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## The effects of age, years of experience, and type of experience in the teacher selection process

David Scott Vail  
*University of Dayton*

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The Effects of Age, Years of Experience, and Type of Experience in the  
Teacher Selection Process

DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

The School of Education and Allied Professions

THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

David Scott Vail, B. S., M. S.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, OHIO

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The Effects of Age, Years of Experience, and Type of Experience in the  
Teacher Selection Process

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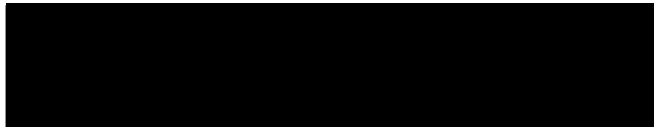


A. William Place, Ph.D.

Committee Chair

11/8/2010

Date

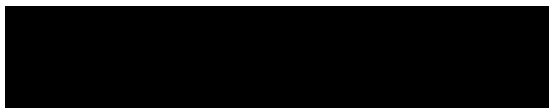


C. Daniel Raisch, Ph.D.

Committee Member

11/8/10

Date



James R. Biddle, Ph.D.

Committee Member

11/8/10

Date

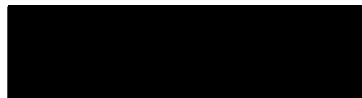


James E. Gay, Jr., Ph.D.

Committee Member

11/8/10

Date



Kevin R. Kelly, Ph.D.

Dean

12/15/10

Date

## The Effects of Age, Years of Experience, and Type of Experience in the Teacher Selection Process

By

David S. Vail, Ph.D.

The University of Dayton, 2010

A. William Place, Ph.D.

Paper screening in the pre-selection process of hiring teachers has been the focus in an ongoing series of similar studies starting with Allison in 1981. There have been many independent variables, including, but not limited to, age, gender, ethnic background, years of experience, type of experience, and grade point average, introduced into the various studies but all have used the same format. Each administrator in the survey was asked to rate hypothetical candidates based on the information provided by the researcher and to provide an evaluation of each of the candidates. The dependent variable in several of these studies, including this one, was the administrator's evaluation of each candidate. The independent variables used in this study were candidate age, candidate years of experience, candidate type of experience, and type of district of the administrator. The purpose of this study was to determine if an administrator is inclined to select a candidate whose experience is similar to the type of district to which the candidate is applying. There was significant finding that candidates with 8 years of experience were preferred over candidates with 3 years of experience. There was also

statistical significance in the relation between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the age of the hypothetical teacher candidate. The respondents who classified themselves to be from urban schools showed that they were inclined to choose the 29-year old candidate over the 49-year old candidate. The suburban administrators, on the other hand, were more inclined to choose the 49-year old candidate over the 29-year old candidate. The administrators who classified themselves as being from a rural district showed no preference in one age group over another. While there was no statistical significance of the hypothesis related to the similarity-attraction, there was evidence to support this theory.

To my parents, Harold and Lois, who were always there to provide for me and encourage me. To my children, Melissa and Matthew, who always gave me a reason to try to be better. To my wife, Kathleen, who was, and is, always there for me, and whose unconditional love and support gave me the strength and courage to continue.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The success of any organization is dependent on the performance of the people within the organization. While many organizations have the liberty and latitude to remove personnel who are deemed to be performing at less than the desirable level of performance, schools do not always have that freedom. The process of showing just cause and accumulating the proper documentation must be done in accordance with revised codes, which is sometimes difficult to do except in extreme cases. The practice of granting employees tenure within the district makes this task even more arduous. Once granted tenure, teachers have a formidable ally on their side in the language of the negotiated agreement of the district and the teachers' union. The ability to dismiss a teacher is usually limited to those teachers with less than 5 years' experience who are under a limited contract, or a tenured teacher who has committed a documented offense of the written contract. "The termination of a teacher's contract for cause is governed by one statute, although other statutes in the Revised Code also provide for the termination of teacher contracts in specific situations" (Carey, 2007, p. 669).

Another aspect of the phenomena of losing employees is that of attrition. Many teachers new to the profession, those with less than 5 years of experience, leave teaching to pursue other careers (Archer, 1999). The reasons vary as to why as many as 50% in some districts may leave during this time. "The literature on teacher retention tells us that more than 20% of public school teachers leave their positions within three years of

employment and almost 10% quit before finishing their first year” (Podsen, 2002, p. 4). Teacher attrition has become epidemic in some schools, both public and private, in regular education classes, as well as special education classes (Erling, 1997).

Teachers have one of the highest attrition rates of any profession; in particular, new teachers are apt to leave our schools. ‘According to Ingersoll’s findings, the average yearly turnover rate in education is 13.2 percent as compared to 11 percent in other professions.’ Even more significant to the problem under discussion here is that 29 percent of new teachers leave education within their first three years, and by the end of five years, 39 percent have left. (Heller, 2004, pp. 4-5)

The problem of attempting to retain qualified teachers and lower attrition rates is a continuous concern for schools and those administrators whose charge is to select teachers to employ within their district (Lucksinger, 2000).

While this is a legitimate concern and one that requires additional study, the focus should be placed on being proactive toward the problem. Rather than looking at the problem after it happens, perhaps education would be better served if the problem were addressed at the front end of the process. More than ever, it is essential to carefully screen teacher candidates in order to make the best possible selection decision.

No doubt, systematic research is needed about this important administrative activity because new employees must be selected to replace those leaving due to retirements and due to resignations as well as to accommodate new organizational configurations (Bolman & Deal, 2003), many of which have emerged because of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. (Young & Young, 2009, p. 3)

It was once easy to find teacher replacements from within a large assortment of applicants. Now the assorted collection is smaller and requires special skills to negotiate and identify quality teachers (Mondak, 2004). If the pre-selection and selection process could be refined so that there is a better chance of the teacher being satisfied with his or her job and the district in which he or she is employed, the rate of attrition could be lowered (Whitehead, 2000). "Businesses and schools have determined that one method of alleviating the problem of losing employees... is to hire those employees that exhibit those characteristics which favor their remaining" (Luo, 1995, p. 28). Business was the first to research a method of selecting people to interview and hire as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Schools began to follow this practice, but not until almost 50 years later. The instruments used to make these determinations were crude at the onset, but as time went by, these methods were refined.

Understanding the key determinants of teacher sorting is especially timely. Many teachers who entered the profession in the 1950s and 1960s to staff baby boom classrooms are about to retire. This mass of impending retirements, coupled with an increasing school-age population and class size reduction policies, are likely to generate teacher shortages. At the very least, these factors combine to exacerbate recruiting difficulties in already hard-to-staff urban schools. (Bacolod, 2007, p. 155)

The research also branched out to ascertain a pre-selection method based on different variables with which to determine which person was to be interviewed. Studies in the educational setting have been made to assist the person or persons who are directly responsible for the interview process, including the screening of whom is to be

interviewed. Young and Allison (1982), Wallich (1984), Place (1988), Newby (1994), Luo (1995), Bowman (1998), Winter and Kirkpatrick (1998), Gottinger (1999), Chounet (2002), and others set in motion a structured research methodology that can be replicated for the most part to further the study of teacher selection. Each of these studies used theoretical applicants and specific parameters, with administrators choosing the best candidate using a pre-determined set of criteria. There is a variety of independent variables which includes but is not limited to the applicants' age (Bowman, 1998; Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Wallich, 1984; Young & Allison, 1982), grade point average (Gottinger, 1999; Luo, 1995; Place, 1988), gender (Place, 1988; Wallich, 1984; Young & Schmidt, 1987), ethnic background (Luo, 1995; Oto, 2003; Young & Fox, 2002), years of experience (Gottinger, 1999; Newby, 1994; Young & Allison, 1982), extracurricular experience (Gottinger, 1999), the position of the administrator and type, as well as the years of experience of the administrator (Newby, 1994; Young & Voss, 1986). The dependent variable in the studies was the composite score that each applicant received based on the hypothetical information supplied by the researcher. Other studies in the educational field that used similar variables but different approaches were those of Cumley (1999) and Busa (2000),

The process for selecting candidates for a vacancy in the business world or private domains has been included in studies which used similar variables but different methods to determine either the candidates to interview or which candidates to hire. Waxley and Nemeroff (1974) focused on race and similarity and Dipboye, Fromkin, and Wiback (1975) focused on gender, attractiveness and scholastic standing. These are mentioned to

show the consistency of some of the variables used within the pre-selection and selection process, whether it is in the educational realm or in the private sector.

However, this type of methodology has been used frequently in research for over 30 years, and our focus was on screening decisions rather than on hiring decisions. Furthermore, subjects taking part in this study, like those taking part in other selection studies (e.g., Young et al., in press), indicate that they do, indeed screen teacher candidates on the basis of paper credentials. (Young, Jury, & Reis, 1997, p. 342)

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the onset of such legal and ethical issues as age, gender, race, and/or a handicap condition and the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Americans with Disabilities Act, administrators had to exercise much needed caution as to who was, or was not, granted an interview or was ultimately hired. "Intent of legislation by state and federal governments is crystal clear relative to the employment process. That is, individuals seeking to obtain gainful employment should not be discriminated against on the basis of certain demographic characteristics and/or cultural heritage" (Young & Fox, 2002, p. 531). Studies were devised, revised, and repeated to explore what predilections may exist in the mindset of the persons responsible for screening applicants who are to be interviewed. The research on pre-selection was to determine any variable that may influence the final outcome in the process. This study by Young and Fox was a valuable tool to enable the administrator to make the best possible selection, but also to make one aware of any prejudicial influences that the many factors like age, gender, race, or handicap condition may have. This study will be conducted to explore if there are any



pre-dispositions of administrators to select candidates who have experience in the type of district that is similar to the district in which they are seeking employment. In other words, are rural schools more inclined to interview candidates with rural experience, or at least favor a candidate with 3 years of experience in a rural setting over a candidate with 8 years of experience in an urban setting, regardless of age and years of experience? The study explored the question of whether the type of experience a candidate has is more influential on the administrator in the pre-selection process than the age or the number of years of experience of the candidate. Is the same true for urban and suburban interviewers? This study was conducted to determine if there was a preference toward similar experience that exists when the candidate is perceived to be ingrained with the beliefs, attitudes, and values associated with a like district.

Several studies have used the similarity-attraction theory to predict screening outcomes for similar and dissimilar pairings of sex and age involving principals and applicants. Results from these studies failed to offer any support for this particular theoretical underpinning as it relates to the screening stage of the selection process. (Young & Fox, 2002, p. 539)

### **Significance of the Problem**

Studies have been conducted to observe if there exists some preference of the administrator in the selection of candidates in the pre-selection process based upon age (Bowman, 1998; Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Wallich, 1984; Young & Allison, 1982), gender (Place, 1988; Wallich, 1984; Young & Schmidt, 1987), ethnic background (Luo, 1995; Oto, 2003; Young & Fox, 2002), and grade point average (Gottinger, 1999; Luo, 1995; Place, 1988), although studies using gender as a variable

have been either inconclusive or mixed. The significance that these variables may have on pre-screening was examined and there are data which suggest some personal preference on the part of the administrator. While not all studies have shown that ethnicity and gender are variables that influence such decisions, the preferences exhibited by the administrators must be examined (Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994). This study may shed light upon the question as to whether a district exhibits preference to a candidate who has similar experience over a candidate who has the same amount of experience in a different setting or possesses the greater number of years of experience, but in a different type of educational setting. Does a candidate with less experience in a similar setting have an advantage over another candidate with more experience in a dissimilar setting?

A handful of recent studies have been critical of the way in which public school districts select teachers, emphasizing in particular the preference of local administrators to hire locally or to favor those familiar to them over recruiting the best possible candidate. (Baker & Cooper, 2005, p. 450)

The study will examine whether there is a distinct preference based on the type of experience and/or years of experience in that specific setting that is prevalent in the hiring practices of school districts and personnel.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to add to the knowledge base about the selection process for hiring teachers by determining whether or not there exists an advantage for a candidate to have experience in a specific educational setting, such as rural, suburban, or urban when applying for a job in a district where he or she has similar experience. The rationale for selecting the variable of age that was used in this study was based upon the former

studies of this type which showed that while age by itself may or may not be an influencing factor in the selection decision, that in conjunction with one or more than one of the other variables, there did exist a definite influence. According to the study done by Voss (1983), there were data that showed that a 29-year old was likely to receive a better evaluation than a 49-year old, but that when an additional factor was introduced in conjunction with age, there were differing effects. If the candidates of different ages were vying for a chemistry position, the effect of increased age was not as great. If the position, however, were for a physical education opening, the 29-year old had the advantage. It is therefore to be determined in this study if the age of the candidate has any influence on the rating of a prospective candidate, regardless of the type of experience. If age is indeed an influence, either by itself or in conjunction with the other variables, then its presence in the study will add to the knowledge base, although in a study by Jury (1993) it was shown that candidates with bachelor's degrees who listed their age were rated significantly higher than their counterparts who did not list their age. If age, either by itself or in conjunction with the other variables, had no significant effect on the outcome of the ratings, then it might be concluded that a different variable, or set of variables, needs to be studied with the variables of type of experience and type of district. If no other variable or variables showed significant influence on the outcome of the rating, then the relationship of these two variables (i.e., type of experience and type of district) could be attributed to the Similarity-Attraction Theory. The random sample of 432 principals who were selected were each asked to review the applications of three candidates of similar age and length of experience, but each candidate had a different type of experience.

Each principal received a packet with information pertaining to three distinct candidates for pre-selection screening. Each of the three candidates in each packet had the same age, either 29 or 49, had the same number of years of experience, either 3 or 8, and comparable letters of recommendation. Each candidate, however, had a distinctly different type of experience: urban, suburban, or rural. The distribution was done so that 36 urban principals received the packets for candidates aged 29 with 3 years of experience; 36 urban principals received packets for candidates aged 29 with 8 years of experience; 36 urban principals received packets for candidates aged 49 with 3 years of experience; and, 36 urban principals received packets for candidates aged 49 with 8 years of experience. This accounted for 144 of the 432 surveys sent. The same distribution was used for 144 suburban principals and for 144 rural principals. The distribution was as follows:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Age Type Yrs	Age Type Yrs	Age Type Yrs	Age Type Yrs
29 R 3	29 R 8	49 R 3	49 R 8
29 S 3	29 S 8	49 S 3	49 S 8
29 U 3	29 U 8	49 U 3	49 U 8

The definitions of urban, suburban, and rural were those currently accepted as the Market Data Retrieval definition. In an email received Monday, April 17, 2006, from Market Data Retrieval in response to a telephone inquiry, the following definitions were given (their terminology is metro status and the status code is driven by locale code):

I. Urban

A. Large city – A central city of a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) or Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), with the city having a population greater than or equal to 250,000.

B. Mid – Size City – A central city of a CMSA or MSA, with the city having a population less than 250,000.

II. Suburban

A. Urban Fringe of a Large City – Any incorporated place, Census Designated Place (CDP), or non-place territory within a CMSA or MSA of a Large City and defined as Urban by the Census Bureau.

B. Urban Fringe of a Mid-Size City – Any incorporated place, CDP, or non-place territory within a CMSA or MSA of a Mid-size City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau.

III. Rural / Non – Metro

A. Large Town – An incorporated place or CDP with a population greater than or equal to 25,000 and located outside a CMSA or MSA.

B. Small Town - An incorporated place or CDP with a population less than 25,000 and greater than or equal to 2,500 and located outside a CMSA or MSA.

C. Rural, outside MSA - Any incorporated place, (CDP), or non-place territory not within a CMSA or MSA of a large or mid-size city and defined as rural by the Census Bureau.

D. Rural, inside MSA - Any incorporated place, (CDP), or non-place territory within a CMSA or MSA of a large or mid-size city and defined as rural by the Census Bureau.

Market Data Retrieval is the company which supplied the names and addresses of the survey population. The number of years of experience varied from 3 years or 8 years for a candidate. All of the candidate résumés had the exact grade point averages and were of the same gender, which attempted to control for the variables of perceived content area knowledge and gender.

### **Null Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) There is no difference between the 29-year old candidates and the 49-year old candidates on the rating determined by the administrator.
- 2) There is no difference between candidates having 3 years of experience and candidates having 8 years of experience on the rating determined by the administrator.
- 3) There is no difference among the candidates' type of experience (urban, suburban, or rural) in the rating determined by the administrator.
- 4) There is no difference among the classification of the administrator, rural, suburban, or urban, in the rating of the administrator.

- 5) There is no two-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.
- 6) There is no three-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.
- 7) There is no four-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

There have been many discussions, articles, (Baker & Cooper, 2005; Heller, 2004), and research (Farrell, 2004; Mianzo, 2001) relating the success of an organization to its dependence upon the quality of its employees. This premise has led to an increase in evaluating the selection of personnel. While the majority of the literature and studies have dealt with the private sector or business, there has been an increased interest in the educational realm as well. This review examined writings that are opinion and theoretical, as well as research based. Within the field of education, there are as many theories and opinions as there are schools. These types of articles will be addressed, but the majority of the literature review is focused upon research based or refereed articles. There appears to exist a distinction in the selection process itself. The process for selecting teachers differs from the process that is in place for administrators. It also seems that there is a different process for selecting personnel at the K – 12 level than at the post-secondary level. All of these categories are introduced and discussed, but the focus is placed upon those that have direct impact upon teacher selection at the K – 12 level, with an emphasis on the secondary level, Grades 7 – 12. There appears to be a need for continued research in the field of the selection of teachers and the need to refine the process as we know it. From a school district's perspective, the purpose of the research



on the selection process “has been and continues to be the overall improvement of the selection process” (Young & Ryerson, 1986, p. 23).

Some school districts rely heavily on testing of one form or another. While some districts or interviewers create their own test, the majority of districts use more traditional tests such as the National Teacher Exam, the Teacher Perceiver (Howard, 1998; Jackson, 1983), or state-created tests. According to at least one study, (Delli, 2000), there was little relationship between the scores on the Teacher Perceiver Interviewer and the job performance measures. Many states have minimum requirements that presently include the Praxis test, with a prescribed content area test and a test of general education knowledge. According to information retrieved from the Educational Testing Service, ETS website, [www.ets.org](http://www.ets.org), 45 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U. S. Virgin Islands, as of August 2010 mandate that teaching candidates pass the Praxis test to become a certified or licensed teacher. Some states also have their own unique requirement regarding course work, licensure, and university exit exams.

One of the least touted aspects of selection, but probably the most prevalent, is the personal interview. “By far the most frequently used job predictor is the selection interview” (Young, 2008, p. 155). While this process is usually performed after the pre-selection step has been followed, some administrators may decide to interview as many candidates as possible and proceed with a second round. In other districts, the initial interview is performed by the administrator to determine which candidates might be recommended to be interviewed by a committee, depending on the procedure prescribed by the district. In either of these two cases, the interview might be perceived as a pre-selection in the overall scheme of the process. “The selection interview provides

information about job candidates beyond that obtainable with most other job predictors used at the screening stage of the process” (Young, 2008, p. 155). Some of these interviews are performed over the phone or on-line, but are used in this manner to pre-select candidates for further evaluation. The person conducting the interview would be advised to provide a consistent presentation that allows him or her to gain a baseline with which to rate all candidates. The instrument used should probably be such that different interviewers would obtain the same results, which would allow the interview to be as objective as possible. The interview, without the assistance of a pre-selection process, lends itself to being influenced by factors other than the interview.

The first stage of the teacher employment process involves screening candidates on the basis of their paper credentials (Young, Rinehart, & Baits, in press). School administrators review applications, resumes, and college placement files submitted by teacher applicants and delimit the initial applicant pool of candidates to a manageable number of job candidates for further consideration. (Young, Jury, & Reis, 1997, p. 334)

### **Legal Issues**

This literature review also broaches the legal aspect of the selection process as the administrator in the position of selecting, interviewing, and hiring candidates must be fully aware of the implications raised in regard to discriminatory practices that must be avoided. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the American Association for Affirmative Action, and the U. S. Equal Opportunity Commission have done much to assure that discrimination and bias are eliminated from the hiring practices of all organizations, including educational

institutions. "The first step in establishing equal opportunity within the selection process is knowledge about how selection decisions are made and about factors that influence selection decisions" (Young & Fox, 2002, p. 553). There are studies dealing with discrimination or bias based on age, gender, race, and disabilities (Young & Prince, 1999). Some of the studies have to do with these exact qualities, either separately or in combination. In order to minimize or eliminate the potential of the existence of discrimination within the hiring process, it is imperative that the administrator is equipped with at least "the mere knowledge of potential influences associated with chronological age and national origin of job candidates can be used to alter existing practices" (Young & Fox, 2002, p. 553). There is also a discussion of the issue of legal and illegal interviews. The propriety of what questions may or may not be asked and is also an area of which the administrator needs to be aware. "This selection process has profound implications for the students, applicants, and boards of education. Poor selection decisions have implications that hamper the education of America's youth"(Young & Prince, 1999, p. 517).

### **Variables in Similar Studies**

A number of variables that are cited in the studies have been used in the research on the topic of teacher selection. While some of the variables have been discussed as theory or opinion in one form or another, others have been the subject of research studies and/or dissertations, either as a single variable or in relation with one or more other variables. The most frequently used variables deal with personal traits or achievements. "Some districts use elaborate selection systems with many job predictors, while others use simple selection systems with few job predictors" (Young, 2008, p. 145). The

independent variables ranged, regardless of method used, but were not limited to the applicants' age (Allison, 1981; Bowman, 1998; Jamison, 1987; Jury, 1993; Kramer, 1981; Luo, 1995; Marcum, 1988; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Schmidt, 1993; Small, 1995; Voss, 1983; Wallich, 1984; Young & Allison, 1982), grade point average (Farrell, 2004; Fries, 1987; Gottinger, 1999; Howard, 1998; Kramer, 1981; Luo, 1995; Place, 1988; Schmidt, 1993), gender (Kramer, 1981; Marcum, 1988; Place, 1988; Small, 1995; Wallich, 1984; Young & Schmidt, 1987), ethnic background (Brooks, 1967; Kramer, 1981; Luo, 1995; Oto, 2003; Waxley & Nemeroff, 1974; Young & Fox, 2002), years of experience (Allison, 1981; Brooks, 1967; Fries, 1987; Gottinger, 1999; Howard, 1998; Kramer, 1981; Newby, 1994; Young & Allison, 1982), extracurricular experience (Gottinger, 1999; Kramer, 1981), the position of the interviewer and type, as well as the years of experience of the interviewer (Allison, 1981; Dougherty, 2002; Jackson, 1983; Newby, 1994; Young & Voss, 1986), type of school district, which varied from being classified as independent or dependent, as well as rural and/or urban; elementary, junior high or high school; elementary or secondary; or demographics of the district (Jackson, 1983; Jamison, 1987; Kramer, 1981; Small, 1995; Watrobka, 2003), résumé and résumé information (Bredeson, 1982; Grohe, 1981; Voss, 1983), and letters of recommendation (Bredeson, 1982; Fries, 1987; Grohe, 1981; Jamison, 1987; Wittwer, 2004; Young & Voss, 1986). There have been multiple studies done on the teacher selection process and what variables influence the process. Such factors or variables that have been cited or researched as to their impact on the selection process are grade point average (Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975; Gottinger, 1999; Luo, 1995; Place, Kowalski, & Young, 1992), age (Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994; Place, Kowalski, & Young, 1992; Wallich, 1984;

Young & Allison, 1982; Young & Schmidt, 1987; Young & Voss, 1986), gender (Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975; Wallich, 1984; Young & Schmidt, 1987), ethnicity (Luo, 1995; Waxley & Nemeroff, 1974; Young & Fox, 2002), experience (Gottinger, 1999; Newby, 1994; Young & Allison, 1982), extracurricular activities (Gottinger, 1999), experience of the administrator (Newby, 1994; Young & Voss, 1986), attractiveness of the applicant (Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975), and letters of recommendation (Waxley & Nemeroff, 1974).

Some studies involving these variables have utilized a mailed instrument to determine the impact these factors had, either singularly or in combination, on an administrator's decision as to the desirability of interviewing or hiring a candidate. The groundwork for this type of study was put into place by Young and Allison (1982) and has continued with Young and Fox (2002), Young and Schmidt (1987), Young and Voss (1986), Place (1988), Newby (1994), Luo (1995), and Gottinger (1999). While most of the literature was fairly explicit in identifying the variables that were used in the study or article, others were less specific and only referred to the personal traits of the candidate that the administrator might use in the selection process (Busa, 2000) or the determination of the variables that might influence teacher selection by an administrator (Cumley, 1999). Some of these studies, as well as this one, use a similar methodology in the gathering of information.

The methodology used in these studies consisted of mailing an instrument to obtain information from administrators. The information that was provided to the administrators was a cover letter explaining the research and its purpose. This was followed by a second letter to thank those who had already responded, as well as to

encourage those who had not yet responded to do so. Also provided was a description of the hypothetical position for the candidates that were to be screened, a résumé, and a reference letter for each of the candidates. In this study, the résumé will contain the independent variables. The administrator completed a form which provided information about him or her and the school. The final information gathered was obtained from an evaluation form on which the administrator rated each of the candidates in six categories, as well as indicating the likeliness of the candidate being interviewed. The information garnered from this final form was used to operationalize the dependent variable, which was also the case in this study.

### **Similarity-Attraction Theory**

One theory that has been related to some of the studies of personnel selection is that of similarity-attraction. "The similarity-attraction hypothesis postulates, in general, a positive relation between perceptions of similarity and degree of attraction" (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997, p. 87). In layman's terms, similarity-attraction theory supports the idea that people tend to select people with whom to work who are similar to themselves. While the theory of similarity-attraction was once viewed by social psychologists as a means to describing or defining relationships between two people, the premise behind the theory is easily transferable to the discussion of hiring practices or selection of candidates. "In sum, we usually like people whose attitudes are similar to our own" (Duck, 1998, p. 69). This is what is described as "best fit" between a teacher and a district. If the administrator "feels" that the candidate will fit in with the current staff, there is a stronger inclination to have a preference for that person. "Most people are attracted to others on the basis of three factors: attractiveness (physical

appearance and personality), proximity, and similarity (DeVito, 1998, p. 302). If we feel that someone is similar to us and has the same attitudes, it gives us the perception that the person will act as we do.

What is meant is that subjects not only indicate their attraction toward others on the basis of affective determinants but that they also have a reservoir of memories of experiences in such situations and can reproduce them under certain situations. (Byrne, 1971, p. 256)

In a situation where we must rely on making decisions based on perception, such as the possibility of a teaching candidate succeeding in our district, we feel if the candidate is similar to the rest of the staff, he or she will perform as they do. "Similarity may also promote attraction because we believe we can predict how a similar person will behave" (Horowitz & Bordens, 1995, p. 457). The main thrust of the articles and studies (Allison, 1981; Chounet, 2002; Jury, 1993; Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Small, 1995; Voss, 1983; Wallich, 1984; Waxley & Nemeroff, 1974; Young & Allison, 1982; Young & Fox, 2002; Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997; Young & Schmidt, 1987; Young & Voss, 1996) deal with age, gender, or race.

Used most frequently among these studies is the similarity-attraction theory developed initially by Byrne (1961). Simply stated, Byrne's theory of similarity attraction posits that candidates perceived to be similar to self (evaluator) will be favored over candidates perceived to be dissimilar to self. (Young & Fox, 2002, p. 535)

This study attempted to link to the similarity-attraction theory by examining the type of district hiring and the type of experience of the candidate. "Individuals tend to

perceive members of their own race as more similar to themselves than members of other racial groups. This perceived similarity in turn heightens attraction to the individual” (Avery, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2004, p. 147). It should not be a major stretch to apply that same logic to those with similar work experiences. “Increases in perceived similarity should correspond with great attraction to the organization because applicants tend to generalize characteristics of organizational representatives to the organization in general” (Avery, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2004, p. 150). The attraction in the opposite direction would certainly be within the realm of possibility. A related study dealt with the values of the principal, the values of the teacher and the interaction within the principal-teacher value (Winter & Kirkpatrick, 1998). These types of studies and/or hypotheses lend themselves to the distinct possibility that decisions on employee selection might have as much to do with the comfort level or familiarity of the administrator as it does with the candidate’s personal traits or qualifications. The second case is of the utmost interest as it is the purpose of this study to determine if there is predilection for an administrator from a rural school to favor a candidate with rural experience, and likewise for urban and suburban administrators. If there does indeed exist a relation between the type of the district and the candidate’s type of experience, regardless of the other variables in existence, then there should be feedback to all prospective candidates and employers of an influence, whether intentional or unintentional. “Previous studies have noted that districts may privilege familiarity with candidates or other worker traits (such as race) over ability indicators in their hiring decisions” (Bacolod, 2007, p. 166).



Some of the related studies and literature either alluded to something that could be perceived as being in the same vein as the Similarity-Attraction Theory or were very much the same type of study.

The research literature related to recruitment messages suggest that job attributes influence job attractiveness and likelihood of accepting a job. In addition, the emphasis of certain types of job attributes and their placement within the recruitment message can assist organizations in targeting specific types of applicants. (Mianzo, 2001)

Bowman (1998) examined the proximity between the ages of the candidate and the administrator. Oto (2003), while looking at national origin and age as the variables in his study, also included the premise of social distance and the “fit” of a candidate within the district. Waxley and Nemeroff’s study (1974), while not an educationally based study, raised the issue of biographical similarity and its effects on the evaluation of applicants.

Although this recruitment practice has a sound theoretical base and an intuitively logical appeal, it has been assessed only with sex in the private sector and has failed to receive any subsequent attention in education. Our data, however, cast much needed insight on the recruitment practice involving sending ‘like to beget likes’ within the teacher labor market. (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997, p. 100)

This opinion holds feasibility for this study that is examining the attraction of like-experiences to each other, especially since the “data are somewhat more promising for pairings based on race” (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997, p. 102). Boyd,

Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2005) found that teacher candidates in both urban and suburban settings were more likely to attempt to secure a position in a district similar to the one that they attended, if not the exact district. "There is evidence in the literature indicating that teachers prefer to stay close to home when choosing jobs (e.g., Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2003)" (Bacolod, 2007, p. 158). Since there is a preference from the teacher candidate's perspective to be hired at a district with which he or she is familiar, it will yet to be determined if the reverse is true. "Although teachers and other workers do not set the salaries and working conditions in any job, by choosing occupations and locales of those jobs, workers are effectively selecting the combinations of salary and working conditions in their jobs" (Bacolod, 2007, p. 158). Rynes and Lawler, as cited by Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, and Baits (1997), found "that most subjects preferred jobs that would keep them in the Midwest and out of inner city school systems" (p. 89). This assumption that applicants would rather stay in locales with which they are familiar would also reinforce the need to identify the type of school district and the type of experience of the teacher candidate. Based on the indication that a teaching candidate has a preference for a school district similar to one in which he or she has had experience, it would seem as likely that an administrator has a preference, or at least might give a more favorable rating, to a candidate who has a similar experience.

For instance, a school with a high minority enrollment may disproportionately prefer teachers of similar racial background. Few studies have documented district hiring practices, but Ballou and Podgursky (1997) and Ballou (1996) showed that districts do not always hire the most qualified candidates. (Bacolod, 2007, p. 158)

This notion bodes well for this study as it examines the likelihood of an administrator from a specific setting selecting a teaching candidate with experience in the same setting. "Instead of continuing to ask whether the measure of attraction has validity, the question now shifts to inquiries concerning the possible implications of differential attraction" (Byrne, 1971, p. 257). The implication here is that the theory of similarity-attraction is no longer seen as needing to be proven and that what remains to be seen are the implications and/or ramifications that it may have in a professional or business setting. This study will examine what variables might impact the similarity-attraction factor in the selection process of teachers, as well as promote the exploration of other variables in this method of study. "To attract diverse pools of job candidates, many private organizations and public school districts have matched organizational representatives and applicants on certain demographic characteristics as suggested by the similarity-attraction theory" (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997, p. 93). As selections are made based on either the preference of hiring a candidate of similar experience or, if the intent is to diversify the make-up of the staff, to hire a candidate of dissimilar experience, the administrator must be cognizant of the underlying predilection of choosing candidates based on their type of experience. It could also be said that the opposite would be true. If an administrator is aware that he or she has an inclination to choose candidates based on similar experiences, he or she might overcompensate to choose otherwise. It would then become evident "that interviewers have been so sensitized to the importance of demographic status that they consciously and effectively reduce reliance on these aspects of an applicant" (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2003, p. 860).

There has been some inclination for administrators to hire a homogeneous staff to reflect the make-up of the community in which the school resides, as well as to hire those teachers that have similar values and backgrounds. It has been observed by some "that rural school districts have faculties that mirror the community's cultural composition. For that matter, the hiring of 'locals' is widespread in urban and suburban districts as well" (Little & Miller, 2007, p. 120). It appears as if the perception of the administrator as to the type of district in which he or she is employed is influenced by the type of values inherent to the given community. In the practice of favoring like-experienced teachers it appears that administrators "who harbor rural values seem especially susceptible to hiring people who perpetuate this cycle" (Little & Miller, 2007, p. 120) and that this trend seems likely to continue as rural districts have shown to have staffs that are "mainly populated by employees with similar rural backgrounds and outlooks" (Little & Miller, 2007, p. 121). It does not seem too much of a stretch to make the same comparisons for urban and/or suburban districts.

The previous studies (Allison, 1981; Chounet, 2002; Jury, 1993; Luo, 1995; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Small, 1995; Voss, 1983; Wallich, 1994; Waxley & Nemeroff, 1974; Young & Allison, 1982; Young & Fox, 2002; Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997; Young & Schmidt, 1987; Young & Voss, 1986) have produced results that have supported that there is some merit in the hypothesis that there are variables, which are qualities and characteristics of a candidate, that influence the decision of the administrator in the pre-screening process. "When existing research is viewed retrospectively, both the attraction-similarity theory and the social distance theory examine screening from a unidimensional perspective" (Young & Young, 2009, p. 15).

The variables used have, for the most part, shown to be qualities and/or characteristics that have had, and will continue to have, an influence on the pre-selection process for the administrator. Those variables that had no influence should no longer be studied, or possibly be studied in conjunction with other variables. In that same vein, other variables should be examined, both independently and with other variables to determine their influence. Some of the most consistent variables used are age and grade point average. Gender has also been considered in a significant number of studies and Place (1988) combined the three in his study. There were three statistical differences noted in Place's study. First is that "young teacher candidates (29 years of age) with a high undergraduate grade point average (3.50 G. P. A.) are rated higher than young teacher candidates with a low undergraduate grade point average" (Place, 1988, p. 71). The second finding was similar with respect to the older candidates, age 49, in that the candidates with the higher G. P. A. were rated higher. The third difference was that comparing a younger candidate with a high grade point average to an older candidate with a low grade point average, the younger candidate was preferred. However, the reverse situation was not true. An older candidate with a high grade point average was not preferred over a younger candidate with a low grade point average. These findings "suggest that an indirect disparate impact for older teacher candidates with a low undergraduate grade point average exists" (Place, 1988, p. 72). It is therefore imperative to utilize these studies to not only find variables that have a significant positive impact on the selection process, but it is equally important that those variables or combinations of variables that have negative impact be examined and documented. The age of the candidate was indeed significant with no bearing on the level of experience or position of the administrator (Allison, 1981). In Newby's (1994)

study, age was found to be significant when studied relative to having 8 years' experience and the superintendent making the decision. The significance of age as a variable has shown to be an important factor and will be used as a variable in this study. In a study by Luo (1995), however, age was not as critical a variable as were the other two variables, grade point average and ethnic origin. According to the conclusion drawn by Luo, "a statistically significant difference was found in the principals' evaluation for the candidates with different ethnic names and G. P. A.s" (Luo, 1995, p. 120). In a study by Gottinger (1999), a candidate's extracurricular experience was used as a variable.

Each of the variables and combinations of variables were examined as to their impact on each of the criteria on the candidate's evaluation form.

There are no significant differences in the likelihood of the candidate to receive an interview with varying levels of grade point average, extra-curricular experience and field-based experience. This study provides evidence that the factors of a good college grade point average and a large amount of extra-curricular experience will enhance the likelihood of a candidate receiving an interview. (Gottinger, 1999, p. 74)

That is the crux of this study which includes the type of experience – to look at different variables, as well as combinations of variables. It was important to use the type of district as a variable as "most experimental studies examining teacher recruitment have focused on main effects, important interactions with demographic variables have been neglected" (Young, Place, Rinehart, Jury, & Baits, 1997, p. 91).

When determining the type of district to which the candidate is applying, or the type of district from which the administrator perceives him or her to be, it was necessary

to use the classifications most commonly used. While most school districts, as well as community members in these districts, refer to themselves as urban, suburban, or rural, there are indications out there that these designations might no longer be as definitive as they once were.

In order to make sure that the focus was on the possible relationship between the type of experience of the candidate and the type of school district, the study relied on the three commonly recognized classifications. As discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, the candidates were designated as being urban, rural, or suburban, while the administrators to whom the surveys were sent were classified by the information gathered by Market Data Retrieval. The administrators also corroborated the type of district and were limited to the three choices of urban, suburban, and rural.

The need to limit the choices to three is brought about by the blurring of these designations due to such things as whether it is urban sprawl, urban flight, or other phenomena. As suburbs stretch out into previously uninhabited areas surrounding them, there becomes more gray area in the previous designation. Studies have shown that “growth in relatively rural areas adjacent to large urban areas is sparking renewed interest in the rural-urban fringe” (Sharp & Clark, 2008, p. 61).

There has been a need to look at the findings of data “in relation to both urban/suburban areas and rural areas” (Sharp & Clark, 2008, p. 61). This crossing over or blending of the classic designations might come into play as these become more prevalent throughout the United States as the urban areas begin to spread out. The creation of new terms has come out of discussions to give us “exurbanites,” which addresses those of the urban population who have left or exited the urban areas, similar to

suburbanites. Those that have relocated further than just the existing suburbs are creating the rural-urban fringe and are referred to as “exurban rural” (Sharp & Clark, 2008, p. 63).

There also becomes a more distinct stratification or layering as these new designations begin to take on their own characteristics such as size of house, size of lot, amount of time to commute to work, number of parents working in the house, type of occupation, and others, such as, but not limited to, population size.

There is a whole new vocabulary to describe these layers as we go from urban to suburban to inner fringe to outer fringe to rural, not to mention fringe cities and villages, and fringe townships (Sharp & Clark, 2008). But as these terms become more commonly used, we need to become familiar with their designations and not interchange them. We have to be aware that “the rural-urban fringe differs from urban and suburban places in a number of ways and is also distinctive from more rural places in several ways” (Sharp & Clark, 2008, p. 74).

### **Follow Up**

The present study of the effect of the candidate’s type of experience, as do other studies of a similar nature, will assuredly raise as many questions as it answers. One need that will arise will be that of additional research to further focus on any problems determined by this study to facilitate the pre-selection and selection process for hiring prospective educators. School districts will need to seek a system with which to prescreen candidates and to obtain the best teacher for their district through a research-based and data-driven study.

In studying the impact of the use of resume and letters of reference on the pre-screening and selection process, which replicates the previous studies, it was necessary to



find out how much administrators rely on the paper that is sent to them from teacher candidates.

Most important for our research protocol assessing the reactions of practicing public school superintendents at the screening stage of the selection process, over 95% of these participants indicated that they use paper credentials to screen job applicants for vacant focal positions in their school district. (Young & Young 2009, p. 20)

While the study itself will be subject to the variables introduced, each individual district will determine the best method for hiring, whether it is a small or large district, or if it is rural, urban or suburban. "Logically, one may think of the choice process as a recent college graduate facing an occupational choice, and if he or she chooses to teach, whether to teach in an urban, suburban, or rural school" (Bacolod, 2007, p. 157).

There will undoubtedly be ongoing research to determine if there are other variables, or combinations of variables, that will hopefully allow the selection process to become more efficient. As the goal of the administrator is to find and hire the best teacher candidates for his or her district, the method to do so will need to be perpetually assessed and revised. "All school districts must identify, attract, select, orientate, compensate, and retain competent personnel to be effective as an organization in providing education to America's youth" (Young, 2008, p. 90). Any assistance or additional guidance that can be given to administrators in the pre-screening and selection of teachers would diminish the time and effort spent on this process.

For school administrators filling teacher positions this knowledge can be used to improve decision making and to shape organizational policies governing the

teacher selection process, while for applicants seeking teacher positions, this knowledge can be used to enhance their opportunities for gainful employment. (Young & Chounet, 2003, p. 158)

There are many approaches to the selection process and many factors that can and should be considered but if a district “is thorough in its review of teacher candidates, it considers a plethora of sources, including: work experience, job-relevant skills and abilities” (Stronge & Hindman, 2006, p. 63).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The subjects for the study are high school principals that have been selected randomly by a national marketing agency, Market Data Retrieval. For purposes of equitable randomization, 432 principals will be surveyed with equal distribution to principals at urban, suburban, and rural schools. These schools were classified as per the company supplying the school districts' information, and were included in the definition section.

### **Procedures**

High school principals ( $N = 432$ ) were contacted by mail. Each principal received a packet containing the following items: a cover letter (Appendix A), biographical data survey (Appendix B), position description (Appendix C), resume (Appendix D) references (Appendix E), and evaluation forms (Appendix F) for each candidate (each principal rated three candidates), and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. The cover letter will describe the procedure of the study and importance of the study. The principals were guaranteed anonymity, as well as the results of the study upon completion. The biographical data survey required the principals to provide age, gender, administrative experience, hiring experience, enrollment of school, and classification of school. The classification of the school was requested from the administrator and the response served in a variety of capacities. As the mailings went out to rural, suburban, and urban administrators as per the mailing list provided by Market Data Retrieval, the

classification from the administrators served as a confirmation of the type of district from which they responded. If the administrator's perception of his or her district matches that of its original designation, the data will be utilized in the study. If, however, the administrator's perception of the classification of the district contradicted the classification to which it was assigned by Market Data Retrieval, there are two options to be explored. If there were a sufficient number of surveys returned that have consistency between the original classification and the administrator's classification, then the surveys which contained the contradictions were not to be used. If an insufficient number of surveys were returned with consistent classification, then the contradictory surveys were used and were placed under the classification as cited by the administrator. The rationalization for this would be that if the administrator had the mindset that the district is rural, suburban, or urban, the selection should reflect that mentality, rather than a classification of which the administrator might not be aware. Another reason that the perception of the administrator was used is that the distinction between rural, suburban, and urban is becoming blurred to the point where the designation once associated with a given district no longer applies. As the lines between urban, suburban, and rural become blurred, these designations may give way to new designations, by dividing "the United States into four geographic categories, or community types, including: primary cities, suburbs, small metropolitan areas, and non-metropolitan areas" (Kneebone & Garr, 2010, p. 3).

### **Independent Variables**

The study utilized four independent variables. These variables were age, years of experience, setting or type of experience, and setting or type of district. The age will vary

between 29 years of age and 49 years of age. Years of teaching experience will vary between 3 years and 8 years. The type or setting of the candidate's teaching experience will either be urban, suburban, or rural. The type or setting of the district will also be urban, suburban, or rural. The age of each candidate and the number of years of experience of each candidate were replicated from earlier studies to draw on the validity and reliability from their findings. Names of candidates and the names of the districts from which they were coming were chosen as to not promote any ethnic or location familiarity.

### **Dependent Variable**

The dependent variable for this study is the composite score obtained from the provided rating form, comprised of six criteria. The six criteria were curricular knowledge, communication skills, discipline ability, classroom management, growth potential, and overall contribution to the school. Each criterion score is determined on a Likert scale of 1- 4 with the higher score being the more favorable. The dependent variable will be correlated to the likelihood of the candidate receiving an interview.

### **Design**

The design of the study was a 2 X 2 X 3 X 3 factorial design. Each principal will receive a packet containing the pertinent information – resume and references – of three candidates seeking employment with the district. All resumes will be identical with the exception of type or setting of the candidate's teaching experience. All references will be comparable with regard to favorable and positive previous experience. All candidates screened by each principal were of the same years of age and the same number of years of teaching experience. Therefore, the type or setting of the teacher's experience is a

within subjects variable; while age and years of teaching experience are between subjects variables.

There will be a packet sent out to 432 high school principals with an equal number, 144, going to each of the types of school districts, rural, suburban, or urban, as classified by the Market Data Retrieval firm. The packet will contain: A cover letter (Appendix A, an initial letter to explain the survey method and to solicit responses); a self-biographical form to elicit information regarding the administrator, the school, and the hiring process (Appendix B); a position description to define the position for which the fictitious candidate is applying (Appendix C); candidate resume that will define the candidate's age, years of experience, and type of experience (Appendix D); a letter of reference in support of the candidate and written such that all three letters will be comparable and should not have been an influence on the decision (Appendix E); an evaluation form on which the administrator ranked the candidate in six categories, as well as determining the likelihood of the candidate receiving an interview (Appendix F). The information from Appendix D supplied the administrator with the information that represents the independent variables of this study and the information gained from Appendix F supplied the data that represent the dependent variable of this study. These appendices have been replicated in their entirety from the previous studies of this nature, or have been edited slightly to reflect the change in variables and/or time frame.

### **Hypotheses and Analysis**

The null hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) There is no difference between the 29-year old candidates and the 49-year old candidates on the rating determined by the administrator.

- 2) There is no difference between candidates having 3 years of experience and candidates having 8 years of experience on the rating determined by the administrator.
- 3) There is no difference among the candidates' type of experience (urban, suburban, or rural) in the rating determined by the administrator.
- 4) There is no difference among the classification of the administrator, rural, suburban, or urban, in the rating of the administrator.
- 5) There is no two-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.
- 6) There is no three-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.
- 7) There is no four-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.

The analysis will be a four-way ANOVA relating the four independent variables of age, years of teaching experience, type of experience, and type of district with the dependent variable being the composite score from the rating form.

#### Set-Up

	Setting of Principal	Age	Years of Experience	Type of Experience
Principal #1	Urban	29	3	Urban
Principal #1	Urban	29	3	Suburban
Principal # 1	Urban	29	3	Rural
Principal # 2	Urban	29	8	Urban
Principal # 2	Urban	29	8	Suburban
Principal # 2	Urban	29	8	Rural
Principal # 3	Urban	49	3	Urban
Principal # 3	Urban	49	3	Suburban

Principal # 3	Urban	49	3	Rural
Principal # 4	Urban	49	8	Urban
Principal # 4	Urban	49	8	Suburban
Principal # 4	Urban	49	8	Rural

The same pattern will be repeated for suburban and rural principals. Precautions were taken to assure that the letters of reference were balanced and sorted so that every resume would be reviewed with each type of letter of reference to counterbalance any effect that these letters might have had.

This study was done to determine the inclination of building principals to select candidates through the pre-screening process based on the type of setting of the school in relation to the experience of the teacher candidate. In order to maximize the number of responses from each type of school classification, an equal number of surveys was sent to each type. This is different from the studies done by Place in 1988, Newby in 1994 and Luo in 1995. In each of these studies, the surveys were sent to a random sampling of administrators without regard to their demographic classification. Both Place and Luo used a random sampling of all of the secondary principals in the United States. Newby's study was also a random sampling, but only included four mid-western states. These surveys relied on the administrator to classify his or her own district and would have served the purpose of this study but it was determined that the number of surveys sent out should reach an equal number of rural, suburban, and urban secondary school administrators. It was important to verify the classification of the district from which the data were collected in order to assure the significance of the influence the type of the candidate had in the pre-screening process.

The classification by the principal would corroborate the designation given by Market Data Retrieval, or would invalidate the designation. While the designation given



by MDR was the actual classification of the district, it was felt that the perception of the administrator would have a stronger implication in the pre-screen selection. If a principal thinks that he or she is in a suburban setting and chooses, or does not choose a candidate, based on that perception, the designation assigned by MDR would have little, if any, bearing on that decision. For example, if MDR had designated Principal A as being in a rural setting, but that principal thought he or she was actually in a suburban school and was looking for a teacher with suburban experience and selected that candidate, it would appear as if a rural principal had chosen a suburban candidate. The impact of that could be also seen in the reverse when someone was trying to avoid hiring someone with similar experience as his or her district in an effort to diversify the type of staff in the building.

It was initially proposed that only those responses that came back with the principal confirming the designation of MDR would be used. It was later determined that if not enough responses came back that corroborated the classification, other results would be used that were based on the principal's designation rather than that given by MDR. The decision to use the perception of the administrator for classification of the district, rather than the designation provided by Market Data Retrieval, was based upon the assumption that if the administrator thought that he or she was from a specific type of district, it would influence the outcome of his or her decision. There is less definition of what an urban, suburban, or rural district might be, as opposed to what the perception might be. According to the trends of poverty studies and census findings, the lines between district types seem to have become more blurred in the past 10 or so years. As the number of poor populations grow in other than urban sites, there is an inclination for

what was once considered a suburban area to be thought of as an urban area, especially by someone who deals with the changing demographics on a regular basis, such as a school administrator. It has been shown that “growth rates well above average in the suburban and small metro area populations have re-drawn the map over the course of the decade” (Kneebone & Garr, 2010, p. 4).

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Results of this study are given in this chapter which includes (1) the demographic data of the participants, (2) an examination of the dependent variable, and (3) an analysis of the hypotheses.

#### **Demographic Data of the Sample**

The demographics of the participants in this study included 432 secondary principals randomly selected from throughout the United States, with 144 of the principals identified as urban, 144 identified as suburban, and 144 identified as rural as per the definition received from Market Data Retrieval, the company from which the addresses were obtained.

The initial mailing to all 432 principals was completed in October 2009 and a subsequent mailing was done in January of 2010 with a follow up letter (See Appendix G). There were a total of 95 responses from the two mailings, for a return rate of 22%. Of the 95 returned, only 83 were able to be used due to incomplete data being recorded in 12 of the replies. Of the 83, only 60 were returned in which the administrator corroborated the classification of the district, which necessitated the use of the 23, thus relying on the designation of the administrator for the type of district. While the surveys were sent out to an equal number of each of the types of districts in an effort to maximize the results from each, it was important to use the principals' perception as to the type of district in which they were employed. To ascertain the impact of the similarity-attraction theory, the reliance had to be placed on the perception of the individual filling out the survey rather than on a designation provided by Market Data Retrieval. With the increasing urban sprawl and the changing demographics of these designations, it could easily be understood how a principal would perceive the district as being urban when MDR had

designated it as suburban. The same could be said for a principal in a rural district having the perception that his or her district is considered suburban.

The biographical data supplied by the administrators yielded the following information: The number of administrators who responded as being under the age of 40 was 12, in the 40 – 54 age range 39 responded, and in the 54 and over age category 32 responded. The gender of the respondents was 63 male and 20 female.

The number of years that each administrator had served in his or her current position ranged from one year to 35 years, with a mean of 12.2 years with a standard deviation of 6.89. The number of students reported from each school ranged from 57 to 2,500 with a mean of 962 and a standard deviation of 725.1. As reported by the administrators, the percentage of minorities per building were as follows: 35 reported less than 10% minority students, 22 reported between 10% and 50% minority students, and 26 reported more than 50% minority students.

The classification of the district from which the principal was reporting, including both those that corroborated with the classification as given by Market Data Retrieval and those who classified their district differently than that of MDR, yielded 18 urban districts, 26 suburban districts, and 39 rural districts. It was decided that the administrators' perception of the type of district in which he or she was working was relevant to the study in order to determine the inclination of an administrator to choose, in the pre-selection process, a teaching candidate with experience in a similar setting (See Table 1).

Table 1

*Principal Type Reported*

Information	Frequency	Percent
Urban	18	21.7
Suburban	26	31.3
Rural	39	47

When reporting the status of employing a chemistry teacher in their district, one reported a surplus of chemistry teacher candidates, 55 reported their status as having enough candidates, with 25 reporting a shortage of candidates and two responding with an NA.

The responses to the question of whether or not resumes are used to screen applicants, 81 responded that resumes were used in the screening process while two responded that resumes were not used in the screening process.

When asked if their recommendation for hiring teachers was usually accepted, 80 administrators responded that their recommendations were usually accepted and three administrators responded that their recommendations were not accepted. The results of the administrators' biographical data from Appendix B are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Demographic Data of the Participants\**

Information		Frequency (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age	(1) under 40	12 (14.5)			
	(2) 40 – 54	39 (47.0)			
	(3) Above 54	32 (38.5)			
Gender	(1) Male	63 (75.9)			
	(2) Female	20 (24.1)			
Adm. Exp.			12.2	6.89	1 – 35
School Size			961.7	725.07	57 – 2500
Minority Students	(1) < 10%	35 (42.2)			
	(2) 10 – 50%	22 (26.5)			
	(3) > 50%	26 (31.3)			
School Type*	(1) Urban	18 (21.7)			
	(2) Suburban	26 (31.3)			
	(3) Rural	39 (47.0)			

\* As reported by the responding administrators.

## **Examination of the Dependent Variable**

The administrators were asked to evaluate the hypothetical candidates on the evaluation forms provided (See Appendix F). The first six items, A through F, were the main criteria of the evaluation. The six items on the evaluation form were: (A) knowledge of curricular area, (B) ability to communicate knowledge, (C) likelihood to contribute to the overall school program, (D) ability to maintain a disciplined teaching environment, (E) ability to create a friendly classroom environment, and (F) potential for professional growth. Each criterion was rated on a 4-point scale, with a *poor* rating receiving a 1, a *fair* rating receiving a 2, a *good* rating receiving a 3, and an *excellent* rating receiving a 4. The administrators were asked to rate each candidate as if they were screening resumes for filling a position in their respective school districts.

The ratings given by the administrator for each of the hypothetical candidates on the six criteria were totaled to give a composite score for each candidate. The composite score that was computed for all of the candidates served as the dependent variable and was used to test the hypotheses for this study.

## **Overall Ratings of the Criteria**

The ratings given by the administrators were used only when all six criteria were rated and that the rating given by the administrator was able to be interpreted clearly on the evaluation form.

The means and standard deviations for the ratings on the six criteria are shown in Table 3. The administrators rated the hypothetical teacher candidates highest on their likelihood to contribute to overall school program and lowest on the candidates' ability to

maintain a disciplined teaching environment. The one criterion that showed the most variance among the ratings given by the administrators was the candidates' ability to maintain a disciplined teaching environment.

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Ratings on the Six Criteria*

Criterion	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
(1) Knowledge of Curriculum Area	3.13	.44
(2) Ability to communicate knowledge	2.93	.49
(3) Contribute to Overall School Program	3.17	.49
(4) Disciplined Teaching Environment	2.91	.51
(5) Friendly Classroom Environment	3.01	.47
(6) Potential for Professional Growth	3.16	.46

**Criteria Correlations and Internal Consistency**

The administrators' ratings were determined to be useful by the reliability of the ratings. The internal consistency of the composite scores of the administrators' ratings on the six criteria was determined by using a Cronbach Alpha measure. The correlations of the six criteria, along with the composite scores are shown in Tables 4, 5, and 6. The results show that the administrators' ratings on each criterion had significant variance with the ratings with all the other criteria.



Table 4

*Criteria Correlations and Internal Correlations for Rural\**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G***
A	-						
B	.70	-					
C	.58	.44	-				
D	.57	.61	.57	-			
E	.55	.63	.55	.67	-		
F	.63	.60	.54	.51	.58	-	
G	.60	.65	.49	.62	.68	.60	-
Sum**	.81	.81	.77	.82	.82	.80	.74

\* All correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level

\*\* Sum of A - F

\*\*\* A = Knowledge of Curriculum Area

B = Ability to communicate knowledge

C = Contribute to Overall School Program

D = Disciplined Teaching Environment

E = Friendly Classroom Environment

F = Potential for Professional Growth

G = Chance of Candidate Getting an Interview

Table 5

*Criteria Correlations and Internal Correlations for Suburban\**


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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G***
<hr/>							
A	-						
B	.58	-					
C	.62	.52	-				
D	.56	.59	.46	-			
E	.61	.52	.49	.60	-		
F	.50	.52	.64	.43	.48	-	
G	.62	.60	.58	.65	.57	.59	-
Sum**	.80	.78	.78	.80	.79	.74	.75

---

\* All correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level

\*\* Sum of A – F

\*\*\* A = Knowledge of Curriculum Area

B = Ability to communicate knowledge

C = Contribute to Overall School Program

D = Disciplined Teaching Environment

E = Friendly Classroom Environment

F = Potential for Professional Growth

G = Chance of Candidate Getting an Interview

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Table 6

*Criteria Correlations and Internal Correlations for Urban\**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G***
A	-						
B	.60	-					
C	.49	.46	-				
D	.39	.57	.61	-			
E	.42	.49	.63	.68	-		
F	.61	.48	.64	.53	.48	-	
G	.46	.63	.67	.65	.64	.54	-
Sum**	.71	.74	.83	.80	.77	.78	.72

\* All correlations were statistically significant at the .01 level

\*\* Sum of A – F

\*\*\* A = Knowledge of Curriculum Area

B = Ability to communicate knowledge

C = Contribute to Overall School Program

D = Disciplined Teaching Environment

E = Friendly Classroom Environment

F = Potential for Professional Growth

G = Chance of Candidate Getting an Interview

In this study, three composite scores were computed from the administrators' ratings using the three types of school district of the administrators. The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were .86 for the urban administrators, .87 for the suburban administrators, and .89 for the rural administrators. This findings are within acceptable and publishable limits and according to DeVellis (2003, p. 96), "between .80 and .90, (*are*) very good." The total coefficient of the three composite scores of the ratings on the six criteria was .87. This coefficient for a total rating is as high as other studies related to teacher selection which used the same criteria. The other studies yielded coefficients of .88, .88, .86, .78 (Luo, 1995; Place, 1988; Young & Schmidt, 1987; Young & Voss, 1986), which provides support for using the composite score being analyzed in this study.

The final item on the evaluation form (Appendix F) asked for a rating of the chances of the three hypothetical candidates being interviewed. This item was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 signifying a *poor* chance of the candidate receiving an interview and 10 signifying that the candidate had an *excellent* chance of receiving an interview. Using the Pearson's R Correlation, the administrators' ratings for the three hypothetical candidates and the candidates' chances for receiving an interview, the following correlations were calculated,  $n = 82$ : Urban, .72, suburban, .75, and rural .74.

### **Testing of the Hypotheses**

The seven null hypotheses of this study are: (1) there is no difference between 29-year-old candidates and the 49-year-old candidates on the rating determined by the administrator; (2) there is no difference between candidates having 3 years of experience and candidates having 8 years of experience on the rating determined by the administrator; (3) there is no difference among the candidate's type of experience (urban,

suburban, or rural) in the rating determined by the administrator; (4) there is no difference among the classification of the administrator, rural, suburban, or urban, in the rating of the administrator; (5) there is no two-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator; (6) there is no three-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator; and (7) there is no four-way interaction that affects the rating determined by the administrator.

The test of within-subjects, with sphericity assumed, is reported in the following table. The table compares the candidate's type of experience (CT), the type of district as reported by the principal (RT), candidate's age (CA), and candidate's number of years of experience (CY).

Table 7

*Tests of Within – Subjects Effects*


---

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
CT	2	0.16	0.04
CT * RT	4	3.80	0.93
CT * CA	2	4.52	1.10
CT * CY	2	5.96	1.46
CT * RT * CA	4	2.93	0.72
CT * RT * CY	4	1.87	0.46
CT * CA * CY	2	0.61	0.15
CT * RT * CA * CY	4	1.79	0.44

---

CT – Candidate's Type of Experience

RT – Type of District as Reported by the Administrator

CA – Candidate's Age

CY – Candidate's Years of Experience

The test of between subjects provided statistical significance with two categories. The first being the candidate's years of experience (CY), and the other being the interaction between the type of district, as reported by the principal, (RT) and the candidate's age (CA).

Table 8

*Test of Between – Subjects Effects*


---

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>
RT	2	4.080	.303
CA	1	.074	.005
CY	1	55.040	4.082*
RT * CA	2	51.631	3.829**
RT * CY	2	18.043	1.338
CA * CY	1	13.944	1.034
RT * CA * CY	2	1.159	.086

---

RT – Type of District as Reported by the Administrator

CA - Candidate's Age

CY – Candidate's Years of Experience

\*  $p = .047$ ; Partial Eta Squared = .057

\*\*  $p = .027$ ; Partial Eta Squared = .103

---

There were no significant findings with the candidates' age by itself as there had been in previous studies of this nature. There were also no significant findings in the interaction between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the type of district of each candidate, which is contrary to the belief from a similarity-attraction theory perspective. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5 and shown in Appendix H.

There was significant finding with the candidates' years of experience as it was shown that those candidates who had 8 years of experience were preferred by all respondents over those candidates who had 3 years of experience. It is speculative at best to suggest why this is the case and will be discussed in the follow up in Chapter 5.

Table 9

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*Candidates' Years of Experience*

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Number of Years Experience	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
3	35	17.73	2.36
8	44	18.94	1.99
Total	79	18.41	2.23

---

There was also significant finding in the interaction between the type of school district as reported by the administrator and the candidates' age (See Table 10 and Figure 1). It was shown that the administrators who reported themselves to be from urban districts favored candidates who were 29 years of age over candidates who were 49 years of age. On the other hand, the respondents who were designated as suburban, by their own reporting, were shown to favor candidates who were 29 years of age over those candidates who were 49 years of age. The respondents who reported themselves to be from a rural school district did not show any significant preference when it came to the age of the teaching candidate.



Table 10

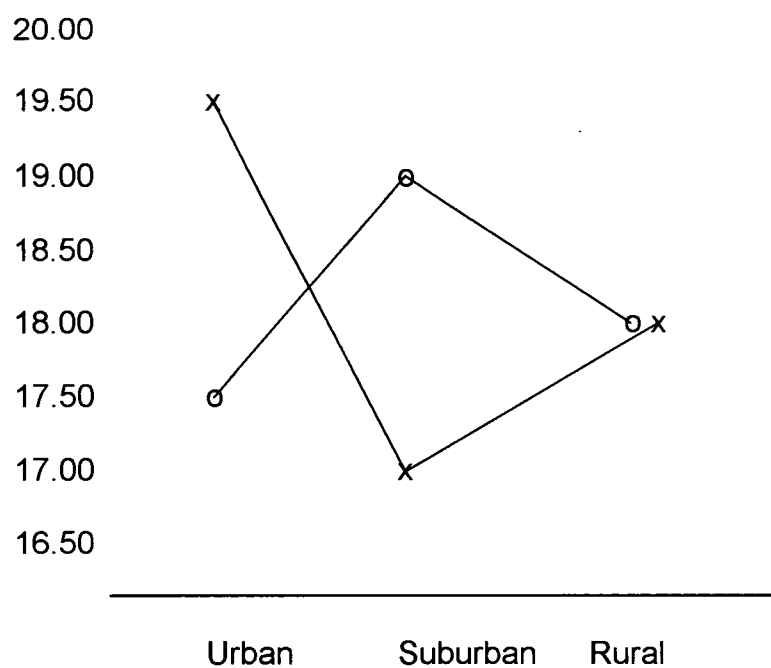
*Reported District Type and Candidate Age*

RT	CA	M	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Urban	29	19.55	.83	17.89	21.2
	49	17.53	.89	15.76	19.30
Suburban	29	16.94	.68	15.58	18.31
	49	18.97	.57	17.82	20.11
Rural	29	18.25	.65	16.95	19.55
	49	18.12	.43	17.26	18.97

RT – District Type as Reported by the Administrator

CA – Candidates' Age

Figure 1. Interaction between Reported Principal Type and Candidate Age\*



\* X – 29 Year Old

O – 49 Year Old

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations**

This chapter is divided into four basic sections: (1) a summary of this study, (2) a discussion of the findings from this study, (3) the implications of the findings, and (4) recommendations based on the findings and implications of this study.

#### **Summary of the Study**

This study was based upon the need to improve the pre-screening in the selection process of teachers. It is important to come up with a systematic process to assure that the best candidates are being selected and that those administrators who are in charge of this process be aware of the results of latest studies (Young & Young, 2009, p. 3). The four variables used in this study, teacher candidate's age, teacher candidate's number of years of experience, type of district as reported by the administrator, and type of experience of each teacher candidate were analyzed in order to attempt to determine the effects each had separately, or in a combination, on potential bias in the pre-selection process and the chance of the teacher candidate receiving an interview. The main purpose of this study was to add to the current knowledge base regarding the decision-making process in the pre-selection process.

The sample population used in this study were secondary principals or administrators who are directly involved in the hiring process, and more importantly, in the pre-screening. The 432 secondary administrators were chosen randomly through

Market Data Retrieval (MDR) from the national population. Of the 432 random administrators chosen, 144 were designated by MDR as urban school district administrators, 144 were designated by MDR as suburban school district administrators, and 144 were designated by MDR as rural school district administrators. This was done to allow equal numbers of each type to participate. Of the 432 surveys sent out, 83 administrators (19.2% of the sample) returned useable information. Of the 83 respondents, 18 were from urban districts, 26 from suburban districts, and 39 from rural districts, as self-reported by the administrators on the demographic survey, Appendix B, item 6.

### **Age of the Candidate**

In previous studies of teacher selection and the pre-screening process, the age of the candidate was one of the most widely used variables (Allison, 1981; Bowman, 1998; Jamison, 1987; Jury, 1993; Kramer, 1981; Luo, 1995; Marcum, 1988; Newby, 1994; Oto, 2003; Place, 1988; Schmidt, 1993; Small, 1995; Voss, 1983; Wallich, 1984; Young & Allison, 1982). The results showed that "the effect of a candidate's age on the selection evaluation was found consistently in several studies" (Luo, 1995, p. 123) and that in some cases there was an effect regardless of the other information provided about the candidate. Due to the fact that age has been an integral variable in studies of this nature, it was used in this study to build upon the knowledge base of them. In this study, the three hypothetical candidates had the same age for any given administrator in order to maintain age as a between-subjects variable and not a within-subjects variable in the study. There were, however, different age categories in the study with some administrators screening three 29-year olds and other administrators screening three 49-year olds.

It is interesting to note that with all of the studies done previously in this fashion that used age as one of the variables, only a few showed that age had any statistical significance as a single variable. Some showed a significance when age interacted with another variable such as ethnic name and/or grade point average (Luo, 1995), with grade point average only (Place, 1988), or candidate's experience and superintendent's rating (Newby, 1994). Others showed no significance for age regardless of the other variable, including but not limited to similarity-attraction theory (Bowman, 1998), gender (Wallich), or age of evaluator (Bowman). One study showed a significant finding in age but it was in relation to principal candidates and not teacher candidates (Small, 1995).

In one of the earliest document studies on the topic of teacher selection and pre-screening, the format upon which this study was fashioned, age was significant regardless of the other variables which might have been used in conjunction with age in previous studies, such as candidate experience or the level of the administrator performing the evaluation, with which age interacted (Allison, 1981). It is also interesting to note that a study done over 20 years later also showed that age had statistical significance by itself but not with the other two variables of ethnic origin or locus of decision (Oto, 2003). In Oto's study, there was also significance with three-way interaction between age, ethnic origin, and locus of decision.

The findings of all of these studies, as well as the fact that it has been the most widely used characteristic of teacher candidates, should provide adequate support that age is a variable that warrants its repetition as a variable in further studies of this nature.

### **Years of Experience of the Candidate**

In this study, the number of years of experience of the teacher candidates was studied along with the age and the type of experience of the candidates. The three teaching candidates all had either 3 years of experience or 8 years of experience. There have been numerous studies of this nature which have used the number of years of experience as one of the variables in conjunction with other variables. (Allison, 1981; Brooks, 1967; Fries, 1987; Gottinger, 1999; Howard, 1998; Kramer, 1981; Newby, 1994; Young & Allison, 1982).

There has been little evidence that the candidate's years of experience has any significance on the pre-screening or selection process of teacher candidates. The candidate's years of experience appears to only be significant when interacting with another variable. The interaction between the candidate's years of experience, age, and superintendent decision was significant for Newby (1994). There was a significance found in the candidate's years of experience in another study; however, the same methodology was not used and the study was based on candidates having 1 or 2 years of experience and not 3 or 8 years of experience, as has been used in many of the studies of this nature (Fries, 1987).

### **Type of Experience of the Candidate**

In this study, the main emphasis was placed on the type of experience that each teacher candidate had listed on the resume. While the teacher candidates that each secondary administrator evaluated had the same age, either 29 or 49, and the same number of years of experience, either 3 or 8, the candidates that the administrator were to evaluate each had a different type of experience listed on their credentials. One candidate

had urban experience, one had suburban experience, and one had rural experience. The aim of this study was to see whether there was an inclination of the administrators to give a higher, or more favorable, rating to the hypothetical teacher candidate whose experience was most similar to the type of school district in which the administrator was employed. It was important to this study that the type of district was determined and that attention is given to the impact of the similarity-attraction theory on the pre-screening and the selection process of teacher candidates.

There have been relatively few studies that have used the type of district as a variable and none, to my knowledge, has compared the type of experience of the teaching candidate with the demographic type of district. Most of the studies using district type as a variable limit it to the type of school by grade level, elementary, middle, high school or secondary (Marcum, 1988; Small, 1995), or based it on simply being urban or rural (Jamison, 1987; Wittwer, 2004). One study found did use the demographics of urban, suburban, and rural, but only as the designation of the district and not that of the candidate (Cumley, 1999). Cumley also designated the type of experience of the candidate but limited it to school designation of middle or junior rather than demographic. Other studies used the type of experience of the candidate with one designating the candidate either elementary or secondary (Marcum, 1988), and the other refers to the candidate's locale of prior teaching (Kramer, 1981), which is isolated as a single county in New Jersey.

It appears that the use of the type of experience of the candidate is a variable that merits further study within the framework of this type of methodology.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

There were two significant findings determined from this study with one main effect and one interaction. The first is the candidates' number of years of experience. It was found that among all respondents, urban, suburban, and rural, there was a preference for those candidates with 8 years of teaching experience over those candidates who had 3 years of experience. Regardless of demographics, it appears as if administrators from all types of school are looking to hire someone with more experience. This is understandable as one would equate someone with more experience as being the better teacher, all else being equal.

The other finding in this study was the significance of the interaction between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the candidates' age. The urban administrators preferred the 29-year-old candidates over the 49-year-olds; the suburban administrators preferred the 49-year-old candidate over the 29-year old; and, the rural administrators had no preference as related to age (See Figure 1).

This phenomenon could be contributable to a variety of factors that might have an influence on the administrators' decision. It could be based on an economic factor as a younger teacher would be less of a financial burden to a district in terms of salary and benefits. If all things were equal, such as number of years of experience and level of the education of the candidate, there would be no difference in the rate of pay based upon age. But this would also rely on the years of experience as most schools have a salary schedule for their certified employees. But as there was no significance when there was a



three way interaction between age, years of experience, and type of district, this can only be speculative at this time and be used as a basis for further study.

The preference for youth over age might be attributable to the perception of the necessity of having the ability to relate to the students, as well as the vitality to keep pace with them, which would certainly be more valued in the urban setting. The opposite inclination of having age over youth might be the value that is seen in the life experience of an older teacher and using that experience to relate lessons to real life issues.

Another possible reason for the preferences shown in this study could be attributable to supply and demand. There could be an overabundance of applicants for the suburban positions initially due to the perception that a teaching position in the suburbs is more desirable than one in an urban setting. Once the suburban schools have selected their candidates, and this study shows that the suburban schools will select the older candidates, the majority of the candidates left for the urban positions are the younger candidates. Therefore, as the supply of older candidates dwindled due to their being hired in the suburban districts the demand for teachers would remain the same for the urban districts. They would then rely on the younger candidates to fill their vacancies.

A majority of colleges and universities are located near urban settings and it would be natural for recent graduates looking for a job to submit applications to a number of districts, including those located in the urban settings near their school. As the schools receive these applications it would be in their best interest to screen, interview, and hire as quickly as possible to acquire the best candidates. The younger teaching candidate, eager to get in a classroom, would assuredly welcome the opportunity to accept a job offer. And in these economic times, any job is better than no job.

Many colleges and universities have courses in their curriculum for aspiring educators which place them in schools for periods of time to observe, to participate, and to complete their student teaching requirements. In order to facilitate these placements, the students are usually placed in school districts that are located in close proximity to the colleges. The experiences of the candidates coming out of college would then be similar to those who are employed in the schools that are close to the colleges. As alluded to earlier, with a larger number of colleges and universities located near urban settings, the experience of the candidates would be urban. Then not only would the younger candidates be more attracted to the urban schools, but the urban schools would be more attracted to the younger candidates.

### **Implications of the Study**

There were two significant findings in this study. The study did show a statistical significance with regard to the number of years of experience a hypothetical teaching candidate was reported to have, whether it was 3 years or 8 years of experience. The implication is that the more experienced the candidate, at least with those having 3 or 8 years of experience, the more likely the candidate was to be interviewed by any district regardless of the type of district. By choosing the candidate with 8 years of experience over the candidate with 3 years of experience, the administrators were implying that the more desirable candidate was the one having more years of experience regardless of age, type of experience, level of education, and/or cost to the district.

Most public schools have a salary schedule wherein, if all other criteria of two candidates are equal, the candidate with more years of experience would cost the district more in terms of salary and benefits. That being said, by choosing the candidate with the

greater number of years of experience the administrator is implying that the years of experience are more valuable to the district than the savings that might be realized by choosing the candidate with fewer years of experience. In today's economy it would certainly appear that saving money is secondary to procuring the best candidate, which reinforces the notion that experience is equated with quality.

While the teacher with less years of experience might be less of a financial liability to the district as far as salary and benefits, there are some tangible and intangible costs associated with a teacher with fewer years of experience. The teacher with fewer years of experience might need to attend more classes, workshops, and/or conferences to bring the candidate up to the level that the candidate with more years of experience already is bringing to the district. All of this training and professional development would cost the district directly, as well as the expense of a substitute teacher, if needed,

A teacher with fewer years of experience, with few exceptions, usually requires more hands-on assistance from an administrator, a department chair, or a peer to mentor the teacher. As this takes away from the duties and responsibilities of the mentor, it is indirectly costing the district. The thought of hiring someone who would require more maintenance might certainly influence an administrator to prefer the candidate with more experience who would require less outside assistance.

It has been my experience that when having to choose between two candidates who have identical credentials, other than years of experience, and that there is no financial constraint on the decision, the underlying thought is to hire the best candidate for the position. The candidate with the greater number of years of experience would tend to be chosen as the one who would be bringing more to the district.

There was also statistical significance in the relation between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the age of the hypothetical teacher candidate. The respondents who classified themselves as being from urban schools showed that they were inclined to choose the 29-year-old candidate over the 49-year-old candidate. The suburban administrators, on the other hand, were more inclined to choose the 49-year-old candidate over the 29-year-old candidate. The administrators who classified themselves as being from a rural district showed no preference in one age group over another.

The implications from this study did not show that there is an inclination for an administrator of a distinct type of district, such as rural, urban, or suburban, to select one candidate from a pool of three that had experience in a similar type of district. There was, however, an indication that this might be a true supposition but this study did not have the numbers necessary to be statistically significant. While the number of years of experience that a candidate has impacts the selection process and the type of district as reported by the administrator interacting with the age of the candidate were both significant, there was no significance with the interaction between the type of district reported by the administrator and the type of experience of the candidates. When referring to similarity-attraction theory, it would seem that the natural outcome from this study would support this theory. While this study did not show any statistical significance with this interaction, given the low statistical power of the survey and the possibility of a Type 2 error, it was decided that looking at a plot of the similarity-attraction between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the type of experience of the candidate would be worthwhile (See Appendix H).

Although there is not any significance, as seen in Appendix H, in the findings reported between the type of district as reported by the administrator and the type of experience of the candidate, they are not incongruent with what would be expected in a similarity-attraction situation. While not statistically significant, the following can be seen from Appendix H:

1. The suburban candidate was rated higher by the suburban administrator than he was by the urban or rural administrator.
2. The urban candidate was rated higher by the urban administrator than he was by the suburban or rural administrator.
3. The rural candidate was rated higher by the rural administrator than he was by the urban or suburban administrator.

If this interaction had been statistically significant, it clearly would have been congruent with the similarity-attraction theory and would have supported it.

Therefore, the implications of the study are that administrators in general prefer to pick someone who has more experience when selecting teaching candidates to fill a position within their district. With regard to candidates who have either 3 years of experience or 8 years of experience, the implication was that regardless of the type of district the administrator was from, urban, suburban, or rural, the candidate with the greater number of years was the candidate of choice. And urban administrators tend to select younger teaching candidates to interview while suburban administrators tend to select older candidates and rural administrators show no preference. The urban administrators showed a preference to the 29-year-old candidates while the suburban

administrators showed a preference to the 49-year-old candidates when determining which candidate was more likely to receive an interview.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations to come from this study are based on the outcomes of the study and the studies made earlier that are similar in nature to this one. Due to the significance found in the number of years of experience of the teaching candidate and the significance in the interaction between the reported type of district and the age of the candidate, both of these findings should be further researched.

It is recommended that the number of years of experience be studied as the independent variable with a variety of other independent variables. It is also recommended that the number of years be varied as well as expanded, with the variables used in this study as well as others. This would certainly clarify the disparity in one candidate with a given number of years of experience being preferred over a candidate with a different number of years of experience.

While age has been a stalwart of many of the studies of this nature, it would be beneficial to continue to look at age as it interacts with the reported type of district as well as with other variables. While the ages of 29 and 49 have been used in a number of studies, it could prove useful to change these numbers and also use a larger selection of ages for the candidates. It would certainly be vital to this study to see if the findings were to be replicated as the ages were to change.

Other findings might have been possible and could have been addressed but were not due to the nature of this particular study. Similar studies of this type have included other variables and it is possible that those along with the variables used in this study

could be used in other combinations to further add to the knowledge base of these studies. Other variables that could be used could be: gender, both of the candidate and the administrator; age, both of the candidate and the administrator; and ethnicity, both of the candidate and the administrator.

One other item that might enhance this string of studies that has not been used in the previous studies is a cover letter of application. This letter would serve to answer some questions that the pre-screener might have had in this study as well as to emphasize some information that might be missed in the reading of the resumes.

In order to answer some of the questions raised by this and other studies of its type, there might be an accompanying qualitative study to address them. While this study looked quantitatively at the data to determine if there existed any relationship between candidates' and administrators' experiences, it would certainly enhance the study to have a qualitative component to understand the rationale behind the scoring of the evaluation.

It would also follow from this study that there is a need to provide more training to administrators to increase their skills when it comes to prescreening and selection of candidates. If the goal is to hire the best candidate for the position, then we need to make sure that there is a process in place to allow the administrators to do this.

Perhaps due to the lack of power of this study there was no statistical significance relating the type of reported district and the type of experience the candidates had. However, there was an indication found that there does exist some indication that the similarity-attraction theory is prevalent (Appendix H). It is recommended that a further study be made to validate or invalidate this line of reasoning. While the methodology of this study has proven over time to be reliable, it might be worth refining this study in

order to isolate the possible relationship that this study attempted to find but was only able to infer.



## Appendix A

### Cover Letter for the First Mailing

September 1, 2009

Dear High School Principal,

Principals are asked to perform many tasks. The selection of teachers is one of the most important tasks. Teacher selection consists of at least two processes: (1) screening; and (2) interviewing. Research, however, on the screening process leading up to the final interview has been limited. I am hoping to add to the existing knowledge of the teacher selection and screening process. As a former building level administrator, I understand very well the daily demands on your time. Therefore, this request was designed to take only a few minutes of your time. I sincerely hope you will choose to assist in the research.

Specifically, you are asked to read the enclosed position description and to evaluate three candidates as if you are screening for a vacant position in your district. Please note that each of the hypothetical candidates depicted on the enclosed résumés is to be evaluated on a separate evaluation form. After completing the evaluations of these candidates (3), please return the evaluation form along with the Self Biographical Form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

The confidentiality of your response is assured because your name is not requested. Individual responses will be treated anonymously and will be destroyed once group norms are calculated. In return for your cooperation, results will be mailed to you as well as all others asked to participate. The return of the survey constitutes your informed consent.

If you have any questions as to the research, please contact Dr. A. William Place at (937) 229 – 2640. If you have any questions as to the ethics regarding the study, please contact Dr. Mary Connolly, Interim Chair, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, (937) 229 – 3493, or [Mary.Connolly@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:Mary.Connolly@notes.udayton.edu).

Again, I want to thank you for your time, effort, and cooperation in this research project. Your contribution to research on the selection process will be of benefit to all of us in education.

Sincerely,

A. William Place

David S. Vail  
University of Dayton

Appendix B  
Self Biographical Form

Information about the Principal and School

1. Your age    (Under 40) \_\_\_\_;    (40 – 54) \_\_\_\_;    (54 +) \_\_\_\_
2. Your gender        (Male) \_\_\_\_; (Female) \_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been a school administrator? \_\_\_\_
4. Approximate number of students in your school \_\_\_\_
5. Approximate percentage of minority students in your school  
      (Less than 10%) \_\_\_\_;        (10 – 50%) \_\_\_\_;        (More than 50%) \_\_\_\_
6. Type of your school setting  
      (Urban) \_\_\_\_;        (Suburban) \_\_\_\_;        (Rural) \_\_\_\_
7. What is the status of employing chemistry teachers in your district?  
      (Surplus) \_\_\_\_;        (Enough) \_\_\_\_;        (Shortage) \_\_\_\_;        (NA) \_\_\_\_
8. Are résumés used to screen applicants for teaching positions?  
      (Yes) \_\_\_\_;        (No) \_\_\_\_
9. Is your recommendation for hiring teachers ordinarily accepted?  
      (Yes) \_\_\_\_;        (No) \_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Position Description

Title: Chemistry Teacher

Reports to: Building Principal

Description:

To instruct students effectively and affectively.

To supervise, test and grade students as well as develop curriculum with other district personnel.

Features of the Position:

Twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) pupils per class.

Five (5) classes per day.

General supervision for 45 minutes.

Medium-sized school (800 students, 9 – 12)

Moderately conservative community

Challenging students.

Desired teacher Behavior:

Friendly, but firm.

Strong teaching skills.

Intelligent.

Dynamic.

Sociable.

Positive model

Wide range of interest.

Dedicated to teaching.

Extra-curricular:

Teachers who are interested in supervising after school activities should see the appropriate department head.

## Appendix D

### Candidate Résumé

May 15, 2006

#### Personal Data

Name: John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith)

Address: 1234 Main Street, Anycity, State\*, 01010

Telephone: (555) 555 – 5555

Age: 29 (49)

Date of Birth: February 31, 1980 (1960)

#### Educational Background

Bachelor's Degree: B. S. – State University

Undergraduate G. P. A.: 3.20

Major: Chemistry Minor: Education

High School Diploma: Anycity High School

#### Certification / Licensure

Chemistry and Physical Science

#### Teaching Experience – Total years experience: 3 (8)

Current -Springfield High School (Rural / Suburban / Urban), Springfield, State\*  
Subject area: Chemistry and Physical Science

Previous - Jonestown High School (Rural / Suburban / Urban), Jonestown, State\*  
Subject area: Chemistry and Physical Science

#### Extracurricular Experience

Student Council Advisor  
Science Club Advisor  
School Awards Committee  
District Curriculum Committee

#### Professional Organization

National Education Association  
State\* Education Association  
Local Education Association  
National Council of Science Teachers

#### Community Activities

Adult Class Teacher / United Way

#### Future Ambitions

1. To complete a Master's Degree
2. To become a better teacher

\* For the purpose of this research, assume the state to be your own.

## Appendix E

### Reference Letter\*

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Mr. John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith), a candidate for a teaching position in the area of chemistry. Mr. Williams (Johnson / Smith) was a teacher in our high this past year. He was given the responsibility of four chemistry classes and two physical science classes.

John (James / Robert) exhibited a thorough knowledge of the subject matter. He was able to plan and organize several in-class activities and experiments quite well. He seemed to meet individual student needs as well.

Mr. Williams (Johnson / Smith) maintained a professional relationship with students, faculty, and the community at all times. He was well thought of and appreciated by colleagues and superiors for his work in the classroom, as well as the student council, awards committee, and science review committee.

Overall, I would rate John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith) high as a science teacher. I would not hesitate to hire John (James / Robert) again should he ever apply to our district in the future.

Sincerely,

A. Principal

\* The name on this letter was substituted with the other two names on this and two other comparable letters of reference on a rotational basis.

## Appendix E

### Reference Letter\*

To Whom It May Concern:

I would appreciate your consideration of a fine person, Mr. John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith), for a chemistry teaching position. John (James / Robert) did a good job in our high school over the past few years, having had the responsibility of teaching four chemistry classes and one physical science class.

John Williams' (James Johnson / Robert Smith) above average background in chemistry prepared him for meeting the challenges of planning and organizing the many in-class activities required to do a good job in teaching this subject. The studies and training received by John (James / Robert) at the university have provided the many skills necessary for planning, organizing, and meeting individual student needs in the classroom.

Mr. Williams' (Johnson / Smith) sense of professionalism and good disposition were evident in his classes, in his work with the science review committee, and in his other activities. With respect to an overall appraisal of John Williams' (James Johnson / Robert Smith) teaching and experience at our school, I would say it was well above average and indeed quite good at the high school level in the area of chemistry.

Sincerely,

B. Principal

\* The name on this letter was substituted with the other two names on this and two other comparable letters of reference on a rotational basis.

Appendix E  
Reference Letter\*

To Whom It May Concern:

I would appreciate your consideration of an outstanding candidate, John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith), for a teaching position in the area of chemistry. John (James / Robert) did a good job in our high school over the past several years, having had the responsibility of four chemistry classes and one science class.

John Williams' (James Johnson/ Robert Smith) varied and above average background in chemistry has provided him sound preparation for meeting the challenges of planning and organizing the many in-class activities and experiments required to do a good job in teaching the subject. The studies and training received by John (James / Robert) at the university have provided the many skills necessary for planning, organizing, and meeting the student needs in the classroom.

A real sense of professionalism and a good disposition were displayed by John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith) during the time spent here in teaching and in working with the science review committee for grades 9 – 12.

With respect to an overall appraisal of John Williams' (James Johnson / Robert Smith) teaching experience at our school, I would say it was well above average and indeed quite good at the high school level in the area of chemistry.

Sincerely,

C. Principal

\* The name on this letter was substituted with the other two names on this and two other comparable letters of reference on a rotational basis.

## Appendix F

### Evaluation Form

Candidate's name: John Williams (James Johnson / Robert Smith)\*

After reviewing the position and the candidate's résumé and letter of reference, please rate the candidate as if you were screening résumés to fill a similar position in your school.

- A. Candidate's knowledge of the curricular area  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- B. Candidate's ability to transmit knowledge  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- C. Candidate's likelihood to contribute to overall school program  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- D. Candidate's ability to maintain a disciplined teaching environment  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- E. Candidate's ability to create a friendly classroom environment  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- F. Candidate's potential for professional growth  
\_\_\_\_\_ poor      \_\_\_\_\_ fair      \_\_\_\_\_ good      \_\_\_\_\_ excellent
- G. The chances of this candidate being interviewed are:  
(please circle one number)
- Poor    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10    Excellent

\* Names were substituted for each of the three hypothetical candidates.



## Appendix G

### Cover Letter for the Second Mailing

November 1, 2009

Dear high school principal,

Recently you were asked to evaluate a few hypothetical candidates. Many of have graciously responded and if you are one of these please accept this note as an indication of our thanks. If you have not yet responded, won't you please take a few minutes to answer our request at your earliest convenience?

We understand the busy schedule of building level administration these days. Therefore, this request was designed to take as little of your time as possible. The time and effort by your colleagues who have already participated will be made more meaningful with your participation. We sincerely hope you will choose to assist in this research.

Let us repeat our request: you are asked to read the enclosed position description and to evaluate three candidates as if you are screening for a vacant position in your district. Please note that each of the hypothetical candidates depicted on the enclosed résumés is to be evaluated on a separate evaluation form. After completing the evaluations of these candidates (3), please return the evaluation forms along with the Self Biographical Form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

The confidentiality of your response is assured because your name is not requested. Individual responses will be treated anonymously and will be destroyed once group norms are calculated. In return for your cooperation, results will be mailed to you as well as all others asked to participate. The return of the survey constitutes your informed consent.

If you have any questions as to the research, please contact Dr. A. William Place at (937) 229 – 2640. If you have any questions as to the ethics regarding the study, please contact Dr. Mary Connolly, Interim Chair, Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, (937) 229 – 3493, or [Mary.Connolly@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:Mary.Connolly@notes.udayton.edu).

Again, I want to thank you for your time, effort, and cooperation in this research project. Your contribution to research on the selection process will be of benefit to all of us in education.

Sincerely,

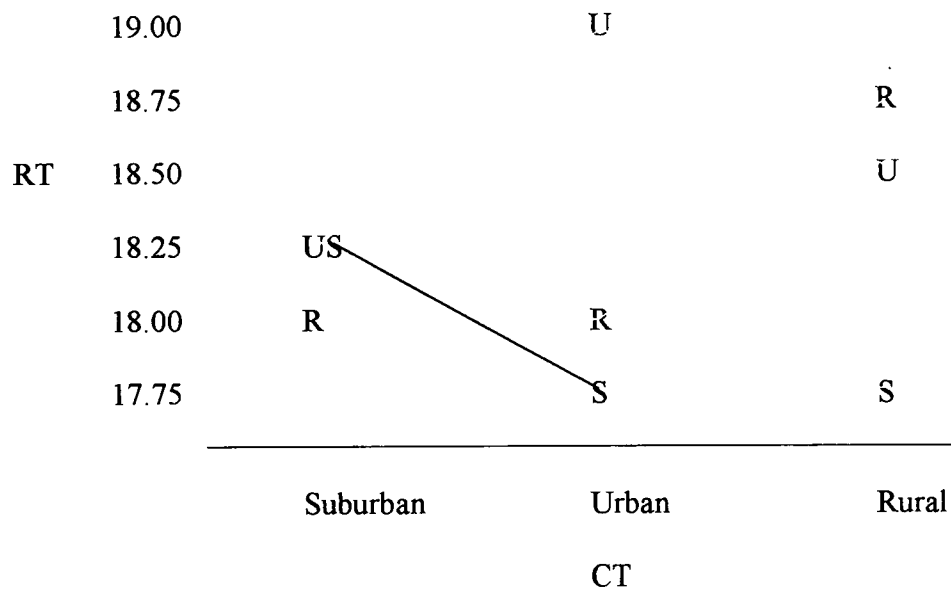
A. William Place

David S. Vail  
University of Dayton

# Appendix H

## Reported Principal Type (RT) \* Candidate Type (CT)

RT	CT	Mean	Std. Error
Urban	Suburban	18.42	.80
	Urban	18.94	.78
	Rural	18.44	.73
Suburban	Suburban	18.30	.59
	Urban	17.81	.57
	Rural	17.75	.54
Rural	Suburban	17.97	.51
	Urban	17.94	.50
	Rural	18.64	.47



U – Urban

S – Suburban

R - Rural

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