the district and start something, but within a month, three of those people had taken jobs elsewhere and only two were left of that pool. We’re always encouraging those we think possess leadership skills to go back and get their leadership degree, but then, we’ve had issues with them passing the test. They complete the classwork and get the degree, but they can’t pass the test. Some we’ve encouraged and they’ve gotten the degree and passed the test but they go elsewhere.

Despite the risk of those administrators, then, leaving the district that spent time and funds for coursework, training, and professional development materials, CASE C supports the concept.

“They may not end up with a license or pass the test, but you’ve still improved the building, and it’s just another gamble trying to build that capacity and get good administrators.”

CASE D: “I try to support people, hold everybody up to give them a better perspective. CASE D’s calm demeanor, quiet tone, and smile gave no indication it was a hectic spring in a small district with few district personnel to carry out district operations, oversee finances, and support principals and teachers. CASE D, a veteran educator with 18 years

experience, has served as a district-level administrator for five years. According to the superintendent surveyed, the district holds a D rating and is a high poverty, Title I district, with a free and reduced lunch percentage in the 90% and above range. When asked how human resource duties fit into a workday of other duties, including federal programs and curriculum, CASE D immediately shared participating in the application review and selection process with the majority of time spent supporting the new principal after the hire has been made.

CASE D discussed her district's online application process and her first role in the selection process, ensuring the applicant meets licensure criteria, then checking for "red flags." Referring often to "work in progress" for improving the process of hiring principals or supporting principals post-hire, CASE D shared her district's exploration of advantages and disadvantages of including parents and community members during the interview process and of plans to establish an "intentional," organized principal induction. In contrasting her superintendent's black-and-white observations of candidates' applications and data with her own concern for school culture and improvement through the applicant, CASE D noted a tripod in the corner of her office, commenting it probably best represented her approach to district leadership and, therefore, to the principal selection process. "I try to support people, hold everybody up to give them a better perspective."

Improving Application and Selection Process. CASE D reported the application process for the district unchanged over the last five years; however, she shared she is continuously looking for ways to improve the committees who select the principals in the district. CASE D outlined the manner in which applicants submit an application online and the review of those applications when a position becomes available in the district. The review process begins with "weeding," ensuring applicants meet basic criteria followed by checking

references. CASE D noted the importance of paying attention to “if particular people aren’t there, like an immediate past supervisor.”

Following the review process, CASE D’s contribution to the interview phase is significant, as she forms the selection committee. She indicated the committee, in addition to the superintendent and her, consists of teachers from the elementary and high schools in the district. CASE D discussed at length the benefits of using a committee to interview applicants, and, specifically, the contribution of teachers who serve as department chairs in their schools. “When you use department chairs, they know what the culture is like and what changes are needed and what changes will be received. They are closer to the people with their boots on the ground. . . . They see what people bring to the table and whether that person’s knowledge and personality or whatever aspect of the person is going to be a problem.” In addition to sensing fit for the school culture, CASE D characterized the discussions the department chairs have with the applicants and the expectations the department chairs have of applicant answers by sharing an example of a recent interview. “With those department chairs, they got into hearty discussions—real talk—about what they’ve dealing with, maybe that week. They want a plan—a real plan.”

CASE D also shared current discussions for expanding the committee beyond the school community. “We haven’t gotten to the point where we invite parents or other community members to sit on that, but that is a possibility for the future. We are looking at having some community people become involved in that role.” She expressed the district’s rationale for expanding the selection committee for “a high leadership role” as two-fold: 1) an alignment of what is said and what is done and 2) an expression of the value of the voice of community members who have not all, historically, supported the school district. “When you say you are including [the community] in all decision-making and involving them in every area, when it

comes to hiring practices [for] the building leader, someone who is going to be the face of that school in the community, it is good to give them a voice.” After hearing an example from another participant whose district is examining the use of stakeholders outside the district for selection committees and the hope by that participant that involving the community will build loyalty for school leaders, CASE D agreed support could come of that involvement “unless you hire that person they didn’t want.” CASE D’s focus on improving the processes her district uses to select quality principals and the deep thought she had given advantages and disadvantages to the process were apparent.

Influencing School and District Culture. CASE D’s interview showed the significance she placed on culture in schools and the importance of hiring principals who understood how specific actions related to building or changing the culture of a school. Speaking of involving community members in the interview phase of the selection process, CASE D described the principal as the “it,” “the face of [the school] in the community.” Of herself, she stated, “I respect the culture enough to try to match that.”

Asking “How are we going to move from the ground up with this person in between?” CASE D expressed her filter for selecting a principal and how that filter question connects to the district’s culture. Throughout the interview, she described instances of support and cooperation for a collaborative culture in which “everyone is trying to make things work.” Utilizing committees throughout the district, assigning teacher leaders to coordinate Response to Intervention and district-level benchmark assessments, and forming plans to include community members as a voice in the principal selection process exemplify the collaborative culture CASE D expects a new principal to understand and embrace.

Initiating Principal Support. CASE D described herself as being a support to teachers and administrators in her district. Although the majority of her support occurs after the recommendation and hiring process, she identified a need for support for principals “during that initial hire,” predominantly in the form of shared knowledge. “I’m learning . . . there were some things that should have been emphasized.” The importance of refining how specific responsibilities, compliance requirements, and prioritized needs are shared CASE D views as needing to be a part of the selection and interview process prior to hiring. Further, CASE D and her superintendent are in the early stages of developing a principal induction process. After observing the performance and needs of principals hired within the last three years from the perspective of her role as the federal programs coordinator responsible for federal Title I guideline compliance and school improvement efforts, as well as her role as curriculum coordinator working with building-level principals, CASE D sees greater support for those principals as a needed improvement in her district. CASE D reflected, “If I had [transitioning principals] to do again, that induction process would be intentional and not haphazard.” CASE D’s concern for smooth hiring transitions and emphasis on continued support for new principals were obvious in our interview.

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. CASE D balanced the applicant pool with the need in her district. Having two schools in the district, and therefore, two principal positions with no assistant principal positions, CASE D explained the district typically had low applicant numbers for positions and interviewed all applicants. “When we had to hire a principal last, I want to say it was five, maybe 6 or 7 [applicants.] It wasn’t closer to ten; it was closer to five.” However, in the past, she reported the district had also experienced having a teacher earn administrative licensure when the district had no administrative vacancy. When asked to

describe anything being done to build administrative capacity in response to low response from external applicants, she described no official pipeline or training program but motivational efforts by her and her superintendent. “We encourage our staff who are seeking higher degrees to consider the educational leadership field. Sometimes they have their minds made up for curriculum and instruction but we see leadership potential, so we make sure they are the ones placed in those building and leadership roles.”

Findings of Cross-Analysis of Interviews

To what extent are human resource/personnel directors involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, four themes emerged through constant comparison of qualitative interview data related to the contributions of human resource/personnel directors during the principal selection process and the suggestions those participants offered for improving the selection process: improving the application and selection process, influencing school and district culture, initiating principal support, and impacting the district and state candidate pool. Cross-analysis and in vivo coding for the four themes revealed, though apparent in each case, the themes differed across cases by consistency to which a district selection process was adhered, conversation regarding fit and change in influencing culture, components of support noted or provided post-hire by the human resource/personnel directors interviewed, and confidence in the capacity of the principal candidate pool. Following is a discussion of the results of the cross-analysis of the four themes, highlighting the four key differences.

Improving Application and Selection Process. Improving the application and selection process is the most obvious, expected theme emerging from analysis of the interviews. Participants confirmed improving the processes of their districts, providing ample examples of

improvements made to past processes during their time in the human resource/personnel director position, changes occurring for this school year, and suggestions for future changes to their districts' processes to be initiated or strengthened from the human resource/personnel director role. Three areas characterized participants' contributions to improving the principal selection process: developing a streamlined, consistent process for applying, screening, interviewing, and selecting applicants; in-depth pre-screening, including personal and professional background checking beyond listed or obvious references; and establishing and assessing criteria specific to the job, or school, through behavior-based questioning.

In an effort to “make the process streamlined and work for everybody,” two of the participants described procedures and structures implemented during their tenures as human resource/personnel directors in response to district needs for consistency, ease, and an established format. One of these implementations was an employment software package, also utilized by another participant, to improve the consistency and efficiency of application distribution and review. CASE B described the previous process by which applications were collected and shared:

Before [SearchSoft], we would take paper applications, and when a position would come open, we would have to make paper copies of all those applications and send those out to the schools that had the openings. There were some being delivered at the schools and people going by the schools. We didn't know about those and didn't have any record of that, so we abandoned that process and went with the SearchSoft application.

Using the software, positions can be submitted, reviewed, edited, and tracked at different user-levels; all complete, submitted applications may be viewed by administrators in the district at any time. Responses of references listed by the applicant are collected in the software for viewing, as well.

In addition to software implementations providing consistency and ease during the application process, CASE A stressed the importance of having a checklist and order of proceeding through selection, with decisions to be made at established points. His interview revealed the importance he gave this order; for example, he referred to himself as the initial contact before any candidate speaks to the superintendent “unless they contact her because they know her from past experiences.” His tone suggested a person who did not contact him first was viewed as not following procedures. Each participant was able to communicate the ordered steps during an application and selection process; however, their descriptions revealed differences in the frequency or consistency the known process is followed.

A second area participants perceived improved through their contributions is pre-screening, or “qualifying a person as a candidate.” Citing adult issues associated with the human resource/personnel director role, responsibilities regarding ethics violations, and addressing “adults say[ing] things they should say” and “do[ing] things they shouldn’t do,” as being a part of their duties, three of the participants emphasized their role in screening candidates for possible “baggage” or “red flags.” One human resource/personnel director shared, “Every day almost is some kind of personnel issue. Kids can be dealt with fairly quickly and fairly easily, but adults—they’re another issue.” All participants expressed the need to identify possible issues, avoiding surprise, during pre-screening. According to the participants, much of their time during the selection process is spent making calls for extensive background checking beyond

listed references, “finding out things we need to know” and attempting to “see things that might go bad” prior to interviewing. CASE D specifically noted checking references for what is not listed, explaining “if particular people aren’t there, like [an] immediate past supervisor,” she and her superintendent seek “what else is to be learned.”

Human resource/personnel directors interviewed verified the greatest amount of time in the process focused on a background “screen out;” however, steps are also taken to ensure applicants are properly credentialed for the position. Each participant named checking credentials as a component of pre-screening, referring to MDE qualifications for principal licensure. CASE C communicated he frequently helped candidates “make sure they have the right paperwork,” as a part of the pre-screening, (usually) pre-interview phase of the selection process.

Finally, the human resource/personnel directors interviewed believed their involvement in the interviewing phase of the selection process was an important contribution. CASE A and CASE B noted a point at which criteria specific to the opening are discussed and developed prior to interviews. Participants contributed during the interview phase by sitting in on interviews and providing an additional perspective for superintendents. Also, one of the participants felt his questioning and listening skills developed over two decades of human resource experience in the private sector gave him an advantage during this particular phase of the selection process. Another was responsible for selecting teachers from each of the district’s schools to serve on the interview committee.

All of the participants reported developing behavior-based questions to ask during the interviews. Topics varied for the examples shared; however, each question requested an applicant tell about a time he or she experienced a specific emotion, event, or situation; making a

high-stress decision, showing courage, handling an uncomfortable situation with people, and utilizing data were among the examples. CASE D described listening for knowledge and personality traits within the same response. CASE D remembered interviews in which an applicant had been asked how he or she would address a specific issue and had given a vague response, referring to meeting and working together. “[Committee members] want a plan—a real plan.” CASE A further explained he listens not only for the content of candidates’ responses but for “how [applicants] might put thoughts together and explain themselves.” Strong questions, active listening, and multiple perspectives characterize the contributions human resource/personnel directors make to strengthen the processes involved in selecting a principal.

Influencing School and District Culture. Illustrating the tension between fit and change agent, human resource/personnel directors, spoke in detail of school and district cultures and of the importance of selecting a principal to meet district and community expectations, as well as student and faculty needs. The phrases “how we do,” “what we expect,” “relationships,” “ownership,” “culture,” and “fit” permeated the conversations. Each spoke of the climate of the school being a factor in the criteria for selecting a principal and used the elusive term fit. CASE B expanded on his use of the term. “[Fit] can be personality or content, like [a special education teacher] we hired as an administrator; that school needed that knowledge at that time.” Whether that climate requires “courage to go up against what the community thinks is correct but isn’t best for the child,” an understanding of the community’s expectation “kids, and the teachers, too, have to feel good about being at school,” or the expectation processes and strategies “continue in that building instead of everything starting over,” each participant spoke of selecting an applicant for fit and change.

Human resource/personnel directors interviewed viewed their contribution to the selection process as increasing the likelihood a candidate would provide the degree of fit or change agent right for the district at the time. Obtaining multiple views of a candidate during an interview provides increased opportunities to “pick up on different things,” and “get opinions on how people fit into what we’re looking for.” One participant suggested improving his district’s process, a component of which is his participation with the superintendent in principal candidate interviews, by including teachers and community members in panel interviews. The human resource/personnel director who suggested the panel interview noted the structure would build loyalty and ownership for new leaders, particularly change agents. “If those people were involved, they’d support that new principal because THEY selected that person instead of feeling like *He sent him out here, and he’s terrible*. If five other people in the building or community were able to say, *Yeah, we met him and we talked to him. We liked him.*” An interview participant whose district does utilize committee interviews with teacher participants claimed teachers serving on interview committees were particularly beneficial in identifying potential problems in applicants’ knowledge gaps, personality traits, or other aspects of a person due to their closeness to other teachers and school processes. The district was also considering involving parents or community members to select “the face of [the school] in the community,” as a “good faith sign on [the district’s] part we value their contribution to the process.”

CASE A described the importance of both multiple people and, possibly, multiple interviews to (from his metaphor) paint a fuller picture of the candidate. He admitted his district may call someone to come in after an initial interview and speak with district personnel a second time “if we aren’t comfortable on some things;” he continued, “and sometimes it takes a third until it gets done and we get the right person in that job.” In three cases, committee decision-

making and multiple perspectives for employee selection are typical. Two of the participants shared committees are common to other district processes. For example, one participant shared he served on a Family Medical Leave Act committee hearing requests for family medical leave and determining if the employee has a qualifying event. Another referred to district employees in other roles serving on interview teams, such as the Athletic Director influential in hiring coaches and the Director of Instruction participating in several schools' teacher interviews or transfer request reviews. A third shared the benefits of committees led by teacher leaders being encouraged to pursue educational leadership. Therefore, for these three districts, principal selection process is simultaneously a result of the districts' cultures and a manner of influencing those cultures.

Initiating Principal Support. Participants also described a variety of ways in which they support applicants, with each expressing a desire to make easier applying for positions and phasing into the positions after being hired. CASE C discussed assisting applicants by “making sure they have the right paperwork.” He voiced some applicants for positions in his district have struggled to pass the administrative licensure exam or have earned a degree and passed the exam but they have not completed the process of applying for the administrative endorsement with MDE's licensure office.

Other participants discussed updating applicants and new hires on the operations, existing concerns, and current program and/or strategy implementations in schools during and after the hiring process. Each described being the point of contact, with one being the “initial contact,” for applicants to ask questions and voice concerns during the selection process. One of the participants shared, when interviewing from an external pool and not transferring in-district, gaining input from staff of a school for which a principal is being interviewed for “some of the

things the staff at that school need help with, want, or expect” provides insight during interviews. Sharing the input informs a principal entering a new building of staff views and needs for which he or she will need to prepare. One district was engaged in the planning stages for implementing a principal induction process to ensure principals know their responsibilities, how to prioritize the many duties involved in “stay[ing] in compliance while keeping the bathroom from flooding.” In the long-term, efforts to support principal candidates by human resource/personnel directors during the application and selection process can establish cooperative relationships and promote a culture of service and helpfulness promoting the post-hire partnership.

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. From “plenty to select from” to “our pool has been shallow of late,” opinions differed across the cases as to quantity and quality of the candidate pool. Subsequently, participants’ view of the pool affected their view of the selection process. Believing a strong set of applicants who “outnumber jobs” exists, CASE A articulated his goal in the process to “screen down and narrow that pool to who is the best match for our job,” mentioning everyone in the district “recruiting all the time.” Further, he mentioned he and the superintendent travel to recruit at events across the state and to interview applicants at locations convenient to the applicants. On the other hand, CASE C described, in addition to screening for professional references and personal backgrounds, assisting applicants with paperwork and interviewing a higher percentage of applicants. Although both completed the same activities reported by their superintendents, our conversations showed a clear difference in intent.

Participants’ view of the internal candidate pool for their districts also differed; therefore, the manner in which they contributed to building administrative capacity throughout their districts and the state varied, as well. None of the interview participants worked in districts with

an official administrator pipeline. However, the human resource/personnel directors interviewed reported encouraging teachers to seek higher degrees, encouraging those seeking higher degrees to choose educational leadership, and purposefully selecting committees, duties, and placements for those teachers to gain leadership experience and, as CASE D hoped, “foster that love of educational leadership.”

Two participants referenced transferring administrators within the district, internal mentoring for teachers attending classes in educational leadership, and utilizing the assistant principal position as positive ways to provide district personnel opportunities to “get their feet wet” and gain experience, strengthening their skill sets. Leadership experiences and internal administrative support improves the candidate’s ability to secure a leadership role in the district or, making no promises, CASE A clarified, “for another school in another district.” CASE B, from a district with very low turnover having hired only two administrators (excluding transfers) in five years, explained how transfers and internal hires lessen the risk or, as CASE C, described, the “gamble” districts make when selecting a principal. Speaking of current administrators seeking transfer or teachers who have gained administrative licensure while working in the district, one participant argued, “[They] know that’s what we do, and we know they do what we’re asking because we’ve seen them. Now, could we ask that of people outside? Yes, but we wouldn’t have seen it.”

Despite differences in their perception of possible candidate quality and their districts’ need for more qualified applicants, each commented on actions they and their districts were taking to support those planning for administrative careers in education. Participants discussed the effects building administrative capacity and developing internal principal pipelines have on morale, instruction, and community support. The human resource/personnel directors

interviewed referred to identifying teachers with leadership skills, strong personalities, and deep content knowledge; encouraging or helping those teachers to obtain licensure; and providing interested employees with school leadership experiences--whether through a structured aspiring administrator program, mentoring, internships, or job-embedded leadership roles—as ways they positively impact the candidate pool for all districts in the state.

What perceptions of their contributions to the selection process exist among human resource/personnel directors? In terms of their contributions to the selection process, the participants spoke with confidence and pride about their roles, their improvements to structures and procedures, their desire to make processes easier for applicants and other administrators, and their perspectives' importance to their districts' screening and interviewing processes. Rather than reflectively, their responses and explanations were narrative in nature with examples of tasks, questions, or suggestions they had contributed in the past. Participants perceived having the “freedom to express” themselves, and each described being “heard,” “trusted,” and “able to disagree” during interviews and subsequent discussions about the candidates for a principal position in their districts.

Three of the participants used metaphors to talk about their human resource/ personnel director activities during the selection process, particularly their roles in pre-screening or identifying possibilities for future issues. CASE A described he and his superintendent as painting a picture, “We’ve got a picture frame, and we know what we want that picture to be. We just have to keep screening those applications and talking to folks until we paint enough of it to know what we’re getting and have as little of it unpainted as possible, particularly in areas that can get you in trouble.” CASE C was a self-described “pit bull. . . . I’m the bad guy,” listening as he participates in the interviewing and reference checking phases of principal selection for

“baggage” and “things that might go bad.” CASE D believed the tripod in the corner of her office represented her contribution of providing a better perspective beyond what might have already been seen.

The four participants also acknowledged their activities and opinions as valuable yet subordinate to the superintendent making the recommendation, “for the good of the whole district” or “looking at a bigger picture.” One participant shared openly sometimes his superintendent “doesn’t listen, but I still get to warn him;” a second recalled advice from a former superintendent with whom he’d worked, “Having your say doesn’t mean having your way.” Another echoed the perception by simply stating, “She’s the boss.” Whether viewing themselves as painters, a pit bulls, or tripods, the human resource/ personnel directors viewed themselves as contributing in significant ways to district processes, school and district cultures, faculty improvement, and the candidate pool required to secure principals and improve Mississippi’s schools.

Results of Mixed Methods Phase of Study

A thorough examination of qualitative interview data findings provided, as expected, a deeper understanding of the topic, clarifying and expanding upon quantitative findings concerning the activities in which human resource/personnel directors participate during the principal selection process.

How do the themes resulting from the qualitative interview process clarify or expand upon the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?

Qualitative interview data more fully illustrated the principal selection process than the quantitative survey data, addressing rationale; focus of activities;

consistency, time, and intent; and activities not explicitly stated during quantitative data collection. Quantitative survey data revealed superintendents' perceptions of the level of activity of human resource/personnel directors in their districts and the specific activities in which those directors participated, limited to six choices: active recruiting, checking references, participating in interviews with the superintendent (non-committee), reviewing applications and/or resumés for the purpose of narrowing, serving on an interview committee with other school or district staff, and speaking face-to-face with applicants for the purpose of narrowing. Based on chi-square statistical testing, no significant difference was found across hypotheses in the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved across superintendent or district demographics. However, qualitative interview data extensively illustrated the human resource/personnel directors' involvement and highlighted key differences in processes. The qualitative phase of this study process, reliant on the ability of each human resource/personnel director to discuss the order of the process in each district and the phases each emphasized, demonstrates--whereas the quantitative phase did not--differences in rationale for the process, phases of emphasis, and specific actions of each human resource/personnel director.

When qualitatively described, quantitatively similar activities vary in consistency, time, and intent. For example, superintendents of three participants reported their speaking face-to-face with applicants; however, their descriptions showed these conversations took place at different phases of the process and for different purposes. All cases reported participating in interviews, but qualitative data shows CASE A's involvement at this level denotes a greater degree than the other cases because he is the only human resource/personnel director to report, in some instances, interviewing without his superintendent (due to multiple interviews with one

applicant taking place in his district.) CASE D's role in participating in interviews is also expressed more accurately in the qualitative data, denoting her role selecting the members of the interview committee.

Participants also included activities or phases related to but not expressed in the activities from which superintendents selected; two examples of these activities were shared by CASE A and CASE C. CASE A mentioned the element of traveling for recruitment and interviewing purposes. Other participants did not mention travel during the interviewing phase, and from their descriptions, phrases such as "come in" and "sit down here" suggest travel is not a part of the interview process for those human resource/personnel directors. For CASE B, his implementation of procedures and a product to improve the collection and distribution of applications is a key contribution unavailable to note or explore in the analysis of survey data. Also, CASE C described time spent assisting applicants with licensure documents—a face-to-face meeting with a significance to the study more fully captured in the human resource/personnel director interview than by the superintendent completing the survey. Analysis and reporting of quantitative and qualitative data achieved a more accurate representation of each district's selection process than would have been possible relying solely on quantitative results.

Qualitative analysis expanded on the reporting of satisfaction level by superintendents to include human resource/personnel directors' views of the candidate pool for the district, perspectives on internal pipelines and grow-your-own programs, and district approaches to candidate selection stemming from those assumptions. Impressions of the candidate pool for each district and the state shared by interview participants revealed more detailed information than quantitative survey

data. Superintendents were asked to report their satisfaction with the quality of applicants for a principal's position in their districts using a Likert scale: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, very dissatisfied. However, human resource/personnel directors were able during qualitative data collection to elaborate on quantity and quality of candidates in specific numbers or terms. The participants shared reasons for their dissatisfaction, differentiated between internal candidates mentored and supported by district leaders and external candidates, and discussed changes in society affecting the candidate pool.

Naturally occurring administrative mentoring or training through entry-level positions, such as assistant principalships, were described by three participants, with none of the districts represented having an organized, formal grow-your-own program or pipeline. CASE A discussed an administrative pipeline briefly, referring to the assistant principal role as one way an employee of the district could gain experience and the district gain information on the employee as a candidate for a future position as principal, to determine in what schools and if, at all, the assistant principals will be "good matches" for open positions. CASE B, on the other hand, described a naturally occurring movement of teachers pursuing educational leadership degrees into internship and teacher leader roles; then, "evolv[ing]" into administrators within the district. In a district with few administrative openings and "little movement," internship and teacher leader opportunities provide teachers in the district with a critical advantage as principal candidates. CASE D shared "[the process] can work" and explained why her district was "50/50" from a grow-your-own perspective. Of two teachers who recently earned administrative licensure, one returned as a principal for the district. With no position open at the time the other teacher earned her administrative license, she had accepted a principal position in another district. Similar to the other human resource/personnel directors, CASE C supported the

concept of creating in-district leadership opportunities and training for aspiring administrators. Realistically, however, he identified hindrances to such a system, including time and funding investments in districts characterized by high turnover and the unknown factor of whether the teacher whose work ethic, instruction, and character are respected by peers and parents will succeed throughout the steps to achieve licensure.

Each human resource/personnel director's perspective on the candidate pool and grow-your-own programs for their districts affected his or her assumptions concerning the purpose of their role during the selection process and the manner in which each approached the process. For example, the assumption of a sufficient quantity of quality applicants supports a process intended to "screen down," "narrow," and "keep screening those applicants" in the same way an assumption hiring within lessens risk due to extensive knowledge of current employees' character, content knowledge, and cultural fit leads a superintendent and human resource/personnel director to "look inside the district first." All of the human resource/personnel directors interviewed spoke of benefits and barriers to a pipeline for administrators, but their considerably different views of the candidate pool outside their districts and level of need seemed to more directly influence approach to the selection process.

Qualitative findings revealed concerns and suggestions for improvements to the principal selection process, a result of the reflection inherent in the interview

process. Interviewing participants reported by superintendents in the quantitative phase to be active or very active provided the opportunity for the participants to identify a rationale for the process and to reflect on their current involvement and processes to identify possible improvements. Conversations in each interview concerning fit, change, and the district and state applicant pool evolved from these reflections. Three participants offered suggestions to improve

the selection process reaching beyond selection to the transition process for the new principal. CASE B addressed how gathering information from teachers within a school could improve interview questions, as well as preparation and planning by the newly administrator. Although a different suggestion, CASE C's concern for the transition process was evident also. He discussed involving more stakeholder representatives to select a principal in his district to foster community support of new principals--changing one process to improve another. CASE D reflected on previous principals' transitions, arguing a need for a clear, organized, "intentional" induction for new principals in the district. Reflection, a precursor to improvement, is a key component of the interview process not prevalent in the quantitative instrument for this study.

Qualitative interview data and the emergent themes revealed "soft skills" important to human resource/personnel directors who play an active role in the principal selection process. For all of the human resource/personnel directors

I interviewed, "leadership is a character trait" requiring strong "soft skills." A positive attitude, strong personality, nurturing impression, and dedication were frequently mentioned. One participant described looking for "salt of the earth" people for the principal's role; others did not use the exact phrase but did list "character" as a critical component. Also evidencing the important of character in the selection process is the extensive background checking described by each participant and the participants' expressing concern for future problems. The representative from each of the two districts with superintendents reporting 90% or above free and reduced lunch percentages cited "courage," "not someone who is laid back or status quo" and a "willingness to step out" and avoid the "safe answer" as character traits principals need.

Each of the interview participants named communication as critical to the role. CASE A mentioned paying close attention to applicants' oral skills as well as the way the person

articulated or organized information being provided. The participants also offered examples of times the way in which a message was communicated affected the response. As CASE D admitted, “A lot of times we’re losing [support] before we even give it a chance because of the way we send the message out.”

How do the perceptions of human resource/personnel directors regarding factors that influence selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board, as evidenced through a qualitative interview process, compare to the ranking of factors by superintendents, as measured quantitatively from survey data? Asked to discuss, generally, differences in the qualities and skill sets they preferred in a principal candidate and those preferred by their superintendent, interview participants described personality traits, communication styles, areas of concern based on personal leadership experiences, and funding, mentioned as areas in which human resource/personnel director and superintendents differed in assessing applicants. For one participant, he noted the cost of different applicants, stating he did not think about funds when reviewing an applicant with a AAA license and more than 20 years experience; however, his superintendent had to weigh the value of the experience against the higher cost of that applicant. Another discussed experience, not in terms of years, but in terms of what has been accomplished; as the participant differentiated “there are those who know what to do and those who do what they know.” One of the human resource/personnel directors believed time spent in district-level administration factored into each administrator’s perspective. With only five years at the district level, she believed she was more likely to see a candidate in terms of impact on the individual school, whereas her superintendent with more than 15 years at the district level considers “an overview of the district” and that person’s impact on the district as a whole. Areas of expertise

also contributed to differing views of candidates or skill preferences. One participant interviewed identified curriculum as an area of strength for his superintendent and an area in which he was not as knowledgeable; therefore, “She’s more looking at the curriculum side; she gets a lot deeper into all that with them than I do. She wants to know what they’ll do based on where our data is or what a school needs in that area.”

In addition to providing a general overview of how their perspectives differed from the district’s superintendent, the human resource/personnel directors were provided the list of factors superintendents ranked during the quantitative data collection (survey) and asked to select those they perceived as most important and as least important. Patterns were easily identified within and between districts. Remarkably, three of the four superintendents reported the same factors for the three most influential in the same order. Human resource/personnel directors reported four factors as the three most influential with the mixture and order of the three most influential varying. Three of the four factors named by human resource/personnel directors were the three factors selected most often by the superintendents of those districts. Table 20 illustrates the differences in the four districts represented both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Table 20.

Difference in Superintendent and Human Resource/Personnel Directors' Perceptions of Important Factors Influencing the Selection of Principals for Recommendation to Hire (data for four districts represented in quantitative and qualitative findings)

DISTRICT	SUPERINTENDENT	HUMAN RESOURCE/ PERSONNEL DIRECTOR
A	Continuous improvement of instruction	School Climate
	Guaranteed and viable curriculum	Data-driven focus on student achievement
	Data-driven focus on student achievement	Continuous improvement of instruction
B	School Climate	Data-driven focus on student achievement
	Data-driven focus on student achievement	Cooperation and collaboration
	Continuous improvement of instruction	Continuous improvement of instruction
C	School Climate	School Climate
	Data-driven focus on student achievement	Continuous improvement of instruction
	Continuous improvement of instruction	Data-driven focus on student achievement
D	School Climate	Data-driven focus on student achievement
	Data-driven focus on student achievement	Continuous improvement of instruction
	Continuous improvement of instruction	Cooperation and collaboration

Connections within the district and/or surrounding community. For the majority of interview participants, connections within the district or surrounding community are less important than other factors. None of the participants selected the factor as being most important. For three participants, connections to the community were either not mentioned or selected as the least important factor. One participant did not select the factor as one of the most important, but he did mention connections to churches as being beneficial because “most parents and student attend.” Interestingly, the two participants who selected the factor as least important offered a qualifying comment indicating “people would disagree” and expressing relief, “So somebody else chose that one? Good, I don’t feel so bad!” CASE B argued, “Without all of that, we’ve still got to perform.” CASE D echoed CASE B’s perception, claiming “If I depended heavily on our community support right now, we wouldn’t be functioning.” Although she viewed the district as striving to further develop community connections and gain support, she doubted a strong relationship would ever exist with all groups and identified the district as “its own community.”

Continuous improvement of instruction. For the majority of interview participants, continuous improvement of instruction was among the most factors. Although the factor was not named as the most important by any participant, the factor was named second or third after data-driven focus on student achievement and school climate by every participant. One participant noted “striving to get better in every area” is a very important habit within and beyond school. CASE C reminded me, “principals are called instructional leaders today.” He acknowledged the impossibility of one person being an expert in every area; however, his view of instructional leadership demanded applicants be able to facilitate professional learning communities, conduct data meetings, research and critique instruction, and build “partnerships to make those things

happen even when they don't know it all." Explaining the importance of the continuous improvement of instruction, CASE D demonstrated the connections she perceives among factors, "Because of high stakes testing, because of the weight of it now, and probably because I am [the] federal programs [director], the data-driven decision making alongside the continuous improvement of instruction are my top two. Number three, because you have to foster cooperation and collaboration to achieve that improvement, it's my next one." She further explained connections, curriculum, and climate would each occur if the factors she selected as most important were strong.

Cooperation and collaboration. Demonstrating cooperation and collaboration was viewed as one of three most important factors in selecting a principal by two of the interview participants. One participant discussed a "team environment," and collaborative work in his district but did not select the factor as one of great importance in the selection process. No participant selected cooperation and collaboration as the least important factor considered. CASE B's interview revealed collaboration as a necessary process for improving schools. CASE D explained the value of "accepting [teachers'] input in the decision-making process" to a principal. "The principal you are hiring needs to be able to go and meet teachers in their professional learning communities and communicate what they are trying to change. . . . [I]t's important to collaborate with them and speak with them as adults. . . . I shared something with the professional learning communities last year, and several of the teachers said they were glad I shared it with them as a work in progress and not as what we are doing whether they liked it or not."

Data-driven focus on student achievement. All of the four human resource/personnel directors interviewed selected data-driven focus on student achievement as one of the most

important factors influencing their selection of a principal. Two of the participants named the factor as most important. CASE B emphasized, “#1, #1, #1 for me would be data-driven focus on student achievement. . . . That is how legislators look at us. That is how we get measured. That is how people want to look at us.” Further, he argued, “Data-focused administrators are powerful administrators IF they can communicate that to those they work with. . . .What I would expect a principal to do is make a picture with the data and focus on those areas of critical need. So, we have to know enough about that person to know if [he or she] can do that and to know they can get [the] staff to understand and do that.” Although he did not select it as the most important factor, CASE A verified data-driven focus is a non-negotiable in his district, as well. “We’re measuring different aspects on a regular basis, so those are elements that have to be in place. We have to find someone in the principal position who is knowledgeable in that area. If they aren’t knowledgeable in an area we focus on every day, they are unlikely to be successful.”

Guaranteed and viable curriculum. None of the interview participants selected a guaranteed and viable curriculum as one of the most important factors. One participant admitted he did not feel as knowledgeable about curriculum so, for him, it wasn’t a factor he examined closely. “I don’t know enough about curriculum. I’d have to say it’s least important to me because I don’t know.” Another mentioned curriculum as a component of working toward continuous improvement of instruction but not important as a stand-alone factor. CASE C selected the factor as least important, reasoning, “it’s constantly changing, and you can’t get a grasp on it like you’d like.”

School climate. School climate was named by two of the four interview participants as the most important factor to consider in selecting a building-level principal. In his reasoning for selecting school climate as most important, CASE A provided his view of climate as safe schools

where students and teachers “feel good about being at school” and the community sees students improving themselves “so they won’t be a liability to society later on.” CASE C also believed school climate to be most important; he was drawn to the word *positive* in the description of the factor: “positive well-functioning environment,” describing his own climate-related goal as a building-level principal: “I wanted my building to be a place you escaped to not escaped from. In doing that, you have to have a positive environment that starts with leadership.” The other participants did not mention climate as an important factor but mentioned climate as result of principals ensuring the presence of the factors those participants did select.

Conclusion

Findings related to each of the three phases of the mixed methods study examining differences in superintendent’s processes in recommending principals for hire to school boards are presented in Chapter IV. These findings offer insight into how superintendents differ in the manner in which they select principals, the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the process, and how quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data combine to present an expanded description of the process. Substantial differences in the factors influencing superintendents’ selection of principals for recommendation to hire, examined using the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test were found in five groups: gender, race, manner in which superintendent is selected, current official accountability rating, and free and reduced lunch percentage. Of the eight hypotheses related to factors influential in principal candidate selection, three hypotheses were rejected; two hypotheses the study failed to reject but revealed substantial differences discussed further in the next chapter and recommended for further study; and three hypotheses the study failed to reject with no substantial differences. Of the eight hypotheses related to human resource/personnel directors’ involvement during the principal

selection process, the study failed to reject all eight hypotheses, as chi-square analysis revealed no substantial differences in the activities of human resource/personnel directors.

Four themes were extracted through analysis of qualitative interview data collected during the second phase of the study. These four themes describe the extent to which human resource/ personnel directors are involved in the principal selection process: improving the application and selection process, influencing school and district culture, initiating principal support, and impacting the district and state candidate pool. Further, qualitative analysis allowed for the reporting of the perception of human resource/ personnel directors regarding their contribution to the principal selection process.

The third phase of analysis addressed two mixed methods questions. Four ways were identified in which the use of quantitative and qualitative data and resulting themes provide clarify or expand upon the extent to which human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board:

- Qualitative interview data more fully illustrated the principal selection process than the quantitative survey data, addressing rationale; focus of activities; consistency, time, and intent; and activities not explicitly stated during quantitative data collection.
- Qualitative analysis expanded on the reporting of satisfaction level by superintendents to include human resource/personnel directors' views of the candidate pool for the district, perspectives on internal pipelines and grow-your-own programs, and district approaches to candidate selection stemming from those assumptions.

- Qualitative findings revealed concerns and suggestions for improvements to the principal selection process, a result of the reflection inherent in the interview process.
- Qualitative interview data and the emergent themes revealed “soft skills” important to human resource/personnel directors who play an active role in the principal selection process.

Mixed methods design also supported the comparison of factors influential in selecting a building-level principal for human resource/personnel directors (represented qualitatively) and the (quantitative) rankings of superintendents. Generally, human resource/personnel directors and superintendents agreed in naming data-driven focus on student achievement and continuous improvement of instruction as the most important factors. Climate also ranked high, with two of the four human resource/personnel director interview participants including it in their top three factors. For human resource/personnel directors, connections within the district and/or surrounding community and a guaranteed and viable curriculum were found to be least important for principal applicants to show during the selection process, although the advantage of working with the community and the community’s perception of the district were mentioned by each as part of the principal’s post-hire work. A summary and discussion of the findings from each phase are presented in the following chapter with implications of the study for researchers and practitioners.

CHAPTER V

IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY

Summary of the Study

Findings reported in chapter four for the quantitative hypotheses as well as qualitative and mixed methods research questions are summarized and discussed in connection with related existing research. The significance of the findings for research and practitioner communities is also explained. The dissertation concludes with a summary of the study's questions, findings, and significance.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Quantitative Findings

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent. Hypothesis One is rejected. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a difference approaching significance in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent for the School Climate factor, with a mean rank of 38.61 for 57 males and 48.08 for 25 females. With the lower mean being more influential, the lower ranking of males in the study suggests males are more attentive than females to climate during the selection process.

The finding is supported in qualitative data as two of the males interviewed selected climate as one of three most important factors in selecting a principal, with one participant

arguing learning does not take place in unsafe, unsupportive climates. Published research regarding gender and leadership also supports the rejection of this hypothesis. “Women’s ways of knowing” are identifiable from men’s (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, & Tarule, 1997); therefore, women and men lead differently (Cotton, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2007; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kelsey, Allen, Coke, & Ballard, 2014; Keohane, 2007; Proudford, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Sandberg, 2013). Cotton (2003) and Kelsey et al. (2014) indicated leadership for learning and a focus on instructional leadership are common hallmarks of female principals and district leaders. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) found female leaders to be more likely than male counterparts to emphasize instructional competence and strong teacher development. The researchers attribute the likelihood to women learning leadership through different roles than men, namely, through curriculum, instruction, and instructional coaching. Women were also found more likely to outsource non-instructional tasks. School climate is important, but safety, order, and discipline—frequently associated with climate—are more indirectly related to instruction than other factors studied, such as data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, and curriculum and may be outsourced by female leaders to male counterparts and, therefore, not ranked as important as the factor is by males.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent. Hypothesis Two is rejected. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by race of superintendent for the Connections and Data factors. For the Connections factor, with a mean rank of 51.76 for

21 black superintendents and 37.97 for 61 white superintendents, white superintendents reported connections to the district and/or surrounding community more influential than their black peers. For the Data factor, with a mean rank of 32.5 for 21 black superintendents and 44.6 for 61 white superintendents, black superintendents reported Data-driven focus on student achievement more influential than white superintendents.

Race in human resource management research is typically explored in terms of who is hiring whom; in other words, studies usually focus on the race of the employer or interviewer as it relates to the race of those more likely to be hired (Giuliano, Levine, & Leonard, 2006; Macan, 2009; Peterson, Saporta, & Seidel, 2004; Rivera, 2012). Studies regarding race and hiring decisions in education have not been conducted to the extent of those in business and industry. Possible explanations for the findings for race may be related to the districts led by superintendents of race. Connections were found to be less influential for the district demographics appointed superintendents, A- and D-rated districts, and high free and reduced lunch percentage districts, as well. This study did not seek to explore if a higher percentage of appointed, extreme measure accountability ratings, or high free and reduced lunch percentage superintendents are also reported in the black race demographic. However, with the factor occurring in multiple demographics, the rationale for the finding may be linked to a district, rather than superintendent, demographic .

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent. The study failed to reject Hypothesis Three. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked

factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years experience as superintendent.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district. The study failed to reject Hypothesis Four. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of district.

Hypothesis Five: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district. The study failed to reject Hypothesis Five. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district.

Hypothesis Six: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district. Hypothesis six is rejected. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by manner in which the superintendent is selected for the Connections factor and approaching statistical significance for the School Climate factor. For Connections, a Kruskal-Wallis statistical test resulted in a mean rank of 45.79 for 51 appointed and 34.44 elected superintendents. For School Climate, the test resulted in a mean rank of 44.97 for 51 appointed and 35.79 for 31 elected superintendents. With the lower ranking indicating the factor is more

influential, data suggests elected superintendents consider connections within the district and/or surrounding community and school climate more important factors in selecting a principal than their appointed peers.

According to Mississippi Association of Superintendent records in fall 2015, 58 of Mississippi's superintendents are elected predominantly to lead county districts. Limited research exists on the election of superintendents with only Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi continuing to select superintendents in this manner. The finding elected superintendents report connections within the district and/or surrounding community as more influential in selecting a principal is not surprising. Researchers agree leaders connecting to the school community is important in all circumstances (Cotton, 2003; Lezotte & Snyder, 2011; Marzano, Warrick, & Simms, 2014; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McEwan, 2003; Murphy, 2012; Whitaker, 2003); however, school leaders participating in a political campaign process greatly elevates the importance of this factor. Maxwell (2010) discussed the necessity of leaders to connect "to identify with people and relate to them" (p. 3) in order to increase the leaders' own influence in the school community. Maxwell also described borrowed credibility, or gaining credibility with a group of followers based on relationships with other group members. Quite simply, by hiring a principal with strong community connections or with relationships and membership in community groups an elected superintendent may be able, during the campaign process, to borrow credibility from that principal to gain re-election.

Also reported to be more influential by elected superintendents, a positive school climate is critical to earning credibility and community support. One interview participant remarked on communities' desires to want teachers and students to want to be at the school; another described his goal as having the school being a positive learning environment and serve as an "escape,"

both participants echoing the assertion of Davis (2008a) “a school with a strong culture is a school where people want to be” (n.p.). Logically, an elected superintendent’s re-election depends on the community’s perception of the district, which is heavily related to the school climate factor as most community members are not as aware of achievement or professional development in the district as they are safety or general feelings about the district’s schools. In addition to greater sensitivity to perception, due to the act of visiting homes, engaging in public speaking, and becoming visible and accessible to the community, elected superintendents may be in a position for more of the community stakeholders to share their perceptions of the school, or specifically, the school climate.

Hypothesis Seven: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by accountability rating of school district. The study failed to reject Hypothesis seven; however, analysis revealed considered a substantial difference for further study for Guaranteed, Viable Curriculum and Connections to District and/or Surrounding Community. Analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a difference approaching statistical significance in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by current official accountability rating for two factors: Guaranteed, Viable Curriculum and Connections to District and/or Surrounding Community. For the factor regarding curriculum, the mean rankings for the factor reflecting the importance of connections to the district and/or surrounding community are as follows: A, 45.59; B, 48.30; C, 34.58; and D, 32.71. No F ratings were reported. Analysis suggests schools holding a lower rating consider curriculum a more influential factor during the principal selection than peers in districts with higher accountability ratings.

Aligning the intended, taught, and assessed curricula of a school, being deliberate, focusing on “power standards” (p. 83) for leverage, supporting student opportunity to learn, and remediating for readiness are important components of a strong instructional system (Lezotte & Snyder, 2011). Superintendents of districts reporting lower accountability ratings may consider curriculum more influential as those superintendents may be more likely than districts with higher accountability ratings implementing small, incremental first-order changes to require principal candidates with deep knowledge of curriculum, alignment, and standards deconstruction to support second-order change curriculum initiatives. Also, districts within those ratings are more likely to have at least one school designated as in improvement status; therefore, those superintendents would be more recently engaged in work regarding federal academic requirements and compliance guidelines affecting the curricula review and improvement processes of schools and the mind-sets of teachers and administrators. Curriculum was also reported as more influential in high-poverty districts, and although this study does not address whether superintendents reporting lower accountability ratings also reported high free and reduced lunch percentages, extensive research and practitioner experience support the connection.

Regarding connections to the district and/or surrounding community, A-(46.09) and D-(45.68) rated district reported the highest rankings, suggesting district connections are not as influential at the extremes of the measurement as in B and C districts. According to Maxwell (2010), connecting with members of an organization and gaining credibility depends on insight, success, ability, sacrifice, and relationships. The finding may be related to the existence of established, intact cultures—whether supportive of the district or not--in districts at the extremes of the measure due to long-term success, or lack of success and relationships developed in those

districts. One interview participant claimed if dependent on the surrounding community and applicants connected to the community, the district “would not be functioning.” A second possible explanation is the high turn-over rate in districts representing the lower end of the measure; administrators and interview committees in D-rated districts may focus more on present need than connections, as connections or relationships are more frequently changing.

Hypothesis Eight: There is no significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district.

Hypothesis Eight is rejected. Initial analysis of a Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of ranked factors influencing selection of principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free and reduced lunch percentage for the Connections and Cooperation factors and a difference approaching significance for the Curriculum factor. For the Connections factor, a mean rank of 3 was achieved for the district with an FRLP 21%-40% but not comparable to other data due to only one district reporting in the category. A mean rank of 38.94 was achieved for 57 districts with an FRLP of 90% and below; a mean rank of 49.19 was achieved for 24 districts with an FRLP above 90%, suggesting districts located in areas of the highest poverty do not report connections to the district and/or surrounding community as influential as their counterparts. For the Cooperation factor, a mean rank of 15.5 was achieved for the one district reporting 21%-40 FRLP; 38.10 for 57 41%-90% districts; and 50.67 for 24 districts with an FRLP above 90%. Cooperation is, thus, reported to be less important to superintendents of districts in the areas of highest poverty than other factors. For the Curriculum factor, mean ranks of 75.00 for 21%-40% FRLP, 44.25 for 41%-990% FRLP, and 33.58% for the 91%-100% FRLP, suggest curriculum is a more influential factor in high-poverty districts. It must be noted

that only one participant reported being superintendent of a 21%-40% district. A second Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to eliminate the outlier case. Analysis of the second test also revealed a statistically significant difference for Cooperation and for Connections and a difference approaching significance for Curriculum, confirming rejection of the hypothesis.

Lezotte and Snyder (2011) named positive home-school relations as an effective schools correlate and link trusting, authentic relationships between school community members and students' families as critical to providing "a successful future for every child" (p. 119).

Carbaugh, Marzano, and Toth (2015) emphasized building-level leaders' behaviors regarding home-school communication and internal professional learning communities supporting a collaborative culture. Therefore, it would seem superintendents from districts with the greatest need would value these critical relationships most. However, the opposite is reported.

Superintendents from districts with free and reduced lunch percentages above 90% report cooperation and collaboration to be a less influential factor than their peer superintendents.

Possible explanations may relate to turnover for faculty and transient rates for students and their families. May 2015 Mississippi Equitable Access Stakeholder Engagement Meeting sponsored by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) addressed inequities of access in the state to highly qualified, highly effective, experienced teachers and principals (MDE, 2015a, p.

2). According to data presented to stakeholders, students in high minority/high poverty schools are more likely to be taught by a teacher with fewer than three years of experience, attend schools with more teachers or administrators with inadequate licensure, and attend schools with a higher teacher turnover rate. Strong professional learning communities and collaborative environments are difficult to develop and maintain with inexperienced, unqualified, out-of-content area teachers likely to leave the school. Cooperating with parents, building relationships

with students and families, and maintaining collaborative efforts between the school and home are exacerbated by a high transient student population. With change in people (both internal and external) being more frequent than in other districts, superintendents of districts with the highest free and reduced lunch percentages may find more influential those factors with a more immediate effect and rely less on *who* but *what*, such as curriculum, data-driven focus, and instruction.

Superintendents of districts with the highest free and reduced lunch percentages also reported connections within the district and/or surrounding community to be less influential than their peers. Extending the rationale for the lower ranking of connections and collaboration, districts located in highly impoverished areas often do not have as many businesses, influential community leaders, and community outreach organizations with which to connect as other districts. Also to be considered are the number of school and district employees living inside the district to develop relationships with the organizations and businesses that do exist. One participant from a district with a free and reduced lunch percentage above 90% shared honestly her district was its own community and would cease to function if it depended on community connections and support. Another participant from a district in the same free and reduced lunch percentage range approached the topic practically, commenting his district had recently gained “a few new businesses” with which the district needed to establish a relationship but business and industry growth was not common.

Lezotte and Snyder (2011) noted the importance of aligning the intended, taught, and tested curricula of a school and focusing on “power standards” (p. 83), offering student learning endurance, leverage, and readiness. Academic readiness and endurance for academic work resulting from chronic poverty must be more widely and specifically addressed in high-poverty

schools. Jensen (2009) claimed high-poverty schools, to be successful, must focus on the use of data and be attentive to accountability, as well as relationship building. The finding curriculum is a more influential factor in high-poverty district may relate to that focus.

With 80% of Mississippi schools qualifying for Title I federal funds and responsible for, as one participant discussed, “compliance,” particularly for schools designated as in improvement status due to not meeting federal academic requirements, guidelines and research concerning curriculum, content standards, instructional strategies, and critical content affect the processes of schools and the mind-sets of teachers and administrators in many high-poverty districts. Considering Cotton (2003) asserts principals in high-poverty schools are less likely to exhibit instructional leadership behaviors than managerial behaviors and interview participants from high-poverty districts reported interviewing the majority of applicants due to limited pools, the higher ranking of curriculum as a factor in this study may reveal the district’s concerted effort to seek instructional leaders within a pool where those behaviors are less often observed in principal candidates interviewed.

Hypothesis Nine: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by gender of superintendent. Chi-square for gender of superintendent was calculated at 1.632 with a significance level of 0.442; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Nine.

Hypothesis Ten: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by ethnicity of superintendent. Chi-square for ethnicity of superintendent was

calculated at .434 with a significance level of 0.805; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Ten.

Hypothesis Eleven: There is no significant difference involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by years of experience of superintendent. Chi-square for years of experience as superintendent was calculated at 4.568 with a significance level of .335; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Eleven.

Hypothesis Twelve: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by size of school district. Chi-square for size of district was calculated at 5.726 with a significance level of .678; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Twelve.

Hypothesis Thirteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by congressional district of school district. Chi-square for congressional district was calculated at 4.195 with a significance level of .839; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Thirteen. Table 16 shows descriptive statistics for involvement of human resource/personnel directors' in the selection of a principal candidate, as measured by activity level, by congressional district. Three participants did not report congressional district.

Hypothesis Fourteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation

to school board by the manner in which the superintendent is selected by the school district. Chi-square for manner in which the district selects the superintendent was calculated at 2.018 with a significance level of .365; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Fourteen.

Hypothesis Fifteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by accountability rating of school district. Chi-square for current official accountability rating was calculated at 10.945 with a significance level of .362; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Fifteen.

Hypothesis Sixteen: There is no significant difference in involvement of human resource/personnel directors in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board by free/reduced lunch percentage of school district. Chi-square for free and reduced lunch percentage was calculated at 3.212 with a significance level of .523; thus, with a significance level of 0.05 being required to reject the hypothesis, the study failed to reject Hypothesis Sixteen.

Quantitative analysis of data revealed no substantial differences in the distribution of ranked factors for years of experience as superintendent, size of district, or congressional district. Quantitative evidence of difference in activity levels of human resource/personnel directors across demographics of superintendent or demographics of district was also not found. Descriptive analysis of the activities in which those administrators participate was conducted with no substantial evidence to acknowledge. However qualitative findings expanding on influential factors, human resource/personnel directors' perceptions of superintendent

preferences, and the activities of these administrators represent gender and race differences of superintendent and human resource/personnel director, as well as differences in district manner in which superintendent is selected, district current official accountability rating, and district free and reduced percentage differences. Years of experience as a superintendent, size of district, and congressional districts were not strategically represented, as no hypotheses for this study related to those variables.

Qualitative Findings

To what extent are human resource/personnel directors involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?

Although human resource/personnel directors differed in the consistency to which a district followed its described D for principal application and selection, the preference for fit or change to influence culture, variety in support provided during and after the selection process, and perception of Mississippi's principal candidate pool, the contributions they made to their districts consistently fell into four themes, or purposes: improving application and selection process, influencing school and district culture, initiating principal support, and impacting district and state candidate pool.

Improving Application and Selection Process. DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell (2014) survey of Washington state superintendents found few districts utilize a strategic, formal, consistent process for determining the most qualified candidate to lead a school. DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell's study is reflected in the districts represented in the qualitative phase of this study, as each district's process varied in phases emphasized and degrees of consistency. Ulah's (2010) 3D hiring process of development, discussion, and decision-making was followed. Participants reported many developments in their districts processes, including software

implementations, procedure development, refinement of interview teams, and the addition of behavior-based interviewing to assess specific constructs in their descriptions of district processes and their contributions to the process. Discussion was present in all cases, as well, with interview participants reporting trusting relationships with their superintendents and the ability, or as one participant stated, “freedom” to express opinions opposing that of the superintendent. Gaining the voices of teacher teams, department chairs, or other administrators involved in the selection process was also noted. Finally, decision-making regarding the recommendation of applicants and support applicants need post-hire were described, but the decision-making process of whom to recommend was described to much less extent than the other processes.

Assessing the qualities of people relative to an organization; recruiting, interviewing, and selecting applicants; providing expert advice on systems-related decisions; and identifying the best candidate for a given position are tasks human resource/personnel directors from a variety of fields rated most relevant to their work and organizational success (O-NET, 2015). Human resource/personnel directors interviewed offered rich data concerning their own contributions reflective of the tasks O-NET found relevant. As one interview participant with experience as a building-level principal and an industry human resource manager communicated, “That’s the reason I’m here.”

Rammer (2007) credited the success of principal selection with the ability to identify necessary skill sets and related abilities in applicants. Each interview participant reported participating in dual or committee interviews with the superintendent and stated the multiple perspectives gained from dual or committee interviews was advantageous in getting a full “picture” of candidates as different people are attentive to different areas or offer a school v.

district view of each candidate's impact. Gaining a fuller "picture" of an applicant through multiple perspectives, utilized by each district represented in qualitative data, reasonably, would increase the likelihood of identifying those related abilities Rammer perceived as critical to the process.

Furthermore, Rammer claimed selecting a quality principal doesn't rely on applicant quality but on superintendents' intent to select applicants with a research-based set of behaviors. Doyle and Locke (2014) argued in many cases interview questions are broad and hypothetical rather than focused on past behaviors, competencies, and experiences Clement (2008) proposed are the best predictors of future actions. However, each participant in the qualitative phase of this study described asking behavior-based or situational questions advocated by Clement (2008), Parrett and Budge (2012), and Katz (2015). Three of the four participants in the qualitative phase of this study also described points during the process at which specifics or, as Macon (2009) recommended, constructs are determined and measurement criteria discussed (although no district reported using a rubric, suggested by Clement, during any portion of the selection process.) Overall, the descriptions of district process and human resource/personnel contributions reflected industry human resource/personnel activities to a lesser extent and consistency than in corporate fields.

Influencing School and District Culture. The effect of culture on an organization, though intangible, is widely accepted. Davis (2008a) noted school leaders as having the potential for "strengthening the organizational culture of a school through human resources development" (n.p.). Human resource/personnel directors interviewed for this study spoke in detail of considering school and district cultures when selecting a principal to meet district and community expectations, as well as student and faculty needs. Describing "how we do," and

“what we expect,” the interview participants discussed building “relationships,” fostering “ownership,” changing or stabilizing “culture,” and hiring a “fit” (Magee, 2007; Huselid, 1995). Relationships, a shared vision, and a sense of ownership are critical, as Deal and Peterson (1999) found “where the culture did not support and encourage reform, that improvement did not occur” (p. 5). Acknowledging the importance of culture in the decision-making process, whether hiring for “fit” and continuation of current processes and strategies or hiring for courage to “disrupt the cycle of poverty” (Parrett & Budge, 2012, p. 15), the participants supported Gruenert and Whitaker’s (2015) observation a new principal’s first days on the job are the “softest leverage points for rewiring a school culture” (p. 137).

According to Huselid (1995), consideration of fit and organizational in hiring also reduces turnover and increases productivity, offering a possible explanation for CASE B’s report of little turnover and internal transfers for “fit” in his district. Kouzes and Posner (2010) provided the connection between fit and turnover. “People won’t fully commit to the group and organization if they don’t sense a good fit with who they are and what they believe” (p. 42). The School Leaders Network’s (2014) finding high-poverty schools are 50% less likely to be led by the same principal for six years elevates the importance of considering culture and the appropriate balance of fit and change for those districts.

Initiating Principal Support. Each interview participant described developing human capital, identified by Huselid (1995) as a human resource task critical to organizational success. Participants described a variety of ways, including serving as a point of contact for questions and concerns during the selection process, assisting applicants in obtaining licensure, updating new hires with necessary information about the school post-hire, and planning intentional structured induction programs, they support applicants, with each expressing a desire to make easier

applying for positions and phasing into the positions after being hired. According to DuFour and Marzano (2011), connecting to people and supporting students, teachers, and other administrators exhibits “genuine affection” (p. 197) and fosters positive learning environments. Participants shared the belief efforts to support principal candidates by human resource/personnel directors during the application and selection process establishes cooperative relationships, promotes a culture of service and helpfulness, and advances the post-hire partnership.

Impacting District and State Candidate Pool. Discrepancy in views of the candidate pool from “plenty to select from” to “shallow of late” by interview participants is echoed extensively in research (Baker, Punswick, & Belt, 2010; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009). According to Mississippi Department of Education’s response to a query by a former State Superintendent of Education, the state’s pool of 6,300 licensed candidates far exceeds the number required to lead the state’s 1,083 schools. Hess and Kelly (2005) found, nationally, 80% of superintendents reported finding desirable, qualified candidates for building-level principal vacancies is a moderate to major problem. Of Mississippi superintendents participating in this study, 72.5% reported they were satisfied with the quality of the applicant pool, refuting Hess and Kelly’s finding.

Regarding the applicant pool, qualitative interview participants shared observations supported by research aligned with Hess and Kelly (2005). CASE C purported external factors, such as media attacks, accountability pressure, and community negativity toward leaders, contribute to a lack of quantity and high-quality candidate applications, supporting Fullan and Mascall’s (2000) premise “few good candidates apply” due to low job appeal. CASE C also reported working with applicants who are not fully qualified to become licensed in order to be

hired, suggesting Loeb, Kalogrides, and Horng's (2010) study showing high-poverty, minority school districts were more likely to be led by first-year principals is applicable to Mississippi districts. CASE D from a small rural district reported dissatisfaction with the quantity of applicants in the district, as well, noting the number of applicants for the most recently hired principal vacancy was five or six. Descriptions of recent applicant pools by human resource/personnel directors interviewed were aligned with Pijanowski, Hewitt, and Brady's (2009) report of 10.3 average applicants with fewer than half being qualified for building-level principal positions, with the average being five in small rural districts like that of CASE D.

Baker, Orr, and Young's (2007) finding of an over-production of school administrators understood in conjunction with Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin's (2013) contention unsuccessful principals are more often re-located than "weed[ed] out" is critical for superintendents to recognize and heightens the importance of the human resource/personnel director's role in screening applicants. CASE A's description of all administrators in his district as "recruiters," his calling applicants even when a vacancy is not available, and being willing to travel to pre-screen or interview principal applicants supports a human resource/personnel director activity focused on recruitment and "talent architect[ure]" (Wright & Stewart, 2010) aligned with the work of researchers in the field of human resource management in industry (Huselid, 1995; Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003; Vlachos, 2009; Yan Jiang & Liu, 2015). Although recruitment is commonly considered a human resource/personnel director responsibility, other interview participants did not discuss specific recruiting techniques or responsibilities. Of the 82 superintendents participating in the quantitative phase of the study, 50, or 60.9% reported human resource/personnel directors participate in district recruiting. The combined data suggests human resource/personnel directors may participate in recruitment, or minimally are expected by their

superintendents to do so, yet the majority (three of the four participants) do not perceive recruitment as a component of the selection process.

What perceptions of their contributions to the selection process exist among human resource/personnel directors?

Describing the work they do and their contributions to their districts, interview participants spoke with confidence and pride. They reported improvements to structures and procedures; efforts to make processes easier for applicants and superintendents; the importance of multiple opinions during their districts' screening and interviewing processes; and trusting, respectful relationships with superintendents despite differing views about particular candidates. Interview participants reported making significant improvements to the structures and procedures of their districts and playing key roles in screening and interviewing applicants; these contributions are supported by Benedict (2008) reporting recruiting and staffing as top functions of human resource managers. For industry human resource/personnel directors, participation in the selection process was named as the most strategic contribution made in that role to improve an organization. The school human resource/personnel directors' perceptions of the importance of their activities to during the selection process to superintendents, applicants, and their districts concur with the claims of Odden (2011) and Wright and Stewart (2010) the role of human resource directors as builders of human capital, through the selection of talented personnel and intentional management of personnel, greatly affects an organization's success.

Mixed Methods Findings

How do the themes resulting from the qualitative interview process clarify or expand upon the information gained from the quantitative survey data concerning the extent to which

human resource/personnel directors are involved in the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?

Qualitative interview data extends the quantitative findings of this study in four ways discussed at length in chapter four.

1. Qualitative interview data more fully illustrated the principal selection process than the quantitative survey data, addressing rationale; focus of activities; consistency, time, and intent; and activities not explicitly stated during quantitative data collection.
2. Qualitative analysis expanded on the reporting of satisfaction level by superintendents to include human resource/personnel directors' view of the candidate pool for the district, perspectives on internal pipelines and grow-your-own programs, and district approaches to candidate selection stemming from those assumptions.
3. Qualitative findings revealed concerns and suggestions for improvements to the principal selection process, a result of the reflection inherent in the interview process.
4. Qualitative interview data and the emergent themes revealed "soft skills" important to human resource/personnel directors who play an active role in the principal selection process.

Creswell (2014) acknowledged, at times, neither a pure qualitative or quantitative study adequately responds to a research questions, particularly in the social sciences. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) recognized the utility of mixed methods research when the results from one method do not sufficiently explain the question of study and when the questions research are

complex in nature. In Mississippi, many districts (25% of superintendents surveyed) do not employ human resource/personnel directors or designate financial elements of the role to non-administrative positions; therefore, identification of information-rich cases from a sample of human resource/personnel directors was possible due to the quantitative phase. On the other hand, full explanations of the human resource/personnel directors' activities, contributions, perceptions of their role, and suggestions for improving the selection process cannot be accurately represented quantitatively. Further, multiple data collection methods were required to best collect pertinent data from the two distinct positions involved in the principal selection process. Quantitative data collection was suited to be quick, easy, and demographic or opinion-based in nature to suit busy superintendents who oversee processes and activities but are removed from many of the details of the process or time involved. Qualitative data collection from human resource/personnel directors was aligned with their role in the district of communicating with people on a regular basis, commonly participating in interviews from an information-gathering perspective, and having first-hand knowledge of the process studied. Finally, conducting the interviews provided images of the human resource/personnel directors and their work relevant to the descriptions of the cases and useful as a lens to interpret the words of the participants and to reflect on initial interpretations for accurate representation. In the case of this study, the statistics are deepened and mixed methods strengthen the confirmation of results as referred to by Ukiwe (2011).

How do the perceptions of human resource/personnel directors regarding factors that influence selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board, as evidenced through a qualitative interview process, compare to the ranking of factors by superintendents, as measured quantitatively from survey data?

Human resource/personnel directors, asked to discuss differences in the qualities and skill sets they preferred in a principal candidate and those preferred by their superintendent, referred to characteristics of the applicants such as personality, communication, and leadership experiences. Superintendents' responsibilities to consider the effect of the selected candidate on the district overall or on the district's budget were also noted. For the six factors of study—connections within the district and/or surrounding community, continuous improvement of instruction, cooperation and collaboration, data-driven focus on student achievement, guaranteed and viable curriculum, and school climate—human resource/personnel directors and superintendents generally agreed as to the priority factors for an effective principal. Data-driven focus on student achievement and continuous improvement of instruction are among the most important factors to each of the human resource/personnel directors interviewed. School climate was deemed almost as high, differing on that factor from two of the four human resource/personnel directors interviewed. The focus of Mississippi superintendents and human resource/personnel directors aligns with the three leadership skills reported as most important by Washington state superintendents studied by DeArmond, Denice, and Campbell (2014): “ability to improve overall student achievement, to build a culture of continuous improvement for staff and students, and to build a shared vision of instruction across the school” (p. 2).

Cooperation and collaboration as well as curriculum are viewed as important factors for a principal on-the-job. However, the interview participants generally agreed these factors result from the two of higher priority regarding the intentional use of data to improve student learning and continuous teacher growth for improved instruction. Overall, a guaranteed and viable curriculum and connections to the district and/or surrounding community are much less critical

factors for candidates to show human resource/personnel directors and superintendents during the selection process.

Significance of Findings

Contribution of Knowledge

The knowledge base for selecting educational leaders who are likely to be effective and to remain in a school district is inadequate and often presents more disagreement than consensus. For candidates hoping to be viewed high in the worker queue, improving their own selection of districts, and for districts seeking to recruit and retain top applicants, understanding high priority factors or skill sets and activities occurring in other districts during the application and selection process is advantageous. Also, the position of human resource/personnel director in public school districts is an under-studied role likely to be under-utilized considering the potential a human resource/personnel director can have on recruiting and selecting principal candidates. This study addresses the dilemma Davis (2008a) described, pointing out differences in organizational cultures and language, as “the gulf between the theoretical scholars in the academy and the people who actually do the work and live day-to-day in the ‘real’ world of schools (theory v. practice)” (n.p.). Therefore, the findings of this study meet dual needs in contributing to a body of knowledge concerning educational leader selection for academics in the field of educational research and a wide range of practitioner audiences in “the ‘real’ world of schools” (n.p.).

Recommendations for Research

Limitations-Related. Further research is suggested to control for limitations of this study: imbalance of size, non-parametric design, and availability of trend data. Further quantitative studies are recommended to control for balance of sample size across groupings.

Although the size of groups is representative of those groups in the general population of administrators, the number of participants for given levels of each variable are not comparable in size for this study; therefore, two non-parametric statistical measures were conducted rather than more robust parametric tests. A second limitation of the study to address in future studies is in employing experimental design in order to explore explanations for differences in factors influencing the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board for hire related to gender, manner in which superintendent is selected, accountability rating of school district, and free and reduced lunch percentage. Also, conducting research after the stabilization of assessments for the state and the state accountability model is recommended. Finally, this study is limited to the perspective of the district (superintendent and human resource/personnel director). Future studies exploring the perspective of applicants and/or the documented actions of districts will provide a more detailed account of the application and selection process, as well as the contributions of human resource/personnel directors from external perspectives.

Delimitations-Related. Several factors delimit the study, all associated with location. First of all, the sample and eventual subjects of this study are exclusively from one state's superintendent pool. The investigation of differences by geographic areas of Mississippi and the newly developed, state-specific rating system also delimit the study. Qualitative replication studies are recommended to examine data across time and location, particularly in examining factors influencing the selection of a principal candidate for recommendation to school board for hire related to gender, manner in which superintendent is selected, accountability rating of school district, and free and reduced lunch percentage. Based on similarities in pilot and study findings for this research in all factors with the exception of the order of influence of the two most influential factors reported--continuous improvement of

instruction and data-driven focus on student achievement--replication should occur in other states.

Future Research. Limited research is available concerning principal selection and human resource/personnel director activities in school districts. Therefore, a number of key topics present themselves as requiring further research to verify, expand, or clarify the findings of this study. Suggestions for three quantitative, four qualitative, and two mixed methods studies follow, with a rationale provided for each. Feasibility concerns are stated in some instances.

Quantitative

1. Quantitative research is needed to address the number of cells with expected counts below five during the chi-square analysis for years of experience, size of district, congressional district, current official accountability rating, and free and reduced lunch percentages. Reducing categories is most likely not the best way to address the dilemma because two variables, congressional district and accountability rating, are constant and other variables are already substantially reduced. The best way to address the low expected counts is in analyzing data from a larger sample. Because the number of superintendents available for sampling is constant, incentives or internal research by superintendents, members of consortia leaders, Mississippi Department of Education should be considered to increase response rate.
2. Further quantitative research is suggested in the examination of human resource/personnel director activity levels and activities comprising that level. For this study, an introductory study in its field, a general nominal measure based on superintendent perception was utilized. A ratio measure for the construct would strengthen the study and likely yield differences not observed in this study.

3. Due to Connections being reported as varying based on multiple demographics of superintendents and districts for this study, further study is needed to explore whether (and if so, how) the demographics related to one another and to the Connections Within the District and/or Surrounding Community factor.

Qualitative

1. Qualitative data concerning the candidate pool and the lack of district pipelines or grow-your-own programs viewed through the quantitative lens of ten or fewer applicants applying for most principal vacancies suggests a qualitative exploration is needed to identify ways human resource/personnel directors or other administrators simultaneously recruit from a pool of over-production and “screen out” the under-qualified to hire candidates of high quality.
2. Two studies are suggested to address qualitative review of district processes, interview protocols, and rubrics (if selection forms, rubrics, or relevant documents exist and would be made available) would further expand the knowledge base for the over-arching topic of this study, principal selection. As was asked during the prospectus defense for this study, “Could you see what superintendents have done rather than what they say is being done?”
3. A qualitative study to define *fit* is suggested, as research supports the concept’s effect on organizational culture and its frequent identification as a consideration in hiring.
4. With superintendents and human resource/personnel directors concurring a data-driven focus on student achievement and continuous improvement of instruction are critical, related factors, a qualitative study is recommended to address 1) how district leaders involved in the selection process evaluate a candidate’s data-driven focus on

student achievement and commitment to continuous improvement of instruction and
2) how candidates may evidence the factors ranked most important to the selection process.

Mixed Methods

1. With little agreement reached regarding the applicant pool in districts with mid- to high- free and reduced lunch percentages, future mixed methods research is necessary to determine the characteristics of districts of high-poverty reporting satisfaction with the applicant pool. As this study's cut-points were designed to identify Title I districts (with an FRLP at or above 40%) and 90% and above districts, future research for this variable should refine the free and reduced lunch percentages to more accurately identify whether a percentage cut-point is associated with dissatisfaction.
2. Several mixed methods studies are suggested to focus on the identified differences in factors influencing superintendent selection of a principal candidate and build on findings specifically related to assessing Connections to the District and/or Surrounding Community, Cooperation and Collaboration, Data-driven Focus on Student Achievement, Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum, and School Climate during the application, pre-screening, interview, and reference-checking phases of the selection process.

Recommendations for Practice

Improved practice results from increased knowledge. Although this study is limited in scope and design, the findings expand the current body of knowledge for superintendents, educational leadership program developers, and school leader candidates. In turn, the expanded knowledge and greater understanding are beneficial to those desiring to improve practices and

policies related to hiring quality principals and those preparing school leaders to present their knowledge and skills fully during the interview and recommendation process. Improved quality of applicant pools for districts combined with an improved, consistent, research-based application and selection process that incorporates enhanced selection methods will go far to ensure Mississippi school districts hire leaders who will be effective in improving school culture and student achievement. This study has great potential to improve practice for its audiences, and therefore, Mississippi's students.

Superintendents. “One of the greatest differences in resources across schools is that of human capital” (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010). Accepting Loeb et al.'s premise, superintendents must ask as Doyle and Locke (2014) asked, “What do districts do to hire the best people to do the toughest jobs?” (p. 37) Knowing the factors peer superintendents consider most important for building-level principals to possess and of research supporting those factors supports superintendents' making informed choices for their own districts. In addition to heightening their attention to those factors during the application and selection process for principals being newly hired, the factors also inform superintendents of factors to examine in current principals and school processes. With data-driven student focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, and school climate highly valued by superintendents in the state, superintendents may find the need to focus on expectations and specific strategies for these factors during principal induction processes or within district mechanisms for on-going principal support.

Superintendents will also increase their knowledge of improved staffing decisions and processes, as attention in this study is given to the role of an under-studied population in educational research, the human resource/personnel director. Understanding the contributions an

active human resource/personnel director provides to the district allows the person in that role to be fully utilized and recognized for making significant contributions to the administrative team. Further, becoming aware of the role human resource/ personnel directors fulfill and the value colleagues place on these administrators' contributions provides an opportunity for superintendents and/or human resource/personnel directors to emulate districts using human resource/personnel directors to improve the application and selection process, influence school and district culture, initiate principal support, and impact the district and state candidate pool. Suggestions made by human resource/personnel directors concerning improvements made or planned for the selection of quality principals in their districts offers superintendents points to investigate to address key areas of concern in their own districts and to internally assess their own procedures.

Davis (2008b) asserted “weak and ineffective human resource management in schools is almost always the result of insufficient resources (time and money)” (n.p.). Findings from the study support Davis' assertion, showing many districts (almost one-quarter of those studied) do not have a human resource/personnel director to support the superintendent in principal application and selection. In quantitative survey data, numerous superintendents indicated filling the human resource position themselves or, often, filling the hiring component of the title with an office assistant or payroll clerk managing personnel paperwork and funds. Qualitative interview data revealed human resource/personnel directors devote more than half of their workdays to human resource/personnel director duties but typically hold multiple titles, responsible for tasks outside that role. Findings of this study support the need for active human resource/personnel directors in districts and may be useful to superintendents in evaluating

district-level personnel needs and in defending the need for human resource/personnel directors to school boards reviewing personnel budgets.

Human Resource/Personnel Directors. Findings of this study provide needed information to human resource/personnel directors, a group of administrators often overlooked in k-12 educational research and in resource distribution or pre-job training. According to interview participants, even for those designated to the role but responsible for many other duties, the majority of one of these administrator's workdays can be devoted to tasks for which they have not been previously trained. From this study's results, human resource/personnel directors learn the significance of contributions they may not have considered or become aware of ways in which recruitment, applicant selection, and induction through "effective human resources development leadership will have a large impact" (Davis, 2008a, n.p.)

Principal Candidates. Candidates seeking a leadership position gain information from the study by learning of the role of specific factors in securing a desired job in a school district and of the role of human resource/personnel directors they may encounter throughout the application and selection process, called "the least understood aspect of the employment relationship" by Peterson, Saporta, and Seidel (2004). With information concerning the critical factors sought by superintendents and others involved in the selection process, candidates will have the opportunity to focus on critical areas of knowledge and experience, such as data-driven focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, and school climate (specifically suggested by this study), to better prepare for the selection process. Understanding common phases and practices during the application and selection process is also advantageous for new and early career principals. Further, being aware of behavior-based questioning and human resource/personnel directors' expectations in responses encourages candidates to fully

show the knowledge, experiences, and skills that have been found to be most desired by districts similar to that for which they have applied or by high-performing districts.

Developers of Educational Leadership Preparation Programs. Principal candidates and those charged with preparing those candidates also benefit. Educational leadership program developers and professors' gaining a strong sense of hiring trends supports improved decision-making regarding relevant courses, coursework experiences, and internship requirements embedded in educational leadership programs. Information from the study may guide the selection of seminars or discussions pertaining to the current job market, interview/hiring processes in specific districts commonly served by the area in which the program is located, and probable expectations of district leaders concerning "soft skills," as well as data-driven student focus on student achievement, continuous improvement of instruction, and school climate. Improved preparation for the job market and for typical application and selection processes support candidate confidence during the process, which may affect hiring, particularly in districts seeking confident, courageous, informed leaders. Increased likelihood of program graduates being hired is a benefit for the new principal, as well as for the program's placement data, and therefore, marketing.

Policy-makers. The theory articulated in the Mississippi Department of Education's (2012) Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES), with its goal "to achieve a higher level of academic success for every student through improving school leadership" is an improved evaluation system leads to improved educator quality, which, in turn, yields improved student achievement. Extending this line of logic, an improved selection process by districts in selecting principals will yield improved student outcomes for the schools for which those principals are hired. Because the foundational principle of the evaluation model is to "highlight learning-

centered leadership,” this study, which revealed the emphasis on data-driven focus, student achievement and continuous improvement of instruction, and school climate by district leaders supports the core principle of the model and may offer information or resources important to improvements in assessing and promoting learning-centered leadership practices as the model is refined.

Conclusion

Research regarding the process of selecting effective building-level principals, perceived factors of importance, and the role of human resource/personnel directors in public schools is a significant contribution to an area widely accepted as critical for Mississippi’s school districts. Findings are relevant for multiple audiences, educational researchers and a variety of educators in k-12 schools. The discussion of this study’s findings and the implications for future research and practice included in this chapter respond to questions listed throughout the study which, if answered repeatedly with increasing focus and depth, aid researchers and educators in collaborative efforts to increase knowledge, improve practice, and implement policies supporting quality principals to lead teachers and students toward improved student learning in all Mississippi school districts

LIST OF REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Abbott, M. L., Joireman, J., & Stroh, H. R. (2002). The influence of district size, school size, and socioeconomic status on student achievement in Washington: A replication study using hierarchical linear modeling. Technical Report #3 for Washington School Research Center. Retrieved from www.spu.edu/wsrc
- Ardichvili, A., & Manderscheid, S. V. (2008) Emerging practices in leadership development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 10*(5), 619-631.
- Baker, B. D., Orr, M. T., & Young, M. D. (2007). Academic drift, institutional production, and professional distribution of graduate degrees in educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43*(3), 279-318.
- Baker, B.; Punswick, E.; & Belt, C. (2010). School leadership stability, principal moves, and departures: Evidence from Missouri. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(4), 523-557.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Benedict, A., Lockwood, N. R., Esen, E., & Williams, S.. (2008). *HR's evolving role in organizations and its impact on business strategy: Linking critical HR functions to organizational success*. Survey report by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM). Retrieved from www.shrm.org/research
- Boser, U. (2013). *Size matters: A look at school-district consolidation*. Report of the Center for American Progress. Retrieved from www.americanprogress.org
- Branch, G. F., Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2013). School leaders matter: Measuring the impact of effective principals. *Education Next, 13*(1), 62-69.

- Bridgespan Group. (2009). *Finding leaders for America's nonprofits*. Retrieved from www.bridgespan.org
- Brookover, W., Beady, C., Flood, P., Schweitzer, J., & Wisenbaker, J. (1979). *School social systems and student achievement: Schools can make a difference*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.
- Bryk, A. S. (2010). Organizing schools for improvement. *Kappan* 91(7), 23-30.
- Bryman, A. (2004). Qualitative research on leadership: A critical but appreciative review. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15(6), 729-769.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). *Occupational outlook handbook online 2010-2011*. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oco
- Bush, G. W. (2003, January). *No child left behind*. Speech presented to leaders from the fields of education and politics. Washington, D.C.
- Caliskan, E. N. (2010). The impact of strategic human resource management on organizational performance. *Journal of Naval Science and Engineering* 6(2), 100-116.
- Campbell, C., DeArmond, M., & Denice, P. (2014). *School leadership in Washington State: Today's leaders and key challenges they face*. Retrieved from www.crpe.org
- Carbaugh, B. G., Marzano, R. J., Toth, M. D., Houpt, K., & Sahadeo-Turner, T. (2015). *School leadership for results: Shifting the focus of leader evaluation*. West Palm Beach, FL: Learning Sciences International.
- Carli, L. L., & Eagly, A. H. (2007). Overcoming resistance to women leaders: The importance of leadership style. In B. Kellerman & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 127-148). San Francisco: CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Chilcott, L. (Producer), & Guggenheim, D. (Director). (2010). *Waiting for Superman* (Motion picture documentary). United States: Paramount.
- Clement, M. C. (2008). Improving teacher selection with behavior-based interviewing. *Principal*, 87(3), 44-47.
- Clifford, M. (2012). Issue Brief. *Hiring quality school leaders: Challenges and emerging practices*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates. Retrieved from http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Hiring_Quality_School_Leaders_0.pdf
- Clinton, W. J. (2000, January). *State of the Union address*. Speech presented to American public and joint session of the U.S. Congress. Washington, D. C.
- Cohen, C., Darling-Hammond, L., & LaPointe, M. (2006, November 10). *School leadership study: Policy and resource supports for exemplary principal preparation and development programs*. Presented at the Annual Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration: San Antonio, TX.
- Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity*. A publication of the National Center for Educational Statistics. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.files.eric.ed.gov
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap . . . and others don't*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Collins, J., & Hansen, M. T. (2011). *Great by choice: Uncertainty, chaos, and luck—why some thrive despite them all*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

- Cooper, J. E., Ponder, G., Merritt, S., & Matthews, C. (2005). High-performing high schools: Patterns of success. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 89(645), 2-23.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement: What the research says*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Cowie, M., & Crawford, M. (2007). Principal preparation—Still an act of faith? *School Leadership and Management*, 27(2), 129-146.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Cruzeiro, P. A., & Boone, M. (2009). Rural and small school principal candidates: Perspectives of hiring superintendents. *The Rural Educator*, 3(1), 1-9.
- Cullen, D. (2009). *Columbine*. New York, NY: Twelve, Hachette Book Group, Inc.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010a). *The flat world of education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010b). Teacher education and the American future. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 35-47.

- Darling-Hammond, L., Meyerson, D., LaPointe, M., & Orr, M. T. (2010). *Preparing principals for a changing world: Lessons from effective school leadership programs*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Davis, D. R. (2008a). Essay. *Module one: Leadership and human resources development and the role of human resources in educational organizations*. EDLD 694. Human Resource Development. University, MS: University of Mississippi.
- Davis, D. R. (2008b). Essay. *Module two: Strategic human resources planning and determining future human resources needs*. EDLD 694. Human Resource Development. University, MS: University of Mississippi.
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- DeArmond, M., Denice, P., & Campbell, C. (2014). *Missing out on strong school leaders?: A survey of principal hiring and support in Washington State*. Retrieved from www.crpe.org
- Doyle, D., & Locke, G. (2014). *Lacking leaders: The challenges of principal recruitment, selection, and placement*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Retrieved from <http://edexcellence.net/publications/lacking-leaders-the-challenges-of-principal-recruitment-selection-and-placement>
- DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (2005). *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- DuFour, R., & Marzano, R. (2011). *Leaders of learning: How district, school, and classroom leaders improve student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

- Eilers, A., & Camacho, A. (2007). School culture change in the making: Leadership factors that matter. *Urban Education, 42*(6), 616-637.
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: Using our selves in research*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Evans, L. (2010). Job queues, certification status, and the education labor market. *Educational Policy Online First, 25*(2), 1-32.
- Finally, L. (2002). Outing the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research 12*(4), 531-45.
- Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Fossey, R., & Alan, S. (2006). Educational leadership preparation programs: In transition or in crisis? *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 9*(3), 3-11.
- Fowler, F. J., Jr. (2014). *Survey research methods* (5th ed.). In Applied Research Methods Series. Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century 2.0*. Updated and expanded edition. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Fullan, M. (2014). *The principal: Three keys to maximizing impact*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fullan, M., & Mascal, B. (2000). *Human resources in education: A literature review*. Report for the New Zealand Ministry of Education. Retrieved from https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/6977/litreview9-hrissues.pdf
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Gitterman, D. P. (2011). The southern “consensus” on education and economic development. In D. P. Gitterman & P. A. Coclanis (Eds.), *A way forward: Building a globally competitive South* (pp. 37-45). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Global Research Institute.
- Gitterman, D. P., & Reid, B. L. (2011). Assessing progress: Almost home? In D. P. Gitterman & P. A. Coclanis (Eds.), *A way forward: Building a globally competitive South* (pp. 57-65). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Global Research Institute.
- Giuliano, L., Levine, D., & Leonard, J. (2006). *Manager race and the race of new hires*. Institute for Research on Labor and Employment Working Paper No. 150-07. Retrieved from <http://irle.berkeley.edu/workingpapers/150-07.pdf>
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Grogan, M., & Shakeshaft, C. (2011). *Women and educational leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Hanushek, E. A., & Woessman, L. (2015). *The knowledge capital of nations: Education and the economics of growth*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating achievement*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Hess, F. M., & Kelly, A. P. (2005). An innovative look, a recalcitrant reality: The politics of principal preparation reform. *Educational Policy, 19*(1), 155-180.
- Hinkle, D. E., Wiersma, W., & Jurs, S. G. (2003). *Applied statistics for the behavioral sciences* (5th ed.) Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hofstede, G. (n.d.). *National culture*. Retrieved from www.geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html
- Howley, C. (1996). Compounding disadvantage: The effects of school and district size on student achievement in West Virginia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education 12*(1), 25-32.
- Huselid, M. A. (1995). The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity, and corporate financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal 38*(3), 635-672.
- Irwin, T. (2014). *Impact: Great leadership changes everything*. Dallas, TX: BenBella Books.
- Jensen, C. (2005-2006). The employability of site administrators who obtained administrative certification by examination. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal-Electronic, 23*(4E). Retrieved from <http://www.nationalforum.com/Electronic%w0Journal%20Volumes/Jensen>
- Jensen, E. (2009). *Teaching with poverty in mind: What being poor does to kids' brains and what schools can do about it*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Jensen, E. (2013). *Engaging students with poverty in mind: Practical strategies for raising achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Jiang, J. Y., & Liu, C. (2015). High performance work systems and organizational effectiveness: The mediating role of social capital. *Human Resource Management Review* 25, 126-137.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133. Retrieved from <http://mmr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/1/2/112>
- Katz, L. M. (2015). Cool and competent. *HR Magazine* 60(2), 56-60.
- Kelsey, C., Allen, K., Coke, K., & Ballard, G. (2014). Lean in and lift up: Female superintendents share their career path choices. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, 7. Retrieved from <http://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/142015.pdf>
- Kennedy, J. F. (1961). *Special message to the Congress on education*. Speech presented to Congress. Washington, D. C.
- Keohane, N. O. (2007). Crossing the bridge: Reflections on women and leadership. In B. Kellerman & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 63-92). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Khine, M. S., & Hayes, B. (2010). Investigating women's ways of knowing: An exploratory study in the UAE. *Issues in Educational Research*, 20(2), 105-117.
- Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2010). *The truth about leadership: The no-fads, heart-of-the-matter facts you need to know*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. In U. Flick (Series ed.) *The SAGE qualitative research kit*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkman, S. (2009). *Inter views: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contributions of leader efficacy. *Educational Leadership Quarterly*, 44(4), 296-528.
- Leithwood, K., & Mascall, B. (2008). Collective leadership effects on student achievement. *Educational Leadership Quarterly*, 44(4), 529-561.
- Levine, A. (2005). *Educating school leaders*. New York, NY: The Education Schools Project.
- Lezotte, L. W. (1992). *Creating the total quality effective school*. Okenos, MI: Effective Schools Products.
- Lezotte, L. W. (1997). *Learning for all*. Okenos, MI: Effective Schools Products.
- Lezotte, L. W., & Snyder, K. M. (2011). *What effective schools do: Re-envisioning the correlates*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Loeb, S., Kalogrides, D., & Horng, E. L. (2010). Principal preferences and the uneven distribution of principals across schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(2), 205-229.
- Lombardi, V., Jr. (2001). *What it takes to be #1: Vince Lombardi on leadership*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Louis, K. S., Dretzke, B., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). How does leadership affect student achievement?: Results from a national US survey. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(3), 315-336.

- Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Learning from leadership: Investigating the links to improved student learning*. Final report to the Wallace Foundation. Retrieved from www.wallacefoundation.org
- Macan, T. (2009). The employment interview: A review of current studies and directions for future research. *Human Resource Management Review, 19*, 203-218.
- Magee, D. (2007). *How Toyota became #1: Leadership lessons from the world's greatest car company*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Marzano, R. J., Heflebower, T., Hoegh, J. K., Warrick, P., & Grift, G. (2016). *Collaborative teams that transform schools: The next step in PLCs*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.
- Marzano, R. J., Warrick, P., & Simms, J. A. (2014). *A handbook for high reliability schools: The next step in school reform*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.
- Marzano, R. J., & Waters, T. (2009). *District leadership that works: Striking the right balance*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Maxwell, J. C. (2010). *Everyone communicates, few connect: What the most effective people do differently*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- McEwan, E. K. (2003). *10 traits of highly effective principals: From good to great performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- McLaughlin, M. W., & Talbert, J. E. (2006). Developing communities of practice in schools. In M. W. McLaughlin & J. E. Talbert (Eds.), *Building school-based teacher learning*

- communities: Professional strategies to improve student achievement* (pp. 38-63). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Messick, D. M., & Kramer, R. M. (2004). *The psychology of leadership: New perspectives and research*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2010a). *Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP)*. Retrieved from http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/financial_accountability/MAEP/MAEP_Explanation_2010.pdf
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2010b). *Understanding the Mississippi statewide accountability system*. Jackson, MS: Office of Research and Statistics.
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2012). *Overview of the principal evaluation system for potential pilot districts*. Handout packet from June 18, 2012 at Jackson State University e-Center.
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2014a). *Mississippi schools graded according to new accountability system and U.S. Department of Education waiver*. October, 17, 2014, news release. Retrieved from www.mde.k12.ms.us
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2014b). *2015 Mississippi administrator of the year program application*. Retrieved from http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/docs/cte/2015-ms-administrator-of-the-year-application_20141121104016_253808.pdf?sfvrsn=2
- Mississippi Department of Education. (2015a). *Equitable access stakeholder engagement meeting handouts*. May 4, 2015.
- Mississippi Department of Education (2015b.) *Mississippi accountability results based on 2013-2014 school year*. Public reports. Retrieved from reports.mde.k12.ms.us/report/report2014.aspx

- Mississippi Department of Education (2015c). *Mississippi school superintendents and district websites*. Retrieved from www.mde.k12.ms.us/mississippi-school-superintendents
- Mississippi Department of Education (November-December 2015d). *Regional administrators' meetings focusing on secondary principals*. Handouts for Session on Accreditation and Federal Programs. Jackson, MS: Mississippi Department of Education.
- Murphy, J. (2012). *Comprehensive overview of the Mississippi Principal Evaluation System (MPES)*. Training Session June 8, 2012. Jackson, MS: Mississippi Department of Education.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education*.
- Nichol, G. (2011). Southern poverty, southern politics. In D. P. Gitterman & P. A. Coclanis (Eds.), *A way forward: Building a globally competitive south* (pp. 185-87). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Global Research Institute.
- O-NET Occupational Information Network. Retrieved from www.onetonline.com
- O'Reilly, C. A., Caldwell, D. F., Chatman, J. A., Lapid, M., & Self, W. (2010). How leadership matters: The effects of leaders' alignment on strategy implementation. *The Leadership Quarterly, 21*, 104-113.
- Obama, B. (2009, August). *Prepared remarks of President Barack Obama: Back to school event*. Speech presented at Wakefield High School. Arlington, VA.
- Obiwuru, T. C., Okwu, A. T., Akpa, V. O., & Nwakwere, I. A. (2011). Effects of leadership on organizational performance: A survey of small scale enterprises in Ikosi-Ketu council

- development are of Lagos State, Nigeria. *Australian Journal of Business and Management Research*, 1(7), 100-111.
- Odden, A. (2011). Manage 'human capital' strategically. *Phi Delta Kappan* 92(7), 8-12.
- Orr, M. T. (2007). How preparation influences school leaders and their school improvement: Comparing exemplary and conventionally prepared principals. [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from [seli.stanford.edu/research/documents/ .../orr_preparation_impact.ppt](http://seli.stanford.edu/research/documents/.../orr_preparation_impact.ppt)
- Parrett, W. H., & Budge, K. M. (2012). *Turning high-poverty schools into high-performing schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Payne, R. K. (1996). *A framework for understanding poverty* (4th ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Payne, R. K. (2009). *Research-based strategies: Narrowing the achievement gap for under-resourced students*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.
- Pennington, J. (n.d.) District characteristics: What factors impact student achievement? Working Paper from Intersect: Iowa Department of Education. Retrieved from www.educateiowa.gov
- Peske, H.G., & Haycock, K. (2006). *Teaching inequality: How poor and minority students are shortchanged on teacher quality*. Washington, D.C.: Education Trust, Inc. Retrieved from <https://edtrust.org/resources/teaching-inequality-how-poor-and-minority-students-are-shortchanged-on-teacher-quality>

- Petersen, T., Saporta, I., & Seidel, M. L. (2004). *Getting hired: Race and sex differences*. Institute for Research on Labor and Employment Working Paper No. 150-04. Retrieved from <http://irle.berkeley.edu/workingpapers/150-04.pdf>
- Petzo, V. (2008). The perceptions of new principals regarding the knowledge and skills important to their initial success. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 92(3), 224-250.
- Phillips, O. (2015). *Mississippi has the most elected superintendents in the country: Here's what it means for students*. Rethink Mississippi. Retrieved from www.rethinkms.org
- Pijanowski, J. C.; Hewitt, P. M.; & Brady, K. P. (2009). Superintendents' perceptions of the principal shortage. *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*, 93(2), 85-95.
- Pittinsky, T. L., Bacon, L. M., & Welle, B. (2007). The great women theory of leadership: Perils of positive stereotypes and precarious pedestals. In B. Kellerman & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 127-148). San Francisco: CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Proudford, K. L. (2007). Isn't she delightful? Creating relationships that get women to the top (and keep them there). In B. Kellerman & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 431-451). San Francisco: CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Qualman, E. (2009). *Socialnomics: How social media transforms the way we live and do business*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Rammer, R. A. (2007). Call to action for superintendents: Change the way you hire principals. *Journal of Educational Leadership*, 101(2), 67-76.

- Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (2014). *Designing and conducting survey research: A comprehensive guide* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Rhode, D. L., & Kellerman, B. (2007). Women and leadership: The state of play. In B. Kellerman & D. L. Rhode (Eds.), *Women and leadership: The state of play and strategies for change* (pp. 1-62). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Richards, L. (2015). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Rivera, L. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching: The case of elite professional service firms. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6), 999-1022.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
- Roosevelt, F. D. (1938, June). *Address before the National Education Association*. Speech presented to the National Education Association. New York, NY.
- Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Sandburg, S. & Scovell, N. (2013). *Lean in: Women, work, and the will to lead*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf.
- School Leaders Network. (2014). *Churn: The high cost of principal turnover*. Retrieved from http://connectleadsucceed.org/sites/default/files/principal_turnover_cost.pdf
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75. Retrieved from http://www.angelfire.com/theforce/shu_cohort/viii/images/Trustworthypaper.pdf
- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Southern Echo. (2014). *Explaining disparity in student performance: Race, class, critical teacher shortage, student performance, and school district ranking in Mississippi school districts*. Report by Southern Echo. Retrieved from www.southernecho.org
- Stallings, T. (2011). Southern education progress: Half past halfway, but still a ways to go. In D. P. Gitterman & P. A. Coclanis (Eds.), *A way forward: Building a globally competitive south* (pp. 46-53). Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Global Research Institute.
- Steingart, G. (2008). *The war for wealth: The true story of globalization, or why the flat world is broken*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Stronge, J. H., Xianxuan, X., Leeper, L. M., & Tonneson, V. C. (2013). *Principal evaluation: Standards, rubrics, and tools for effective performance*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision of Curriculum and Development.
- Talbert, J. E. (2010). Professional learning communities at the crossroads: How systems hinder or engender change. In A. Hargreaves (Ed.) *Second International Handbook of Educational Change*.
- Teddlie, C. B., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.

- Tooker, E., Trent J., & Cox, R. (2004). *Leading from your strengths: Building close-knit ministry teams*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.
- Tooms, A. K., Lugg, C. A., & Bogotch, I. (2010). Rethinking the politics of fit and educational leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(1), 96-131.
- Tucker, M. S. (2011). *Surpassing Shanghai: An agenda for American education built on the world's leading systems*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Ukiwe, Alladin. (2011). *Research mehtods: Theory of mixed method*. Lexington, KY: Alladin Ukiwe.
- Ulah, M. M. (2010). A systematic approach of conducting employee selection interview. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(6), 106-112.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). *Quick facts*. Retrieved from <http://quickfacts.census.gov>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). *National school lunch program*. Fact sheet from Food and Nutrition Services. Retrieved from www.fns.usda.gov
- U.S. Elections-Mississippi. (2015). *Congressional districts map*. Retrieved www.uselections.com/ms
- Vlachos, I. P. (2009). The effects of human resource practices on firm growth. *International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management* 4(2), 18-34.
- Wagner, T. (2008). *The global achievement gap: Why even our best schools don't teach the new survival skills our children need—and what we can do about it*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Whitaker, T. (2003). *What great principals do differently: Fifteen things that matter most*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

- Whitehurst, G. J., Chingos, M. M., & Gallaher, M. R. (2013). Do school districts matter? White paper by the Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings. Retrieved from www.brookings.edu
- Wright, P. M., Gardner, T. M., & Moynihan, L. M. (2003). The impact of HR practices on the performance of business units. *Human Resource Management Journal* 13(3), 21-36.
- Wright, P. M., & Stewart, M. (2010). *From bunker to building: Results from the 2010 Chief Human Resource Officer Survey*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies. Retrieved from <http://moore.sc.edu/UserFiles/moore/Documents/Management/CES/2010%20CHRO%20Survey%20Report.pdf>
- Yukl, G. (1998). *Leadership in organizations*, (4th ed.), Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Zhao, Y. (2009). *Catching up or leading the way: American education in the age of globalization*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision of Curriculum and Development.
- Zhao, Y. (2014). *Who's afraid of the big bad dragon?: Why China has the best (and worst) education system in the world*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter to Survey Participants

Dear Educator:

I am currently pursuing the Ph.D. degree in educational leadership at The University of Mississippi. In conjunction with my dissertation study, I am inviting you, as a Mississippi school district superintendent, to participate in a research study exploring the selection of principals in the state. My study specifically focuses on two components of principal selection: factors influencing the selection of a candidate for recommendation to the school board and activities performed by human resource/personnel directors during the selection process. As part of your participation in the study, I ask that you complete the short survey at the link provided below. The survey should take only a few minutes of your time.

The benefit to you of becoming involved in this study is that you will contribute to a critical issue in education today: understanding selection of leaders for schools in a culture of high-stakes accountability. I also hope that through your self-reflection and participation, you will gain a deeper understanding of the selection process and discover ways in which your district and our state can secure the best-prepared leaders. Any findings of this research will be reported as a compilation of information from all the survey data. Your name, school district, or identifying demographic or descriptive information about you or your district will not be used in reporting. Therefore, I see no risk in your involvement with this study; however, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have or address any risks you feel are associated with your participation. Please do not hesitate to contact me at aquinn@go.olemiss.edu or (662) 512-2533.

This study has been reviewed by my committee and approved by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in this project.

[link]

Sincerely,

Angela E. Quinn

Appendix B

Mail-out Survey for Second Contact of Non-responsive Participants (Quantitative Phase)

Survey of Superintendents Regarding the Selection of Effective Principals

Place an X on the line which precedes the best answer to each question for you or your district.

Demographic Information of the Superintendent

What is your gender?

- Female
 Male

What is your ethnicity?

- Asian
 Black
 Hispanic
 White
 Other _____

How many years have you served as a superintendent (in your current and previous districts)?

- 4 or fewer
 5-12
 More than 12

Demographic Information of the District

What size range is your district?

- 999 or fewer
 1000-2499
 2500-4999
 5000-9999
 10,000 or more

In which congressional district is your school district?

- 1
 2
 3
 4

In what manner is the superintendent selected in your district?

- Appointed
 Elected

What is your school district's current official accountability rating?

- A
 B
 C
 D
 F

What percentage of your student body qualifies for free/reduced lunch?

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41%-90%
- 91%-100%

Principal Selection

How many applicants typically apply for a principal's position in your district?

- 0-1
- 2-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- More than 15

Please circle the word or phrase that best describes your satisfaction with the quality of applicants for a principal's position in your district.

Very Satisfied Satisfied Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Please rank the following components of leadership in order of importance (with 1 being most important and 6 being least important) according to your desire to identify evidence of the components in your principal selection process.

- Connections within the District and/or Surrounding Community
network of contacts and support within the school, district, or area
- Continuous Improvement of Instruction
knowledge of pedagogy and commitment to improvement of instruction
- Cooperation and Collaboration
regular interaction with collaborative groups and a means of teacher input in the decision-making process
- Data-Driven Focus on Student Achievement
clear goals focused on student achievement and driven by relevant data
- Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum
assurance that critical content will be taught and assessed appropriately
- School Climate
positive well-functioning environment

Human Resource/Personnel Director Role in Selecting Principals

What is the name of the person in your district designated to handle human resource/personnel director responsibilities (whether working in this role full-time or in addition to other job titles)?

Please circle the word or phrase that indicates the level of activity of the person named above in the process of selecting a principal for recommendation to the school board.

Very Active Active Not Active

Please check ALL activities in which the person named above participates during the principal selection process:

- Active recruiting
- Checking references
- Participating in interviews with the superintendent (non-committee)
- Reviewing applications and/or resumés for the purpose of narrowing
- Serving on an interview committee with other school or district staff
- Speaking face-to-face with applicants for the purpose of narrowing

Appendix C

Letter to Interview Participants (Qualitative Phase)

Dear Mississippi Human Resource/Personnel Director:

I am currently pursuing the Ph.D. in educational leadership. In conjunction with my dissertation study, I am inviting you, as a Mississippi school district human resource/personnel director or designee by the superintendent, to participate in a research study exploring the selection of principals in the state. My study specifically focuses on two components of principal selection: factors influencing the selection of a candidate for recommendation to the school board and activities performed by human resource/personnel directors during the selection process.

As part of your participation in the study, I would like to conduct an interview with you at your convenience. In addition to my role as a graduate student, I am also the Director of Instruction for the Pontotoc City School District, and, as a fellow school administrator, I am aware that time, especially during early fall is a precious commodity. Therefore, I will ensure the interview is conducted in an efficient a manner as possible and will not extend beyond one hour.

I will digitally record and transcribe the interview; however, the recordings, notes, and transcriptions will be stored in a locked file cabinet until completion of the study. The interview will focus on questions about your involvement in your district's selection of principal candidates and your perceptions of your contributions to the selection of principals for recommendation to the school board. Only I will know you are participating in the study. Any findings will be reported as a compilation of information from all the interviews I conduct. Your name, school district, or identifying demographic or descriptive information about you or your district will not be used in reporting.

The benefit to you of becoming involved in this study is that you will contribute to a critical issue in education today: understanding selection of leaders for schools in a culture of high-stakes accountability. I also hope that through your self-reflection and participation, you will gain a deeper understanding of the selection process and discover ways in which your district and our state can secure the best-prepared leaders. I see no risk in your involvement with this study; however, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have or address any risks that you feel are associated with your participation.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (662) 512-2533 or aquinn@go.olemiss.edu.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in this project.

Sincerely,

Angela E. Quinn

Appendix D

General Interview Protocol For Use with Select Human Resource/Personnel Directors

The protocol will be used as a general guide for the interviewer; however, questions may be modified for time constraints or to respect the direction of the interviewee's responses. The interviewee's own words will be included in follow-up questions to the extent possible.

Briefly describe your general work duties.

- How does the role of human resource/personnel director role fit into your typical work day?
 - What portion of your work is represented by HR functions?
- Would you say that you were drawn to HR through past experiences or interests or would you say that you were seeking a leadership role in the district and HR was a part of that role? Would you elaborate on that answer?

Can you describe your district's principal selection process, including how you fit into that process?

- How do you feel your contributions add to your district's process?
- Has the process changed in any way in the last five years? How?
- What, if anything, would you change about your involvement in the process of selecting a principal candidate for recommendation to the school board?

To what extent do you recognize differences in the qualities or skill sets you prefer in a candidate for principal and the qualities and skill sets your superintendent prefers?

- To what would you attribute those differences?

Of the following [provide short list], how do you view these leadership components for an effective principal?

- Would you talk about the two or three that you see as more important than others? Of those, what would you see as most important for a principal candidate to show his or her knowledge or experience [if not already clarified]?
- Which would you see as least important? What experiences lead you to believe that is not as important as _____ [select from previous answer]?

Do you have anything on your mind that we haven't discussed that you feel is critical to exploring human resource/personnel directors' involvement in selecting principal candidates for recommendation?

VITA

Angie is currently in her third year as Director of Instruction for the Pontotoc City School District. In her nineteen years in education, Angie has taught English, Spanish, and courses for English Language Learners in north Mississippi. Her previous administrative experience includes serving as ELL Coordinator for the New Albany Public Schools and Curriculum and Testing Coordinator for the Pontotoc County School District. Angie is an active member of the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and currently serves on the *DKG Bulletin's* editorial board for its two publications, a research journal and a collegial magazine. Angie, selected as Woman of Distinction by Alpha Psi Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, was nominated for the Red Rose Scholarship by the University of Mississippi's educational leadership faculty and received financial assistance through a scholarship funded by Alpha Psi Chapter of Zeta State Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and through the Margaret A. Boyd International Scholarship from Delta Kappa Gamma Society International during her doctoral studies.