RELATIONAL FLEXIBILITY WITHIN A CONNECTED CULTURE: ELEMENTARY

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL FIT IN TEACHER

SELECTION

by

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RELATIONAL FLEXIBILITY WITHIN A CONNECTED CULTURE: ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL FIT IN TEACHER SELECTION

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This phenomenological study examined the perceptions public elementary school principals have of environmental fit within the teacher selection process. Environmental fit is a term used to describe congruence between an employee and the work environment. The congruence is measured through five domains of fit type, resulting in employee satisfaction, individual productivity, job competence, organizational withdrawal, or personal adjustment to the environment. The singular fit types have been studied throughout the organizational literature, and moderately within the educational literature. Research on fit congruence shows connections between organizational effectiveness and individual productivity. The possibilities presented because of these connections support the need for research into this area.

In selection studies, existing research has focused on the role, preferences and perceptions of the principal to that process, with only a few connecting a multi-dimensional fit framework to selection. This study draws on transcendental phenomenological methods to examine the perceptions of ten public elementary school principals from the mid-Atlantic region of the United States within the teacher selection process. All ten participants participated in a semi-structured, in-depth interview with opportunities for additional narrative reflections related

to the overarching question of the study, "how do public elementary principals perceive the role of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?" Using the methods of phenomenological analysis, the findings convey five precepts capturing a structural essence of the participants' fit perceptions. Principals view school culture as mutable, valuing teachers who are relational, culturally receptive, and adaptable. These teachers are instructionally competent, but fit into the environment when they contribute to others within the school. For this reason, the principals believe selection does not confirm a teacher's fit. They utilize components of selection to determine relational dynamics that would lead candidates to integrate easily into the culture as that measure of environmental fit. This conclusion indicates a need for practitioners and school leaders to increase awareness of how relational biases and limited skills specific to salient definitions of fit outcomes influence teacher selection practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

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My life verse of encouragement, challenge and personal conviction: Philippians 4:6-7 – Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God.   And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. May God continue to pour His peace on me in all my present and future pursuits.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

I have always valued the selection of a teacher into a school. For me, this task holds importance because I understand the impact a right hire has for my school building. About three years ago, however, my interest in selection transformed. Other principals did not seem to hold the same values as I did in their teacher selection decisions. More importantly, I did not know why.

This event left me wondering about our methods for selecting teachers. What was it that led to such emotional variation within a process designed to hire the best teachers for our schools? How should we respond so as not to compromise the legitimacy and legality of hiring practices, but still account for finding people we as principals perceive to be excellent practitioners for the classrooms with our unique schools in mind?

1.1   THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER SELECTION

Literature in both organizational psychology and education confirm the importance of personnel selection; however, selection practices seem to not employ the best practices, suggesting that research may not be meeting the needs of those responsible for hiring. Nowicki and Rosse's (2002) study found that non-human resource hiring managers recognized the value of rigorous selection processes, yet felt limited in their ability to apply research-confirmed practices. They relied on luck, intuition, gut or chance to make their decisions (p. 163). Their study also showed

that managers were open to training on the rigorous processes of selection, as long as researchers and human resources managers could clearly communicate these practices to them in a relevant medium (p. 166-167).

Similarly, studies in education found that principals responsible for teacher selection rely on their intuition and gut (DeArmond, Gross & Goldhaber, 2010; Mertz, 2010). Principals base these intuitive decisions within strained selection processes and circumstances beyond their control (Rutledge, Harris & Ingle, 2010, p. 230). They view the selection of teachers as an operational task, defined as one of five key roles relevant to their work (Grissom & Loeb, 2009; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009; White, Brown, Hunt, & Klostermann, 2011). Some literature suggests that principals do not view the selection and hiring of teachers as an area of their immediate responsibility, believing that this task is best handled by central office personnel (i.e., Ramierez, Schofield, & Black, 2009). Though certain studies within the educational research suggest a correlation between student achievement and the amount of time a principal spends on organizational management tasks, principals place little value on these operations in favor of activities that they feel have a more direct instructional focus (Grissom & Loeb, 2009, p. 19; 26; White et al., 2011, p. 18). It seems that the research presents a mismatch between best practice evidence of selection and practical application by principals.

Although research that infuses best practices into the principal's teacher selection decisions exist (e.g., Rutledge, Harris, Thompson & Ingle, 2008), the extant literature focuses largely on identification and principal preferences toward certain selection processes, hiring tools and teacher characteristics. The research examines these tools and processes, but offers very little into the principal mindset behind their preferences. The research also seems to question the role of the principal within teacher selection. Literature related to the degree of centralized

hiring adopted by school systems (c.f., Engel, 2012; Naper, 2010; Ramierez, Schofield, & Black, 2009); district prioritization of training principals in human resource functions (i.e., Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Mertz, 2010); and how principals influence effective teaching practices through selection of teachers (i.e., Ingle, Rutledge & Bishop, 2011) raise questions regarding the role and investment a principal can and should have in teacher selection. Researcher Norma Mertz (2010) posits that principals do not understand the influence they have on selection decisions, and thus do not invest their time and energy into that function (p. 202-203). Despite this evidence, no applicable rationale or theoretical framework exists for the principal practitioner to strengthen the operational task of teacher selection within the context of their school leadership.

Studies within the organizational psychology literature have confirmed the effectiveness of a theoretical framework used in hiring decisions known as environmental fit theory. This theory suggests that improvements to organizational effectiveness, increases in employee satisfaction, and optimization of individual worker productivity occurs when a match exists between an employee and the work environment (i.e., Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). For over a century, organizational psychologists and researchers have developed fit theory studies, infusing the organizational psychology literature with considerations of how selection for fit strengthens personnel practices (i.e., Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006, p. 802; Jansen & Kristof-brown, 2006, p. 193). The studies also exist in the educational literature, focusing on how principals value different types of fit in their selection decisions (Bowman, 2005), what criteria they use in assessing fit (Cranston, 2012; Ingle, Rutledge & Bishop, 2011), and how principals and superintendents value different fit types for different purposes (Little & Miller, 2003). Despite the potential contribution to the theoretical base for teacher selection, these studies have only marginally generated ideas that employed by

the principal practitioner. The literature suggests that principals still wrestle with their own philosophic beliefs and contextual factors, forming their selection decisions on gut, intuition, and preferences and not on theory or structure. In light of this information, the current study presents a means to help bridge the gap between theory and practice.

1.2   PURPOSE, RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Through the process of phenomenological analysis, this study presents a structural essence of the perception of fit as defined by a group of public elementary school principals. The context of this examination considers how that perceived definition of environmental fit influences their experiences and decisions within the teacher selection process. Within the tradition of qualitative research, phenomenology develops a structure that captures the essence of an experience. As the intention of this study moves beyond identification of preferred teacher selection processes to an understanding of the principals' perceived preferences of fit, phenomenological inquiry is the most appropriate methodology.

The term *structural essence* builds from an integrated, unified statement of essence specific to phenomenological studies. According to Moustakas (1994), the culminating aim of phenomenological analysis is to arrive at "an intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole" (p. 100). For this study, the principals' collective perceptions of fit will form the integrated foundation of the structural essence. Understanding the essence of fit theory from the perception of the principal will help strengthen school practitioners, district leaders, and university instructors' understanding of pre-service and in-service needs that

principal leaders demonstrate. Additionally, this study will influence theoretical models of teacher selection and future research applying phenomenological methods toward selection practices and environmental fit theory.

The current study is the first to apply a multi-dimensional fit theory model describing principal perception of fit within the teacher selection process. Environmental fit theory studies have been one dimensional – focusing on vocational fit, organizational fit, job fit, group fit or person fit singularly. No studies in educational literature specific to vocation or person fit exist; only limited studies of job, organization, and group fit exist. Existing studies focus on processes and procedures within a singular dimension model. The literature on principal preferences within teacher selection use both qualitative and quantitative methods; however, none of the research employs phenomenological methods. The contribution of the structural essence of fit informs the field, offers practical application of how fit theory influences selection decisions, and lays the groundwork for future research using this theoretical premise.

1.2.1   Rationale for the study within the context of existing literature

The literature review detailed in Chapter 2 examines the studies connecting environmental fit theory to teacher selection practices. The three sections of the literature review examine studies that: connect fit theory with teacher selection; identify variables regarding selection preferences of the principal; and examine the important role an interviewer plays within the selection process. Literature may still contest the degree of influence a principal can have within selection decisions, but the work of Curtis and Wurtzel (2010) support the role a principal has in facilitating school cultures that strengthen the human capital of teaching staff (p. 93). Studies

that focus on the role of the principal in selection process point toward work that considers environmental fit theory as a framework to identify quality teachers for individual schools.

The organizational literature affirms that fit congruence benefits individual and organizational efficiency. The studies apply singular fit domains, with the most predominant studies discussing person to job (P-J) fit and person to organization (P-O) fit. Within the educational literature, researchers confirm that matching a candidate's fit to the organization (school) or to the job can have positive outcomes such as attaining personal and professional goals within the context of improving the educational environment, or increasing teachers' commitment to the organization (Youngs, Pogodzinski, Grogan, & Perrone, 2015). These studies considering perceived fit are sparse, however, and within the literature that focuses on principal perceptions of fit, conclusions generally indicate that decision making will vary based on a principal's contextual background and preferential understanding of which tools, processes or teacher traits they deem most valuable.

These contextual variables affect the principal's view of their role and influence in selection. Studies show that individualized variables influence how principals involve themselves with selection decisions (i.e., Engel, 2012; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; O'Donovan, 2012). Some of these variables, such as availability of teaching candidates, centralization of selection decisions, or timing of these decisions, are circumstantial. Others, such as favoring certain teaching characteristics or using convenient selection tools show that principals can take more active roles in navigating through their contexts. The question as to why some school systems take an ambivalent role in equipping principals on theory and practice within the human capital structures remains rather unexplored in the literature. Even within the principal's use of their preferred selection tool – the interview, where scores of research validate its reliability –

studies show very little direction in how principals can actively engage with the process by using that tool. Perhaps some of this ambivalence has allowed principals to adopt an attitude toward selection that relies on intuitive factors and not on formal structures.

The research does show that meaningful decisions can occur so long as protocols for use of selection tools exist. The organizational psychology and human resource management literature validate that the interview is a reliable assessment, especially when measuring a candidate's potential congruence for an organization or a job (i.e., Arvey & Campion, 1982). The studies emerging from the field have contributed to uncovering the complexities existing within the interviewer as selection decision-maker (Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014; Posthuma et al., 2002). Educational researchers benefit from the decades of work done by the organizational psychologists, and are conducting studies that examine the contextual variables and psychological influences affecting principals (i.e., Delli & Vera, 2003). The movement within the research of the interview is now focusing on these behavioral and psychological variables of the individual practitioner. Because the principal is often the predominant individual in selection, studies that examine the complicated perceptions and perspectives of these decision makers will provide foundational work to theory and to practice.

1.3   THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Person to Environment (P-E) fit forms the theoretical construct of this study. In their meta-analysis, Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005) define P-E fit as "compatibility between an individual and a work environment that occurs when characteristics are well matched" (p. 281). Research defines five key domains of environmental fit. These domains

include Person to Job (P-J), Person to Organization (P-O), Person to Group (P-G), Person to Vocation (P-V) and Person to Person (P-P). These domains continue to evolve, with recent literature offering different perspectives and characteristics dependent on the employee's interaction with the work environment at any given stage of their employment (Shipp & Jansen, 2011). The literature confirms that the outcomes defining fit, and the measurements pertaining to work climate, employee satisfaction, organizational effectiveness, and individual productivity differ depending on the perspectives of the participants being studied at any given moment in time (i.e., Edwards, et al, 2006; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). The result of these studies suggest that the totality of P-E fit is measured by the employee's congruence with the organization assessed at pre-hire and post-hire, even though there is relevance to understanding fit congruence at isolated moments along that continuum (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006, p. 202).

Due to the complexities related to P-E fit, researchers have developed multiple theoretical models applicable at various stages along this work environmental continuum. For example, Shipp and Jansen's (2011) model measures fit using a narrative analysis approach of an employee's interaction at three distinct stages of the work environment relationship. These three stages explore their retrospection of past fit experiences with current assessments of present fit characteristics, and projected anticipation of how they might characterize their fit through future definitions (p. 79-80). Additionally, Edwards (2008) explores theoretical models within the history of fit research, categorizing the studies by their type. These include studies of employee satisfaction, job stress, vocational congruence, recruitment and selection, and organizational culture and climate (p. 169). Although he contends that existing research leaves question about these theoretical models, he does validate the importance of fit theory to studies of organizational

behavior and human resource management (c.f., Edwards et al 2006; Cable & Judge, 1999; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, Johnson, 2005). Edwards (2008) believes that an integration of the singular theories present within the field would strengthen fit constructs, the explicit relationships among the fit domains, and improve definitional boundaries (p. 218-219). In Chapter 3, I explore the basis of the multi-dimensional fit theory models that inform this study design, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. I also present in this chapter how this theoretical framework forms the basis of inquiry that leads toward a conceptual structure of fit and selection theory related to the research questions for this study.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explores four questions pertinent to the principal's perception of environmental fit within teacher selection processes. These questions evolve from the core tenets of the theoretical framework. The overarching question guiding the study is: *How do public elementary school principals perceive the role of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?* This question explores the foundational components of principal perception in teacher selection decisions as they would apply within their preferences, their use of tools, and their understanding of fit within selection. The following questions guided the data collection processes used in the study.

1) How do principals define environmental fit?

2) How do principals describe their experiences within the teacher selection process?

3) How do principals' experiences of selecting a teacher inform their perception of environmental fit?

4) What do principals imply about the connection between their selection decisions and their perception and definition of environmental fit?

1.5   DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Central to the framework of the study are terms relevant to environmental fit theory. As defined in the literature, *Person-Environment (P-E) fit* refers to the degree of congruence that exists between an employee and his or her work environment (i.e., Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The organizational literature has predominantly studied this theory, although recent studies have emerged within the educational literature. The research defines several domains of fit, referred to as *Person-Vocation (P-V), Person-Job (P-J), Person-Organization (P-O), Person-Group (P-G) and Person-Supervisor (P-S)*. Some studies also characterize the P-G and P-S under one broader category of *Person-Person (P-P)*. Table 1 found in the literature review defines these domains more thoroughly.

Within the model of P-E environmental fit theory, *temporal stages* of fit congruence are characterized by a finite period occurring during the selection and hiring processes. Within the temporal stage, managers elicit pre-employment data on candidates that measure the various fit domains (Jansen & Kristof-brown, 2006).

These measurements elicited reveal *salient features* of a candidate. The salient features are those clearly and evidently observed in employees, and are used to make the determination of environmental fit congruence (c.f., Jansen & Kristof-brown, 2006; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). For the context of this study, salience will be discussed as related to those data points in the selection process (i.e., the temporal stage) and not with the other areas along the P-E fit continuum.

Within the selection literature, *human capital* relates to the skills, dispositions, values and motivations of employees as developed by organizational investment into these people (Curtis, 2010, p. 4). These human capital structures in school systems fall under the category of *human resources management* (Webb & Norton, 2009). Human resources management defines and articulates policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities of the leaders within the school organization who directly oversee aspects of the human capital framework. The framework, as suggested by Curtis and Wurtzel, consists of all integrated human capital processes, which includes employee selection processes.

Selection process will be specific to all stages that involve moving a candidate toward recommendation for hiring. The selection of a candidate would involve screening processes associated with any pre-hire decisions, including but not limited to resume analysis, portfolio review, face to face interviewing and reference checking (i.e., Wise, Darling-Hammond, & Berry, 1987). *Centralization* refers to the degree of centralized, uniform practices maintained by a system during the selection process. The degree of control or oversight of individual units (i.e., school buildings, departments, or grade levels) help clarify whether a system's selection decisions are highly controlled by entities outside of the specific school buildings, departments or grade levels where a vacancy exists, or whether they are *decentralized*. Selection decisions that have lesser degree of centralization see more site based decision making, and thus are considered decentralized (i.e., Naper, 2010; Ramierez et al., 2009).

Transcendental phenomenology refers to the qualitative methods guiding the study design, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies. Phenomenology has evolved within qualitative inquiry, possessing multiple nuances in both its meaning and its methodological approach (c.f., Creswell, 1999; Patton, 2002). Within the field of

phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) defines transcendental phenomenology by focusing on core practices designed to "explicate what is in one's own terms" (p. 41). The methodological processes of transcendental phenomenologist look at the intentionality, intuition, and inter-subjectivity of the participants. Phenomenological researchers construct knowledge and conscious understanding of a focal experience by describing a structure capturing the synthetic essence of the experience from all participants involved. Chapter 3 will explore the methods and procedures of the phenomenological methods contextualized within transcendental inquiry.

1.6   ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

I designed this study using phenomenological methods exploring a sample of elementary principals who share geographic proximity and comparable school performance success. Several assumptions and limitations exist due to the nature of phenomenology, the topic of this study, and the precise focus on elementary level principals within a specific region.

1.6.1   Assumptions

Because the sample selected is homogenous based on geographic proximity, school performance ranking and elementary setting, I assume that the principals operate within similar selection contexts. These contexts include relatively comparable working conditions, hiring processes and structures, and candidate selection from among a common pool of professionals. This homogeneity also presumes that certain structural contexts of the school systems (working

conditions, salaries, benefits) would entice similarly minded teaching professionals to these school systems.

Another assumption related to the sample considers that high performing schools have more opportunities to select teachers outside of singular fit dimensions. In their work on a principal's influence over school culture, Deal and Peterson (2009) indicate that paradoxical complexities related to "accountability pressures have centered attention on standardized achievement tests as the sole indicator of a school's effectiveness" (p. 233). They also contend that schools that fail to measure up to such accountability demands have cultures that are "compromised or severely maimed" (p. 233). Although it is difficult to predict how schools operationalize their value systems related to accountability, I assume that schools performing in the highest tier do not have a "compromised or maimed" culture. Rather, they are operating successfully, and have flexibility to consider other factors of teacher fit beyond just academic accountability. Because the intention of this study looked to define perceptions ranging across multiple fit domains, the sampling criteria only considered schools performing in the highest tier of academic performance.

Finally, variations due to a principal's contextual factors alter the structural essence of selection experiences for a particular group. Even though experiences are non-replicable among individuals, I assume that perception of fit occurs for every principal involved in the teacher selection process regardless of context (c.f., Creswell, 1998, p. 278). The structural essence presented in this study synthesizes the essence for this group of principals while holding some theoretical comparisons for similarly constructed samples.

1.6.2 Limitations

Interviews of participants without observation limit the findings as self-reported conclusions. Future research on environmental fit theory and teacher selection could validate principals' perceptions of fit by collecting additional data that confirm perceptions and decisions.

Phenomenological design limits the sample size; therefore, the structural essence generated from this study generalizes specific to its sample and not to other populations. Future research may build from the findings described in this study to inform theory, to compare structural essence, and to improve selection processes in school systems.

The homogenous sample included elementary principals in one geographic region in comparable school district contexts. Future research may expand sample with secondary principals, heterogeneous groupings, or other geographic regions.

The participants included in the study met criteria to include them within the study. For example, each principal who participated met the criterion of having experienced selecting a teacher for their elementary school. However, the principals' experiences with selection correlate to the amount and degree of background experience with their school processes. Thus, their definitions and perceptions will vary accordingly. Future studies may consider identification of participants who have comparable depth of experiences in selection of teachers to determine how the essence of the experience adjusts based on richness the background of the participants. Conversely, future studies that gather participants with sparse background would also generate other relevant conclusions.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

This analysis will explore what the literature says about current hiring practices related to a principal's understanding of teacher fit. These selection practices, framed within the operational work behaviors of teacher hiring as an organizational management task, will consider how a principal's preferences of certain types of teachers as well as preferences toward the interview as a preferred hiring tool, lead toward selection of teachers who fit within their school cultures. The questions used for this review of the literature include:

1) How do principals evaluate environmental fit when selecting teachers?

2) What are the variables that influence a principal's application of fit theory to the hiring process?

3) What does the literature indicate about the principal as interviewer in fit selection processes?

2.1   HOW DO PRINCIPALS EVALUATE ENVIRONMENTAL FIT WHEN SELECTING TEACHERS?

In a meta-analysis reviewing the theoretical framework of Person-Environment (P-E) fit, Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005) explore 172 studies that define components of fit across the literature. Environmental fit exists when there is alignment between an individual's pre-entry

employment characteristics identified during the hiring process and post-entry outcomes, related to work performance, job satisfaction and organizational contribution (pp. 282–283). Due to its complex nature, research studies have taken fit in the broader context and have narrowed the relationship to focus on singular studies of vocation, organization, job, and group (some studies expand definitions to also include person to person fit, making room for individual interactions within the organization including work peers and supervisor (e.g., Jansen & Kristof-brown, 2006, p. 194)). These categories define sub-set domains of fit explored within the organizational psychology literature for over a century. Table 1 expands the definitions and characteristics of these singular fit domains.

Table 1. Theoretical Definitions and Characteristics of the Domains of P-E Fit

Domains	Definitions	Reference
Person-Vocation (P-V)	Broadest level of organizational fit, matching people with their careers	(Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 284)
Person-Job (P-J)	A worker's knowledge, skills and abilities commensurate with the requirements of the job	(Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 284)
	Employee needs, desires and preferences met by job	(Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 285)
Person-Organization (P-O)	Individual possesses organizational similarities related to values, strategic vision and mission	(Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 285)
	Merging of an individual's values to the organization's values	(Winter, et al, 1997, p. 28)
	Organizational fit is mutually defined – both organization and individual needs met through fit elements	(Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006, p. 194)

16

Table 1. (Continued)

Domains	Definitions	Reference
Person-Group (P-G)	Individual characteristics matched to work group interactions	(Kristof-Brown, et al, 2005, p. 286)
Person-Supervisor (P-S)	Personal characteristics of the supervisor representative of the work environment	(Kristof-Brown, et al, 2005, p. 287)
	Dyadic relationship between the individual employee or potential candidate and his/her direct supervisor	(Kristof-Brown, et al, 2005, p. 287)

Within the literature, studies rarely concentrate on linking all types of environmental fit across the workplace; rather, they focus on these subsets to extend the context within that particular area. Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) confirm that P-E studies rely on singular dimension models without consideration of how the fit domains interrelate. Recent studies recognize that fit exists at varying stages on an employee's relationship with the work environment. Managers applying P-E fit theoretical models must carefully align fit type with their specific decision-making outcomes (e.g., Shipp & Jansen, 2011). Regardless of the simplicity or complexity of the study or how fit theoretical models are used, the primary conclusion remains: fit matters, and employee congruence links job satisfaction with person to job fit (P-J), commitment to the organization as person to organization fit (P-O), and satisfaction with people as either Person to Group (P-G) or Person to Supervisor (P-S) fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Maurer, 2006).

The framework of environmental fit operates within the context of employee-employer relationships. Since organizations consist of employees and employers, the fit theoretical framework applies in all personnel decision-making contexts. Within the field of education, the studies of fit are limited, but the potential to link teacher characteristics with organization and job alignment is great. It is within this context that environmental fit theory can serve as a meaningful base when making teacher selection decisions.

2.1.1 Organizational literature surrounding P-O and P-J fit

The organizational literature includes singular domain studies distinguishing and applying person to job (P-J) and person to organization (P-O) fit than the other domains. This may be in part because organizations intentionally hiring for P-O and P-J hold a competitive advantage over those who do not. The organizations hiring for P-O and P-J fit see reduced turnover, increased job satisfaction and improved performance among their employees (Chatman, 1991; Kristof-Brown, 2000). Additionally, P-O and P-J hiring practices show congruence in a candidate's values with the organization, and demonstrated knowledge, skills and abilities with the job (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993). In the literature of fit theory in organizational psychology and human resource management, the studies regarding these domain characteristics have delineated P-O and P-J definitions, and have improved analysis of organizational behavior.

Since researchers have explored P-O and P-J fit more frequently than the other domains, their conclusions suggest that in selection decisions, managers tend to recognize a candidate's P-J alignment more easily than their P-O. Individual behaviors that align with P-J fit are identified as the specific knowledge, skills and abilities associated with a particular job (Bretz et al., 1993; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Motowidlo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). P-O fit, on the other hand,

18

relies on connecting employee values and personality to organizational culture and goals (e.g., Chatman, 1991; Gardner, Reithel, Cogliser, Walumbwa, & Foley, 2012; Maurer, 2006).   In the literature, P-J fit inherently possesses more objective measures connecting an employee's abilities with the knowledge, skills and demands of a job (i.e., Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006; Kristof-Brown, 2000).   In the growing body of literature surrounding P-O fit, identifying these measures becomes much more complex.   A study by Gardner et al (2012) identifies certain personality types thriving within particular organizational cultures, and matches of personality and culture can achieve high levels of performance, organizational commitment, and citizenship (p. 613).   Assessing this fit relies on strong communication of the organization's values to attract potential recruits to the organization (p. 590).   Similarly, Chatman (1991) finds that identifying person-organization fit "is a meaningful way of assessing person-situation interactions because values are fundamental and relatively enduring, and because individual and organizational values can be directly compared" (p. 459).   Within the context of selection, assessing candidates using subjective criteria like personality alignment or values similarity casts a tremendous responsibility over these managers' decision making practices.   Therefore, determining what measures –subjective and objective – leads to identifying the most relevant data for selection as well as improving the entire P-E theoretical model.

Certain P-O fit studies look at employee responses to work situations that characterize their behaviors as either contributing to or detracting from the organization's strategic goals.   A manager's assessment of a candidate's employability presumes that they can distinguish skills, knowledge and abilities from specific goals, values and relational interactions within the work culture (Bretz et al., 1993; Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1991; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Maurer, 2006; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990).   Hiring assessments of candidates are very often holistically

measured without delineating across the categories of P-O and P-J (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Some research, like Cable and Judge (1997), suggest that recruiters employ tools of selection indicating perceived congruence of fit from actual, and that often these perceptions are an inaccurate assessment of employee values (p. 555). Rynes and Gerhart (1990) find that "raters from different organizations agree more closely on assessments of general employability than on firm-specific fit" (p. 23). This conclusion emerges by an employer's membership within an organization and not based on deliberate training or alignment of interviewing protocols connected to organizational values (p. 18). The complexity of this hiring process suggests that managers have the ability to determine how a candidate's work and behavioral values will align to the job and organization. Conversely, the research also suggests that managers do not always distinguish traits appropriate to their fit determinations.

However clear the distinctions between P-O and P-J fit assessment are, the largest gap exists in hiring managers' understanding and use of selection tools to evaluate fit. The research of Bretz, Rynes and Gerhart (1993) look at general employability characteristics and organization specific goals and attributes, finding that interviewers exhibit greater variability when matching candidates to firm specific values over general employability assessments (p. 73). This point maintains the theoretical framework established by Motowildo, Bowman and Schmit (1997) whose study identify patterns of work behavior that either extend or detract from organizational goals, and that individual work associated with job specific tasks will aid contextual performance of employees (p. 81). Still, recruiters mix holistic components of fit when assessing employees P-O and P-J alignment. This leads them to make determinations of fit based on general employability factors that may not always align to organizational goals and values or job specific tasks (Bretz et al., 1993; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Motowidlo et al., 1997).

Bretz et al (1993) contend that recruiters seldom agree on specific indicators of a good fit, and base their perceptions of fit on idiosyncratic preferences developed from misinformed perceptions assessed by mismatched hiring tools (p. 325). They suggest that "despite increased academic attention to the potential importance of broad-based organizational fit, most applicants are encouraged to focus primarily on immediate job-related knowledge, skills and abilities" (p. 326). Focus on one type of fit may be appropriate in certain contexts, but the organization's goals inform job specific tasks. Therefore, when managers hire based on misinformed use of tools or with a one sided scope of fit assessment (i.e., looking at job-related skills and not organization specific behaviors), complete organizational fit of employees may not exist.

The recent models considering fit as a multi-dimensional construct of employee-environmental congruence address concerns with this mismatch (Edwards, 2008; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 1998; Maurer, 2006; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). The work of Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) and Shipp and Jansen (2011) suggest application of integrated approaches of measuring multiple domains of P-E fit. Edwards (2008) contends that the theoretical framework has contributed to organizational psychology, yet has not substantiated forward movement as a rigorous theoretical base (p. 218). He suggests integrating the salient characteristics of fit with established protocols of selection. In this way, a theoretical model that blends important characteristics of selection with environmental fit theory may strengthen theory. Since selection of personnel is a cumbersome tasks for managers, and managers are under-prepared with evidence-based practices (Nowicki & Rosse, 2002), an integrated multi-dimensional model of P-E fit in selection may strengthen organizational decision making practices.

2.1.2   Environmental fit within educational literature

Despite the positive potential to organizational effectiveness, individual productivity, and feasible theoretical application when principals select teachers for environmental fit, there are only a few studies examine applications of the theory to practice. Table 2 summarizes the literature applying environmental fit theory to the teacher selection process. Though some of these studies explore the domain of P-G fit, the significant information relates to studies of P-O and P-J.

Table 2: Environmental Fit Research Across Educational Literature: Studies in Brief

Reference	Methodological Details	Fit domains	Contributions to P-E literature	Contributions to teacher selection literature

Bowman,J.S, 2005	• Purpose:
	  • determine if principals and superintendents look at candidates similarly
	
	• Sample:
	  • Systematic random sampling procedure using population of all principals and superintendents from mid-western state
	
	• Methodology:
	  • Quantitative Survey
	
	• Data and Measures:
	  • 28 item survey related to P-O and P-J fit
	  • Exploratory factor analysis to determine levels of difference between superintendents' values of fit and principals
		• P-J
		• P-O
			• The study does not directly contribute to developing P-E theoretical models; however, Bowman claims to be the first study applying the theoretical framework to distinguishing between superintendents and principals views of the theory
			
			• Bowman suggests that HR personnel value different types of fit at differing levels within the organization.
				• Principals and superintendents follow different considerations of P-J and P-O fit:
				
				  o Principals focus on building level culture and school vision
				  o superintendents focus on job related factors (ex., interaction with students)
				
				• There is an assumption that educators base selection decisions within the context of the law

Table 2. (Continued)

Reference	Methodological Details	Fit domains	Contributions to P-E literature	Contributions to teacher selection literature
Cranston, J., 2012	- Purpose: - What principals believe about fit - How principals assess fit - Sample: 8 Catholic Canadian principal - Methodology: - Qualitative Study (non-defined within the qualitative traditions) - Data and Measures: 16 semi-structured interviews of 45 – 60 minutes in length - Transcription of interviews, member checking for accuracy, descriptive coding analysis	- P-J - P-O - P-G - P-V	Confirms that hiring for P-E fit is axiomatic within the personnel management literature (p. 8) *because people thrive in organizations where good fit exists*	- Principals view themselves as gatekeepers to the profession - Selection for P-G fit proves challenging for principals due to shifting and sometimes ambiguous group values. - Principals feel confident identifying candidates knowledge, skills and abilities (P-J) - Principals hire for dual purposes: - assessing a teacher's ability to improve schools (P-J) - assessing to improve school cultures (P-O) - Principals connect certain selection tools with identifying specific fit domains: - P-V – interview - P-J – resume, cover letter, interview and reference checks - P-O – interview - P-G – no definitive tool identified to assess P-G fit

Table 2. (continued)

Reference	Methodological Details	Fit domains	Contributions to P-E literature	Contributions to teacher selection literature

Little & Miller, 2003	• Purpose:
	  o Empirical test of selection decisions with P-E theoretical model
	• Sample:
	  o Superintendents and principals in all rural Kentucky schools
	• Research goal:
	  o Understand what degree demographic factors of candidates predict rural values in public school officials hiring decisions
	• Methodology:
	  o Quantitative survey factor analysis
	• Measures and Data:
	  o 214 (60%) responses
	  o 40 item survey with questions based on participant's application of the model
		• P-O	• This paper develops rationale for a conceptual model of P-O fit
			  o The model considers how rural values influence selection decisions.
				• Larger school systems utilize general concepts of fit whereas smaller schools draw on the idiosyncratic differences of fit unique to their individualized values
				• Superintendents select teaching candidates who would maintain community values and stability whereas principals hire for teacher effectiveness
				• Superintendents who possess rural values are those who work in small, non-metropolitan, racially homogenous schools (p. 23)
				• Superintendents of rural schools hire for community fit whereas principals look for academically oriented teaching candidates.
				• Values are mutable and can be influenced by local school board policies
				• Rural values influence the person-organization fit model within personnel selection practices

Table 2. (continued)

Reference	Methodological Details	Fit domains	Contributions to P-E literature	Contributions to teacher selection literature

Ingle, Rutledge, Bishop (2011)	• Purpose:
	  • How do principals winnow down teacher qualities for consideration into hiring? (p. 583)
	  • Understand principals' conception of organizational needs and whether they hired based on P-O, P-J or P-G fit
	• Sample:
	  • Purposive sample of 21 Florida principals from mixed demographic schools
	• Methodology:
	  • Qualitative case study
	• Data and Measures:
	  • Semi-structured interviews of elementary, middle and high school principals
	  • Analysis included inductive and deductive coding of transcribed interviews and memo-writing
		• P-J
		• P-O
		• P-G
			• Suggests that theoretical models related to P-G fit best happen post hire stages of employment process	• Principals apply sense-making strategies to assess teacher fit
				• Organizational values vary based on a school's cultural context
				• Principals apply different values systems based on:
				  o school context
				  o personal preferences
				• Principals acknowledged the importance of fit with all three domains (P-J, P-O, P-G)
				• Principals operationalize teacher quality dependent on unique, specific school contexts (p. 603)
				• Principals value certain teacher characteristics:
				  o pedagogical knowledge
				  o professional knowledge
				  o ability to improve student achievement on standardized tests
				• Principals value public perception of the school's accountability related to student performance on standardized tests

Table 2. (continued)

Reference	Methodological Details	Fit domains	Contributions to P-E literature	Contributions to teacher selection literature

Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, Ingle (2008)	• Purpose:
	  • understand the tools and processes used by principals in teacher hiring
	
	• Sample and Methodology:
	  • Mixed method case study of 39 Florida school administrators
	
	• Data Collection and Measures:
	  • semi-structured interviews
	    ○ In-depth interviews occurred twice for each principals over a two year span
	  • direct observations
	  • survey results
	  • document analysis
	  • memo-writing analysis
		• P-O
		• P-J
		• P-G
			• No advancement toward the P-E theoretical model exists in this study; however, this study identifies teaching as a profession of high complexity. As a result, use of P-E fit theoretical model may strengthen decisions made for specific teachers.	• Selection process is complex
				• Principals circumvent the processes of hiring to mitigate the complexity
				• Circumventing happens because of timing of hiring decisions and variation in degree of centralization over hiring practices
				• Interview is the most preferred selection tool used by principals
				• Preferences toward tools vary across school systems
				• Principals' decisions for teacher selection varies across school systems based on their own informed view of P-O, P-G and P-J fit
				• Principals' decision making varies based understanding how to use hiring tools and how to follow established hiring policies and processes
				• Recommendation to strengthen principal training processes related to hiring

2.1.2.1 Contributions to teacher selection theory

School district personnel value teacher fit, though there is limited evidence suggesting that a consistent application of the construct exists. In some of the studies represented by Table 2, both superintendents and principals see the value in finding competent teachers (P-J) with correct qualifications (P-V) and who mesh with organizational values (P-O) and group dynamics (P-G) (c.f., Bowman, 2005; Cranston, 2012; Little & Miller, 2003). However, Bowman's (2005) study suggests that organizational level factors have a greater influence on principals whereas superintendents are influenced by job specific factors (p. 400). Contrast that to the findings of Little and Miller (2003) who show superintendents value rural cultures of their communities whereas principals focus on accountability measures related to student performance (p. 30). In Cranston's (2012) study, he finds that principals are confident in identifying the knowledge, skills and abilities of teachers, but they value teachers who will mesh into the existing school cultures (p. 9). His study shows that principals view themselves as gatekeepers of the teaching profession, hiring only those most competent with knowledge, skills and abilities (Cranston, 2012). These three studies suggest that variability dominates in selection, and application of the fit construct will be dependent on different contexts.

Although the results of the previous studies suggest contextual inconsistencies, Ingle, Rutledge and Bishop (2011) and Rutledge et al. (2008) also show that principals draw on their subjective preferences in selection. For example, Rutledge et al. (2008) validate principals' knowledge of fit to specific positions, but this knowledge is often non-quantifiable and based on intangible factors occurring at different times for different principals (p. 251). Despite local policy and federal constraint, their study indicates principals' decisions are informed by subjectivity and personal preference (p. 256). Similarly, Ingle, Rutledge and Bishop (2011)

show that principals define quality teaching based on fit within their unique school contexts (p. 580). They find that principals pay more attention to the professional, personal and context related characteristics than to organizational priorities (p. 583). The principals of these studies have limited understanding of how their decisions influence the greater P-E fit congruence that could benefit school cultures, instead relying on personal philosophies emerging within their individual contexts. The principals want to make effective selection decisions informed by fit determinants, but maintain limited understanding of the organizational benefits occurring with total P-E congruence that moves beyond subjective variations.

2.1.2.2 Implications to theoretical model

The organizational literature defines congruence through a holistic assessment of an employee across various domains. Managers hire on gut or intuition in making fit determinations (i.e., Kristof-Brown, 2000; Nowicki & Rosse, 2002; Rutledge et al., 2008). They also rely on personality alignment or cultural cohesion within the organization (Chatman, 1991; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Maurer, 2006). Within the educational literature, research suggests that principal involvement in the selection decisions links to environmental fit (Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Naper, 2010; Quality, 2010). Nevertheless, there is little contribution to the theoretical construct of selection when applying P-E fit theory. The studies shown through Table 2 validate that the theory has applicability in selection processes. Collectively, the studies focus on how principals and superintendents perceive distinctions of fit in teachers. The studies by Rutledge, et al (2010) and Ingle, Rutledge and Bishop (2011) validate the complexity of teaching as a profession, and suggest that incorporating the theoretical model can differentiate between P-O and P-J. No studies in the educational literature have examined the more defined theoretical models emerging from fit theory (i.e., multi-dimension theory or selection specific theories as

offered by Jansen & Kristof-Brown, or Werbel & Gilliland). The exploration of this theoretical construct within the educational literature is clearly in a nascent stage of research possibilities.

2.1.3   Summary of P-O and P-J fit within organizational and educational literature

The research supports assessing recruits into organizations based on their environmental fit. The literature surrounding fit can be broken into five domains, with the bulk of research characterizing person to organization (P-O) and person to job (P-J) most distinctly. Considering the factors of employee satisfaction, performance productivity and overall organizational success, hiring for fit matters. Greater complexity exists when assessing P-O fit compared to P-J fit, and for that reason, hiring managers may need better preparations and support in how to assess for fit when making selection decisions. Within the educational literature, studies are limited, and those that exist suggest a great deal of contextual and preferential subjectivity from those involved in the process. The literature specific to principals shows that they value certain characteristics of fit. Then again, the complexities in identifying and assessing fit congruence present challenges for the principal, especially in light of the limited studies on the topic, and an evolving theoretical base.

2.2   WHAT ARE THE VARIABLES THAT INFLUENCE A PRINCIPAL'S

APPLICATION OF FIT THEORY WITHIN THE HIRING PROCESS?

The contextual factors associated with fit challenge how principals participate in the selection

process.   Research shows that principals navigate the hiring process based on individual

preferences that vary across school cultures (D. Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2010; K.

Ingle, Rutledge, & Bishop, 2011; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Mertz,

2010). However, they misunderstand the level of influence they can have on strengthening the

instructional program by infusing schools with high quality teachers (Grissom & Loeb, 2009;

Horng et al., 2009; Mertz, 2010; White et al., 2011). This misunderstood influence is a direct

result of competing variables principals face in their selection decisions.   For example, one

variable relates to existing culture.   Principals may focus on selecting teachers who will mesh

into the existing staff rather than risk selection choices that might change that culture (Mertz,

2010). In and of itself, this practice may not be problematic for schools where healthy cultures

already exist, but as a premise of practice, this mindset underestimates the degree of power

behind selection choices.   This portion of the review will explore variables like this that contend

for a principal's selection of teachers, and how these variables influence fit theory in selection.

2.2.1   Principal preference in personal and professional attributes

The existing literature on principal selection of teachers explores the tools, processes, and

teacher traits preferred.   These studies, located within the human resource management literature,

consider how development of the processes and tools of selection contribute to human capital

development.   The research on human capital frameworks for school systems places the principal

in a significant role for attracting, retaining and developing teachers (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010, p. 69). Human resources recognize that principals play an important part of the process. They also know what principals prefer when using hiring tools, following established selection processes, and valuing specific qualities of teacher candidates.

Although the research around these tools and processes continues to expand, the findings show that the interview is the most widely used and preferred tool by principals (Harris et al., 2010; Liu & Johnson, 2006; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Mertz, 2010). The interview has been examined in research at great length, proving to be a valid measure of a candidate's organizational and job fit (i.e., Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Section 2.3 will investigate more thoroughly its role and validity to the principal as interviewer. For this section, conversations related to the interview occur as a preference variable influencing other contextual variables of selection.

Principals seem to recognize their own intentional biases as they are making their selection decisions. Their recognition does not preclude them from acting on biases, whether or not they benefit their schools. In her study of urban school principals, Mertz (2010) critiques a principal's preference to bring in a teacher who shares the same values, vision and approaches that the principal already had. The principals did not consider that their investment in the process could lead toward identifying teachers who would affect student learning. She writes:

> If it is true that principals' days are filled with crises that hinder their ability to exercise leadership on a regular basis, then the teacher selection process would seem to provide an opportunity to exercise this leadership apart from the press of daily activities. . . . that principals in this study did not use the teacher selection process to exercise their influence over the instructional program by choosing teachers who bring the attitudes, knowledge, and competencies known to affect student learning raises questions about the nature of their understanding of and commitment to the teaching-learning program (p. 202-203)

Mertz's study challenges these lackadaisical attitudes toward a process that could influence student learning and school climate. She contends that principals are more inclined to rely on their gut feelings and intuition instead of investing in processes and tools that would improve their selection choices (p. 194).

Perhaps for reasons inferred by Mertz, researchers desiring to improve theory and practice have examined variables influencing principals' attitudes toward this operational task. One of these variables relates to the centralization of schools' hiring systems. Centralized hiring processes may include principals, but structural definitions defined by the district, or organizational attitudes developed by principals may cause them to view their role as irrelevant or unimportant (Mertz, 2010; Ramierez et al., 2009, p. 22). There is literature supporting the degree of influence principals have, but those studies advocate for more decentralized hiring practices. Within those studies, decentralization gives principals an opportunity to influence school culture and the instructional expertise of their staff (DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010a; Donaldson, 2013; Ingle et al., 2011; Keedy, Seeley, & Bitting, 1995; Kersten, 2008; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Naper, 2010; Sergiovanni, 1992). Centralization helps organizations develop their processes for hiring to oversee necessary legal and accountability structures. These include the procedural stages such as developing selection criteria, managing screening processes and background checks, developing interview protocols, establishing appropriate candidate evaluations and notification systems, and procedures for the placement of employees into open positions (Webb & Norton, 2009). The centralization of school systems maintains a necessary role and responsibility for these processes to improve and develop their human capital (i.e., Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). In these ways, the literature does not refute the importance of organizational oversight and uniform practices. Studies like Wise, Darling-Hammond and Berry

(1987) validate these processes of recruitment, screening, hiring, placement, induction and evaluation of staff as necessary to the operation of teacher selection (Wise et al., 1987). Even though the research necessitates such process components, the degree of centralization presents a contextual variable that influences a principal's attitude and behavior toward the process.

It is hard to determine within the literature whether centralization has a greater influence on the principal's preferences compared to other contextual factors. The research considers candidate familiarity and availability, local, state, and federal policy, and knowledge of pre-employment tools and resources as factors influencing principals' view of selection. While none of these studies has greater influence over their views or preferences, each provides contextual considerations that develop the theoretical base. Table 3 eight highlights studies that consider these factors.

Table 3: Studies Associated with Contextual Factors Affecting P-E Fit Assessments and Preferential Decisions

Source	Contextual information	Key Findings
Ballou, 1996	- Quantitative analysis - Focus: econometric model evaluating relationship between a pre-service teacher's pursuit of position (desire and availability of a job) with the district acceptance of candidate for employment	- College quality has no significant effect on success of applicant in job market (p. 116) - Principals hire on affective characteristics instead of academic content knowledge - Pre-service teachers are drawn to the profession for reasons outside of cognitive enticements and pecuniary factors related to the job - Academically rich students do not choose to enter the field of teaching - Little distinction made by principals between academically strong and affectively strong candidates
Baker & Cooper, 2005	- Quantitative survey of 16,000 K-12 public school teachers - Focus: correlated principal preferences of teachers to the similarity of the principal's collegiate background	- Principals favor teachers of similar personal academic ability - More selective educational background of teachers preferred in secondary schools - Comparative preference between caliber of the principal's post-secondary education and teacher's post-secondary caliber - not as apparent or important in low poverty schools - in high poverty schools, the researchers suggest recruiting and compensating smarter principals

35

Table 3. (continued)

Source	Contextual information	Key Findings
Cohen-Vogel, 2011	- Qualitative study of 10 elementary schools in five Florida school districts - Focus: district contexts and procedures shaping administrator decisions about hiring, assignment and dismissal (p. 488) - analyzed district and state policy documents and collective bargaining agreements related to hiring, placement and dismissal	- Principals draw on personal experiences and local knowledge of candidates as opposed to performance data - Principals serve as gatekeepers in hiring processes when selecting teachers for cultural fit - Principals understand how to bridge policy demands and external requirements in order to select teachers for specific school cultures
Engle, 2013	- Mixed methods study - Subjects: Chicago Public Schools, sample of 26 schools, population of 627 - Survey data from 368 principals - Semi-Structured interviews: 31	- School context influences principal decision making - Principals prefer teachers based on easily noted traits - Traits less connected to student achievement and academic growth - Limited training and development for principals
Rutledge, Harris & Ingle, 2010	- Mixed methods study - Subjects: 30 Florida principals, 3 district level administrators - Decentralized system - All schools - Focus: interview questions posed to principals - goal orientation - vision of schools - constraints of policy - Focus: observational data - local hiring fairs interviewing processes - principal selection decisions	- Principals bridge and buffer preferences - teacher traits - local and federal policy mandates - certification demands - accountability requirements - valuing professional teaching characteristics consistent with accountability goals - subject matter knowledge - teaching skills - Principals navigate locally established policies

Table 3. (continued)

Source	Contextual information	Key Findings

Rutledge, Harris, Thompson & Ingle (2008)	• Mixed methods case study
	  • two year study in single midsized school district in the state of Florida
	  • The sample is same sample from Rutledge, Harris & Ingle, 2010 study
		• School systems follow calendars that complicate the timing of hiring decisions
		• Restrictions for teacher selection
		  • limited teacher candidate pool, particularly with lower performing school systems
		• Teaching ranks second highest complex profession
		  • collection and analysis of performance data
		  • clear communication
		  • high reasoning abilities
		• Subjective preferences of hiring tools
		  • interviewing over portfolio reviews
		  • reference checking over video analysis of teaching demonstration
		• Principals circumvent timing and policy restraints to select tools preferred
		  • Leads to inconclusive evidence evaluating hiring tools used by principals

Strauss, Bowes, Marks & Plesko, 2000	• Quantitative analysis
	• Focus: econometric application to data sets
	  • state regulations for certification requirements
	  • numbers of certificated professional employees across the state
	  • SAT and NTE data of prospective and hired teacher employees
		• Districts hire teachers from local institutions and not based on academic expertise or high content knowledge scores
		  • Processes rely on candidate familiarity by district personnel
		• Districts who are more professional in hiring processes are also districts whose students demonstrate greater interest in further education and achieve higher test scores (p. 405)

Table 3. (continued)

Source	Contextual information	Key Findings
Young & Delli, 2002	- Mixed Methods study - Subjects: two populations of public school teachers from southeastern and mid-western states - Focus: could Teacher Perceiver Instrument (TPI) as a pre-employment tool connect to postemployment outcomes - link commercialized tool as a means of generating reliable data toward teacher selection processes - Pre-employment data of the study based on scores specifically taken from use of TPI instrument - Data: postemployment teacher absentee data and annual evaluations - Limitation: subjective instrumentation of "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" ratings	- Teacher selection literature - screening and interviewing studies - person perception theories of hiring - policy capturing perspectives - Limited consistency in teacher screening - Limited information comparing interview decisions and screening decisions - hiring tools (i.e., TPI) may strengthen pre-employment decisions - it is "not uncommon for different questions to be asked of different job candidates, and this makes process of comparing candidates impossible" (p. 609-610) - consistent use of pre-employment screening tool - greater probability connecting pre- and post-employment performance

Candidate disposition, their availability to the field, geographic proximity, and personal familiarity do affect the selection preferences of principals. In Ballou's study, he suggests that teachers are drawn to the profession for reasons outside of cognitive, pecuniary, or academic influences. This may account for a principal's preference toward affective characteristics instead of content level knowledge and background (Ballou, 1996). This draw by principals toward affective dispositions of teachers may be circumstantial, although Ballou also contends that even when teachers with stronger cognition enter the field, there is little evidence that principals will prefer these candidates. These same circumstances exist with principals who select teachers based on familiarity. In the research, principals favor candidates whose academic backgrounds compare to their own (Baker & Cooper, 2005), or with whom they have personal familiarity (Cohen-Vogel, 2011), or geographic closeness, as implied through hiring from institutions that are familiar (Strauss, Bowes, Marks, & Plesko, 2000). Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the principal and the candidate, the studies acknowledge this range of contextual factors influencing the outcomes to selection decisions.

Some of the research indicates that principals actively negotiate the variables to suit their own preferences showing that contextual factors are not present passively or circumstantially. For example, local and federal policy restraints may dictate restrictions on what a principal should value in the affective or professional characteristics of teachers. But, principals have learned to buffer external policy pressures so they can still select teachers they prefer (e.g., Rutledge, Harris, & Ingle, 2010; Rutledge et al., 2008). Principals, too, face restrictions regarding the timing of hiring (Rutledge et al., 2008), yet they counteract these limitations by using selection tools such as the interview that are convenient and time efficient (e.g., Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Engel, 2012; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Rutledge et al., 2010, 2008; Young &

Delli, 2002). Principals may appear and may even be passive in light of these circumstances, but these studies suggest that they can take active roles under certain conditions.

The research indicates that not a lot of explicit training or direction exists for principals, which may be why they learn to navigate individually their circumstances. Engle's mixed methods study of 31 Chicago area principals found that they lacked the ability to evaluate traits of teachers easily observed during selection interviews as a result of limited training on proper evaluation criteria (Engel, 2012). As a result, these principals were drawn toward teachers who possessed qualities that had questionable connection with improved student performance. Similarly, Cohen-Vogel's study showed that principals do not use student performance data as criteria for selection, instead drawing on familiarity, local knowledge or personal traits (Cohen-Vogel, 2011). Research validates that the adoption of standardized pre-employment instruments, such as the Teacher Perceiver Instrument, minimizes the inconsistencies associated with selection decisions (Young & Delli, 2002, p. 610). Nevertheless, solutions like this require that school systems deliberately guide and prepare principals to understand the role that they can have in selection despite the controlled and circumstantial variables influencing that activity.

Since guidance for the principal in this area remains under-developed, the controversy over preferential teacher characteristics continues to exist. The studies separate the preferred teacher traits into either professional or personal characteristics. Table 4 categorizes these traits.

Table 4: Literature on Administrative Preferences of Personal and Professional Teacher Attributes

Reference	Contextual information	Personal Attributes	Professional Attributes
McEwan, 2002	Literature study using qualitative methods and resources targeted for principals and based on field observations and interviews of principals and teachers	• Mission Driven • Passionate • Positive • Real • Personal style • Motivational expertise • Mental life (strategic, reflective, responsive	• Teacher leader • With it ness • Communication ability • Research based methods • Classroom climate • Assessment and diagnosis • Wide repertoire of teaching approaches • Application of principles of learning • Book learning • Street smarts (knowledge of students, community, school)
Engle, 2012	Mixed method study of principals in Chicago PS, included 31 principals, semi-structured interview	• Caring about children • Willing to give extra to the classroom	• Content knowledge • Have classroom management skills
Kersten, 2008	Questionnaire developed to principals in Illinois (398 in identified sample, with 142 response rate)	• Positive attitude • Hard work ethic • Collaborative team players	• Content knowledge • Ability to link best instructional practices and real life, practical experiences • Student centered thinking • Skilled communicator

Table 4. (continued)

Reference	Contextual information	Personal Attributes	Professional Attributes
Pilsbury, 2005	Op-ed	• Purposeful • Relational	• High quality approaches and knowledge of teaching
Ingle & Rutledge, 2010	Case Study and literature review	• Enthusiasm • Motivation • Caring • Interpersonal skills	• Subject matter knowledge • Pedagogical skills • Verbal and quantitative abilities
Schumaker, Grigsby & Vesey, 2012	Qualitative inquiry into effective teaching practices constructed through interview processes	----	• Classroom management • Organization of instruction • Implementation of instruction • Monitoring student progress
Strauss, Bowes, Marks & Plesko, 2000		----	• High content knowledge • Academic proclivities toward teaching
Rutledge, Harris, Thompson & Ingle, 2008	3 district official and 39 Florida principals from 20 elementary, 6 middle, 4 high schools, mixed demographics	• 2nd highest complexity of profession in interpersonal relationships and requiring use of language and reasoning data	• Student engagement and motivation • Analysis of data for instructional decision making
Ingle, Rutledge & Bishop, 2011	Qualitative study on 21 Florida principals	• Caring	• Strong teaching • Subject matter knowledge

The research shows principals preferring one category over the other, but within varying contexts. Principals place preferential values on the characteristics of teachers and choose their staff according to their own biases and not necessarily on what they may need for the organizational environment. A conclusion of Ingle, Rutledge and Bishop (2011) shows that principals vary their hiring preferences based on contextual factors, although they consistently prefer caring teachers with strong teacher and subject matter knowledge (p. 594). As Table 4 shows, when principals prefer teachers based on their personal characteristics, they identify these traits as being caring (Engel, 2012; Ingle et al., 2011; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; McEwan, 2002), positive (Kersten, 2008; McEwan, 2002), motivational (Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; McEwan, 2002; Rutledge et al., 2008), enthusiastic (Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; McEwan, 2002) and relational (McEwan, 2002; Pilsbury, 2005; Rutledge et al., 2008). When principals prefer professional traits, they identify teachers with strong content knowledge (Engel, 2012; Ingle et al., 2011; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; McEwan, 2002; Strauss et al., 2000), understanding best classroom instructional practices including classroom management, and pedagogy (Engel, 2012; Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; McEwan, 2002; Pilsbury, 2005; Schumaker, Grigsby, & Vesye, 2012), and who possess strong communication and academic proclivities (Ingle & Rutledge, 2010; Kersten, 2008; McEwan, 2002; Rutledge et al., 2008; Strauss et al., 2000). The research is clear on the identification of traits as preferred by principals. However, the tensions remain because research only marginally addresses why preferences exist as they do.

2.2.2 Summary of influences related to principal preference in hiring for fit

In considering the factors that influence a principal's assessment of fit theory to selection, the research confirms that an underlying tension exists between preferences of professional and personal traits. The research identifies caring, enthusiasm and conscientiousness as examples of personal traits, while connecting academic proclivity, high content knowledge, and solid pedagogical background within the professional. These preferred traits remain relatively ambiguous in varying contexts, though the research does show some universally accepted definitions and even preferences of principals. Still, these varying contextual factors contend with active engagement and investment of principals toward the process. Factors such as the degree of decentralization, timing, local candidate familiarity, complementary academic background of prospective teachers with selecting principals, and the limited training on the use of hiring tools all influence the principal's perceptions over teacher selection. The research suggests that the selection process is important, and the principal plays an important role. However, districts have a responsibility to strengthen, develop, and guide the principal, in spite of these circumstantial and somewhat conflicting contextual variables.

2.3 HOW DO PRINCIPALS UTILIZE THE INTERVIEW AS A SCREENING TOOL WHEN ASSESSING FOR FIT?

Researchers have long recognized the contextual ambiguities associated with candidate selection tools. This may be one reason why research on the interview, arguably one of the most utilized selection tools, exists. Interestingly, 91% of teacher candidates have gone through interview

protocols in their selection decisions (Liu & Johnson, 2006), which confirms what the research indicates about the preferences principals have toward using this particular selection tool (i.e., Mason & Schroeder, 2010). Despite this, very little educational research explores how principals understand this tool, and how to use it strategically in their decisions. We have already seen that preferential and subjective ambiguity exist with principals' evaluation of fit congruence, and with their understanding of contextual variables influencing selection practices. It stands to reason, then, that examining the tool most widely preferred by principals may clarify some of these subjective ambiguities.

2.3.1   Organizational literature review of studies on the interview

In 1982, Arvey and Campion conducted a meta-analysis on the interview research available at that time. Their review showed that despite its rather low validity, reliability and susceptibility to bias, existing research on the interview as a hiring tool was valued by organizations in their selection decisions (Arvey & Campion, 1982, p. 314). At the time of their review, non-simulated experimentation of interviewing structures had begun to emerge within the field. Their review suggested that future research related to the subjectivity of interviewers' biases, feelings, and impressions was necessary (p. 285). Additionally, prior to the time of their meta-analysis, studies on interviewing had been paper-pencil studies and had not simulated authentic investigations into the interview structure (p. 290). No meta-analysis had collected the extant research combining these two areas of the interview construct. Arvey and Campion conducted their meta-analysis to explore the reliability, validity, methodology and interviewer decision-making when using the interview as hiring tool (p. 291). They found that the interview has some valid components, notably that it serves as a good communication tool between interviewer and

candidate related to the job and the organization (p. 316). They also found that greater validity

occurs in panel or board based interviews, but it also points toward questionable judgments of

recommended candidates (p. 293). They showed psychological factors dominated training

protocols as opposed to studies of interviewer's behaviors. (p 299; p. 311; p. 316). With the

interview's popularity in hiring, Arvey and Campion created a comprehensive analysis that

opened up the field of research into how structure and interviewer psychological and behavioral

elements would improve its validity and reliability.

Seven years after Arvey and Campion's meta-analysis, Harris (1989) reviewed all

interview research available through several major organizational literature manuals and

conference papers. His work extended information on the employment interview and presented

areas for future studies (pp. 691-692). His review showed that the structure of the interview

serves as an important moderator toward validity, but his focus included more specific research

on structured and unstructured use of interviews as a predictor of job performance (Harris, 1989,

pp. 695–696). His showed that there is validity to decisions when considering the role and

influence of the interviewer (p. 699-700). Interview impressions and interpersonal attractiveness

are more important to some interviewers than work experience or academic achievement (p.

702). His study also showed that interviewer validity may not relate toward decision-making

biases and preferences, and instead, validity relies on an interviewer's ability to obtain quality

information by asking probing questions (p. 703). During the time of the study, no empirical

research had been conducted on interviewer training of effective implementation strategies

needed for the collection of relevant and reliable candidate data (p. 700-701). Harris suggested

that individual differences between interviewers will affect the overall validity of information

gained during interviews (Harris, 1989, p. 714). Whereas Arvey and Campion lay a foundation

toward structure and on the psychological traits of the interviewer, Harris suggested that hiring decisions should be based on deliberate developments in the role, background, behaviors and disposition of the interviewer as well as the considerations of how an interview is conducted.

In light of the research focus on the interviewer, the next wave of research studies started to look at communication components between interviewers and recruits. Harris's work positioned these future studies to look at theoretical constructs surrounding communication itself within the interview, focusing on the behaviors of the interviewer, and the overall effectiveness of the interview as a selection and communication tool (p. 719). When Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion conducted another meta-analysis of interview research in 2002, they built on the implications suggested by Harris, considering 278 studies conducted from 1989 to 2002. They identified five categories of research studies: social factors, cognitive factors, individual difference factors, measurement issues and outcomes (Posthuma et al., 2002). Table 5 highlights the categories and key findings of their meta-analysis.

Table 5: Category Descriptors and Findings within Interview Studies (Posthuma, Morgeson & Campion, 2002)

Social Factors Number of studies reviewed[a]: 114	
Descriptors	Findings
Interviewer-applicant similarities	Similarity has small and inconsistent effects on an applicant's rating, though attitudinal similarity shows some potential importance in selection results (p. 6)
Applicant fit	Interviewers first attempt to assess applicant values and personality in interview settings (p. 7) Assessment of fit between person and organization play an incremental role in the decision making process (p. 7) Biases of interviewer rating may affect judgment of fit when candidate is viewed as similar (p. 8)
Verbal/non-verbal behavior evaluation	Both verbal and non-verbal behaviors influence interview outcomes (p. 9-10)
Impression management studies	Inconclusive findings related to impression management and how it influences interviewer affect or impressions about job-specific traits of applicant (p. 12)
Information exchange	Successful applicants adapt to interviewer communication style, suggestive of importance to relational aspect within interview setting (p. 13)

Table 5. (continued)

	Cognitive factors Number of studies reviewed[a]: 86
Decision making studies	An interviewer's understanding of organizational culture, vision and strategy will influence decisions made during the interview. This understanding influences perceptions of "fit" based on the interviewer's image of the organization (p. 16)
Pre-interview impressions	Interviewers make pre-interview judgments on candidates, and these judgments relate to interview outcomes (p.18)
Confirmatory bias	Pre-interview biases of interviewers positively influence candidates, especially when considering the interview from recruitment purposes and not just assessment of fit (p. 19)
Applicant & job information	Favorable information received by interviewers affects judgment within the interview (p. 20)
	Individual difference factors Number of studies reviewed[a]: 212
Applicant characteristics	Studies on appearance, demographics, disabilities, training of interviewees, and personality have varying degrees of influence. The studies conclude that large investments into interviewee training are hard to justify. Recruiters believe this type of training would lead toward impression management and not toward accurate measurement of job related skills (pp. 28-29)
	Training and experience of interviewer matters, specifically showing that less experienced interviewers were more likely to hire poorer applicants when stress for quotas was of concern (p. 31)
Interviewer characteristics	Reactions to training in interviewing practices have generally small relationship with actual change of behaviors (p. 32)

	Measures Number of studies reviewed[a]: 59
Constructs measured	Questions asked can help interviewers measure any number of constructs, but the interpersonal nature of the interview make it challenging to measure fit with organizational values (p. 39)
Stimulus materials/sample type	Video-taped and technology centered interviewing lessens the real outcomes sought by both interviewer and applicant (p. 41)
Differential interviewer validity	Mixed results in the validity of the interviewers, but differences can be mitigated by increasing interview structure and accountability (p. 42)
	Outcomes Number of studies[a]: 34
Applicant reactions	Interview serves dual purpose of selection and recruitment (p. 45) Goal for future research considers how interviews may improve validity by improving structure and assessment of applicant reactions (p. 45)
Interview goals/purpose	Recruitment and selection as goals of an interview lead to better two-way communication, and lead toward a positive reaction to interview by the interviewee. The interview verbally provides a realistic job preview, and helps candidates understand components of job specific tasks (p. 46-47)
Legal compliance issues	Little research on compliance issues for interview (47-48)

Note. Information adapted from Table 1 of meta-analysis (Posthuma et al., 2002, p. 2).
[a] 538 total articles were considered in their meta-analysis.

Within their meta-analysis, Posthuma et al (2002) state "there is movement away from a focus on simple bivariate relationships, and an increased recognition that the interview is a complex multi-faceted process with underlying psychological determinants" (p. 50). Whereas Arvey and Campion (1982) and Harris (1989) show the development of the bivariate relationships associated with interview protocols, Posthuma et al reveals that the interview construct is complicated, relying on multivariate interchange of factors that influence the decision making process. Table 5 shows the degree of complexity built into these multivariate relationships.

Whereas prior research did focus on reliability and validity studies, Posthuma et al (2002) showed that the complexity of the relationship created within an interview setting remains a central focus in understanding how decisions are made. They find that the interviewer perceives data on candidates subjectively, informed by assessments of personality similarity, interviewee attitude or adaptability of communication style (p. 6; p. 13; pp. 28-29). The interviewer also assesses one's job or organizational fit based on his or her own perceived understanding of organizational goals, values or strategic vision (p. 16). Since Posthuma et al find that the interview serves the dual purpose of recruitment and selection, relational communication occurring throughout the interview may affect the positive perception of the job specific requirements, specifically if the interviewee is more focused on impression management or values adaptability than focus on skills, knowledge and attitudes related to job and organizational fit (p. 8; p. 12; p. 16). Thus, their meta-analysis demonstrates the multivariate complexities within an interview that help an interviewer assess a candidate through relational, behavioral, psychological, and technical aspects.

Establishing that the interview is a multivariate process provided an opportunity for researchers Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson and Campion (2014) to consider the structural components of interview research within the context of the relational complexities. These authors define interviewing as "a personally interactive process of one or more people asking questions orally to another person and evaluating the answers for the purpose of determining the qualifications of that person in order to make employment decisions" (Levashina et al., 2014, p. 243). Their meta-analysis looks at two components of structure – one being content standardization, including focus on the interview questions, and the other being evaluation standardization, specifically considering the methods and behaviors of scoring from the interviewer.

Levashina et al (2014) explored 104 studies conducted from 1997 – 2010 summarizing these two structural components. Their review showed that studies on job analysis, quality and consistent questioning, interviewer values and rating of questions, candidate evaluation using anchored rating scales, and interviewer training were the topics occurring most frequently throughout the literature (Levashina et al., 2014, p. 247). Their review suggests that the structure of the interview may limit the influences of extraneous information discovered by the process. The structure also helps interviewers follow actual job required definitions as opposed to those implicitly understood (p. 252). The findings support the use of structured interview questions, such as past behavior questions referred to as "PBQ" and situational questions referred to as "SQ" (p. 256-257). Interviewers can allay impression management by employing probing strategies that mitigate tactics weakening validity and reliability of candidate assessments (pp. 257-260). The authors advocate employing structure in hiring decisions as it gives organizations more validity and legal defensibility (p. 278). Still, interviewers follow structure when

cognitively easier to do so, when the accountability demands are higher, or when they perceive it as a more interesting form of data collection (p. 279). This point suggests that additional training related to the interviewer's adherence to structure is needed.

The findings support the organizational use of structured interviewing, but also show variations in individual interviewers lead to inconsistencies in outcomes and selection decisions. They state, "structured employment interviews are an important area of research because they are more valid than unstructured interviews, they can improve decision making, and they are widely used in practice" (p. 283). Yet, the hiring goals of managers within structured interviews do not always align to performance predictors sought in candidates. A manager's hiring decisions follow "gut and chemistry" instead of concrete candidate data (i.e., Nowicki & Rosse, 2002) including skill and aptitude factors evident in cognitive ability tests or prior work samples (Ryan & Tippins, 2004, p. 306). There is also variability in the demeanor of interviewers that affect how candidates view the position for which they are interviewing. Some studies suggest that interviewees may connect impressions of the organization to the warmth and demeanor of the interviewer (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998; van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002). In high structure interview sessions, interviewer demeanor may not always be conveyed, and could limit the team and achievement orientation valued in organizational operations (Kohn & Dipboye, 1998, p. 306). van der Zee, Bakker & Bakker (2002) show correlation of a manager's work based behavioral preferences with construction of interviews as either structured or unstructured. They show a connection between higher structure and organizational profitability, and further support that reliable decision making within interview constructs leads toward greater employee performance (p. 182). These studies conclude that inevitable relationships exist between the

interviewer and interviewee, and the degree of understanding an interviewer brings to the process will strengthen the outcome of his or her hiring decision.

A clear connection exists between the interviewer's understanding of the environmental fit construct and the methodological processes used during the interview. As this section of the literature review suggests, the role the interviewer has in the selection process inevitably influences the outcome of the selection decision. What then emerges within the research is a need for continued understanding of the interviewer's values in candidate traits, how those values exist within their structural and contextual variables, and what these interviewers perceive makes solid environmental congruence.

2.3.2   Studies of the principal as interviewer within the teacher selection literature

Within the educational literature, little research connects the principal as interviewer to the outcomes of their teacher selection decisions. Table 6 identifies teacher selection studies that focus on the role of the interview in that process. Generally, the findings note that interviews conducted by panels lead to greater reliability and validity of selection decisions (Caldwell, 1993; Stronge & Hindman, 2003; Young, 1983). The literature also supports specific and intentional use of behavior based questioning, lesser emphasis on situational or hypothetical questions, and use of rubrics to measure candidate responses (Clement, 2009; Haberman, 1995; Stronge & Hindman, 2003). Whereas the organizational literature contains numerous studies looking at measures and outcomes applied through structure (e.g., Posthuma, et al, 2002), and the influence of that structure improving the reliability and validity of decision outcomes (e.g., Levashina et al, 2014), the educational literature contains only limited studies addressing these components.

54

Similarly, the educational literature minimally explores the psychological aspects associated with the principal as interviewer and decision-maker. The literature suggests that certain psychological factors including climate and information collection processes along with a principal's active listening abilities and discernment of information may influence selection outcomes (Caldwell, 1993; Delli & Vera, 2003). However, Stronge and Hindman (2003) note that principals draw more on informal training, such as peer mentoring, and not on formalized processes used to strengthen their abilities to evaluate candidates (p. 50). Delli and Vera (2003) show that interviews maintain certain psychological complexities that affect the principal's evaluation of candidates (Delli & Vera, 2003). This information further supports that psychological factors of the interviewer affect decision making, and that organizations committed to offsetting such variables may rely on training, use of rubrics, or interview panels to help validate decisions (Hindman & Stronge, 2009). Unfortunately, the studies also show that principals are swayed by other factors including the order of positive and negative information (Caldwell, 2009) and even the medium in which applicant information is received (Young & Chounet, 2003). Once again, the variability existing within the role and person of the principal has a significant effect on outcomes. Thus, understanding how the psychological and structural variables influence decision outcomes will strengthen the principal's investment to the selection process.

Component Contributions to Interview Structure and Interviewer Characteristics within Educational Literature

Component Contributions		
Reference	Structure	Interviewer
Caldwell, 1993	• Psychological factors such as impressionability exist within interview design • Unstructured design are less reliable in data collection • Team and panel structures lead toward greater reliability • Use of questions linking philosophical thinking of teachers with content matter expertise lead toward more reliable assessments of candidates	• Unfavorable information about candidates more easily and readily informs the views of the interviewer
Clement, 2009	• Use of behavior based interviewing strategies assess teaching skill levels • Behavior based questions require use of rubrics to measure candidate responses • Intentional selection, construction and use of questions identify targeted attributes of teaching	

Delli & Vera, 2003	• Psychological factors may be influenced by the contextual factors of structure	• Psychological biases and multi-faceted variables influence evaluations of candidates (p. 152)
		• Psychological influences manifest in face to face interviews include:
		    o attractiveness
		    o likeability
		    o perceived expertness
		    o similarity
		    o dissimilarity
		    o interviewer reliability

Table 6. (continued)

Reference	Structure	Interviewer
Haberman, 1995	• Structured interviews identify best fitting teachers working with urban youth. Use of: 　o Behavior based scenarios 　o Questions specific to teacher characteristics known to show success when working with urban youth	----
Hindman & Stronge, 2009	• Format of interview and questioning leads to validity and reliability • Experience based questions more predictive of employee performance than situational questions	• Principals report limited formal training structures of interviewing. They relied on: 　o Mentoring 　o Informal conversations of strategies • Interviewer training correlates with higher use of rubrics and scoring guidelines • Regardless of training, principals used multiple interviewers (panel) than rubrics
Martin, 1993	• Establish interview climate of acceptance and interest in interviewee	• Active listening strategies of interviewer requiring concentration and practice
Young, 1983	• Dyad interview structure (one on one) leads toward higher specific interview assessment of candidate whereas panel interview structure leads toward assessments of overall employability factors (less on specific interview performance)	• The impression and favorability of candidates connects to the order positive and negative information first perceived by administrator • Interviewers in panel structures showed higher individual risk taking behaviors (questions asked, assessments of candidates, sharing of opinions, etc.)
Young & Chounet, 2003		• Administrator biases toward candidates submitting paper credentials opposed to electronic or online submissions • Age biases occur based on medium used to transmit applicant materials

2.3.3 Summary of organizational and education literature related to interview research

Arvey and Campion's (1982) research showed that the interview is a meaningful tool within organizational hiring, and does have some reliability and validity. Because of the limited empirical studies conducted at the time, their review established a necessary foundation regarding structure, specifically as it related to panel based interviews. When Harris (1989) completed his meta-analysis in 1989, he extended the work of Arvey and Campion, concluding that more studies confirmed the reliability and validity of the interview within structured formats. However, his meta-analysis showed that research was broadening its focus to the interviewer, noting that some interviewers are more valid than others. The reliability of an interviewer depends on factors that include interviewer understanding of organizational goals and specific training opportunities provided to the interviewer.

Posthuma et al (2002) showed the interview having multivariate complexity, blending social, cognitive, individual difference factors, measures, and outcomes across the studies. They conclude that structure is important to mitigate the human interaction variables when measuring the validity and reliability of the data collected. They also support the focus on the interviewer as a decision making agent, recognizing that biases, training variations, personality dispositions, ability to adhere to structure, and variant representation of organizational values and skills will exist within individuals. Topics related to impression management and similarity attraction also contribute to the complex psychological factors of the interviewer, influencing the collection of two way communication data. This body of research builds on Harris' view of variability within interviewers based on variations in their experiences and perception of organizational goals, culture and strategy. Their research points toward a distinct focus on the people conducting

interviews, especially as decision-making agents for the organization who can improve the integration of potential workers into their jobs.

Levashina, et al (2014) validates the complexity of the interview by focusing on components of structure. Their study looks at how interviewers adhere to established forms of structure and assessment of candidate responses. They show that there are limited studies exploring interviewer training adhering to reliable structure. The research also considers the importance an interviewer has in setting a positive impression of the company to the candidate.

The literature on the interview in education is relatively sparse. Where literature does exist, the authors study its structure, and interviewer characteristics. Limited studies point toward the complex psychological factors influencing principals' attitudes, perceptions, and biases toward certain candidates. The organizational literature shows that interviewers can collect meaningful data with acknowledgment of these subjectivities; however, this mode of data collection is contingent on systems and structures that account for the psychological and behavioral attributes of the interviewer. Within the educational literature, studies do not explore these personal complexities of the principal as facilitator of selection interviews.

2.4   SUMMARY/NEED FOR FURTHER STUDY

The research on hiring employees based on environmental fit matters in terms of overall employee satisfaction, productivity, and organizational success. The literature explores five domains of this framework, but more studies consider how an employee fits to the job and to the organization than with the other areas. Within the environmental fit literature, emphasis placed on P-O and P-J fit more readily applies to selection decisions, as other types of fit are either

limited in studies (P-P), or are more relevant to other work stages along the continuum of P-E congruence (P-P and P-G).

The educational research on environmental fit considers P-J, P-O and P-G, but with less literature available. In the extant studies, variability between superintendents' and principals' perceptions of fit emerges, showing that principals vary their preferences based on a range of contextual factors. The variability of these factors ultimately leads to certain ambiguity in the study of selection decisions, and in understanding how to help principals and district leaders value the perspectives principals offer to the selection processes. Principals acknowledge some comparable personal and professional teaching characteristics that have a universal base among the literature. However, the larger context of preferring certain teacher traits perpetuates the tensions of selection, even confounding how district practitioners involve principals as key decision makers to the process. Nonetheless, the literature shows that principals have learned to navigate tensions like this so that they can adhere to guidelines, policies, and restrictions while ultimately selecting candidates who meet their preferences.

The literature shows that the interview is one of the most widely used tools across organizational selection processes. It is a multivariate, complex tool, and the research indicates that the psychological ambiguity of the interviewer presents the greatest variable to selection decisions. The research shows that interviews can provide reliable and valid data on candidates, especially regarding assessments that measure potential fit congruence. What remains unclear in the research is how strongly the variable of the interviewer affects those assessments of fit. It stands to reason that future studies should focus on exploring the complexity of the interviewer, understanding the variable contextual factors of that person, with the hopes of uncovering certain commonalities that may be useful for theory and practice.

The importance of the principal's role in teacher selection cannot be underrated. As this literature review suggests, great ambiguity concerning the principal's investment to the selection process exists. There are several explanations for this, including limited training on effective use of the interview as a selection instrument, complicated contextual variables affecting the principal's role within selection systems, and misinformed perspectives of what teacher criteria may best benefit individual school cultures. Regardless, future studies that examine the complex perspectives of principals within the selection processes will help address these ambiguities.

3.0   METHODS

This chapter addresses the research methods used in the current study. The chapter explores the research questions, the theoretical framework connecting P-E fit theory, the literature and the research questions, the study design and data analysis processes.

3.1   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching question guiding the study is: *How do public elementary school principals perceive the role of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?* This question explores the foundational components of principal perception in teacher selection, as they would apply within their preferences, their use of tools, and their understanding of fit. The following questions guided the data collection processes used within the study:

1) How do principals define environmental fit?
2) How do principals describe their experiences within the teacher selection process?
3) How do principals' experiences of selecting a teacher inform their perception of environmental fit?
4) What do principals imply about the connection between their selection decisions and their perception and definition of environmental fit?

3.1.1 Question 1: How do principals define environmental fit?

This first question reflects the limited background understanding of principals' view toward environmental fit. The interview questions examine how the experiences and background knowledge of principals inform that definition of environmental fit. The questions do not investigate the participant's depth of theoretical background on the subject – rather, they uncover implicit understanding principals have on this topic. The interview questions are:

a) "What makes a teacher a good fit for your school?"

b) "Describe for me what fit means to you"

c) "Describe for me a teacher who fits into this picture you have for your school and your classrooms. What do you hear him or her saying? What do you see him or her doing? What do you feel about this teacher? What do you think about this teacher?"

d) "Describe what misfit looks like. What is a teacher who doesn't fit doing? What is he or she saying? What are you feeling when you think about this teacher?"

3.1.2 Question 2: How do principals describe their experiences with the teacher selection process?

One of the selection criteria for participation in the study was to have background experience selecting a teacher. During the interview, principals drew on those personal experiences within the selection process. The data uncovered perceived values toward the entire selection process. The interview questions are:

a) Describe your experience in selecting a teacher for your school. What does it look like? What do you sense throughout the process?

b) What does your involvement in the teacher selection process look like? Describe the specific ways you are involved in selecting a teacher.

c) How do you feel about your experience in selecting a teacher?

3.1.3   Question 3: How do principals' experiences of selecting a teacher inform their perception of environmental fit?

The foundation for understanding a principal's perception of the theoretical construct behind fit informs how they engage with the selection process. I intended to capture critical moments of experience through the questions developed for this section. The principals identified critical moments where they could articulate a confident understanding of fit in their selections. Participants' responses helped characterize perception of fit while they experienced the process. The interview questions are:

a) Describe what you experience when you decide on selecting a teacher. What do you see at that moment? What do you hear? What do you feel?

b) What are you thinking about when you are making a teacher selection decision?

c) At what point in the selection process do you recognize a teacher meets the picture you have of his or her environmental fit? Describe that moment. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? What are you thinking?

3.1.4 Question 4: What do principals imply about the connection between their selection decisions and their perception and definition of environmental fit?

This final question connects perception of fit and the experiences principals associate with selection. In this portion of the interview, I asked participants for descriptions of their behaviors, values, and cognitive processes to uncover implicit connections with environmental fit theory. Phenomenology "looks to know things as they are – to seek meaning from appearances and arrive at essences through intuition and reflection and conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments and understandings" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). The intention of the final phase within the interview was to identify and connect these experiences as Moustakas implies. The interview questions are:

a) What do you do in the selection process that helps you determine if a teacher will meet your definition of fit? Describe what you are doing, or thinking or feeling.

b) Which parts of the selection process are the most important to you?   What is happening at that moment in the process that you value?

c) Which things happen in the selection process that you do not value? Describe those moments and what you are seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking about.

d) Describe what you are thinking as you are making the selection decision.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section details the theoretical and conceptual basis underlying the inquiry design for this study. The theoretical construct exists within the framework of P-E fit theory, and establishes a portion of the conceptual framework connecting the research questions, literature and study suppositions.

3.2.1 Theoretical construct

As discussed in Chapter 1, Person to Environment (P-E) fit forms the theoretical construct of this study. Due to the vast complexity of P-E fit theory, researchers have developed multiple models applicable for different types of studies and at various stages along the continuum of an employee's fit within the work environment (i.e., Shipp & Jansen, 2011). Since the totality of P-E fit theory exists along a continuum, having multiple models designed for different purposes in research and analysis aid those studying organizational behavior.

I have selected two models from the recruitment and selection studies that contextualize P-E fit at one point along the continuum. These models align with the phenomenological methods and the assumptions relative to the study. According to Edwards (2008), P-E theoretical models develop either out of implicit premises of fit or explicit concepts that relate to the totality of fit definitions (p. 199). I chose to consider theoretical models that aligned with explicit concepts of fit as opposed to those with implicit premises. The explicit models consider how congruence within the fit domains leads to positive outcomes for the employee and for the organization.

Within these explicit models, two suggest fit outcomes connected with the leadership dispositions of elementary principals. The models, created by Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) and Werbel and Gilliland's (1999), define outcomes that show direct influences over school cultures and human capital management decisions reflected by the leadership priorities of the principal (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010, p. 191). Teacher selection decisions, as a part of human capital management processes, influence school culture, and the explicit theoretical fit models lead toward individual worker productivity and organizational effectiveness. Both are components valuable to healthy school cultures, and best align with the fit construct.

Werbel and Gilliland (1999) created an explicit, singular-linear domain model. Figure 1 shows the visual depiction of this linear selection model. Their model defines three of the P-E fit domains along a linear track. Entry to assess fit along that path will lead toward an explicit outcome for that particular assessment of fit. These outcomes – quality performance and organizational effectiveness – result from selection decisions focus on job, organization, or workgroup fit. Using the model, they identify key predictor behaviors connected to that specific domain. Based on a singular analysis of what constitutes fit (i.e., knowledge, skills or abilities, organizational values, interpersonal assessments), the selection process targets the job performance subcomponent desired within a particular domain. Depending on the defined job performance sought, congruence will lead toward the quality of individualized performance or to the organizational effectiveness (Edwards, 2008, p. 204).

Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) proposed a multi-dimensional model of P-E fit considering the totality of employee congruence within a work environment. Their model recognizes that dimensions of P-E fit differ according to variant circumstances of an individual. They define these individual variants as salient features of fit, emerging at different times, in

different ways, for different people (p. 202-203). Because the focus of this study looks at principal perception during the pre-hire (temporal) stage, I considered only the perceived salient features valued during selection decisions. The multi-dimensional theoretical model gives the needed flexibility to assess all five fit domains as they exist within principals' perceptions. Figure 2 shows the multi-dimensional model developed by Jansen and Kristof-Brown.
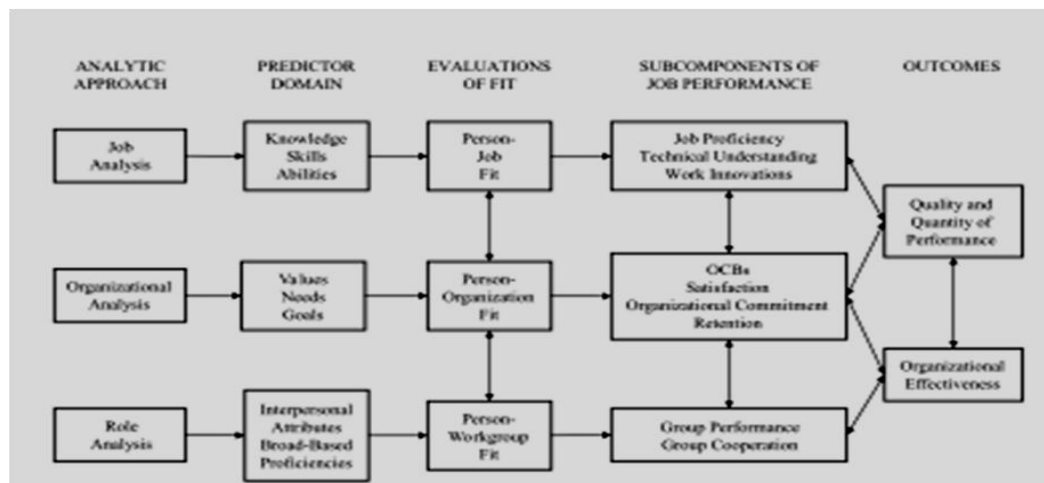
Figure 1: Linear model of facet theory[1]

Figure 2: Multi-Dimensional Fit Theoretical Model[2]

Since this study focuses on perception of fit existing in an undefined, unspecified categorization of traits, adhering singularly to Werbel and Gilliland's model would not allow for the flexibility of assessing principal perceptions. The aim of the study does not assume entry into a linear movement of fit congruence. Rather, the study recognizes that principal perceptions may fluidly move around the predictor definitions associated with the domains. Similarly, focusing on the multi-dimensional model of Jansen and Kristof-Brown provides the flexibility of perspective, but without the specific outcomes that result from congruence. Werbel and Gilliland's model leads toward two outcomes that align with components of healthy school cultures. The benefit of their linear model draws specific connections between fit definitions and

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[2] From "Toward a Multi-Dimensional Theory of Person-Environment Fit" by K.J. Jansen and A. Kristof-Brown, 2006, *Journal of Managerial Issues, 18(2),* p. 199. Copyright by Journal of Managerial Issues. Reprinted with permission.

outcomes. For that reason, the theoretical framework of the study incorporates both models as the underlying basis of analysis. The integration of the models aligns with Edwards (2008) contention to combine models for bolstering the utility to existing P-E theory (p. 218). Figure 3 presents an integration model blending these two explicit fit selection theories.
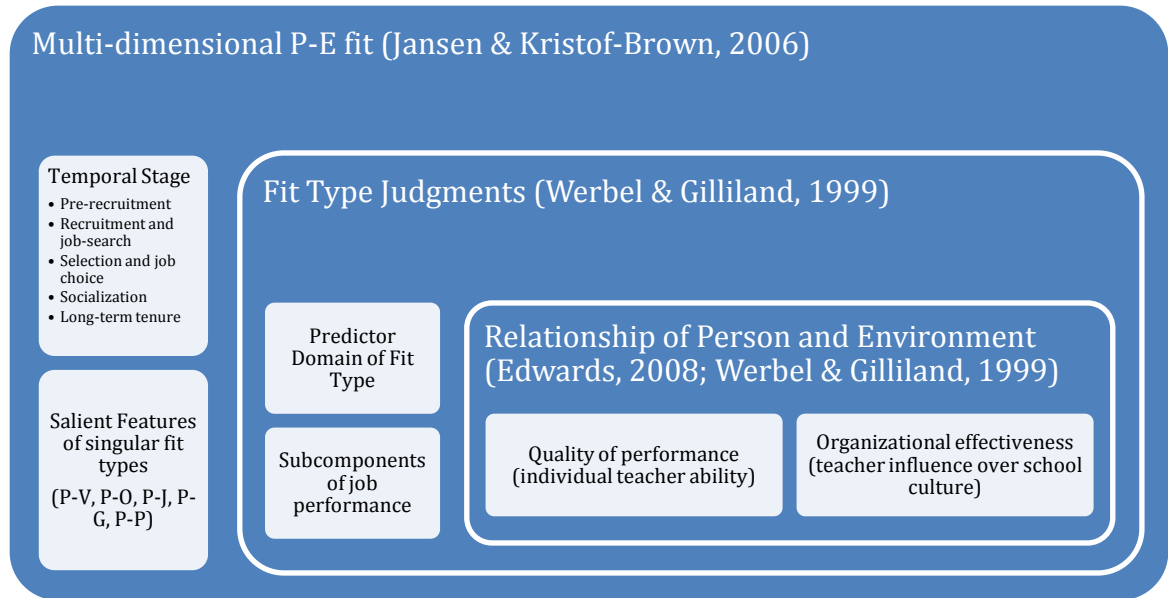
Figure 3: Integrated Theoretical Concepts Adapted from Explicit P-E Theoretical Models

Model	Feature	Rationale for Selection	Alignment within study
	Multi-dimensional framework	The multi-dimensional model accounts for two things: - Gaps within singular fit studies related to interactivity of domains. - Environmental fit contextualizes three factors that influence a person's degree of fit. These factors are defined as individual differences, environmental differences and temporal stage.	Phenomenological Analysis (bracketing and horizonalizing)
	Temporal Stage	The creation of the temporal stage as a factor serves to clarify a boundary issue within P-E theoretical models as suggested by Edwards (2008). This factor of overall P-E fit contextualizes analysis that exclusively focuses on pre-hire components of fit.	Contextualizes rationale and purpose for study
Jansen & Kristof-Brown (2006)	Salient Fit Assessments	The authors describe salience as "the extent to which one aspect of the environment is more prominent or noticeable than another" (p. 198). As the domains of fit vary for individuals, so too does salience. Singular theories of fit congruence (i.e., those which track a linear progression of fit with one domain of fit as its focus) do not allow for interactivity indicative of salience nor does it account for differentiation of an individual's perception, preference or understanding of fit congruence.	Results of this study after phenomenological analysis provide definitions for salient features of the interactivity of fit. These definitions will be infused into the integration of textural-structural description leading toward development of the structural essence of the study.

Table 7. (continued)

Model	Feature	Rationale for Selection	Alignment within study
Werbel & Gilliland (1999)	Facet Model (outcomes)	Unlike other explicit models of fit used in the selection literature, the facet model explores three domains (P-G, P-J and P-O), and it broadens the outcomes toward individual productivity and organizational effectiveness.	Outcomes of applying P-E fit theory to principal's perception of teacher selection processes will strengthen and validate hiring practices based on improving individual worker productivity and organizational effectiveness.
	Predictor Domain	Identifies key behaviors of an employee aligned to fit domains. Using figure 1, the traits described connect to evaluations and definitions defined by the literature for P-J fit, P-O fit and P-G fit.	Contextual information used within imaginative variation stages of phenomenological analysis
	Subcomponents to job performance	Extends definitions of predictor domain – broadens definitions of fit evaluations and provides greater criteria of mapping fit to principal perceptions	Contextual information used within imaginative variation stages of phenomenological analysis

3.2.2   Suppositions

From the theoretical construct and the literature review, several key suppositions surfaced that led to the specific formation of the research questions. These suppositions are considered as concepts within the framework of this study. Table 8 connects how the suppositions relate to research questions.

Table 8: Connections between Research Questions and Literature Suppositions

Research Question	Supposition (conceptual framework)	Supporting References
How do principals define environmental fit?	• Variability exists between superintendents and principals based on a range of contextual factors	(Bowman, 2005; Cranston, 2012; DeArmond et al., 2010a; K. Ingle et al., 2011; Little & Miller, 2003; Mertz, 2010; Rutledge et al., 2010)
How do principals describe their experiences within teacher selection processes?	• Principals navigate tensions within selection processes adhering to guidelines, policies and restrictions while preferences	(D. Harris et al., 2010; K. Ingle et al., 2011; Kersten, 2008; Mason & Schroeder, 2010; Rutledge et al., 2010; Wise et al., 1987)
How do principals' experiences of selecting a teacher inform their perception of environmental fit?	• Tensions exist between professional and personal teacher traits valued and preferred by principals.	(Baker & Cooper, 2005b; Ballou, 1996; Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Engel, 2012; Naper, 2010; Ramierez et al., 2009; Strauss et al., 2000)
What do principals imply about the connection between their selection decisions and their perception and definition of environmental fit?	• Interviews provide reliable and valid data • Interviewer affects fit assessments • Limited training on interview as a selection instrument	(Hindman & Stronge, 2009; Levashina et al., 2014; Posthuma et al., 2002; Stronge & Hindman, 2003; I. Phillip Young & Delli, 2002; I. Phillip Young, Rinehart, & Place, 1987)

3.3 STUDY DESIGN

The methods and procedures used for this study are rooted in transcendental phenomenological inquiry defined by Moustakas (1994), Creswell (1998) and Patton (2002). Within qualitative research, transcendental phenomenology focuses on understanding the conscious and subconscious relationships among research participants to build synthesized knowledge of a common experience. To uncover the complexities associated with this research design, researchers like Moustakas, Creswell and Patton have articulated a series of methodological processes for human science researchers. This section discusses the methodological processes and study design mirrored from these three qualitative researchers. Table 9 depicts the alignment among their methodological processes and those I used for this study.

3.3.1 Phenomenological methods and processes

The first two stages in phenomenological studies contextualize a topic relevant to the tradition of inquiry. The overarching question "*How do public elementary school principals perceive the role of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?*" serves as relevant both to the tradition of phenomenological inquiry as well as to the research and practice within the field of education. From this overarching question, I conducted a thorough review of the existing literature detailed in Chapter 2. The review of the literature contextualized the specific aims for this study.

3.3.1.1 Selection of sample and participant recruitment

After the review of the literature, I established criteria to determine the study sample. Moustakas identifies the establishment of criteria as a relevant and significant stage within the phenomenological process. Creswell and Patton provide definition to identifying purposeful and homogenous criteria for the sample. I based the criteria on three distinctions: geographic proximity to researcher, homogeneity defined by school rank and school level, and ability to access and establish rapport. Based on the criteria, I selected a group of elementary principals in the mid-Atlantic region. This group of principals meets the geographic proximity and homogeneity criteria. These factors also influenced my access as researcher and colleague to the sample, and aided in establishing rapport.

I established homogeneity of school principals by first identifying all elementary schools within a certain geographic area, and then by searching three publically accessible websites that identify and rank schools based on recent student performance data. From the screening of these websites, four school districts ranked among the top tier within this geographic region. Districts that did not rank consistently in the top tier on all three sites were eliminated. The four school districts had 14 elementary schools, and 14 elementary school principals leading those schools. These 14 principals became the participants of the purposeful homogenous sample.

Moustakas identifies the next phase of the methodological process as notifying and recruiting research participants from within the sample. I contacted each principal by phone as the primary means of recruitment. I used the script that appears in Appendix B during the initial contact. If the initial contact was unsuccessful, a second attempt occurred three days later. The second attempt, if unsuccessful, resulted in an email correspondence. The email text used appears in Appendix C. I waited one week after the email to make a third verbal contact. After

the third attempt, if the participant could not be reached, I did not make additional contact. Ten of the 14 principals from the sample participated in the study. Participants represented three of the four school districts identified through the screening criteria.

3.3.1.2 Interview protocol and data collection

The in-depth, semi-structured interview served as the primary means for data collection. I scheduled the preliminary interview with the participating principal during the recruitment phone conversation. We met in the principal's school office. During the interview, I collected basic demographic and background information. This was done as a way of building rapport with the participant, and contextualizing information for possible future research. I then proceeded to conduct each interview using the interview protocol shown in Appendix E. All interviews were recorded using Smart Recorder 7 Version 2.2.1 developed by Roe Mobile Development group. The recording device used was I-pad. At the conclusion of the interview, I uploaded each recording as a password protected audio file. I transcribed the interviews into word documents to prepare for phenomenological analysis.

Each interview lasted one to two hours. During the interview, I maintained propriety in interviewing behaviors as described by Patton (2002). Notetaking occurred strategically throughout the interview. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participant for their time and explained that I would follow up with additional communications related to their involvement in the study. Appendix D includes the follow-up correspondence.

Table 9: Alignment of Methodological Processes in Current Study

Moustakas (1994)	Creswell (1998)	Patton (2002)	Freil (2015)
Procedure One			
Generate topic and question rooted in social meaning and significance (p. 103)	Source of problem foreshadowed with tradition of inquiry (p. 95)	Fundamental questions flow from basic concerns and traditions of a discipline (p. 215)	Overarching topic and research question: *How do public elementary school principals perceive the role of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?*
Procedure Two *Comprehensive Literature Review*			
Procedure Three			

Establish criteria to locate co-researchers (p. 103)	Select individuals based on shared experience with phenomenon, who have access granted and rapport established with researcher (p. 111; 115)	*Homogenous purposeful sampling* describes a "particular subgroup in depth" by "bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences" based on "shared criteria of experience" (p. 235-236).	• Constructed sample criteria (c.f., Moustakas)
			  o geographic proximity
			  o homogeneity
			    ▪ school rank
			    ▪ school educational level
			  o access and rapport
			• Screening for homogeneity
			  o three publically accessible websites that rank individual elementary schools based on 2014 PSSA data
			  o results identified <u>four</u> school districts consisting of <u>14</u> elementary principals

Table 9. (continued)

Moustakas (1994)	Creswell (1998)	Patton (2002)	Freil (2015)
		Procedure Four	
Notification of participants to include: • intentions of study • confidentiality • delineation of responsibilities of researcher and participant • ethical considerations (p. 103)			• Followed recruitment script for participants based o(Appendix B)
		Procedure Five	
Develop a set of questions or topics to guide the interview process (p. 103)	"Design in-depth interviews with as many as 10 individuals . . . with criteria being individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in study" (p. 122)	*Interview guide* In-depth, open-ended interview construct fitting for phenomenological study (p. 347-348)	• Two hour interviews with each participant using in-depth, open ended interview (see Appendix A). o The guide contained questions aligned directly to the research questions used for the study

Table 9. (continued)

Moustakas (1994)	Creswell (1998)	Patton (2002)	Freil (2015)
		Procedure Six	
Conducting and recording a lengthy person to person interview • focuses on a bracketed topic • focuses on research questions	Steps to conducting interviews after establishing the sample participants: • recording procedures • establishing setting of interview • obtaining consent • maintaining behavioral propriety (p. 124-125)	Monitor feedback, record, and notetaking processes • supporting and recognizing responses • maintaining control • enhancing quality of responses • properly closing the interview. • familiarity with recording of data • strategic notetaking (p. 374 – 383)	• Conducted in-depth interviews with participants using the interview guide • Recording and transcription of interviews using audio software • Reaffirmed consent for participation and recording of the interview. • Strategic notetaking • Maintained interview propriety through conversational behaviors • Deviation from interview guide were for clarification or elaboration
		Procedure Seven	
Organizing data to follow phenomenological analysis (p. 104)	Principles of data management and storage: (p. 134) • plan for back-up of recorded interviews • high quality recording device • produce master list of types of information gathered • protect anonymity of participants in data • utilize qualitative computer programs		• Transcribed interviews using word processing and transcription software • All data kept electronically using password protected files. o Hard copy documents including coding techniques were scanned for electronic storage prior to shredding • Anonymity and confidentiality of participants maintained. • Tables with bracketed or horizonalized statements kept electronically

3.3.1.3 Triangulation of data

   To validate the phenomenological process, I transcribed and coded each interview within one week of completion. This constant examination of the data allowed me to revisit my own presumptions discovered through the Epoche. Additionally, each participant had the opportunity to clarify their interview transcript. Of the ten participants, two submitted hard copies of the transcript with changes reflected in the original transcripts. No participants added additional narrative reflection after the interview.

   Participants also had the opportunity to construct reflections in response to the textural summaries provided during the imaginative variation phase of analysis. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the interpretive accuracy of the summary. All ten participants acknowledged receipt of the textural summary, and four participants provided affirmative feedback of the contents to their individualized summary. This document review and narrative reflection follows the phenomenological verification methods and affirms the reliability and accuracy for each participant's data.

3.4   DATA ANALYSIS WITHIN PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROCESS

At the conclusion of the data collection described in the previous section, I followed the methodological processes of phenomenological analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994), Creswell (1999) and Patton (2002). The analysis included constant examination of the data utilizing the triangulation methods mentioned. The stages of phenomenological analysis included the Epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of

textural and structural descriptions. Table 10 presents a comparison of how these authors'
description of the analytic methods compare with the analytical process I used for this study.

3.4.1   Epoche (pilot study)

The Epoche is a foundational element within transcendental phenomenology. Its purpose leads
the researcher toward an internal understanding of the experience with the intention of refraining
from judgments, becoming aware of personal biases, and gaining clarity about preconceptions
with the topic (Creswell, 1998, p. 52; Moustakas, 1994, p. 86; Patton, 2002, p. 485).   As I went
through the Epoche process, I narrated my own experiences following the basic structure of the
interview guide (Appendix A). Once I had generated these personal narrative scripts, I examined
them through the methods of phenomenological analysis. In this way, the Epoche served two
purposes: first, it fulfilled the essential components of phenomenological design; secondly, it
complemented a component to the pilot study.

The pilot study included three semi-structured interviews with an elementary principal
related to the teacher selection process and his perspective on fit. By constructing questions
related to this topic, and by conducting face to face interviewing, the pilot study informed the
development of the interview guide found in Appendix A. The pilot study also strengthened my
technique as an interviewer (i.e., Patton, 2002, p. 379). Transcribing the interviews for the pilot
study helped me apply descriptive and in vivo coding, which aligns both skills needed within the
analytic processes of phenomenological reduction.

3.4.2 Phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction involves two major processes with the data collection. Moustakas (1994) identifies these processes as *bracketing* and *horizonalization*. Bracketing involves locating key phrases or statements from each participant's interview. As Patton (2002) indicates in his description of this part of the process, bracketing helps interpret and inspect meanings through identification of statements related to the essence of the experience (p. 485). In considering which statements relate to the essence of the experience, I drew on the integrated theoretical model depicted in Figure 3. In identifying each statement as having equal weight and validity related to the essence, I sorted the statements into their respective alignment with the research questions. The product of the bracketing was four tables that included all statements from the interview that pertained to the research question that aligned with the contextual definitions implied by the integrated theoretical model.

During horizonalization, I clustered the statements by common theme with no weighted discrimination. This clustering aligns with the essence of horizonalization described by Moustakas (1994). He states, "each horizon as it comes into our conscious experience is the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinctive character. We consider each of the horizons and the textural qualities that enable us to understand an experience" (p. 95). The bracketed statements sorted by research question and appearing together allowed for the creation of thematic categories that established these collective horizons. Completion of this phase of the analysis prepared the necessary ground-work for creation of the textual summary for the participants concluding the phenomenological reduction.

Each transcribed interview and any extension or revision to that transcript edited by the participant went through the process of phenomenological reduction. I bracketed statements

within each participant's transcript, and subsequently horizonalized these statements into common themes. The bracketing and horizonalization of statements aligned with the theoretical model depicted in Figure 3 and explained in Table 7. Document tables for each participant contained their bracketed and horizonalized descriptions.

3.4.3 Imaginative variation

The next phase of the phenomenological analysis involved the construction of textural and structural descriptions of the experiences for each participant. Moustakas (1994) indicates, "the aim [of this phase] is to arrive at structural descriptions of the experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (p. 98). To arrive at the structural description, the researcher figuratively moves around the experience, considering the horizonalized data from new perspectives to arrive at an individualized structure of the experience. As Moustakas states, "we imagine possible structures of time, space, materiality, causality and relationship to self and to others" (p. 99). This requires the researcher to look at the textural summaries and examine them from all possible reflective inroads to arrive at a structure that underlies the essence of the experience.

Using the tables created through phenomenological reduction, I first generated a textural description of each person's experience. The textural description summarized the bracketed, horizonalized statements relative to its essence. The interpretive component of the textural description involved reorganizing the bracketed and thematic statements within the tables, and then summarizing that data into a textural form. As a component of data triangulation, each participant had an opportunity to provide a written reflection responding to the textural summary. This reflective step provides validity and reliability of their data. It also confirmed my

interpretation of the horizonalized data. Participants had one week from receipt of the summary to provide this written reflection. All ten participants acknowledged receipt of the summary, and four confirmed agreement to the summary with a follow up written correspondence.

After completing the textural descriptions, I compiled a structural description of the experience for each participant. Moustakas outlines four guiding principles related to the development of structural descriptions. For this study, I compiled these four premises into two stages. According to Moustakas (1994), one premise relies on an acknowledgment "of the underlying themes and contexts which account for the emergence of the phenomenon" (p. 99). To acknowledge those themes and contexts, I reflected on each participant's textural descriptions, and developed narrative organized around the research questions and theoretical framework. Another premise of Moustakas' model "search[es] for exemplification that vividly illustrates the themes [needed] to develop the structural variation" (p. 99). This occurs after consideration of the time, space, materiality, causality, relationship to self and relationship to others that underlie the experience. For each textural description, I identified these moments of exemplification and the acknowledgment of contextual themes using the reflective processes previously described. The researcher at this phase of phenomenological analysis relies on countless possibilities that could lead to the structural essence, including those emerging from the Epoche. By identifying the exemplified themes from the textural description, compared against insights from the Epoche, I composed a structural narrative for each participant. Each participant's narrative became a part of the comprehensive participant data leading to the structural essence.

3.4.4 Synthesis of textural and structural descriptions

The final phase of the phenomenological process synthesizes the textural and structural descriptions. The synthesis provides the structural essence related to the overarching question and subsequent research questions of the study. This synthesis of this data appears as part of the discussion in Chapter 4.

Table 10 : Comparisons ofTranscendental Phenomenological Process Definitions to Current Study

Moustakas, 1994	Creswell, 1998	Patton, 2002	Methodological Description within Study
Epoche • Eliminates natural attitude of bias (p. 85) • Revisited throughout the phenomenological analysis (p. 88)	*Epoche* • Full description of personal experience with phenomenon (p. 147)	*Epoche* • Coming to understand internal biases (p. 484)	• Followed the interview guide • Narrative product underwent phenomenological analysis • Component to pilot study
Phenomenological Reduction [a] • Bracketing • Horizonalization	*Horizonalization* • Isolates and lists statements treating each with equal worth (p. 147) • Meaning units created by horizonalization (p. 150)	*Bracketing (p. 485)* • locating key phrases or statements • interpret meanings • obtain interpretation from participant • inspect meanings • offer tentative statement about essence *Horizonalizing* (p. 486) • cluster all data as equal • elimination of repetition	• Transcribed interview • Bracketed using research questions, theoretical model and Patton (2002) definition of bracketing • Compiled key phrases and statements into tables per participant • Horizonalized key phrases and statements into common themes and meaning units

Table 10. (continued)

Moustakas, 1994	Creswell, 1998	Patton, 2002	Methodological Description within Study

Imaginative Variation "The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of the experience, the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (p. 98) Creation of:
 - textural descriptions
 - structural descriptions
	Imaginative Variation Reflection of textural summary leading to structural description (p. 150)	*Imaginative Variation* Moving around experience to see from multiple perspectives (p. 486)	• Created a textural description of the participant's experience
			    o reorganized the horizons of the phenomenon to describe the experience as it appeared.
			    o Participant triangulation using narrative reflection of textural summary
			 • Created individual structural description capturing essence of experience per participant

Synthesis of textural and structural descriptions for all participants to describe essence (p. 100)	Overall description of essence	Synthesis of texture and structure	• Synthesis of the textural and structural descriptions • Synthesis describes collective essence and structure of the experience (perception).

[a] See pages 90 – 97 in Moustakas for complete description of phases

4.0   FINDINGS

Two central concepts exist within the overarching research question of this study: the essence of environmental fit and the experience of teacher selection. Thus, the principals' experiences of selection flow from a causal relationship between fit perception and the formalized process. Figure 4 captures this relationship.

Figure 4: Causal Relationship Depicting Overarching Research Question

This chapter is in three parts. The first describes the study participants. These individual contextual differences of the participants are not linked to the conclusions of this study, but may be useful for future research. The second section presents the essence – the product emerging from phenomenological analysis. Readers will recall that the structural essence describes the

collective experience pertaining to the research question (see Table 10).   The final section examines the four sub-questions used for data collection.

4.1   PARTICIPANTS

The sample included 14 public elementary school principals from the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.   Following the prescribed recruitment methodology, ten of the 14 principals agreed to participate.   The principals had a range of administrative experiences, with only slight variations within their school cultures.   In the interviews, the participants shared insights relative to their staffs and school cultures that were largely positive.   The school cultures and staff members were described as being proactive, caring, highly professional, and collaborative. Table 11 provides a brief summary of information provided by the participants.

Table 11: Demographics of Principals

Participant	Total Number of Years in Administration	Building Principal Experience	Gender	Total Years in Education (Teacher + Administration)	Number of staff	Number of students	Average tenure of staff (years)
A	3	3	Female	10	35	336	9-10
B	23	17	Female	28	45	500	7
C	4.5	.5	Male	12.5	20.5	362	11+
D	10	4	Female	17			10-15
E	5	3	Male	12	30	270	5
F	5.5	1	Female	14.5	17	237	15-20
G	14	5	Female	27	35	350	11
H	13	13	Male	20	36	500	13-14
I	14	12	Male	20	35		
J	13	12	Male	18	35	440	15

4.2   STRUCTURAL ESSENCE

The structural essence generalizes commonalities among all ten principals forming a synthesis for the reader. I have summarized the structure into five precepts. The precepts of the structural essence indicate that principals:

1) Understand school culture is mutable because the relational and personal dynamics of teachers change

2) Value teachers who demonstrate personal and relational receptivity within the environment

3) Desire instructional competence when it benefits the entire school environment and not just the individual practitioner

4) Rely on developing interpersonal connections with teacher candidates during the selection process

5) Believe that limitations within the selection process and personal skills impede their ability to assess a candidate's environmental fit

The first precept speaks to principals' belief in school culture as a mutable reality governing all their practical and philosophical operations. This mutability leads people within the culture to adapt to changes in relationships, and to respond to evolving expectations. The principals also identify reflective receptivity as the predominant characteristic of fitting teachers. The trait of receptivity shows that teachers exist symbiotically within the school, relying on others to help them improve while also contributing to others. This symbiosis leads to the third precept: the importance of instructional competence, but beyond the individual practitioner. Teachers who convey their classroom competence establish environmental fit when their

competence strengthens others. Teachers rely on inter-relational skills and receptivity to draw out the instructional competence of others while simultaneously developing their own craft.

These relationship dynamics are crucial for the principal. They draw on their own relational resources during the selection process to confirm that teachers they select will be flexible to receive and contribute to expectations of the school. Principals need to establish a relationship with candidates, and they use the selection process to do this. The relational pieces underscoring both the fourth and fifth precepts indicate how selection processes may contribute to the identification of a teacher's fit, but do not fully satisfy that match. Principals distrust their own abilities as well as the prescribed selection process. As a result, they do not believe they can identify teacher fit during selection. Only when a new teacher is in the environment do principals know that their perceptions of fit are correct.

4.2.1   Precept One: Recognition that school culture is mutable

Each principal recognizes that cultures change based on the people comprising that environment. As principal G conveyed during the interview, "I think every school building has its own sort of culture or climate. And that is determined by the makeup of the staff, and the leadership style of the building principal." Principal E related that the school environment is filled with varying personalities and ideals and is what makes the school gel. Each school has its own identity regarding the makeup of the staff, student body, and parents. The principal looks at a person who approaches the job of teaching with an eye for adaptability – desiring to espouse qualities that are positive within the environment (reflective of the strengths that are there) but who understand enough about themselves to step into a culture, and begin to shape it based on their

perceived view of others' needs. This dualism – receptivity to culture and desire, ability, and willingness to contribute to molding the culture – explains how principals perceive teacher fit.

However, cultures shift based on the needs or gaps defined by smaller groups operating within the larger building context. This causes the environment to be in a constant state of flux. As discussed in the structural summary of Participant I, the principal focuses on relationships between others as the predominant characteristic of environmental fit. The relationship among the teachers reflects individualized flexibilities to adapt to a constantly changing learning culture. People's changing relational needs and life circumstances lead to these adaptations as well. Principal H recognizes that humans are humans, and life changes may cause ideal candidates to change over the years of their work based on experiences they encounter. Perhaps their baggage level increases and they are a completely different person than when they were first brought in to the building.

The principals indicated that this mutable culture maintains certain complexities, but as best summarized by Participant E, who suggested that the confirmation of a teacher fit is not able to occur until after selection has happened, and the teacher organically flows into the culture of a school. The principal believes that school culture is not replicated, even across a system. These variables change fit perceptions over time.

4.2.2   Precept Two: Relational receptivity defines the predominant teacher characteristic

The principals value relational harmony, recognizing that positive teacher inter-relationships help the environment flourish. The structural summary for Participant G highlighted the idea that:

> the workgroup relationship may change based on need, and a teacher's skill will benefit larger subgroups of the population when that teacher willingly shares their innovative skills with others to enhance their performance. The individual pieces of job proficiency and work innovation do not occur competitively – rather it occurs for the benefit of those around them.

When the individual teachers look to benefit others and not themselves, they demonstrate receptivity to building relationships throughout the culture. Principal F suggested, when they have similar values and will be able to maintain that consistent, collaborative continuity throughout the culture of the building, they maintain relational harmony and individual improvement leading to an important element of fit.

In order for harmony to surface, however, teachers must be receptive of each other and willing to develop relationships. Principal B related that the teacher who fits into the environment does so because they convey a relationship with other people in the school community. This principal believes that the interests of other people remain forefront in the mind of a fitting teacher, and the principal sees a teacher who can adjust to those relational needs as one who understands the organizational values and group roles operating in the school. Principal C sees a relationship emerging when honest and open communication and collaboration occurs that benefits other people within the school organization. This honest interaction suggests a characteristic of receptivity. Principals believe that teachers who are open to feedback will

receive the environment positively. This principal suggests that teachers who reflect on their

practice communicate openness to constructive criticism and what their next learning step will

be. Participant D related that:

> If the candidate can form a connection with the principal by drawing on those
>
> experiences that show meaningful relationships with other people, then the principal is
>
> apt to esteem that candidate for open positions. Only in the exchanges within the groups
>
> can development of teaching skill sets happen. Teachers who aren't reflective of their
>
> weaknesses are less willing to share their successes and failures with others, and are not
>
> as willing to learn from others about how to improve.

For principals to value environmental fit of candidates, they must be able to perceive that some

degree of relational interdependency will occur once the candidate moves into the school.

4.2.3   Precept Three: Instructional competence demonstrated individually must benefit the betterment of the entire school environment

Relationships among teachers may refocus needs across a school culture; however, what remains

constant is instructional excellence demonstrated by teachers at the classroom level. Principal J

states it this way: "The essential component of teacher fit begins with their possession of job

skills necessary for efficiently and effectively running a classroom. The skills needed to

accomplish this serve as the foundational necessity for the school environment." Principal B

acknowledges that the concept of fit changes according to the environmental needs demanded

within the school. However, this principal believes regardless of shifting needs, constant will

always be the high expectation of the community and the high expectation by the principal for

meaningful instruction that shows a candidate's ability to creatively adjust and understand what

children need. Though there is focus on developing the larger environment of the school, the principals recognize that a fitting teacher must possess the skills to operate his or her own classroom first.

The caveat to the description of this instructional expertise is how it will benefit the continued growth for the entire school staff. Principal D stated in her interview: "There were a few teachers who were good teachers but who have moved on because they weren't collaborative. And this adds tension into the building." Principal I acknowledges some non-negotiable expectations dealing with a teacher's job abilities (competence). But that competence emerges by the teacher's ability to bring that skill set to others based on their independent ability to recognize need. Teachers must possess a quality where their own instructional competence will integrate into the school culture and benefit others. Principal A suggest the following:

> Equally important is instructional expertise, but what type of expertise is needed will shift based on organizational space differences among different school cultures. School systems vary according to geography and professional expectation, and so skill needs and personality dynamics among teachers will also shift based on these differences. There is a causal relationship between the organizational needs and what types of teachers are best suited to work within that organization. Teachers' skills can be applied into a new setting, but their inherent personality traits that cannot be taught must easily transfer according to the organizational (cultural) needs.

The significance to this precept lies in the connection between instructional competence and how the fitting teacher uses that competence for the benefit of others.

4.2.4   Precept Four: Interpersonal connections between principal and teacher begins during the selection process

The process for selection changes across organizations; however, the relational element between a candidate and principal occurs directly in selection, and has implications to fit perceptions. Principal J suggests that the selection process that draws on the principal being able to connect with the candidate and observe that candidate's skill and ability in creating an environment that connects kids with him or her is the best indicator of finding a staff member who will demonstrate environmental fit. Normally one piece of the process will not satisfy the principal in assessing this connectivity between a teacher and other people. Principal F indicates that the selection process allows the principal to interact with candidates directly face to face, in particular through the interview. The value of the interview allows the principal to perceive a candidate's emotional connection, communication style and ability, and overall intelligence. Relationally, this direct interaction must occur for the principal to value identifying a candidate as one preferred. Principal C suggests:

> the relational element of a person during the selection process is the means of assessing whether someone would be willing to learn from him or others within the culture of the school. Teachers who maintain a disposition toward willingly taking on growth have a greater chance of being seen as a teacher who will fit the instructional and relational expectations maintained by the principal. For this reason, the interview allows the principal to probe into areas to gain more insight about a candidate's experiences, and to determine if the candidate is able to relate how he or she would've adjusted to new circumstances in the classroom.

Even though these representations depict different perspectives on process components, and even adjusted preferences for certain aspects of the process, all principals see the process as means for initiating relational assessments of candidates.

These relationships form the foundational aspect to perceived fit. The principal relies on the process to understand how relationships will function within the school culture should a candidate be hired. Principal H highlighted that principals who do not have solid background experience within the school culture will struggle more in selection processes because they haven't been able to strengthen their relationships with the people in the community, and therefore don't fully understand the values held by the people within the environment. Because of variability like this, principals place themselves as center to the process, learning about the candidate's ability to connect with them as supervisor. He continues:

> Selection for fit rests on a relational element with the principal as center of the process. If the relationship is positive between principal and candidate, and also between principal and existing school culture, then the selection of a teacher who fits into that environment is more likely. Similarly, the principal's interests in new teachers are for those who require less maintenance as human beings because they have an open willingness to take on the values and beliefs of the school environment, and also of the principal. Formal processes alone which bring in people who may not have a positive relationship with the principal, or communicate in a way that connects them to him will not lead toward selection of those teachers into the environment.

In spite of variations in how principals will approach the selection process, their selection decisions are rooted at the relational level with candidates. While not the sole determinant of fit,

the connection plays an important role in principals' perceptions of a candidate. This connection influences how the outcome of their decisions mirror fit definitions.

4.2.5 Precept Five: Restrictions within selection processes and personal skill limitations alter their ability to assess and select for fit.

Not unlike the literature regarding teacher selection, the contextual factors show principals navigating selection variables according to their process and skills. Principal D related that selection processes defined at the organizational level establish needed foundational guidance and expectations that principals should follow while choosing the fitting teacher for their school. Without that organizational structure providing a scripted process that gives principals the tools of how to move through the selection phases, the principals will fill in the deficits of their skills by drawing on whatever they know to gain information about teachers prior to making a selection decision. Each principal spoke of challenges unique to their perspective of processes in their systems. All acknowledged the importance of process, and its support of principal skills in selecting teachers.

The findings suggest that the principals do not navigate the process toward outcomes of candidate fit. Principal H suggests the following:

> The principal values his level of influence over the school environment, and therefore recognizes the importance of the task in selecting a teacher. However, his experience with formal processes has not confirmed that the results will match the level of expectation he believes influences the environment. He connects decisions of teacher selection with his own validity as leader within the community. Because of that, he has

99

learned how to utilize the formal process in a way to identify teachers that he confidently

believes embody the ideals of environmental fit.

Perhaps with the restrictions to the organizational process and the limited confidence principals

have in their own skill sets to manage the formal process, they are reluctant to use selection as a

means of confirming teacher fit into the school environment. Principal J suggests that the more

precise components of a job fit exist after the selection process has been completed, and the

teacher enters the environment and starts interacting within that culture. Only in observing these

interactions will the principal see how a teacher's personality disposition could be tailored

toward specialized positions and roles within the learning climate. This realization supports the

principal's overall view of the process, specifically that the process will generate information

about a candidate's skills for the position as well as a general impression about the candidate's

personality match with the culture at large. However, the formal process does not elicit a

complete match of a person into an exact job. No teacher can meet the complete definition of fit

perceived by the principal in selection processes – only fragments of that definition. Principal E

indicates the following:

> Fit is not defined through a structured, scripted process or within a quick, finite time.
>
> Without the proper structure provided at the organizational level, this principal's view of
>
> the process is meaningless. The best component to selecting a teacher is operating within
>
> a process where everyone's opinion of candidates will matter and be valued across the
>
> group. For this reason, the confirmation of a teacher fit is not able to occur until after
>
> selection has happened, and the teacher organically flows into the culture of a school.

The principals fundamentally and philosophically agree that fit definitions are important, though

existing systemic restrictions, process definitions, or personal skill limitations have created

doubts with the results of their selection decisions. Without the proper confidences and structures of a process leading to results that align with environmental fit perceptions, the principals will believe that fit will only be confirmed after they see teachers interacting directly within the school culture.

4.3   CONCLUSIONS FROM RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overarching question of this study, "how do public elementary school principals perceive the concept of environmental fit within the teacher selection process?" provided the foundation to the structural essence. It also defined the framework of the sub-questions to the study. Table 12 represents data collected during the interviews that aligns with those sub-questions. The insights offered in this final section highlight information from the phenomenological reduction stage of analysis. These conclusions help validate the insight of the structural essence. They also conclude the broader intentions of the four sub questions, synthesizing information generated by participants.

The key conclusions of the first sub-question indicate that principals understand changing cultural needs of a building, but see it connected with the larger organizational system. They recognize personality as a fixed force whereas instructional competence can be taught. For that reason, personality traits of selflessness and altruism are seen more favorably because they are perceived as being good bridges for internal teacher collaboration and their ability to develop each other. The principals value flexibility as a strong trait in teachers as well. Flexibility allows for fluctuation across the environment, and teachers can adjust to personality differences found in smaller teams within the larger construct of the school environment.

The insights from the second question show principals place importance on interacting with candidates directly as a component to selection. Most principals questioned their abilities to navigate selection processes, and even shared mistrust of process implementation. However, all valued using relational resources to assess teacher personality and instructional competence. Because they are most confident in relational assessments with candidates, they placed greater emphasis on parts of the process where relational interactions would surface. The two parts of the process that were most valued are the interview and direct classroom observation of teachers.

The third and fourth questions indicate the greatest complexity connecting principals' perceptions of fit to the process. The selection experience gives principals certain determinants of fit as they are making decisions. These determinants are rooted in the principal's personal awareness of candidate abilities, receptivity, flexibility, and values. What makes this complex is the principal's need to experience these pieces of information directly. The principals do not indicate a complete belief that selection process can confirm this. As question 4 shows, the principals will identify that candidates have only meshed relationally into the culture of the school after directly observing candidates in the culture, and observing their collaboration. Principals want to assess a candidate's environmental fit in selection, but due to personal skill limitations, or unsupportive systemic structures, they tend to confirm fit after selection decisions have been made. For this reason, the selection process remains an incomplete assessment of environmental fit.

Table 12: Essential Information Regarding Research Questions

Research Question	Synthesized Conclusions Emerging from Textural Summaries	Identification of Participant Contributor
"How do principals define environmental fit?"	• Personality traits and instructional skills align with district values and will move building culture forward within the larger organization	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I
	• Collaborative relationships where teachers are altruistic and selfless move others forward	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J
	• Teachers who are willingly flexible to identify needs within existing team or culture will contribute to filling cultural gaps	
	• Principals believe skill competence is teachable whereas personality meshing a fixed variable that may fluctuate throughout building culture	A, B, D, F, G, I, J
	• Teacher personality aligns with job specific expectations related to developmental age of students	A, G, J
	• Teachers understand parental influence of students' needs	B, D, E, H
	• Principals value content level expertise	B, I
"How do principals describe their experiences within the teacher selection process?"	• Principals have range of emotion toward selection process based on their feelings of its structure, definition and consistent implementation. It is a prioritized task for them.	A, C, D, F, H, I, J
	• Principals believe process requires clear definition of structures and supports for all participants	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J
	• Principals rely on gaining information on candidates through other people, personal experiences and self-developed skills.	A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J
	• Principals have limited skill development to execute process components	A, C, D, J
	• Principals feel confident in selection decisions when interview and observation of instruction occur in their direct presence.	B, D, F, G, I, J
	• Principals use differences between recruitment and screening to evaluate a candidate's willing desire to be a part of their school culture.	H, I

Table 12. (continued)

Research Question	Synthesized Conclusions Emerging from Textural Summaries	Identification of Participant Contributor
"How do principals selection experiences inform their definition of environmental fit?"	• Principals make selection decisions after they gain an awareness of candidate personality, values and motivations. They look for meshing candidate values with existing cultural values.	A, D, E, F, G, H, I
	• New teachers will influence principals' perception of environmental fit; therefore, they value candidate flexibility, and look for evidence of that in tools of selection process.	B, D, I, J
	• Principals use interview to assess candidate receptivity for personal reflection and growth	C, D,E, G, I
	• Principals feel more comfortable and confident of teacher fit when they have personalized awareness or direct observation of a candidate's demonstrated work habits.	B, F, G, I
	• Principals think that selection of teachers reflects credibility, reputation and effectiveness of their leadership within the school environment	E, H, I
	• Principals distinguish preliminary assessment of fit based on candidate competence at classroom level, but holistic environmental fit only occurs after entrance into school	C, D, E, F, J, H, I
"What do principals imply about the connection between selection decisions and the definition and perception of environmental fit?"	• Principals use personal interaction with candidates to assess their personality. They judge fit based on these personal interactions and personality assessments.	A, B, C, D, F, J
	• Principals want to observe authentic collaboration experiences with candidates. This normally occurs informally or through direct experience.	B, C, D, E, F, G
	• Principals question their ability to assess truth of character in candidates during formal selection process.	A, C, E, F, H, J
	• Principals value panel interviewing with existing teams to help validate environmental fit	A, B, C, D, G, I
	• Selection has high impact on maintaining flexible and positive school culture	E, G

5.0 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

Existing educational literature has contributed to the processes, preferences, and tools of selection, yet little discussion has considered principals' perceptions of fit within those components. The findings of this study shed some reflective opportunities for pre-service and in-service needs principal leaders have in selection operations. The discussion that follows examines these implications in contexts of both practice and theory.

5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRINCIPAL PRACTITIONER

As suggested in the review of the literature, a mismatch exists between known best practices for selection and how principals make their decisions. With increased school improvement accountability, principals consider non-operational tasks to have greater instructional impact. Thus, the principal practitioner invests little time in developing his or her own skills in operational tasks.

In this study, the principal practitioners value the task of selection, but communicated personal limitations identifying candidates based on environmental fit. Considering this, there are three practical implications for the practitioner when perceiving fit congruence in teacher selection.

5.1.1   Strategize for relational preferences within selection decisions

Principal practitioners are cultural architects, shaping environments to account for the paradox between accountability and cultural traditions.   Deal and Peterson (2009) characterize this paradox as an "either or mindset dominating the approach to educational improvement" where "solutions to problems in schools are seen as choices between extreme alternatives: structural or cultural, rational or spiritual" (p. 218). Principals blend leadership and management practices in an effort to "restore balance between rigor and vigor to keep schools structurally well ordered and symbolically well knit" (p. 233). The findings from this study align with this paradox. The principals value the instructional competence of teachers, but primarily in light of the relational elements of school culture.   Their inclination is to look for candidate connectivity and personality as a means of assessing congruence.

Candidate connectivity, however, does not automatically translate into instructional competence. For that reason, principal practitioners should be cautious in assessing connections with candidates over other measures related to instructional competence. The principal should develop strategies to balance relational connectivity with the needs of their own school environments. Deal and Peterson (2009) refer to school administrators who function like this as "cultural stewards and structural wardens, balancing technical competence with cultural roots" (p. 217). The value of connection with candidates emerging in selection processes plays an important factor with cultural infusion – just so long as the relationship does not blind principals to overlook technical competence that may be necessary for the instructional improvements of the school.

5.1.2 Commit to building cultures that foster receptivity among staff

In selection, because principals function as cultural architects, they also have the responsibility to build a relationally receptive, instructionally growing culture. While principals of this study might have skills deficits in how to measure relational congruence, recent research reflected in the work of Shipp and Jansen (2011) supports assessing environmental fit congruence over time. They see "conceptualizing fit as an exact match in a present moment may meet the need for rigorous measurement, but may simultaneously lead to inaccurate predictions regarding attitudes and behaviors" (p. 90). They charge managers to consider developing fit of employees "in the middle of things" looking at past, present, and future fit (p. 94).

The findings of this study support this notion. The principals capturing fit based on present cultural realities only may lead to inaccurate measures of fit totality. Principals define culture by change. This definition does not unify all past, present and future perceptions of fit when assessing qualities of teachers in hiring. However, the principals who foster receptivity among teachers may help staff work through the inevitable changes that will affect their schools. Teacher receptivity increases personal openness and even productivity that could withstand environmental adjustments, and even reshape the cultural expectations and needs. Future research measuring the impact of teacher flexibility may expand definitions of the fit continuum concept in light of these changing cultural definitions.

5.1.3 Define realistic aspects of fit that can be measured confidently in selection process

In spite of the challenges of assessing fit during selection, principals can prepare themselves to recognize candidate congruence. As noted through this study, principals esteem teacher

flexibility while also feeling uncertain about their skills. In Jansen and Kristof-Brown's (2006) theoretical model, particular areas of job, organizational and person fit occur during pre-hire stages (p. 201-202). Principals who think about individual fit types at certain stages in the process may better understand what aspects of congruence are intended. Since pre-hire phases lead toward identification of values or goals alignment (P-O) or knowledge, skills, and abilities measures (P-J), principals may benefit from focusing selection tools and personality assessments to that specific aspect of the process.

5.2   IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT AND UNIVERSITY LEADERS

Teacher selection processes represent "one of the quickest ways to initiate change and improvement to school organizations" and should be constructed "to ensure highest probability for success" (Webb & Norton, 2009, p. 112). The framework of teacher selection, as articulated by Wise, Darling-Hammond and Berry (1987), identify six components of selection: recruitment, screening, hiring, placement, induction and evaluation (p. 79). Environmental fit theory aligns to that framework, specifically considering how the salient features of fit type (see Figure 2 and Table 7) appear differently along the temporal cycle. Principals' understanding of salience at a particular stage of the selection cycle could clarify their decision making objectives, and help them identify teacher characteristics meaningful to that stage of the process.

Principals lack certainty in selecting teachers who will match environmental fit perceptions. Their own limitations in skills and reactions to the processes lead to this uncertainty. Existing research indicates how principal passivity may be a result of limitations to selection skills, centralized supports, clarity or definitions of roles and purposes, and

understanding of the entire process as connected with school culture (i.e., Cohen-Vogel, 2011; DeArmond, Gross, & Goldhaber, 2010; Donaldson, 2013; Engel, 2012; Mertz, 2010; Ramierez et al., 2009). Though the findings of this study refute the passivity piece of these principals' investment in the process, the principals also communicated a desire to increase their abilities, knowledge of fit, and of proper selection process behaviors. Districts and universities investing in school leaders should be intentional in their development plans for the principal practitioner.

5.2.1 Development of selection process aligning fit type at selection stage

Well planned selection processes can eliminate the potential for poorly executed personnel selection. According to Webb and Norton (2009), "employment of a wrong person can reduce the effectiveness of instruction, jeopardizing existing working relationships among staff members, and require costly remedial support" (p. 112). The development of a process helps preserve legal mandates and compliance with employment law and regulation. The current study indicates principal distrust and frustration with inconsistent or undefined processes. The principals intuitively recognized that environmental fit is a "totality" of an employee's congruence to the work environment, yet often feel they make uninformed decisions at the moment of selection. An implication for school district leadership, then, is to establish clear stages to that process supporting principals' development of skills, and understanding of fit data aligning with the given process stage.

Process connections to fit theory center on salience, which according to Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006), is the "extent to which one aspect of environmental fit is more prominent or noticeable than another" (p. 198). Certain "issues that are more salient will receive greater attention and will lead to one of three conclusions: aspects of fit that aren't salient won't enter

into the considerations; more salient aspects will have higher degrees of influence; and good fit with one salient dimension of the environment may compensate for the lack of fit with other more salient features" (p. 198). Since the principals of this study recognize their own limitations, they prioritize the flexibility of relational connections as the most salient quality in candidates. As principals begin to recognize how to use the tools of selection connecting relational aspects in personality assessments, then greater probability of matching teachers into the environment may occur. This skill development may also broaden their understanding of salient characteristics needed in teachers, and how to identify those within the selection process. Both of these points have potential for future research.

5.2.2 Support principal development of individual school culture without losing organizational values

The study shows principals esteem the cultural aspects of their schools. Yet, through inconsistently managed processes, or in unsupportive structures, principals make selection decisions without the broader considerations of environmental fit. The principal understands how to "follow central office directives" while being "creatively insubordinate" for the preservation of their own jobs as leaders, and also for contributing to those details they value within their school cultures (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 230). Organizations promoting individual school culture overseen by capable principals can balance centralization policies or practice to instill organizational values while permitting principals to serve as ambassadors of their individual cultural needs.

The principals look for teacher receptivity and flexibility as traits matching their perceived definitions of fit. Systems that identify important non-relational elements evaluated at

certain stages of the process could ensure that other P-E fit domains (such as P-J or P-V) are not neglected in favor of relational connectivity. In this way, organizations can maintain systemic values while honoring the principal as cultural ambassador.

5.2.3 Invest in developing principal skills as middle managers of human capital

Curtis and Wertzel (2010) indicate that teacher quality is best addressed through development of a human capital framework supporting efforts to improve student learning. They suggest that "the system can't function at its highest potential for children without a quality work force throughout the district and systems in place to ensure its continued growth and development" (p. 198). The principal plays an important role to this development, and particularly in the aspect of human capital. Milanowski and Kimball (2009) suggest "principals help create cultures that encourage staff to develop and apply their human capital;" therefore, they "have to recruit, retain, develop and motivate the people who make the organization perform" (p. 71). The principal is responsible for "specifying job requirements and competencies wanted in new hires" (p. 75), functioning as "credible representatives of the organization" where candidates "get a sense of the organizational direction through the quality of managers" (p. 75).

When districts strategically strengthen the human resource partnerships with principals, then teacher selection moves away from an operational task into one that has cultural significance. Principals can move past seeing "HR departments as paper-shuffling operations" and instead view them as "key partners in district's educational improvement strategy" (p. 89). The principal can establish definitions of fit in their selection protocols, conveying to candidates "requirements of the job, working conditions, performance expectations, and organizational culture" (p. 76). Principals face relational responsibilities, which may explain why they overtly

value this quality in candidates during selection. Still, strengthening the partnership between human resources and the school leaders can counteract the known relational biases. Future research looking at the depths and qualities of these partnerships, and even how these partnerships strengthen the principal's operational role as middle managers would be beneficial to future literature.

5.3   ENVIRONMENTAL FIT THEORY AND TEACHER SELECTION PROCESSES

The results from this study show the complexities of the perceived P-E fit construct. The principals' perceptions link shifting school cultures with relational receptivity. These next two sections examine implications of this complexity within the framework of environmental fit theory and teacher selection research.

5.3.1   Environmental fit theory with educational context

This study did not seek contribution toward the theoretical model of fit theory within the teacher selection process. The theoretical framework developed from existing models guided and informed the phenomenological data analysis. However, some considerations for future work to theory connect with the findings.

We know that P-E theory in educational literature has focused on the use of the singular fit type models. The theoretical model represented by Figure 3 explored extensions of multi-dimensional domains. The results of this study support considerations of multi-dimensional components fit along a continuum of time and not at a singular moment. The principals

112

perceived that fit domains will vary in importance dependent on cultural adaptations existing along that continuum.

We also know that research on perceived P-E fit "link the perceived person and environment to perceived P-E fit . . . and should be considered theoretically and empirically distinct" (Edwards, et al, 2008, p. 822). The current study favors these theoretical and empirical distinctions. Empirically, we see how the relational elements of candidates positively influence principal perceptions. The principals value practical competence of classroom practices when candidates integrate into the environment, using their competence to improve the school culture. Principals will vary their perception of what defines teacher fit over the course of time, but they want to maintain that consistent approach for assessing relational abilities. Future studies that examine benefits of selection decisions of instructional competence for cultural improvements would be a meaningful bridge in this area.

Theoretically, the principals' view of teachers only supports existing singular domain definitions of environmental fit. Werbel and Gilliland (1999) note the ideas of work group cooperation, contributions, and broad based proficiencies as "subcomponents to job performance" for P-G fit (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999, p. 218). The participants of this study place cooperation and contribution as high pieces of cultural fit, thereby aligning to existing definitions of this fit domain. Similarly, the principals recognize teacher competence as possession of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the job, aligning to P-J fit type, while their understanding of cultural mutability has traces of P-O fit definitions. That said, no new information emerged from this study expanding or contradicting these existing definitions. The value of fit by the principals is clear – they desire to make well supported assessments of teachers. Future research exploring

113

what benefits exist by increasing the principals' knowledge of fit construct may increase how they use salience as a criterion in their selection decisions.

5.3.2   Teacher selection research

Teacher selection research has examined the tools, processes and characteristics preferred and valued by principal practitioners. This study does not advance these three components directly. Rather, these findings suggest principals' perceptions are limited by their own skill set. Principals may know what they want from their teachers, but are uncertain about how to assess those traits. Also, individual teacher characteristics may shift in value from one process to another, aligning to what Rutledge et al (2008) state: "as long as there is ambiguity regarding the characteristics that comprise an effective teacher, it will be difficult to advocate for specific tools and processes over others" (p. 258). These contextual variables will continue to pose challenges in future selection research.

The current study suggests that principal perceptions of their culture adjust with the needs of the school environment at a given point in time. The principals would prepare for selection based on their awareness of those needs. This point runs contrary to other research, like Mertz (2010), who suggests that principals value teachers meshing into existing cultures without considering what might be missing. The principals focus on candidate relational receptivity, believing that this flexibility will help new staff come in, adapt to cultural values, but still infuse their own personal strengths, contributions, and personal improvements into the environment.

When the organizational structure allows principals to invest in selection as a means of strengthening school culture, the findings indicate that principals will invest in credible data gathering before making fit determinants. The research suggesting principals may be disengaged

or reliant upon gut or intuition for selection contrasts with the current study. In fact, the principals are overly cautious with their methods to gain information on candidates. The additional data collection may reflect their skill and knowledge limitations. Future research may wish to connect skills and selection behaviors as a way of validating this operational behavior.

Regarding the tools of selection, potential exists connecting the principal and interviewing practices. This study indirectly confirms principals' perceived value in the tool of the interview. However, the analysis implies that they use it as a means for inter-personal connection with candidates. They make judgments on candidates in the interview, but have limited awareness of the multivariate complexities associated with those dynamics. The findings suggest principals are more apt to draw on easier identified relational pieces without greater consideration of technical or behavioral elements. Future research linking the principal's knowledge and technical awareness of the interview with perceptions of candidate's qualities may increase their confidence to assess fit.

This study also suggests that the principals' confidence increases when they couple impressions from interviewing with first-hand knowledge of teaching ability. The participants who implement post-teaching conferences with candidates after a teaching demonstration lesson use that conversation to gauge instructional and cultural receptivity. Future studies that explore how these principals structure conversations assessing candidate receptivity would be of benefit. Additionally, studies connecting fit evaluation to clear identification of data points at a given stage would inform process development research and skills needs for principal practitioners.

5.4   CLOSING REFLECTION

Every spring around the United States, principals undertake the task of teacher selection. Some question the importance of their role; others recognize its value, but work against prescribed processes. Many rely on gut feelings to make their determinations; others use formal methods to. All principals operate with a vague notion of what they want in a candidate; few understand how to identify the right fit.

The principals of this study shed light on their experiences with hiring structures. Unfortunately, their experiences did not always lead them to select candidates fitting their schools. I am grateful to have had them share their understandings.   It is my hope that other practitioners will consider their own selection experiences as a means of shaping their school cultures. Similarly, I hope that district and university leaders will recognize the role they have in equipping and supporting the practitioner. Principals want opportunities to hone their leadership skills. Perhaps understanding environmental fit theory, school culture, and the bridge that exists between them would be the foundation for such work. Selecting a teacher is not a task for delegation to the unequipped. Theorists and practitioners alike have responsibilities to develop capable principals who can confidently usher new, fitting teachers into their environments.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH QUESTIONS RELATED TO INTERVIEW GUIDE

Table 13: Interview Guide

Research Questions	Interview Guide
How do principals define environmental fit?	What makes a teacher a good fit for your school?
	Describe for me what fit means to you.
	Describe for me a teacher who fits into this picture you have for your school and your classrooms.
	What do you hear him or her saying? What do you see him or her doing? What do you feel about this teacher? What do you think about this teacher?
	Describe what misfit looks like. What is a teacher who doesn't fit doing? What is he or she saying? What are you feeling when you think about this teacher?

Research Questions	Interview Guide
How do principals describe their experiences within the teacher selection process?	Describe your experience in selecting a teacher for your school. What does it look like? What do you sense throughout the process? What does your involvement in the teacher selection process look like? Describe the specific ways you are involved in selecting a teacher. How do you feel about your experience in selecting a teacher?
How do principals' experiences of selecting a teacher inform their perception of environmental fit?	Describe what you experience when you decide on selecting a teacher. What do you see at that moment? What do you hear? What do you feel? What are you thinking about when you are thinking about when making a teacher selection decision? At what point in the selection process do you recognize a teacher meets the picture you have of fit? Describe that moment. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? What are you thinking?
What do principals imply about the connection between their selection decisions and their perception and definition of environmental fit?	What do you do in the selection process that helps you determine if a teacher will meet your definition of fit? Describe what you are doing, or thinking or feeling. What parts of the selection process are the most important to you? What is happening at that moment in the process that you value? What things happen in the selection process that you do not value? Describe those moments and what you are seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking about.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT (PHONE CALL)

Dear _____:

     Thank you for taking my phone call. My name is Rob Freil. I am a doctoral student with the University of Pittsburgh, Department of Administration and Policy Studies within the School of Education. As a graduation requirement toward my doctorate in education, I am conducting a study for my dissertation. My study focuses on a group of elementary principals, and as a part of the sampling criteria created for the study, you have been selected as one of those participants. Before I continue, I have two preliminary questions to ask:

     1.) Would you be willing to learn more about being involved as a participant in this study?

     2.) Have you as a practicing principal ever selected a teacher to be hired into your school?

     [IF NO TO QUESTION 1– CONTINUE HERE] Thank you very much for giving me some time today.   If you change your mind, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or rsf18@pitt.edu

     [IF YEST TO QUESTION 1 AND NO TO QUESTION 2] – Thank you for your willingness to participate. Unfortunately, the nature of this study relies on participants being able to speak about their experiences of selecting a teacher as a part of the hiring process. I do appreciate your time, and have a wonderful day.

     [IF YES TO BOTH – CONTINUE HERE] Thank you for being willing to participate. I would like to share some additional information related to this research study. The purpose of this research study is to study elementary principals' perception of fit throughout the teacher selection process.   If you agree to participation in the study, you will be asked to participate in 1 – 2 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interviews will last approximately one to two hours. The nature of the interviews will explore your perceptions and experiences with selecting teachers as a part of district hiring processes. Additionally, the interviews will ask you to describe your experiences and perceptions of fit, and how that influences your selection decisions.

     If you agree to participate, we will meet on site at your school or at a location that is mutually agreeable. I will record each interview session, and I will transcribe each interview.

After the transcription, you will receive a printed copy for the purposes of clarifying or extending your responses. You may submit such clarifications or extensions in a written reflection completed after the interviews are over. You will have two weeks to complete the reflection should you desire. If after the interviews additional clarification or extension is needed from me as primary investigator, I may ask you to schedule a follow up interview.

The research model I am using is qualitative within the tradition of phenomenology. As a part of phenomenological analysis, you will also receive a summarized description of the information you submitted throughout the interview process. You may respond to that summary in writing if you choose. Any narrative reflection you submit will become a part of the information used in discussion of this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or benefits to participation in this study.

In the presentation of the data, all identifying descriptors of your identity and work affiliation will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. All transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions related to this interview will be kept in password protected files. Hard copies of transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. Any narrative reflections you complete as a part of the study will be shredded at the conclusion of the study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

This study is being conducted by me as a part of a dissertation study needed to fulfill graduation requirements from the University of Pittsburgh. I can be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx or rsf18@pitt.edu.

Can I answer any questions for you related to the purposes of the study, or your individual involvement as a participant? Can we schedule a time and place to meet to conduct the interview?

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT (EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE)

Dear _____:

Thank you for taking my phone call. My name is Rob Freil. I am a doctoral student with the University of Pittsburgh, Department of Administration and Policy Studies within the School of Education. As a graduation requirement toward my doctorate in education, I am conducting a study for my dissertation. My study focuses on a group of elementary principals, and as a part of the sampling criteria created for the study, you have been selected as one of those participants.
The purpose of this research study is to study elementary principals' perception of fit throughout the teacher selection process.   If you agree to participation in the study, you will be asked to participate in 1 – 2 in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The interviews will last approximately one to two hours. The nature of the interviews will explore your perceptions and experiences with selecting teachers as a part of district hiring processes. Additionally, the interviews will ask you to describe your experiences and perceptions of fit, and how that influences your selection decisions.

If you agree to participate, we will meet on site at your school or at a location that is mutually agreeable. I will record each interview session, and I will transcribe each interview. After the transcription, you will receive a printed copy for the purposes of clarifying or extending your responses. You may submit such clarifications or extensions in a written reflection completed after the interviews are over. You will have two weeks to complete the reflection should you desire. If after the interviews additional clarification or extension is needed from me as primary investigator, I may ask you to schedule a follow up interview.

The research model I am using is qualitative within the tradition of phenomenology. As a part of phenomenological analysis, you will also receive a summarized description of the information you submitted throughout the interview process. You may respond to that summary in writing if you choose. Any narrative reflection you submit will become a part of the information used in discussion of this study.

There are no foreseeable risks or benefits to participation in this study.

In the presentation of the data, all identifying descriptors of your identity and work affiliation will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. All transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions related to this interview will be kept in password protected

files. Hard copies of transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. Any narrative reflections you complete as a part of the study will be shredded at the conclusion of the study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

This study is being conducted by me as a part of a dissertation study needed to fulfill graduation requirements from the University of Pittsburgh. I can be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx or rsf18@pitt.edu. Please contact me by _____ if you would be willing to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Freil
University of Pittsburgh Doctoral Candidate
Phone: xxx – xxx- xxxx (cell)
Email: rsf18@pitt.edu

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW UP CORRESPONDENCE 1

Dear _____,

        Thank you for meeting with me during the extended interview to share your experiences related to the teacher selection process and the concept of environmental fit.   I appreciate your willingness to share information with me for the purposes of this study.

        I have enclosed a copy of the typed transcript for your review. Will you please review the entire document? If as you review you would like to clarify any of the details related to your experience, please feel free to do so using the enclosed red pen. If you would prefer sharing these corrections in person, contact me so we can arrange for an additional interview. You may also wish to record your own reflections on the experience of this interview, your review of the transcript, or further insights about experiences related to teacher selection and the concept of environmental fit. If you wish to include a reflection like this, please complete and return along with your edited transcript.

        If you have no corrections and do not wish to participate in the reflection process, then no further action is warranted at this time. Again, I do appreciate your participation and willingness to share insights.

        Please return the edited transcript and/or reflection in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. So I can proceed with the conclusion of this study, I am asking for all corrected transcripts and written reflections to be returned by April 15, 2015. Feel free to contact me with any questions. Again, thank you for being a part of this research study.

        Sincerely,

        Robert S. Freil
        University of Pittsburgh Doctoral Candidate
        Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx (cell)
        Email: rsf18@pitt.edu

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW UP CORRESPONDENCE #2

Dear _____,

Thank you again for your participation in my study of elementary principals' perceptions of environmental fit throughout the teacher selection process. This letter accompanies a copy of the textural summary I have compiled related to an initial analysis of the transcript from our interview.

Please review the summary, and if you would like to clarify any of the details related to it, please feel free to do so. Please type that clarifying response and send to me electronically at the email listed below.

If you have no corrections and do not wish to participate in the reflection process, then no further action is warranted at this time. Again, I do appreciate your participation and willingness to share insights.

So I can proceed with the conclusion of this study, I am asking any additional reflections to be returned by May 30, 2015. Feel free to contact me with any questions. Again, thank you for being a part of this research study.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Freil
University of Pittsburgh Doctoral Candidate
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx (cell)
Email: rsf18@pitt.edu

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The purpose of this research study is to study elementary principals' perception of fit throughout the teacher selection process. For that reason, a purposeful sample of elementary principals was identified based on sampling criteria aligned to phenomenological methods. As a part of the identification process, you were selected to participate in this study. Your participation will require 1 – 2 in-depth, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately two hours in length. If necessary, additional interviews may be conducted for the purposes of clarification or extension. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to review a typed transcript of the interview session, and to offer revision or extension of that transcript. As a part of phenomenological analysis, you will also be provided with a description of the session related to the purpose of the study to comment on its accuracy and to offer revisions or extensions.

Please remember that your responses will be recorded in confidence , and all identifying descriptors of your identity and work affiliation will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. All transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions will be kept in password protected files. Hard copies of transcripts, coding of transcripts and summary descriptions will be shredded at the conclusion of the study.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time.

BACKGROUND DATA COLLECTION

To begin the interview, I want to make sure you are comfortable with the recording software and with the process. Is this location acceptable for you? Are you comfortable with the workings of this recording process? Do you have any questions of me before we begin?

1) Please describe for me your professional background experience including both teaching and administrative experience.
    a) How many years have you been in your current position?
    b) Have you had any professional career outside of education? If so, can you tell me briefly about that experience?
2) At what point in your career did you decide to become an administrator? How long have you been a principal and in what capacity?

3) Tell me a little about the schools where you have been a principal.
   a) What is student population in number? Demographics?
   b) What are some characteristics of the teaching staff? How many do you supervise?
   c) What is the average tenure of time the teachers stay in this school?
   d) Are there any unique features or circumstances pertaining to your school that you feel are important to share?

Interview Guide

For the remainder of our time, I am going to ask you to focus on describing your own experiences, values, beliefs, feelings and thoughts as they relate to teacher selection and the concept of environmental fit. It is important for me to try and capture rich detail about your own perceptions with these experiences. Remember that everything we talk about will be highly confidential, and all presentation of data revealing personal identifying details about you, other people or your affiliation with school systems will be changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality. Are you comfortable to begin this next phase?

- What makes a teacher a good fit for your school?

- Describe for me what fit means to you.

- Describe for me a teacher who fits into this picture you have for your school and your classrooms.

- What do you hear him or her saying? What do you see him or her doing? What do you feel about this teacher? What do you think about this teacher?

- Describe what misfit looks like. What is a teacher who doesn't fit doing? What is he or she saying? What are you feeling when you think about this teacher?

- Describe your experience in selecting a teacher for your school. What does it look like? What do you sense throughout the process?

- What does your involvement in the teacher selection process look like? Describe the specific ways you are involved in selecting a teacher.

- How do you feel about your experience in selecting a teacher?

- Describe what you experience when you decide on selecting a teacher. What do you see at that moment? What do you hear? What do you feel?

- What are you thinking about when you are making a teacher selection decision?

- At what point in the selection process do you recognize a teacher meets the picture you have of his or her environmental fit? Describe that moment. What do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? What are you thinking?

- What do you do in the selection process that helps you determine if a teacher will meet your definition of fit? Describe what you are doing, or thinking or feeling.

- What parts of the selection process are the most important to you?   What is happening at that moment in the process that you value?

- What things happen in the selection process that you do not value? Describe those moments and what you are seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking about.

- Can you describe what you are thinking as you are making the selection decision?

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