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# Strategic Managment of Human Capital: A Crtique of Urban Education Human Resources Policies and Procedures

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STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL: A CRITIQUE OF URBAN EDUCATION  
HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
In the graduate school of the  
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HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

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## **ABSTRACT**

Utilizing a critical race theory lens, this qualitative study employs a semi-structured interview and focus group interview design to explore the perspectives of individuals who interact with human resources structures, policies, or procedures in a formal or informal way in the context of an urban school district. To provide a foundational perspective, this study first reviews relevant literature related to human capital, teacher quality, and performance management. The overarching purpose of this research study is to explore ways that research participants perceive the effective management of human capital and ultimately, how the management of human capital impacts the educational experiences for children of color. Using a Critical Race Theory lens and grounded theory data analysis strategies, this research study synthesizes the participants' expressed experiences and perspectives regarding human capital and how it is significant in the context of an urban school district. Finally, as it relates to the education of children of color and overall performance management of the individuals that serve children of color, this research outlines the possible implications and considerations that emerged from the findings. This research study's findings indicate statutory requirements impact the effective management of human capital in the context of an urban school district, race and equity play a role in the implementation of an effective performance management system, and the quality of the classroom teacher is significant in predicting educational outcomes for children of color. Perhaps the most salient implication of this research is that it can inform the implementation of performance management systems that lead to increased student achievement for children of color.

## Dedication

To whom much is given much is expected. I am a product of my experiences and circumstances. I am grateful for my journey and thank my creator for his guidance, patience and unwavering love. I am still a work in progress and pray that he will continue to guide my path and help me to realize my full potential and purpose in this life. I firmly believe that through Christ, all things are possible.

My foundation was laid early and greatly impacted by the women that have influenced my life. MuDear and Granny, while you are no longer with me in the physical sense, you will forever be in my heart. MuDear, you were such an amazing woman who taught me the importance of family, being a good person, and genuinely putting God first. You valued education and instilled the love of reading in me at a very young age. I cherish the times we shared together and will never forget how you helped to make my journey possible. As you would say “If it’s the Lord’s will” I will continue to strive to make you proud.

Granny, you were my friend, confidante, and strength. You were the matriarch of our family and I miss you so very much. Your love for people and strong desire to give back even when you had few things to give are traits that I hope to exemplify throughout my career. You embraced life and always reminded us to pray and to give thanks to the Almighty. My doctoral pursuit exemplifies your tenacity and grit. I love you.

Mom, you are my rock. Everything that I am is a direct result of you. You sacrificed and provided unconditional love, particularly when I didn’t deserve it. You are an amazing woman and always put others first, especially your girls. I love you.

Sister, it's just the two of us. Thanks for putting up with your big sister. Know that I cherish our friendship. You are that solid force that will keep it real while showering me with love.

Kyle, you will always be my baby. For so long we were a dynamic duo. Mom tried to provide you with rich experiences and always desired for you to be better than me. You are a good person and you have so much potential. Remember that you are destined for greatness. Stay the course and always value the people that you encounter.

Charli, you are my sunshine and bring me so much joy. While an unexpected gift, I daily thank God for the blessing that you are to me and to others. I look forward to getting to know you more. Already I can tell that our lives together will be quite colorful. Thanks for making Mommy smile, particularly when the writing got tough.

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## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	vi
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
Background of the Study .....	2
Research Questions.....	6
Performance Management and Teacher Tenure .....	6
Race and Equity .....	11
Performance Management and Teacher Quality.....	13
Policy .....	15
Statement of the Problem.....	17
Purpose of the Study .....	18
Professional Significance.....	19
Methodology .....	21
Delimitations.....	22
Limitations .....	23
Definitions.....	23
CHAPTER 2 .....	27
Review of Related Literature .....	27
Human Capital Management .....	29
Talent Management-Corporate Connections .....	30
Teacher Quality.....	31
Building Leadership.....	33

District Leadership.....	36
Human Resources Practices/Procedures and Statutory Implications.....	37
Equitable distribution of resources .....	44
Culture and Climate .....	49
Critical Race Theory .....	50
The Counterstory .....	51
White Privilege .....	52
CHAPTER 3 .....	55
Design and Methods .....	55
Research Methodology-Critical Race Theory.....	57
Participant and Sampling Selection .....	61
Ethical Considerations, Consent and Confidentiality .....	63
Data Collection .....	65
Data Analysis.....	70
CHAPTER 4 .....	77
Findings .....	77
People Business .....	78
Accountability.....	83
Culture of Mediocrity and Attributes.....	85
Disparate Treatment-Leadership Matters.....	86
Corporate Connections- Outliers .....	87
Quality .....	89
Leadership and Governance.....	92
Systems and Structure.....	96
CHAPTER 5 .....	100

Discussion.....	100
Meanings and Understandings.....	102
People Business.....	102
Accountability.....	102
Quality.....	103
Leadership and Governance.....	104
The Urban School District as a Structural System.....	104
Further Connections: The Literature and the Findings.....	105
Implications of the Research Study.....	109
Recommendations for Further Study.....	117
Recommendation for Improving this Study.....	118
Conclusion.....	118
Appendix A.....	132
Table 1.....	132
Appendix B.....	133
Table 2.....	133
Appendix C.....	134
Table 3.....	134
Appendix D.....	135
Table 4.....	135
Appendix E.....	136
Table 5.....	136
Appendix F.....	137
Table 6.....	137
Appendix G.....	138

Table 9 .....	138
Appendix H.....	139
Table 10 .....	139

## CHAPTER 1

The ultimate intent of this dissertation is to review human resources policies and procedures and to indicate specifically how they create barriers urban educators face on a daily basis. These barriers impede or prevent the advancement of academic and educational goals, compromise the concept of quality, and contribute to marginalizing a student population that historically has been underserved and ill-prepared (Darling-Hammond & Friedlander, 2008; Freire, 2000; Kim & Crasco, 2006). While framing this much needed discussion, it has been difficult to ignore inequities that relate to social justice issues, especially as they pertain to race. Thus, the theoretical framework encompassed tensions that bring to light challenges unspoken or ignored and challenges that are evident in many urban school systems across the country (Jones, 2007). There are many definitions of the term urban. For the purpose of this study, urban relates to a school district located in a greater metropolitan area; serves over 80% minority students of which the predominant minority racial group is African American or Black; and the free and reduced lunch rate is 88.5% or higher. All other characteristics of the urban school district apply such as low academic achievement, negative public perception, and financial challenges. For the purpose of this study, the terms African American and Black are used interchangeably.

The study explored how policy and practice fundamentally impact equity and quality in the context of an urban school district. In order to effectively and systematically address academic challenges of urban youth, educators must understand how policy, practice, and race are intertwined and subsequently affect the educational landscape in urban schools (Delpit, 1998; Gillborn, 2005).

Race is in fact a concept that is absent from most school reform efforts in a meaningful way. Educators attempt to address race but do not explicitly cite race as a root cause of many of

the challenges public education faces. In essence, society redresses racial tensions and offers reform efforts and programs designed to transform urban school systems (Ashby, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2009). Radical performance management processes and tools are presented; however, in most urban school systems, it is difficult to fully implement such processes and tools in an equitable manner due to the laws and regulations that inhibit full and legal implementation (Boudreau, 2010; Odden & Kelly, 2008). For example, the significance of policy, and particularly human resources related practices, is not adequately considered when dialoging about teacher quality (Bush, 2001; Gates, 2010). This study presented the rationale for examining such policies and procedures and provided a framework for how policy and procedures are used to influence teacher quality.

### **Background of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine the internal and external forces that negatively or positively impact the pursuit of equity for students in urban school districts. A review of the Missouri Revised Statutes (RSMo) and resulting human resources policies and practices at subordinate levels helped to provide insight throughout this study. This study reviewed relevant statutory requirements and guidelines such as those which prescribe procedures for the termination or dismissal of certificated teachers. In addition, this study examined if political, internal, and external structures affect outcomes for urban school children. Further, this study reviewed professional research and literature which relate to and support or contradict the research findings. The researcher pursued this dissertation project as an African American educator, human resources professional, former public school student, and African American parent. Personal and professional experiences as an urban educator, as well as extensive research and literature, were motivation to pursue the concepts and concerns which are

integral to this dissertation. The researcher relied heavily upon credible research conducted by notable and long-time figures on the education scene. Reliable research enabled the researcher to neutralize biases which may be the product of personal and professional experiences, and to minimize any subjective personal view which might compromise the intended focus. The researcher acknowledged and called upon experiences and relied upon various data points, combined with relevant and recent literature, that represent the current state and implications of policy which prevail in urban school districts.

The following examples of research are illustrative of the extensive studies called upon throughout this study. Researchers have shown that the impact of imposed policies is often overlooked and/or not acknowledged and examined (Bell, 2004; Berry, 2010). Darling-Hammond (2010) claimed that practitioners and researchers focus on individuals and school systems as a whole while ignoring the constructs that these entities are forced to navigate. With heightened emphasis on outcomes and accountability, she contended that the educational sector is overwhelmed with recommended remedies that are intended to reform, even transform, school systems across the country (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Researchers further agreed that the prescribed solutions often lack foundational credence and rarely address the systemic and institutional challenges urban schools face (Baker, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2002; Futernick, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

More than a generation ago, Edmonds (1979) maintained that a key overlooked component is how urban schools are situated in the context of the larger society. Edmonds' work on effective schools proceeded to outline a compelling and comprehensive approach to addressing the issues of equity and the education climate for urban schools. Edmonds stated that "Progress requires public policy that begins by making the poor less poor and ends by making

them not poor at all” (p. 15). The educational system should be designed to identify inequities and to eliminate, not minimize, disparities in the area of resources, expectations, and overall educational quality for students (Freire, 2000; Vaught, 2011). More recently, however, several researchers lamented that over thirty years later, Edmonds’ ideas are not included in the current national discussion of school reform efforts (Barkan, 2011; Goe, 2009).

While the ideals of Edmonds are still prevalent in the context of urban education, several researchers (Bell, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Edmonds, 1979) have confirmed that a key component of the educational sector’s inability to transform relates to inequitable distribution of educational resources. Pockets of excellence in urban settings indicate that educators do know what works. Yet, almost all urban school systems have failed to effectively educate most urban children in a systemic, sustainable, and meaningful way (Bell, 2004; Brewer, 2008).

School district personnel-related matters are generally governed by state law, collective bargaining and/or union agreements, and school board policies (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Coulson, 2010). Historically, teachers’ unions have greatly influenced the content of state laws and board policies and how they are implemented (Ashby, 2008; Coulson, 2010). Politically intertwined, state laws offer protection for teachers and foster a sense of job security that lacks reference to outcomes or productivity (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Odden, 2011). As a result, teachers are viewed as being responsible for the inadequate academic progress of students, but are not held accountable for the lack of progress. This premise framed national discussions around teacher quality and the impact it has on student achievement (Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Labaree, 2011).



At the school district level, teacher quality is measured and managed by tools and systems that are devised and governed by a district's human resources department. The systems are mostly qualitative and have no direct quantitative correlation to student performance (Brandt, 2011; Danielson, 2007). Teacher evaluation systems in urban school districts reflect 99 percent of teachers as satisfactory or proficient when the overwhelming majority of students are not achieving at a satisfactory or proficient level (Weisberg et al., 2009). Some would argue that this is the fault of laws or policies and in some instances a result of administrators choosing to take the easy way out (Campbell, DeArmond, & Schumwinger, 2004; Odden, 2011). There is little connection between teacher evaluation and student performance which is ultimately the product for which classroom teachers are assumed to be responsible (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Little, 2009; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Researchers have shown that education systems should glean knowledge and wisdom from the private sector where there is a keen focus on talent management (Brandt, 2011; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden, 2011). A first step is simply being aware of the significance of key people working throughout the organization. Teachers who are weak instructionally teach in schools or classrooms that have the greatest need (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Delpit, 1998). Consequently, throughout any given day, the instructionally weak teacher deals with classroom management issues and rarely effectively delivers quality instruction. The lack of quality instruction is evidenced by low student achievement, low attendance, and increased numbers of discipline infractions (Futernick, 2010).

The Revised Missouri Statutes serve as a guide or roadmap for school district human resources departments in Missouri school districts, despite their limitations. For example there are no clearly defined rules and procedures outlined in state statutes for hiring a teacher; however, the termination of a teacher is clearly delineated in state law. The statutory

requirements for the removal of probationary and permanent teachers for a metropolitan/ urban and suburban school district in Missouri are set forth in Table 1(See appendix A). It is important to note that prior to August 28, 2013, a teacher in a metropolitan/ urban school district in Missouri was afforded 18 weeks to improve in lieu of the 30 day improvement window that was in place in suburban school districts. Urban schools primarily serve children of color and/or children from poverty. The quality of the classroom teacher is paramount to the students' success (Delpit, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Pine & Hilliard, 1990). The performance management processes should promote the attainment of quality in lieu of being a direct barrier as described in the Revised Missouri Statutes.

### **Research Questions**

The study answered the following questions:

1. How do state statutes impact teacher quality and performance in an urban school district?
2. What role do race and equity play when examining implementation of performance management systems in an urban school district?
3. What structures within an urban school district impede the effective implementation of an effective performance management system in an urban school district?

Additional background on this study is further described within this chapter.

### **Performance Management and Teacher Tenure**

Performance management is the vehicle to talent management. School systems and human resources practices and policies that are effective for children systematically monitor and evaluate what matters most (Gussenhoven, 2009; Milanowski, 2010). In effective school systems, staff evaluations are not viewed as a one-time event (Danielson, 2011; Little, 2009;

Odden, 2011). Evaluation is an actual process that prompts the teacher to self-reflect on his/her instructional practices; on student achievement or lack thereof; needed professional growth or resources; and consistently and ultimately presenting teaching as a professional act and the teacher as a professional practitioner (Danielson, 2011; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011.) Effective evaluation systems are rigorous, but are simplistic in design and allow the evaluating administrator, as well as the teacher, to implement with ease (Danielson, 2007). The focus is improved student achievement and the teacher is charged with delivering this goal. Ideally, if school systems utilized such a process, a heightened focus on student achievement would occur and students would ultimately benefit (Danielson, 2007; Marzano et al., 2011; Odden, 2011).

The current talent management systems in urban school districts do not generally embody this approach, while, talent management is an absent entity (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Futernick, 2010; Goe, 2009). Human resources departments are overlooked as an ally. The behind the scene role the human resources department plays in the area of talent management is essential to a school district's success. In addition to supporting the hiring process, the human resources department is responsible for monitoring the evaluation process. Based on research, current evaluation systems are broken (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Delpit, 1988).

The New Teacher Project (TNTP), (Weisberg et al., 2009) conducted a study, 'The Widget Effect,' that examined teacher evaluation systems and their connectedness to teacher tenure in 12 urban school districts. Results of this study revealed that 40 percent of administrators in the districts studied reported never having denied tenure on performance grounds and less than one percent of all probationary teachers overall were non-renewed. The study further concluded that once a teacher obtained tenure status, the evaluation process was

less frequent and less meaningful. Of the districts studied by the TNTP, virtually every tenured teacher was rated as satisfactory and less than one percent received a negative evaluation. A similar pattern was even more prevalent in schools identified as poor performing. TNTP study further revealed that “experienced teachers were almost never actually dismissed for poor performance” (p. 33). A great majority (86 percent) of administrators admitted that they do not always pursue dismissal even when it is warranted. The administrators’ contention was that termination proceedings were being avoided due to the costly, time consuming and cumbersome nature of the dismissal process. This study describes the current state of many urban school districts where the structure of tenure laws is governed by state statute (Odden, 2011).

The tensions between accepting deficient teacher quality and a district’s ability to insist on high teacher quality are complicated by laws that shape human resources policies (Borko et al., 2009). In order for school systems to effectively address the needs of urban children, human resources policies must facilitate a strategic partnership between the operational and academic functions of performance management (Boudreau, 2010; Campbell et al., 2004; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden, 2011).

Effectively addressing the needs of students directly relates to the teacher’s skills and ability. Teachers should be required to demonstrate their effectiveness by producing tangible academic outcomes for students (Danielson, 2007). Many school systems, especially urban school systems, have lost focus on their core business, student achievement (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Developing effective, fair, and equitable structures for managing professional performance is difficult; however, if school systems are to educate all children effectively, a deliberate focus and commitment in this area are essential. Ignoring this premise has proven to

be detrimental to children. To that end, the classroom teacher's role is very important.

According to Curtis and Wurtzel (2010),

The cumulative impact of teacher quality is profound, with research showing that if a child has an ineffective teacher for three successive years, the student performs as much as 50 percentile points lower in mathematics than students assigned to three highly effective teachers. (p. 5)

Ultimately, a school district's most valuable resource is its people whom many school districts and other employers are now defining as "human capital" (Odden, 2011). Although teaching is one of the most important professions, inefficient systems that do not support quality are frequently implemented and in some instances replicated. Urban school districts lack sufficient capacity and freedom to encourage and support innovation and quality performance. The root cause of this dilemma does not stem primarily from the school building but rather that school district personnel must work within policies that conflict with the goal of ensuring a quality education for all (Berreth, 1984).

Quality, as defined by the outcomes produced by students, has recently informed national reform efforts such as the nation's Race to the Top initiatives where school districts are rewarded for implementing cutting edge efforts designed to promote teacher effectiveness. As school districts compete for a portion of the \$4.4 billion designated for this effort, 28 percent of the district's overall score is in the area of teacher effectiveness (Obama, 2009). The national Race to the Top initiative magnifies the heightened focus our nation is placing on teacher quality.

When framing this national discussion, educators and policy makers have failed to acknowledge and address how state laws impact a district's ability to practically ensure equity and quality education for all children (Baker, 2003; Coulson, 2010). Statutory requirements and

union agreements create conditions that make the removal process of ineffective teachers difficult to implement (Berry et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). By default, human resources departments are viewed as being one of the barriers to promoting and maintaining teacher quality (Boudreau, 2010). In reality, human resources departments are challenged by strict policies that complicate the removal process. Successful adherence to statutory requirements is cumbersome and requires an inordinate amount of the principal's time (Campbell et al., 2004; Futernick, 2010).

If a school district is willing to address this reality, it can nevertheless begin to engage professionals in the hard work of transforming a human resources system that typically is viewed as ineffective and transactional in nature to one that is innovative and willing to address challenges in order to promote what is best for children (Ashby, 2008). Human resources policies, while necessarily representing the "people business," must move beyond the "people business" (Odden, 2011). The primary focus should be ensuring the absolute best for students in lieu of supporting incompetent performance or people. Human resources departments play a hands-on role and should work to promote working conditions that are satisfactory for the workforce. However, when quality is being compromised, putting children genuinely first should drive all efforts (Odden & Kelly, 2008).

Another human resources practice that impacts an urban school district's pursuit of teacher quality relates to bureaucratic practices that are often influenced by personal or political forces (Campbell et al., 2004). For example the termination or/removal process of a teacher should be governed by district policy, relevant statutory requirements, and if applicable, union agreements. In some instances, this process is based on personal relationships of individuals internal as well as external to the school system (Ashby, 2008). School district leaders are not

willing to address teacher quality when personal or political forces exist. While this major effort carries a risk for front line administrators, taking this risk and supporting teacher quality are fundamentally essential to the transformation of school systems (Marzano et al., 2011).

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in the state of Missouri has identified essential principles of effective evaluation. Focused on student growth, teacher progress, and overall school improvement, the principles outline best practice and, if implemented effectively, provide a clear roadmap regarding the evaluation process. The principles are listed in Table 2 (See appendix B).

The principles as outlined provide a clear roadmap. The challenge with the evaluation system is actual implementation. Teachers frequently state that little to no feedback is received regarding the teaching and learning process (Danielson, 2007). Administrators lack the appropriate training to effectively implement the system and most importantly, they lack the ability to provide quality feedback to teachers when performance is an issue (Darling-Hammonds, 2003). As a result the evaluation process rarely is implemented with fidelity and teachers are left to their own inadequacies and vices in the classroom (Delpit, 1988; DuFour, 2004).

### **Race and Equity**

Educators, policy makers, business and community stakeholders all agree that quality schooling for all children is the goal of school systems (Bush, 2001; Dudley-Marling, Stevens, & Gurn, 2011). However, approaches to realizing this goal defy the intended outcome. In the urban school setting, a common mistake is to implement current trends or fads. The programs lack data that reflect sustainable and meaningful changes in the area of student achievement. Schools that

predominately serve children of color are subjected to these superficial fixes (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Vaught, 2011).

Race continues to dominate discourse around educational efforts; however, it is not present in the master narrative that constructs educational efforts across the country. Pine and Hilliard (1990) stated “Schools, which ought to be a civilizing influence in our society, seem instead to be incubators of racial intolerance. Racism, prejudice, and discrimination are shamefully sabotaging our nation’s efforts to provide a high-quality education for all children” (p. 1).

Furthermore, when discussing performance management and teacher quality issues, race is not a prominent consideration (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). Educators point to other factors that impede a child’s ability to receive a quality education. These factors include lack of parental engagement, inadequate facilities, and lack of adequate educational preparation (Castagno & Vaught, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Rarely is the fact acknowledged that Black children are frequently perceived to be inferior and, as a result, are taught by teachers who have low expectations for their academic and social development (Bell, 1992; Freire, 2000; Gillborn, 2005).

Discussing race as an issue is uncomfortable for most educators (Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998). It is easier, and considered to be more politically correct, to view all children as being equal, and thus entitled to equity in the context of public schooling. Race and misconceptions associated with race must be courageously and candidly discussed and considered when implementing human capital reform efforts for children of color (Delgado, 2003; Freire, 2000; Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2005). The reality is that inequities continue to exist in public schools, particularly in urban settings.



Complex yet real, race must be included as educators, politicians, and community members dialogue about school reform efforts. As a result of Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) intriguing statement that race remains "untheorized", scholars have subsequently embraced the notion of explicitly discussing race and, more consequentially, have brought much needed attention to developing an educational theory of race in education and its effect on education inequities for children of color: Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT should have a critical presence in the context of educational research. This framework, CRT, served as an analytical lens for this research study.

Significantly presented to educators as a mechanism for analyzing and critiquing education research and practice, CRT possesses tenets that are not mainstreamed and that challenge the general thinking of how the educational system is structured. The impact this structure has on children of color offers an alternative explanation as to why certain educational reform efforts rarely yield scalable and sustainable results for children of color (Vaught, 2009). Bell (2004), a CRT legal scholar, is noted as one researcher who brought the race issue to light in the legal context. Bell (1992) expanded this domain of research by emphasizing and elucidating how race affects the livelihood and plight of people of color, particularly African American people.

### **Performance Management and Teacher Quality**

Effective performance management and proficient teacher quality are essential to a school district's overall success. The human resources division within a school system must assume a crucial role in supporting both facets. This division is charged with recruiting, attracting, evaluating, and retaining a school system's most valuable resource: people. Human resources divisions have been vulnerable to recent external and internal forces, such as state

statutes and bureaucratic practices, which have contributed to their being ill-prepared to effectively meet the needs and challenges of the students, communities, and organizations they serve (Futernick, 2010; Kahlenberg, 2008; Maxwell, 2008).

As presented in Table 1, (See appendix A) of the Revised Missouri Statutes is an example of how legislation negatively influences performance management, particularly in a metropolitan/urban school district in the state of Missouri. While, as of August, 2013, the statute has changed, for decades the law mandated that:

Inefficiency in the line of duty is cause for dismissal only after the teacher has been notified in writing at least one semester prior to the presentment of charges against him by the superintendent. The notification shall specify the nature of the inefficiency with such particularity as to enable the teacher to be informed of the nature of his inefficiency (Missouri Revised Statute, 2013).

In suburban school districts in the same state, the statutory requirement for dismissal was different. In the state of Missouri, the suburban districts and a metropolitan/urban district are governed by different statutes of Missouri law. Inefficiency in the line of duty is cause for dismissal after the teacher has been noticed of his inefficiency in writing at least thirty days prior to the presentment of charges. This variance is significant. The difference, however, was not widely known and as a result, overlooked. The metropolitan/urban school district primarily serves children of color. If information garnered from statutory requirements and performance management systems is viewed through the CRT lens, educators and policy makers can engage in collaborative conversations that yield real and meaningful solutions for the ongoing challenges described (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

## **Policy**

There are numerous examples of effective urban schools, so replicating the effective urban school should be a realistic possibility (Edmonds, 1979). Nevertheless, very few school districts have been successful with transforming an entire school system (Labaree, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Levin & Quinn, 2003). A reason is that schools cannot transform without quality people (Brandt, 2011; Odden and Kelly, 2008).

Educators are consistently blamed for the academic woes of urban students (Borko et al., 2009; Gabriel & Dillon, 2011; Weisberg et al., 2009). Granted, educating young people is perhaps the most important and challenging of all professions. However, at least in partial defense of educators, it is important to understand how written policies, typically in response to and dictated by laws, affect a district's ability to effectively achieve, monitor, support, and sustain quality (Campbell et al., 2004). While the human resources professionals are charged with hiring, developing, promoting, and retaining quality people, their counterproductive procedures and policies hinder a district's ability to promote quality in the area of human capital (Campbell et al., 2004; Hammonds, 2005). In the urban school district, the goal of promoting quality in the area of human capital is difficult to accomplish and in many cases is only minimally met. Urban school systems do not have the power or the autonomy to solely encourage and support innovation and quality performance throughout the organization and as a result children suffer (Berry, 2010). Odden (2011), maintained that:

The strategic management of human capital (SMHC) in public education is about recruiting teachers and principals for all classrooms and schools in the country, particularly high-need schools with concentrations of students from poverty and minority backgrounds; equipping those teachers and principals with instructional leadership

expertise needed to dramatically improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps linked to poverty and race; and rewarding and retaining those who are successful in attaining these objectives and letting go those who are not. (p. 1).

Educators can learn much by reviewing and examining human resources practices and policies. While the mission of public education by law is to educate all children, the current infrastructure works against this goal. Mostly guided by state law, the policies as written represent ambiguous processes and cumbersome timelines that create an environment which subordinates performance instead of accentuating it. Policies are always related to each other (Ball, 1994). State statutes, school policies, and collective bargaining agreements are all commingled in a complex matrix that encompasses and constrains actual practice and action. Historically, in high performing organizations in the private sector, not only is top talent recruited and retained; it is also managed in effective ways that reflect the overall direction of the organization (Boudreau, 2010). Ironically, recent efforts relating to performance in the educational context are targeted primarily at urban districts serving predominately children of color where there are significant challenges organizationally and academically, and not at those in districts that are high performing, predominantly serving White children (Vaught, 2011).

School districts across the country are struggling with the notion of providing exemplary education for all students. As previously discussed, the United States Department of Education recently allocated \$4.4 billion for the national Race to the Top initiative. Specifically, states must present a comprehensive and ambitious plan that addresses four reform areas: (1) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in a global economy; (2) developing data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction; (3)

recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and (4) turning around our lowest performing schools. Funding is awarded to states that present a convincing rationale for and/or demonstrate a proven ability to radically overhaul current human resources practices and procedures.

It is instructive to note that 28 of the possible 100 points possible for funding are designated for reform area number three, quality people. In essence, states that are awarded the funds have demonstrated that they have the capacity to implement innovative practices in the area of teacher quality. This is evidenced by flexible union policy statements, teacher evaluation systems that are rigorously related to student performance, and non-traditional approaches to attract and hire staff. In many of the districts that have secured this funding, there is the perception that operating in a non-traditional manner will yield more positive outcomes for children. As most of the strategies proposed are new, it is too early to measure their overall effectiveness--which may ultimately prove to be quite difficult to measure. As there were winners and losers, the current system still continues to negatively affect many urban children, especially those that are poor and minority (Vaught, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Performance management in the context of urban school districts, while evident via written policies, evaluation instruments and, in some instances, policies, is a novice concept (Odden, 2011; Odden & Kelly, 2008). This concept is attributed to human resources policies and reform efforts that lack a systematic approach to ensuring that implementation yields a positive and direct impact on student achievement. The human resources policies within a district should be designed to support the school district's organizational goals, particularly in the area of teacher quality (Berry, 2010; Futernick, 2010). Furthermore, the reform efforts in the area of

performance management are designed to promote radical changes; yet most lack sustainable measures and the ability to fully implement without hidden barriers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Specifically, the Race to the Top initiative has pumped millions of dollars into urban school systems (Obama, 2009). Once the funding runs out, the districts will most likely lack the capacity to continue the reform efforts in a meaningful way (Jones, 2005; Obama, 2009).

The performance evaluation system that generally exists today has evolved over a period of time and is inefficient, outdated, and does not promote best practices in the area of performance management (Danielson, 2007; Odden, 2011). Educators and policies have attempted to address the challenges, yet few have examined how the system was created and sustained. State laws greatly affect a school district's ability to effectively manage performance and ensure teacher quality (Campbell et al., 2004; Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). This inefficient process in itself makes it impossible for the district to be effective, since the district has to commit a large concentration of time and resources to functioning in a reactionary and irrelevant role. Further assumptive evidence that laws and policies obstruct and impede student achievement and successful schools is the fact that reform efforts almost universally exempt charter schools from complying with requirements imposed on public schools. The ironic implication and presumption that the statutory and policy impositions on public schools handicap rather than facilitate their functioning is as obvious and clear as to be almost ludicrous.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine how state statutes, and human resources policies and procedures negatively or positively affect urban school districts' ability to effectively manage and support teacher quality. An essential component of the study addresses race and overall equity in the context of structures that have created and sustained current state personnel

policies and statutes. Internal and external factors that promote or impede the development, implementation, and sustainability of an effective performance management system within the urban school district setting were explored. The study also examined recommended performance management systems in the public school sector as well as the private sector. Finally, the research study explored the perspectives of educators and individuals who interact with human resources structures, policies, or procedures in a formal or informal manner. This study answered the following questions.

1. How do state statutes impact teacher quality and performance in an urban school district?
2. What role do race and equity play when examining implementation of performance management systems in an urban school district?
3. What structures within an urban school district impede the effective implementation of an effective performance management system in an urban school district?

### **Professional Significance**

The study has implications for educators, policy makers, parents, and the community at large. The study examined the role and human resources policies and practices have played in the area of teacher quality. Key players and/or factors that contribute to and sustain the current system, as well as prescribed reform efforts, were explored. Themes emerged and the notion of race and equity were prevalent. The researcher's role as an educator and human resources professional provided invaluable insight as well as recognition of perplexing complexities. Firsthand experiences as a classroom teacher exposed and enabled the researcher to clearly understand the power of individuals. When the classroom environment is conducive to learning,

print-rich, characterized by rigorous instruction, and motivates students to give their very best, the credit is given to the classroom teacher (Danielson, 2007). On the other hand, in a classroom environment where students are not motivated to learn, instruction was ineffective or inadequate, and low expectations for students resulted in their failing to strive for excellence, the failure is blamed on societal and/or personal issues (Labaree, 2011). The correlation between teacher actions, student achievement, and accountability reveals a fundamental problem with the educational system (Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Dismal yet undeniable, this unfortunate picture is evident in most urban school districts across the nation.

The researcher questions if the effective management of human capital can be realized in the context of the urban school setting. This wonderment is based on the current internal and external structures that district personnel navigate daily. A component of strategically managing human capital relates to the district's ability to hire, attract, and retain individuals who possess the appropriate technical and educational expertise but also correlates to the individual's ability to deliver outcomes for students (Ladson-Billings, 2004; Odden, 2011). As the adults or people in a school system are primary drivers, focus on educational reform efforts shift to conditions of students, societal factors, and other issues that deflect from the importance of individuals charged with providing a quality education for children (Pine & Hilliard, 1990). Individuals responsible for delivering an effective education to children lack accountability and this lack of accountability is immensely present in urban school districts (Lawler, 2008). People are essential to a school district's success. To that end the policies, procedures, and practices that support the development and management of people in an urban school district should be explored. This discussion is limited and rarely examined through the lens of the practitioner.



## **Methodology**

Using a Critical Race Theory lens, this dissertation is a qualitative study using grounded theory data analysis strategies. A research approach that requires the researcher to continuously navigate between collected data and the actual analysis process, the grounded theory research approach requires discipline and extreme organization. The researcher was close to the research topic as well as to some of the research participants. Personal and professional experiences helped to shape the researcher's beliefs regarding the current state of urban schools. In the interest of objectivity, the researcher pursued themes which emerged from the data rather than those which might result from her prior conceptions.

Utilizing this analysis approach, the researcher synthesized the results which research participants have constructed regarding state statutes and their impact on teacher quality and performance management (Borgatti, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The researcher was interested in understanding how participants interact with state statutes and human resources policies. A key component of this research focused on the participants' individual and personal experiences. These experiences as expressed by the participants were used to help construct meaning and foster further understanding regarding the dynamics of state statutes and human resources policies in the context of an urban school district.

The study examined the experiences of educational stakeholders, including a school district attorney, teachers' union Uniserv director, school district superintendent, former school principal and central office administrator, school district human resources coordinator, business leader/charter school advocate, and teachers. Throughout the study, the researcher sequentially collected data. As qualitative inquiry is grounded in specific attention to participants' language and perceptions, the researcher reflected on acquired information and how the participants

processed their experiences (Saladan, 2008). The intent of this study was to synthesize emerging themes which best captured the essence of research participants' experiences and perspectives (Birks & Mills, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

Research participants presented various perspectives and positions within the educational and business community context. They were identified based on their connectedness with and awareness of the research phenomena. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview served as sources of data collection. An interview guide, created prior to the interview, incorporated components of the research questions including specific emphasis on state statutes, performance management, and teacher quality. Open ended questions were posed to prompt participants to share their perspective regarding the topic. This approach allowed for flexibility and two-way conversation between researcher and participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Smith, Osborn, & Smith, 2003). Interviews were audio taped and transcribed immediately following the actual sessions. Field notes and memos served as secondary data sources to foster data captured from participants (Stake, 2010). The researcher intertwined personal experiences throughout the research study which is a key component of Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The researcher's personal narrative at times challenged the master narrative regarding the education of children of color and the school systems that serve them.

### **Delimitations**

The body of research and experience is extensive and encompassed various perspectives. Understanding this challenge, the researcher sought to present a diverse representation of perceptions regarding state statutes, performance management, and teacher quality. Since real-life experiences are included as data sources, honest, subjective, and general responses were

assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Smith et al., 2003). It is difficult for the researcher to validate the lived experiences as expressed by the research participants.

### **Limitations**

Because the researcher is connected to the research topic professionally as well as personally, emphasis was placed on attentively interpreting information in a non-biased manner (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Merriam, 2002; Smith et al., 2003). To achieve objectivity, the primary method was triangulation of data which was critical in order to ensure reliability (Birks & Mills, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The researcher relied heavily on and afforded due consideration to all data sources when identifying and analyzing emerging themes (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

### **Definitions**

*Children/people of color:* For the purpose of this study children/people of color describes non-White individuals. Another word that is frequently used to describe this group of individuals is minority.

*Collective Bargaining Agreement:* A legally binding document that outlines specific agreements between teachers' unions and school districts. Collective Bargaining Agreements or CBA's typically include details regarding work conditions, performance evaluation, compensation, and employee discipline. Conditions outlined in a CBA are protected legally and require school districts to meet and negotiate proposed changes with union leadership (Coulson, 2010; Kochan & Bluestone, 2011).

*Critical Race Theory:* An academic discipline that critically examines how society and culture intersect with race, policy, and power (Bell, 2004).

*Highly Qualified Teacher:* A teacher who holds at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution; is fully certificated or licensed by a state; and demonstrates competencies and skills in the core content area that the teacher teaches (Bush, 2001).

*Human Capital:* Skills, competencies, knowledge and experiences of individuals within an organization.

*Missouri Revised Statutes:* The Missouri Revised Statutes govern parliamentary procedures and acts for all public entities throughout the state of Missouri. Specifically for the context of this research study, the researcher will focus on laws and regulations that affect personnel matters in metropolitan/urban school districts as well as suburban schools (Revised Missouri Statutes, 2013).

*Performance Management:* A business term or concept borrowed from the private sector where the primary premise is to identify high or low performers and define succession plans to address the development or removal of unsuccessful employees and the retention and development of high quality employees (Boudreau, 2010; Odden, 2011).

*Probationary Teacher:* In the state of Missouri, the probationary period for a teacher includes the first five years of employment and ends on the first day of the teacher's sixth year of employment as a teacher (Gabriel & Dillon, 2011).

*Racism:* Marable (1992) defined racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerism, and color" (p. 5). While various ethnic groups are referenced in the above definition, for the purpose of this study, the researcher specifically explored racism and how it reveals itself in the lived educational experiences of African American children.

*Strategic Management of Human Capital (SMHC):* In the context of public education, SMHC addresses the recruitment, hiring, and retention of high quality staff. It specifically addresses the connection of teacher performance to student outcomes (Brandt, 2011; Odden, 2011).

*Talent Management Systems:* The Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM) defines talent management system as a company's ability to attract, select, engage, develop, and retain quality staff (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

*Teacher Quality:* Teacher quality is broadly defined and relates to the skills, dispositions, qualifications, and behaviors of teachers and how these attributes foster positive outcomes for student achievement (Bernhardt, 2004; Danielson, 2007; Marzano et al., 2011).

*Teacher Tenure:* In the state of Missouri, a teacher is considered tenured after his/her fifth consecutive year of satisfactory employment as a teacher within a school district (Coulson, 2010; Gabriel & Dillon, 2011).

*Union Agreement:* A union agreement is similar to a CBA; however, there is no legal obligation to meet and negotiate regarding proposed changes to the agreement (Ashby, 2008; Campbell et al., 2004; Kochan & Bluestone, 2011).

*Urban school district:* There are many definitions of the term urban. For the purpose of this study, urban relates to a school district located in a greater metropolitan area; serves over 80% minority students of which the predominant minority racial group is African American; and the free and reduced lunch rate is 88.5% or higher. All other characteristics of the urban school district apply such as low academic achievement, negative public perception, and financial challenges.

In summary, chapter 1 provided an introduction and background into the problem; a statement of the problem; discussion regarding the purpose and significance of the study; an overview of research questions; and a brief description of the guiding theoretical framework and research study design. In addition the chapter highlights the study's limitations and significant terminology.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Related Literature

The researcher intended to provide insight into how the human resources policies and procedures affect the educational landscape of an urban school district and particularly how they promote or impede educational outcomes for poor and/or minority students. Fundamental to the research is how the laws such as state statutes dictate and set parameters for existing human resources practices and policies. A study of this nature will help the researcher as well as other educators, policy makers, business leaders, and funders review the implementation of human resources practices and policies while ultimately addressing the barriers associated with race and poverty – topics that are overtly overlooked.

This chapter has three purposes. First, a review of the literature will represent an overview of current Strategic Management of Human Capital (SMHC) systems as described by educators, policy makers, and the private sector. Next, this chapter discusses how the tenets of CRT are evident in SMHC. Next the chapter will review human resources practices and policies as defined by the Missouri Revised State Statutes in the context of an urban school district. Finally, this chapter provides an overview of CRT.

SMHC in the context of an urban school system is a novice concept (Boudreau, 2010; Campbell et al., 2004). In comparison, there is extensive research that demonstrates the significance of overall teacher quality and its impact on student achievement. Of all factors researched, there is widespread agreement that of those factors directly related to schools, teachers matter most when determining impact on student achievement (Berry, 2010; Danielson, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2009). School systems across the country struggle with determining ways to maximize student achievement. Substantial dollars are expended in the area of teacher

recruitment, professional development, compensation, and teacher evaluation. However, very few school districts have systematically addressed the notion of SMHC, primarily due to a limited understanding of how to effectively realize human capital management in an urban school system (Coggshall, Lasagna, & Laine, 2009; Odden, 2011).

High performing private sector companies dedicate millions of dollars to managing human capital. Human capital is generally defined as the accumulated value of an individual's intellect, knowledge, experience, competencies, and commitment that contribute to the achievement of an organization's vision and business objectives (Boudreau, 2010; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). In the education sector, human capital's equivalent is its ability to effect student achievement. In essence, what teachers know, what they are able to relay to their students, overall level of talent, and their ability to motivate students to learn are a school district's greatest human capital resource (Odden & Kelly, 2008). Therefore, the management of human capital is a district's attempt to consistently and continuously attract, develop, and retain an overall high talent level. Several components represent an effective SMHC system:

1. A school district's overall understanding of human capital management and its impact on student achievement (Brandt, 2011; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden & Kelly, 2008).
2. The role the human resources practices and policies play in implementing a human capital system (Odden, 1984; Odden, 2011).
3. Collaboration and synergy amongst external constituents (Ashby, 2008; Odden, 2011).
4. Equitable distribution and allocation of human capital resources (Odden, 2011).



## **Human Capital Management**

Human capital is defined as “productive skills and technical knowledge of workers” (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010, p. 4). Human capital further includes an individual’s ability as well as an organization’s ability to invest, develop, and train employees. In the educational sector, the effective management of human capital is not valued and nurtured. In most urban school districts, the performance of teachers is not directly correlated to the performance of students (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Danielson, 2007; Weisberg et al., 2009). Evaluation systems reflect an apparent disconnect between teacher quality and student performance. Educating children, the sole purpose of the education profession, is not effectively accomplished due to fragmented and misguided management of human capital (Campbell et al., 2004; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010).

School systems, especially urban school systems, have lost focus regarding their core business (Berry, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Odden, 2011). Developing fair and equitable structures for managing adult performance is difficult; however, if school systems are to effectively educate all children, doing so is essential. Repeatedly, researchers like Curtis and Wurtzel (2010) concluded that teacher quality is the primary factor that impacts the overall educational experience of a child. With this replicated and overwhelming evidence, it is difficult to understand how school systems are able to morally and ethically ignore the alarming problems with performance management and specifically its impact on student achievement.

Although educators have firsthand understanding of problem areas, very few are courageous enough to take bold risks to address lingering and highly detrimental problems (Borko et al., 2009; Choo, 1996; Edmonds, 1999). Several innovative strategies such as the Boston Teacher Residency (BTR) and the Urban Teacher Residency (UTR) models have demonstrated how to effectively assist districts with managing performance of teachers (Berry et

al., 2008). Programs such as these are unable to survive and make a difference in isolation from the internal and external forces that impact a school district--such as the state department of education, higher education, school governance, business community, and local teacher unions (Odden, 2011).

### **Talent Management-Corporate Connections**

Talent management systems that are used by high performing companies can inform human resources policies and procedures in the urban school district. There is good reason to believe that if adopted, they will lead to improvements in classroom instruction and student achievement (Lawler, 2008). However, in order for effective talent management systems to work well, researchers have stated that management and school district leaders at all levels must be obsessed with talent (Odden, 2011). In essence, there must be a commitment to attracting, monitoring, and supporting quality throughout the organization (Brandt, 2011; Lawler, 2008, Odden, 2001). The following are essential corporate talent and performance management features that can be useful to urban school systems:

- Managers are held accountable for their talent management performance.
- A strong employer brand clearly identifies the organization as an attractive place to work for individuals who want to and can be a part of a high performance organization.
- The employment contract emphasizes the employee's responsibility for personal growth and development.
- Essential skills and attributes are identified for all positions and the organization seeks to hire or develop people who possess these skills and attributes.

- A comprehensive evaluation system provides quality and meaningful feedback to the employee and if progress or outcomes are not attained, a corrective action process is clearly communicated and followed.

### **Teacher Quality**

Because teacher effectiveness is absolutely essential to the success of students, it is not surprising that teacher quality is currently a topic of immense attention in the educational, business, and political arena (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Futernick, 2010). High stakes assessments have also heightened awareness on outcomes produced by educators. Legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) defined expectations for measuring teacher quality and linked it directly to student outcomes (Bush, 2001). Regardless of one's view of NCLB, the legislation brought to light the challenges the nation faces in the area of teacher quality, particularly the quality of teachers that teach underserved students from underserved communities. This emphasis revisits the definition of teacher quality. Some educators would immediately and handily reference state certification requirements or mandates from accreditation programs. Others will point to a teacher's performance evaluations or accomplishments within the school building or greater community. Also, a teacher's educational preparation and advancements may be used to assess quality. All of these, however, are tangential to the rarely addressed key factor of relating teacher quality to the student outcomes produced as a result of the teacher's actions. Until recently, the achievement of a teacher's students was not a primary factor in assessing his/her quality (Berry, 2010).

Providing highly qualified teachers for every classroom is a major challenge for most school systems. While educators understand that the quality of the classroom teacher has the most profound impact on the academic outcomes for children, fulfilling this need has not been

realized in schools across the nation (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, 2011). Studies have shown that well-prepared teachers are important for all students, but especially for students who come to school with greater needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006; Hayes & Behrstock, 2009). Despite this crucial finding, a considerable body of research has shown that poor and minority students are more likely to be taught by teachers who are not qualified than those in more affluent areas who serve fewer minority students (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Quality is a broad term that encompasses many aspects of an effective teacher. Aspects of quality may include teacher qualifications, degrees, experience and experiences, scholarship, various outputs, and professional contributions, as well as student performance or school performance (Andrew, Cobb, & Giampietro, 2005). Used interchangeably with quality, effectiveness is becoming a frequently used term when describing the impact the teacher has on student achievement. Effectiveness correlates directly to student outcomes as a result of the teacher's practices. Furthermore, recent studies of teacher effectiveness at the classroom level have found that teacher effectiveness is a strong factor when measuring student learning (Berry, 2010; DuFour, 2004). Students who are assigned to several ineffective teachers for consecutive years have significantly lower achievement gains than those who are assigned to several highly effective teachers for consecutive years (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Ensuring the quality of teachers is important to fulfilling the mission of public schooling. Quality is now becoming more comprehensive and being determined via multiple measures, including both input and output factors (Bernhardt, 2004; Linn et al., 2002). Test scores alone are no longer sufficient. Core components that are used to determine teacher quality are teacher

qualifications and credentials, academic or intellectual ability, knowing how to teach, teaching experience, and knowledge of diverse students (Goe et al., 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Although teacher quality has historically been viewed to be quite significant and essential to student achievement, as already indicated, there is little agreement on what constitutes teacher effectiveness. What is considered effective in one generation may be passé in the next. Often what is effective in school systems differs from what is effective in other industries (Boudreau, 2010; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Odden & Kelly, 2008).

It is widely agreed, however, that there are four broad predictors of overall teacher effectiveness (Andrew et al., 2005; Dudley-Marling et al., 2011; Goe et al., 2009):

1. Cognitive ability
2. Experience
3. Personality
4. Education

While these predictors provide a framework, teacher evaluations are mostly used to determine the effectiveness of a teacher. The evaluations include defined areas for improvement. For example, Danielson's (2007) teacher evaluation model includes four primary areas:

1. Professional Responsibility
2. Classroom Management
3. Instructional Process
4. Planning and Preparation

### **Building Leadership**

The selection process, new teacher induction, and ongoing training and development are cornerstones to a teacher's success (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hayes & Behrstock, 2009; Lee,

2005). Districts across the country grapple with ways to effectively manage such a valuable resource as the classroom teacher. The selection process in a large urban school district is not actually a process; it is usually an isolated incident of having an individual complete an application followed by an assignment to a specific school (Campbell et al., 2004). In some instances, the human resources department may visit a college/career fair to recruit potential applicants. If a district is considered to be on the cutting edge in the area of teacher selection, a building principal may accompany the human resources department during the college/career fair. In some instances, districts that profess to be very interested in teacher quality utilize a screening tool such as Gallop or Ventures prior to teaching candidates garnering a face to face interview with potential principals (Odden, 2011).

The strategies or actions described above are purely surface level attempts to address the need to recruit quality classroom teachers. Partnerships such as Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) specifically market to the top ten percent of college graduates from across the nation (Odden, 2011). These programs partner mostly with urban school districts who typically struggle with attracting quality teacher candidates. On a fast track, these young teachers are exceptionally bright and are willing to commit two years of service to an identified school district. Over 50 percent do not remain for a third year (Laczko-Kerr & Berliner, 2002). This percentage is also consistent with teachers who complete a traditional education program (Levin & Quinn 2003).

So while the education profession does in fact attract talented teaching candidates, most districts are significantly challenged in retaining them which is essential to the overall success of a school system. This problem is particularly fueled by the fact that school systems rarely effectively demonstrate what quality teaching is (Bush, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2002). Without a

keen understanding regarding this very important piece, often the best teachers leave school systems while the least effective teachers remain (Castagno & Vaught, 2008; Futernick, 2010; Maxwell, 2008). Ineffective teachers are more prevalent in urban school systems.

The role of the building principal is critically important. It should be noted that the building principal requires institutional as well as external supports in order to effectively manage and discriminate between the effective teacher and the ineffective teacher. This support includes time to work with teachers, a clear and well defined teacher evaluation process (evaluation should be a process, not a one-time act), supportive and helpful central office supervisors, and a human resources department that can assist with compliance with union contracts and state statutes where applicable (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Other factors address and relate to the retention of quality teachers; however, the role of the principal is in many instances of the greatest importance.

The notion that convenience and time constraints must be practical factors in determining effectiveness is an undeniable reality. In some instances convenience takes precedence over objective teacher evaluations. As administrators manage unprecedented expectations and demands, they often default to what is most comfortable or convenient—and permissible. A principal's ineffective evaluation of teachers is evidenced by a drop in observations with scripted feedback (or in some instances, no feedback at all). At best the teacher is not provided with quality feedback regarding his/her performance. The feedback is unlikely to correlate with identified standards. Also, some administrators bypass the formal observation altogether and complete year end summative evaluations based on subjective information regarding the teacher's performance (Danielson, 2011; Marzano et al., 2011). Managing teacher quality is undeniably difficult and, if executed well, requires a laser focus on standards, measurable student

outcomes, and a commitment to engaging in courageous conversations about student performance or lack of performance (Danielson, 2011). Most administrators are lacking in these areas, sometimes through their own failing and sometimes because of circumstances beyond their control, and often a combination of both (Odden, 2011; Weisberg et al., 2009).

Danielson (2011), Darling-Hammond (2010), and Goe et al., (2009) revealed significant inadequacies in defining and measuring the effectiveness of teachers and prompted educators to look more critically at how to address these shortcomings. A significant variable is that teachers often determine their own individual educational credos or philosophies. Each can offer a different rationale for specific behaviors and even for specific theories of action. However, the teachers' identified actions or beliefs may or may not positively impact student achievement (Borko et al., 2009). Professing that all children "can learn," or "aspiring to create a learning environment where all children are respected and valued is to be complimented; however, these beliefs alone do not necessarily translate into children actually acquiring skills and attaining academic success (Delpit, 1988). Again, enter the principal who must be the key figure in determining which teacher behaviors actually result in student achievement (Danielson, 2011).

### **District Leadership**

A much needed operational tool is a common language regarding teacher quality (Andrew et al., 2005; Berry, 2010). District leadership must have the capacity to support and to effectively train school administrators to recognize, monitor, and evaluate the teaching process in a reasonable consistent fashion (Odden, 2011). It should be noted that this structure does in fact exist in most school systems; however, in its current state, the evaluation process is inadequately and inconsistently used, and misused, primarily for compliance and punitive purposes (Danielson, 2011; Kahlenberg, 2008, Marzano et al., 2011).



Another issue is “home grown” human resources directors. The “home grown” human resources director has a traditional education administration background with little to no formal training in the area human resource management. As a result they are viewed as being ineffective due to their lack of skills in the area of human resources management (Boudreau, 2010). While the function of human resources has become extremely multi-faceted and encompasses numerous procedural and legal components that most educators never experience in their role as school or central office administrator, managing a school has become much more complex. These complexities are not neatly acknowledged and addressed in a compilation of statutes, policies, regulations, or case studies. Being well informed about the legal aspects of the human resources function in the context of a school district is critically important (Odden, 2011).

#### **Human Resources Practices/Procedures and Statutory Implications**

The human resources division must be viewed as a strategic partner in the educational arena, particularly in school systems where teacher performance is inadequate, turnover is high, and substantial dollars are expended on leadership and professional development with little return on investment. Successful organizations manage human capital and talent in accordance with explicit key business principles. Talent acquisition/development is a cornerstone of an effective organization’s success. High performing organizations such as Williams-Sonoma, Pepsi, and Wal-Mart are not perfect, said (Boudreau, 2010); however, they are implementing innovative strategies in the area of talent management.

The organizations listed above implemented deliberate efforts in the area of talent management. A key component is simply awareness of the significance of the people working throughout the organization. In an address to a group of HR executives Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, stated that employers should put aside a “bucket of money” to demonstrate

how valuable key employees are to the organization (Boudreau, 2010). This statement explicitly affirms how very important people are to an organization.

The business sector yields various strategies which HR professionals utilize to serve as true strategic partners. One assumption is that performance management is vitally important. Understanding performance outcomes and how these outcomes impact the overall success of the organization helps the HR professional support departmental efforts, employee growth/development, and ultimately should drive decisions regarding attainment of organizational goals (Boudreau, 2010).

In contrast, the educational sector lacks a systematic approach for managing or even understanding human capital. Ironically, as several previously cited sources maintain, the product produced by educators, student achievement, is generally not a measure for evaluating teacher performance (Berry, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Odden & Kelly, 2008). Accountability systems for central office staff, principals, and even teachers are frequently almost non-existent (Brandt, 2011). When one considers educators' crucial mission of producing student achievement, this irrational condition is quite troubling (Freire, 2000; Maxwell, 2008). Perhaps the billions of dollars being invested in public education via the government's educational platform, Race to the Top, will alleviate this failure since the dollars are primarily earmarked for school districts across the country who have demonstrated evidence of their ability to quantifiably and qualitatively impact student achievement in meaningful ways.

Districts that have received these very competitive dollars will implement one or all of the following (Ashby, 2008; Boudreau, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2002):

1. Rigorous screening and selection tools
2. Comprehensive evaluation systems that include the value added model

3. Repeal or modification of tenure legislation
4. Merit or performance compensation structures that are attached to student achievement

While similar components are common features in the corporate sector, they are not prevalent in most urban school districts (Boudreau, 2010; Odden, 2011). HR professionals in school systems must be willing to take well validated and promising risks in the area of human capital management. Far too often, staffing decisions are based on emotion, personal interest, and unfortunately political pressures (Odden, 2011). This is devastating to educational systems and as a result, children suffer. Too often the incompetent teacher who sits at his desk when delivering American Government instruction is protected primarily because he has served as the winning football coach for 25 years, instead of hiring the most qualified person available (Delpit, 1988).

Teachers are granted tenure simply because they have been on the job for five years even though they may have been absent on average 50 days per school year. These examples obviously reflect significant and crippling flaws and shortcomings in the area of human capital management throughout school systems. Educators can and must do better for children. The corporate sector is one source of possible help and solutions for urban school district human resources departments. The Society of Human Resource Management (2012) states that at minimum an effective performance management system must have the following components:

1. Goal setting: the process of establishing objectives to be achieved over a period of time
2. Performance review: the process of assessing progress towards goals
3. Performance improvement plans: the process of addressing a specific individual performance issue
4. Quality, timely, and ongoing feedback

The components are very simplistic; yet if implemented with fidelity will yield positive outcomes for the employee as well as the organization. Individuals' contribution to an organization is critically important. The importance of a person's contribution is heightened in the context of an urban school district.

When district leaders recognize the importance of Human Resources, think deliberately about ways to reorient their central bureaucracies to be more effective and focus on the schools' needs, they may be in a better position to marshal Human Resources as an ally that supports rather than hinders efforts to improve schools and teachers for all students (Campbell, et al., 2004). In 2001 in an urban school district in the state of Missouri, community, district, and building leaders reviewed the internal functions of the human resources department. It was determined that the practices and procedures significantly hindered the district's overall progress and the district's ability to maintain teacher quality. Specifically, the report found the following: (1) the Human Resources function in the district was staffed by well-meaning but generally ill prepared individuals who lacked the appropriate expertise to effectively execute the functional responsibilities; (2) new teachers were not treated well; (3) often the new teachers were ostracized by seasoned teachers who had been in the system many years; (4) new ideas were not welcomed; and (5) normally, principals who came up within the system had not taken the lead on setting a stage for inclusion of new teachers and the new ideas. One principal told of the October, "dance of the lemons" when principals released their misfits to other schools through the Human Resources Department (Saint Louis Public Schools, 2001).

The findings reflect the challenges that many urban school district's face throughout the country. The practices and procedures described in the urban school district referenced above directly impacted the pursuit of educational quality for students. The October "dance of the

lemons” was dictated by student enrollment projections and overall staffing allocations to individual buildings. The process entailed a review of staffing allocations and student enrollment projections compared to actual student enrollment as of the last Wednesday in September of the current school year. As outlined in the 168.221 RsMO statutes, if a school is over staffed, meaning their projected enrollment is less than their actual student enrollment; teachers are identified to be reassigned to another school. Specifically, RsMO 168.221 states the following:

Whenever it is necessary to decrease the number of teachers because of insufficient funds or a substantial decrease of pupil population within the school district, the board of education upon recommendation of the superintendent of schools may cause the necessary number of teachers beginning with those serving probationary periods to be placed on leave of absence without pay, but only in the inverse order of their appointment. Nothing herein stated shall prevent a readjustment by the board of education of existing salary schedules. No teacher placed on a leave of absence shall be precluded from securing other employment during the period of the leave of absence. Each teacher placed on leave of absence shall be reinstated in inverse order of his placement on leave of absence. Such reemployment shall not result in a loss of status or credit for previous years of service. No new appointments shall be made while there are available teachers on unrequested leave of absence who are properly qualified to fill such vacancies. Such leave of absence shall not impair the tenure of a teacher. The leave of absence shall continue for a period of not more than three years unless extended by the board. (Missouri Revised Statutes, 2013).

The key factor in this statute relates to the removal or reassignments of a teacher based on his/her hire date in the school district. The statute references the teacher being properly qualified. There is no correlation to the teacher's performance, the teacher's impact on student achievement, or the overall effectiveness of the teacher. Researchers stated that the quality of the teacher is the most significant factor when determining the educational outcomes for students (Danielson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2008). In an urban district in Missouri, the RsMO statute 168.221 compromised the district and specifically, the human resources department's ability to effectively support the needs of the district. Teachers were moved from building to building in October; in some instances, teachers moved two or three times within a three month period of time. Also, where multiple teachers had the same hire date, the principal was asked who he/she felt should transfer. This practice of staff selection by principal represents the notion of "dance of the lemons" where the principal identified their least effective teacher to transfer. Having an effective evaluation system and understanding how the RsMO statute impact teacher quality will help to improve the problem with ensuring teacher quality as described.

Further in 2005 in the same urban school district in Missouri, the Council of Great City Schools conducted another review of the human resources department. The report included the following findings: (1) there was a need to establish a clear strategic focus with action plans that link the activities of the Human Resources Department with the mission, values, and goals of the Board of Education; (2) there was a need to hold the human resources management team accountable for stabilizing the working environment; building an atmosphere of trust among staff; and creating a climate of accountability in the division; (3) there was a need to establish a recruitment calendar and planning process (involving principals and key central offices) that used critical information elements to project new certificated employee requirements for each

school year, and authorized HR to issue contracts to fulfill these needs on a timely basis; (4) there was a need to streamline the district's recruitment and hiring processes; and (5) there was a need to develop and use a comprehensive personnel evaluation system throughout the district that assessed performance based on specific functions and responsibilities. The report provided guidance to the district in the area of human resources but the report did not address the internal processes that directly impact teacher quality. In the same district, the October transfer process was still in place and unchanged.

Then in 2008 in the urban school district in Missouri, the human resource department conducted a review of the department with the assistance of an outside consulting firm. The report included recommendations in the areas of people, processes, and technology.

Acknowledging that people are the most valuable resource of any organization (Odden, 2011), a summary of the report's findings relating to people emphasized the historical perspective and acknowledged that unstable leadership was a key barrier to the human resource department's effectiveness. The report further suggested that the district refocus the human resources department's function and purpose. Specifically, the report suggested that the key role of the human resources department should include activities that center on the recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff in support of the ultimate goal-improving student achievement.

Finally, in 2010 the urban school district in Missouri, engaged in district-wide strategic planning. The process was comprehensive and included various internal and external stakeholders. Key strategic objectives to highly qualified staff included the following: (1) the district will develop and implement a comprehensive teacher recruitment and training program; (2) the principal and at least 50% of the staff at each Turnaround School will be replaced to ensure that a highly capable staff is in place to raise achievement; (3) institute a rigorous

evaluation system for all pedagogical personnel that is tied to student growth data; and (4) implement a peer assistance and review teacher mentoring and evaluation program. All recommended objectives were reflected in some manner in previous studies. In order to effectively realize a strategic management of human capital system, the districts must make radical reform efforts in the area of talent management (Odden, 2011).

### **Equitable distribution of resources**

How to educate black children most effectively continues to be a controversial topic. Attempting to resolve this issue, individuals seek to understand the cultural foundation that shapes the thoughts, actions, and beliefs of people of color. Understanding issues such as the introduction of slavery, the Negroes' thirst for knowledge, and tensions associated with educating black children is helpful; however, at the same time many questions remain unanswered. One contributing factor to this confusion stems from society's unwillingness to acknowledge the actions of the past (Bell, 1992). Educational equality, he says, is unattainable without this acknowledgement. Thus, there remains a high level of confusion and disagreement relative to the educability of all children, especially children of color. Several researchers argue that equity of student achievement will not be realized without fully embracing past actions and being willing to understand how actions of the past have shaped the current state of the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Vaught, 2011). In dealing with the fact that inequities have plagued people of color for decades, Taylor (2009) argued that society, and particularly the white population, have a difficult time understanding the circumstances they have in fact created. The current state of education for urban children and particularly children of color is dismal. Pine and Hilliard (1990) articulated the remnants of society's divergence of the impact that race has on children of color:



It should not require proof here that the educational outcomes are vastly different for different racial, language, economic, and gender groups in this nation. Look at dropouts, suspensions, and expulsions; look at academic achievement indices of any kind. Look at the cultural retardation of all our high school graduates, minority or majority...But most especially look at the ignorance and an alienation from their natal culture experienced by the millions of children who are on the bottom economically, socially, and politically.

It should also require little proof here that the process of education is vastly different for different racial, language, economic, and gender groups in the nation. Look at the scandalously disproportionate placement of children in special education categories, where low-level demands cause them to miss exposure to higher levels of educational activity. Look at the meager attempts nationally to pluralize the standard European-centered curriculum so that it conforms to the truth of all human experience, rather than reflecting a glorification of the narrow, parochial culture experience of dominant groups (p. 2).

The purpose of education, the compromising values and beliefs, the desire for something that was almost impossible to be, and the yearning for individuality have all affected the education of black children throughout the years. Blacks strived to have a sense of belonging while at the same time living within the confining boundaries set by society (Woodson, 1977).

Society sought to “meet the needs peculiar to a people just emerging from bondage” (Woodson, 1919, p.6). Therefore, educating black children based on this quite different assumption posed a risk to individuals and possibly to society as a whole, especially in the long term. The South wanted to insure their economic prosperity while maintaining conscientious and dedicated workers. Some felt that intelligent colored men proved to be useful and trustworthy

servants (Woodson, 1919), at least so long as access to education was restricted and non-threatening. Any effort to teach slaves to know their real condition would be counter-productive to the institution of slavery (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1919).

Why education for Blacks? This question was prominent among black people as well as whites. Some blacks viewed education as a means to improve their minds. Some whites felt “it more profitable to work a slave to death during seven years and buy another in his stead than to teach and humanize him with a view to increasing his efficiency” (Woodson, 1919, p.11).

Simply by virtue of their being in bondage, black people were not viewed as equal human beings. They were humiliated and forced to feel inferior. Blacks were consigned to a life style that was dramatically different from that of the masses of whites and one that was completely one-sided. Their education was of little importance (Smith, 1999). Indeed, they were not even considered educable. These beliefs are not unlike the current perceptions in many urban school districts. Black children are still subjected to low expectations, inadequate learning environments and ill-prepared educators. Yet the reasons for low student achievement are not viewed to be directly related to these factors. The innate nature of the student is usually assumed to be the immediate root cause of low achievement (Castagno & Vaught, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Historically, this mindset forced black people to feel inferior; education was not viewed as a means of achieving success. Despite these obstacles some black people understood the importance and potential of education.

For decades after the Civil War, blacks desired a separate entity in which to educate their children. They felt it was important for children to find their own identity and understanding regarding education. Blacks were very concerned about any interference that might disrupt or limit their elevation. These interferences were revealed in many ways including resources,

educational environment, and most importantly the way educators interact with children. In their eyes, separation was the only way their children would be successful academically (Myrdal, 1944). An integrated setting would allow for the degrading conditions of society to continue. Blacks felt that other people of color could provide an education defined as quality for their children (Du Bois, 1935; Woodson, 1919).

Black parents' conviction that their children should be educated by other black people was well intended. However, the conditions of schools for people of color were typically less desirable. Being a black institution, the schools were deemed inferior. Blacks were expected to pay taxes for public institutions that their own children could not attend. Many understood the direct correlation between education and success. They desired something better for their children, yet this was very difficult to obtain due to limited resources and society's definition of a quality education (Anderson, 1988; Woodson, 1919). Nevertheless, they still sought to have a place of their own, one where their children could be stimulated intellectually while receiving the nurturing encouragement and high expectations from other people of color.

Although they preferred separate schools, blacks pursued the concept of a leveling curriculum. They felt that a separate school was the only setting that could provide their children an educational experience free from bias (Jones, 1980; Woodson, 1919). Colored schools were viewed as institutions, when properly conducted, of great advantage to colored people. They feared, however, that the sacrifice could possibly be an educational program that was not as academically stimulating as those for whites.

Much of the black population was quite serious about advancing intellectually. They strived to take advantage of the resources and opportunities education could provide (Anderson, 1988). Black educators preferred young men of talents and good moral character. They realized,

however, that some individuals either could not meet or would not strive for the same educational goals. Obtaining an education was difficult and often met with sacrifice or risk, even including severe bodily harm and in some instances murder (Butchart, 1980). Unfortunately, blacks and whites had to be willing to accept the consequences that could result from this questionable pursuit of education.

Several factors have helped to shape the education of black children throughout the years. These tensions continue to cause controversy even today. The origin and history of the education of black people in America is not designed to afford people of color the option of success (Clark & Brown, 1990; Foster, 1991). Individuals who felt black people had been wronged afforded blacks minimal acts of kindness and expressions of remorse (Rury & Hill, 2012). Other black people isolated themselves from those who were less fortunate. The true sense of community and desire to equitably educate all people has never existed in our country. The caste system is very evident in the black community as well as the white community (Vaught, 2011).

Ethical values and belief systems were compromised and created an educational system for black people. This system was not designed to be a success. Black schools received fewer resources and were not easily accessible even to all blacks (Clark & Brown, 1990). Although blacks sought for separate schools, this separation did not advance equality, or even quality. Many defining issues for the education of the black child have persisted and survived to the present day. Specifically, because blacks are not viewed as being equal, the educational structures for black children historically reflect this assumption of inequality. Often, the least prepared and more novice teachers are assigned to schools that primarily serve children of color, resources are misaligned to student needs and do not directly impact the classroom, and quick-fix

reform efforts have been implemented that yield little to no sustainable growth in the area of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Delpit, 1988).

Sadly, progress is not being made at an acceptable pace. Thus, the notion of high quality human capital, particularly the equitable distribution of human capital, while a lofty goal, most likely will not be realized, especially when the value of a human's capacity is perceived to be inequitable primarily due to race (Freire, 2000; Smith, 1984).

### **Culture and Climate**

Urban school districts are complex enterprises that reflect failed practices, bureaucratic structures, and failed outcomes for students. A moral imperative of all educators and practitioners is to work to understand the social systems that comprise how the school district operates. "School culture and climate are the set of norms, values and beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies, symbols and stories that make up the personality of the school" (Cromwell, 2002, p.4). Human factors directly drive and determine culture and climate within an educational context. Muhammad (2009) posited that school culture drives organizational happenings and ultimately outcomes for students. Typically in high need, urban environments, the school culture and climate is toxic and one that does not employ positive human relations and an unwavering belief in the educability of all students. Muhammad (2009) further stated that where there is a positive culture and climate, educators have a genuine belief that all students can achieve. This belief is explicitly expressed through words, activities, and most importantly through interactions with students. Also, where the culture and climate are positive, the day to day happenings or practices and procedures fundamentally support the educators' belief in every child being able to achieve (Cromwell, 2002).

In contrast, where the toxic culture and climate exists, student success is dependent upon the student and, specifically, the students' overall commitment to the educational process, prior knowledge, and at times parental support structure. Also, where the culture and climate are toxic, the day to day happenings or practices and procedures reflect the educators' lack of efficacy regarding the achievement of all students (Cromwell, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Muhammad, 2009).

In order for culture and climate to be improved in urban schools, schools must become learning organizations. Schlechty's (2009) extensive research on school transformation revealed critical attributes of school systems. He specifically focused on the school as a system and how the system is situated in the social context. He contended that most school districts are not learning organizations; in essence school districts function as bureaucratic organizations. Characteristics that reflect the learning organization versus the bureaucratic organization are listed in Table 3 (See appendix C).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) in the context of urban education is an "intellectual and societal tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction" specifically as it relates to the education of African American children (Ladson-Billings, 1996, p. 9). CRT derives from the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman and embodies the legal analysis movement called critical legal studies (CLS). A primary premise of their research established that the current legal structure supports and in many ways legitimizes oppressive structures prevalent in American society. However, absent from the CLS scholars critique of mainstream legal practices and ideas are transformative action and strategies that could foster a new legal system, one that rejected the master narrative that omitted race and racism as key factors in the legal system. CRT scholars

emerged from the work of CLS. Bell (2004) stated that race continues to be a significant factor in determining equity in the United States; society in the United States is based on property rights; and the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which society can understand social and consequentially, school inequity. In this study using the CRT lens, current human resources practices and procedures are examined and explored.

### **The Counterstory**

A primary component of CRT relates to storytelling or counter-storytelling. Historically, marginalized groups of people have used the art of spoken word, music, parables, and other forms of oral expression to represent their truths (Ladson-Billings, 1997). The voice of marginalized people is privileged through the CRT lens. This act is a means of self-preservation and allows for people of color to make meaning of their own day to day experiences and struggles (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Oppressed people internalize stereotypes and definitions that arrive from the master narrative (Freire, 2002). When referencing the term urban, negative images such as poverty, crime, violence, poor schools, and bad teachers represent society's master narrative. Prevalent in urban school districts across the country is a sense of hopelessness (Delpit, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2004). This mindset is pervasive across many school systems and is evidenced by low expectations for student performance, ill-prepared teachers, and implementation of radical reform efforts that have yet to demonstrate scalable and sustainable improvements (Levin & Quinn, 2003; Rhee & Fenty, 2010; Vaught, 2009).

As a result, people of color communicate a counter-narrative as a means to preserve self and heal the wounds afflicted by oppression (Freire, 2000). The pains and ill-feelings experienced by children of color are not understood by mainstream society (Vaught, 2009). In contrast, society removes race from the discussion and creates a false sense of equity and

balance. While factors such as poverty, gender, family life are significant when addressing the needs of a child, the impact of race and racism is paramount and should be considered when dialoguing about improvement efforts for urban children (Delpit, 1988; Freire, 2000; Tate, 2008).

The counterstory is interwoven in cultural and racial knowledge. The counterstory represents voice for marginalized groups. The counterstory from educators and children of color can help to inform the master view of greater society (Delgado, 2003). Without this voice, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1996) contended that “Oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor. Stories of people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism” (p. 58). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) noted four primary outcomes of the counterstory:

- (a) Can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice;
- (b) they can change the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems;
- (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position;
- (d) and they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either story or the reality alone (p. 36).

### **White Privilege**

Whiteness is a category of privilege. Lawrence and Tatum (1997) wrote about the issue of white privilege. They lamented that even with affirmative action and reverse discrimination efforts in the United States every social and economic indicator from life expectancy to



compensation reveals advantages of being white. In a recent study by Castagno and Vaught (2008), perceptions of teachers from various racial backgrounds were assessed. Their study specifically examined teachers' attitudes towards race, racism, and white privilege in response to anti-bias in diversity in-service training. The teachers were employed in two major urban school districts. While the districts invested resources and the trainings were designed to address the individual teacher, the trainings did not improve diversity awareness or sensitivity. Instead, the trainings, "allowed the structural dimension of racism to persist unchallenged" (Castagno & Vaught, 2008, p. 110).

Further, researchers contended that without structural transformation to a school system, racism adapts to new ideals and continues to permeate racial supremacy (Castagno & Vaught, 2008). Through a CRT lens, the notion of whiteness as property was viewed as a structural and systemic issue. The goal of the CRT scholar is the elimination of racism. However, Harris (1993) posited that when understanding and addressing white privilege and whiteness as property in a system, the system must work to de-legitimize white property. The master narratives' definition of equality is not enough. Castagno and Vaught (2008) defined distributive justice as "a conceptual frame in which individuals and groups can make claim to the privileges or advantages they would have earned or received in an equitable context" (p. 110). In essence, distributive justice requires understanding of the educational system as a structure and ultimately holds the system accountability for ensuring equity. A school district's awareness of whiteness as property is required in order to make the radical change to ensure equity for the oppressed group.

This change is necessitated because of the presence of the infrastructure of urban districts which is built on the premise of whiteness as property. As CRT scholars have posited, the voice

and perspective of marginalized groups have been silenced. In the silencing of their voice, policies and procedures are in place that supports the master narrative of educational equity for all. However, the lack of equity is evidenced by significantly large numbers of minority students who display behavioral concerns; the disproportionate amount of minority students identified to receive special education services; significantly lower achievement of minority students as compared to the majority student population; ill-prepared teachers, Black and White, who lack the capacity to effectively deliver instruction; and ineffective or non-existent performance management systems needed to support and foster educational accountability (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Delpit, 1988, Freire, 2000). So while the urban school system may encompass the urban child and is governed by majority African Americans, the policies and procedures in place reflect society's master narrative regarding educational quality; one that has historically marginalized children of color and particularly, African American children (Vaught, 2011). In chapter 3, the researcher describes the methodology for the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### *Design and Methods*

In this chapter, the researcher delineates an overview of the methodology that was utilized during this research project. The chapter begins by summarizing the problem statement and research questions. Next the theoretical perspective that assisted in the development of themes and concepts related to SMHC in the urban school district context, Critical Race Theory is reviewed. Then, the research design and methods are discussed. The researcher included details regarding the setting, participant selection process, IRB and ethical considerations, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures. The approaches described above assisted the researcher with demonstrating the appropriateness of the theoretical perspective to interpreting data.

The study aimed to provide a critique of current human resources practices and procedures as well as Strategic Management of Human Capital (SMHC) in the context of an urban school district through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Also, this research study explored the perspectives of educators or individuals who interact with human resources structures, policies, or procedures in a formal or informal way in the context of an urban school district. While the notion of SMHC is based on the premise of equality, the researcher explored the tenets of racism as well as white privilege as represented in current and prescribed human resources practices and policies. The goal of this study was to help readers better understand the multi-faceted dynamics of SMHC in an urban setting, the key factors that impede or promote this premise, and ultimately how policy, race, and equity issues affect full realization of SMHC in the urban school setting.

The methodology approach embodied a narrative context that incorporated grounded theory data analysis strategies. The grounded theory approach was appropriate for this study and helped the researcher to discover research participants' primary perspectives regarding the research topic (Allan, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 2009). The grounded theory data analysis approach includes a set of steps whose careful execution is thought to enable the researcher to present good theory as the outcome. Concerned with or largely influenced by in-depth understandings of the research participants' perceptions of the world, the researcher used categories drawn from respondents themselves and focused on making implicit belief systems explicit.

The ground theory data analysis approach was appropriate for this research study for the following reasons: (1) data was captured overtime and includes information regarding the research participants' lived experiences; (2) the data analysis process was vital to the research study and was dynamic, changing, moving and occurred throughout the study; and (3) the researcher read and re-read textual data captured from research participants. This act is central to the grounded theory data analysis approach. In addition, the data captured could have been captured through observations of behavior, interactions, and other field notes. In this research study, the researcher did rely on field notes when reviewing and analyzing data sources.

A key component of grounded theory relates to the researcher's interpretation; specifically, the interpretations must include the perspectives and voices of the people that participate in the study. It is important to note that it is not enough to simply report or give voice to the viewpoints of participants. The researcher sought to responsibly interpret what was observed, heard, or read (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Components of the grounded theory data analysis approach included the following (1) transcribing interviews; (2) line by line coding; (3)

open coding; (4) axial coding; (5) development of concepts; (6) development of categories; (7) creation of category/concept map; and (8) finalization of major emerging themes.

This study expresses the perspectives from the field—from individuals who interact with the urban school district in the area of human capital and overall management of quality. Also, the study provides voice to a population that has historically been oppressed and silenced in the discussion around educational reform and overall quality, particularly for children of color.

1. How do state statutes impact teacher quality and performance in an urban school district?
2. What role do race and equity play when examining implementation of performance management systems in an urban school district?
3. What structures within an urban school district impede or promote the effective implementation of an effective performance management system in an urban school district?

### **Research Methodology-Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical perspective that attempts to address racism as normal American Society (Delgado, 2003; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Ladson-Billings (2005) further stated that because racism “is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture” (p.11). The major tenets of this study allowed for analysis and critique through the lens of CRT as the problem encompasses current SMHC practices and procedures within the urban school district context and particularly the human resources function. While prescribed strategies are presented in a neutral manner, implementation of ineffective systems is primarily evident in districts serving predominantly minority students, especially African American. Employing CRT, the researcher communicated

the perceptions of those individuals who directly interact with the human resources function with the goal of working to understand the nuances of racism while exposing the injustices that are evident in the fabric of society (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Adding voice is a key component of the CRT framework. Therefore, the researcher worked to accurately and intentionally represent research participants' perspectives. Throughout the discourse of education, the voice or dialogue of people of color has been silenced (Delpit, 1988). The researcher privileged the voice of research participants. The CRT researcher "sometimes departs from the supposed decorum of scholarly language to speak an assertive truth" (Vaught, 2011, p. 29). As the perceived perception of research participants is represented in their natural voice, it was critically important to interpret data through the lens of CRT. This approach is appropriate as racial issues and issues of equity have historically impacted the educational process for children of color and primarily urban school systems. Utilizing the CRT framework to analyze the research participants' data enabled the researcher to present findings that are in sync with previous research efforts.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated that "school equity in particular, is based on three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. United States society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and consequently, school) inequity" (p. 48).

Discourse around race was essential to this study. Because human resources practices and policies and SMHC are based on the notion of equality and access for all, realizing equality remains a lofty goal for students of color. Particularly in the context of children of color or

poverty, education's role in providing equity historically has been questioned (Vaught, 2011). Simply, the educational system does not reflect equitable distribution and utilization of resources. Woodson (1977) stated that:

The same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other people (p. 21).

In the context of education, the researcher specifically employed a research methodology through CRT. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) reported five elements of CRT and methodology in education. The elements are:

1. The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination-race and racism are permanent structure
2. Challenges dominant ideology
3. A strong commitment to social justice
4. Legitimizes, values, encourages, and respects the experiences and knowledge of people of color
5. Analyzes race in both the historical and contemporary context

In educational research, historically, race and racism are absent from the dialogue. The CRT analysis from the educational context counters the omission of race and centers race and racism by eliciting the experiences of those whose lives are daily affected by racism-individuals "at the bottom of society's well" (Bell, 1992, p. vi.).

Finally, aligned with the CRT framework, the research incorporated personal narrative as an African American educator, former student, parent, and researcher. As storytelling is embedded in rituals and traditions of African American people, the researcher privileged voice and added a perspective to the discussion regarding race, equity, and social justice. In some instances the researcher challenged and rejected the master narrative by providing a counterstory that exemplified lived experiences as well as the lived experiences of research participants. As a people, African Americans have fought against the master narrative that describes their being, one that emphasizes a system of discrimination, impacts, and effects of slavery; schools that fail to teach; single mothers who are not qualified to raise children, particularly males; and the over-representation of African American males in prison systems (Bell, 1992; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The researcher used the CRT framework, personal narrative, and grounded theory data analysis strategies to review and analyze these inequities in the context of human resources practices, policies, and the SMHC in an urban school district.

The study was a qualitative study. During the study, grounded theory data analysis strategies were used. The researcher was particularly interested in understanding how research participants regarded the identified topic as well as emerging themes revealed from the data analysis process. A goal was to uncover the meaning each research participant constructed about the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Emphasis was placed on saturation of knowledge and understanding as various data sources were reviewed. Interviews were triangulated to further demonstrate meaning as perceived through the lives of research participants. The lived experiences were important to the researcher's ability to scaffold further and ultimately capture the true essence of participants' perspective regarding the phenomenon. To ensure trustworthiness and overall quality of the study, data sources were used and analyzed in a reliable and ethical manner.



Triangulation of data assisted with construction of meaning regarding the phenomena while validating key emerging themes and concepts. Data captured from participants shaped the emergence of concepts and eventually categories.

The grounded theory data analysis approach was an appropriate framework. The researcher was able to review and analyze data in small fragments in order to create a holistic perspective regarding the phenomena. The data analysis process began as soon as the data collection phase commenced which is typical for grounded theory analysis (Allan, 2003). Data sources were transcribed, including notes from audio taped interviews and field observations.

### **Participant and Sampling Selection**

When determining research participants, the researcher intentionally sought individuals who possessed first-hand knowledge regarding the research topic, Strategic Management of Human Capital or human resources practices and procedures in the context of an urban school district. The research participants served in one of two roles—individual interviewee or focus group participant. Initially a form letter was generated via email and sent to each potential individual interviewee. The letter included details regarding the study and suggested educational benefit for participating in the study. Participants were requested to volunteer their time and then the researcher emphasized the time commitment as well as the willingness to be flexible when scheduling interviews.

The individual interview participants were selected for four primary reasons. First, each participant has direct contact in a personal or professional way with an urban school district in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Their experiences are varied; yet reflect a multi-year interaction with the school district. The second reason the individual interview participants were selected is that they have a passion for and commitment to education. This premise has been demonstrated

through their professional work, civic engagement, and via numerous conversations the researcher had with the participants over the years. The third reason the individual interview participants were selected is that they have knowledge of SMHC or human resources practices and policies in the context of an urban school district. Finally, the individual interview participants were selected because they expressed an interest in dialoguing about the current state of urban educational systems and possessed the willingness and desire to be honest about the current state as well as proposed remedies. Initially, the researcher anticipated three to five research participants. After receiving the letter, five research participants agreed to participate in the study.

As the interviews commenced the researcher noticed that initial assumptions were not being affirmed in very tangible and meaningful ways. As qualitative research is discovery-oriented and the findings are not predetermined (Merriam, 2009), the researcher decided to add an additional individual interview participant who possessed similar characteristics as the original five. Merriam (2009) stated that the design of qualitative study or inquiry is “emergent and flexible, responsive to changing conditions of the study in progress” (p. 16). Table 5 outlines a brief biography of each of the individual interview research participants (See appendix E).

Next, purposeful sampling was used to identify focus group research participants. A key aim of the study was to capture the lived experiences of research participants. As the research topic directly impacts and influences the classroom teacher, the researcher wanted to make sure that their voices were heard. The focus group approach provided an additional dynamic that encouraged dialogue between the research participants and helped the researcher to explore the participants’ knowledge and experience (Kitzinger, 1995). The approach also assisted with examining and exploring not what the participants thought about the phenomenon but how and

why they think that way. An initial email was sent inviting research participants to participate in the study. The letter included details regarding the study and suggested educational benefit for participating in the study. Participants were requested to volunteer their time and then the researcher emphasized the time commitment as well as willingness to be flexible when scheduling the focus group. As a result of this invitation, five individuals agreed to participate in the study; however, on the actual date of the focus group, only four individuals participated. To maximize interaction among the focus group participants, a facilitator was identified and facilitated the session. The facilitator is a well-respected educator who had personal knowledge of each participant. These relationships helped to set the tone for the session and provided a level of comfort and ease which is important to the focus group approach (Kitzinger, 1995). See Table 6 for a brief biography of each of the focus group research participants and the focus group facilitator (See appendix F).

### **Ethical Considerations, Consent and Confidentiality**

Protecting the rights of research participants, guidelines outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Ethical principles and guidelines relating to the research study involving human subjects were employed. The study required research participants to be open and honest regarding sensitive topics; thus the researcher emphasized the importance of confidentiality. In addition, other methods were used to ensure the integrity of this study. They are described below.

All participants reviewed the purpose of the study. In some instances, the researcher spoke directly with research participants to address questions and to explain in more detail the research study's purpose and the research design. Before participating in the study, each research participant read and signed the full consent. The consent outlined that research participants

possessed the right to withdraw from the study at any point without providing notice. It was clearly stated that the research participants' time was considered a volunteer activity. There was no financial gain as result of the research participants' participation in the study. As the intent of this qualitative study was to understand how the research participants interpreted their experiences and specifically, how they make meaning of these experiences, each research participant was afforded the opportunity to review emerging themes to make certain that the information was interpreted with fidelity. Member check was employed to allow research participants the opportunity to reject or correct themes and initial codes derived from the data. Creswell et al., (2007) recommends member check as a means to provide research participants with the opportunity to add value to the data analysis process. Understanding the researcher's connectedness to the research topic, this step was critically important.

The purpose of the research study was to explore the perspectives of educators who interact with human resources structures, policies, and procedures in a formal or informal way in the context of an urban school district. It was not the researcher's intent to attach comments to specific research participants. Doing so would minimize the meaningfulness of their responses. It was important to provide an environment where research participants felt safe and at ease. To that end actual names were replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participants' identity. In some instances demographic information was expressively vague to protect the research participants' identity. Video and digital audio files were maintained in a locked file cabinet that can only be accessed by the researcher. Once the dissertation is finalized and approved, the data will be transferred to a personal hard drive for one month. Compliant with IRB regulations, the data will be stored for seven years after the dissertation has been approved. Then, the researcher will discard the relevant data.

The research study revealed many implications for future practice in school systems as well as educational policy development. Therefore, the researcher sought to have representation from all sectors. This fact provided a variety of perspectives regarding the research questions. Next, the data collection phase is described which included an in depth analysis of interview transcripts and field notes.

### **Data Collection**

Procedurally, the researcher utilized qualitative grounded theory data collection strategies. Data collection in grounded theory is important as theoretical sampling enables the researcher to select subjects that maximize potential to discover as many dimensions and conditions related to the phenomenon as possible (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The initial research questions are outlined below.

1. In your opinion what is human capital?
2. What factors contribute to an urban school district's management of human capital?
3. What are the perceived characteristics of an effective SMHC system?
4. What structures within an urban school district promote or impede effective SMHC?

Semi-structured interviews, focus group interview, and field observation notes, served as the primary sources of data collection. Relying on the researcher's experience as a trained human resources professional that has extensive expertise in the area of behavior based interviewing, close attention to participants' mannerisms, facial expressions, and non-verbal communication were observed. It was important to accurately capture all communication and reactions from participants. During the semi-structured interview, this approach facilitated a focused, two-way conversation between the researcher and the participants. Prior to conducting an interview, IRB approval was received. The interview guide encompassed various components

of the research questions. Notions of equity issues, race, and policy, surfaced during the semi-structured interviews.

Currently, the researcher serves as a school district human resources administrator and enjoys experience with implementing various interviewing techniques. To that end, open ended questions were posed to prompt participants to describe their perspectives regarding the topic. The researcher deliberately worked to facilitate the questions in a non-biased manner in lieu of providing guiding probes. The researcher's expertise in the area of interviewing did assist with ensuring that questions were posed in an objective manner. Overall, the researcher fostered a two-way conversation with the research participants.

The individual interviews were taped using a digital audio recorder. The focus group session was taped using a digital audio recorder as well as taped using a video recorder. Each individual interview and the focus group were manually transcribed by the researcher. The researcher's field notes and memos were used as secondary data sources.

Individual interviews were conducted in the research participant's natural environment. The researcher suggested a meeting location and finalized the location based on the research participants' preference. Individual interview locations included a local library, restaurant, district administrative office, and a private home office of a research participant. The focus group interview was held at a district administrative office. Allowing participants the opportunity to express their preference regarding the meeting location helped to foster an environment where they were willing to express thoughts without constraints.

The initial interview was with Christopher and was held at a local library. Initially, the noise level was a challenge; however the researcher was able to identify a quiet location to conduct the interview. The interview occurred in the afternoon and started at the agreed upon time. The

researcher and the research participant have worked together professionally in the past so there was a casualness about the interaction. However, the research participant remained focused and expressed a sincere desire to positively inform the research study. The interview process went smoothly and the research participant answered each question in detail. This may have been attributed to his extensive experience with interviewing as an attorney. The interview lasted 67 minutes.

The second interview was conducted with Terry and was held in the afternoon at a local library. The researcher has also worked professionally with the research participant so there was informal dialogue regarding family and personal happenings prior to the start of the interview. The selected location within the library was quiet; however, there was a tutoring session occurring nearby. The additional noise did not seem to impact the research participant's responses. The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes.

The third interview was conducted with Marcus and was held in the morning at a district administration office. The researcher and research participants have worked together professionally so the tone was calm and the research participant was at ease. The questions were posed succinctly and the research participant responded with detailed, yet concise responses. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

The fourth interview was conducted with Ryan and began at a local restaurant and concluded at the research participant's home office. The research participant and the researcher have worked together over the last six years so initially they discussed general educational issues and happenings. During the interview, the research participant provided detailed responses and useful examples to substantiate statements. There were two brief interruptions where the audio

tape was stopped. The interruptions were not significant and did not impact the research participant's responses. The interview lasted over an hour.

The fifth interview was conducted with Jacob and was held in the afternoon at a district administration office. The research participant and researcher currently work together professionally so the interview went smoothly. The work relationship did not seem to impact the research participant's responses or approach to the interview process. The research participant was very concise when providing responses and did not provide an abundance of detail. The interview lasted 30 minutes.

The sixth interview was added late in the data analysis process. The researcher was noticing surprising themes. Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggested "In grounded theory, the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected" (p. 6). To that end, the data revealed emerging themes that were unexpected. An additional research participant was identified and agreed to participate in the study. The interview was conducted in the morning at a district administrative office. The research participant was at ease and answered each question in detail. After the interview concluded, the research participant shared additional information so the researcher requested to audio tape the additional dialogue. The research participant agreed. The research participant was very concise when providing responses and did not provide an abundance of detail. The interview lasted 30 minutes. The individual interview questions are listed in Table 7.



Table 7

*Individual Interview Questions*

1. Tell me about yourself. Please include your name, date of birth, and all pertinent demographic information.
2. Please tell me about your educational background.
3. Discuss your current profession.
4. Explain why you are interested in the field of education.
5. Based on your past experience, knowledge, and professional expertise, what is human capital?
6. What factors contribute to an urban school district's management of human capital?
7. What are the perceived characteristics of an effective strategic management of human capital system?
8. What structures within an urban school district promote or impede the district's ability to implement an effective strategic management of human capital system?
9. Is human capital important to an urban school district's success? If so, why?
10. What else would you like to share about human capital in the context of an urban school district?

The focus group interview was conducted on Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 9:15 AM. The session was facilitated by a well-respected educational leader. The individual was someone who knew the research participants well and who assisted with the research participant identification process. The goal of the focus group was to explore the perspectives of the research participants' lived experiences. Specifically, the focus group explored how the research participants interact with human resources structures, policies, or procedures in the context of an urban school district. Due to an unforeseen circumstance the focus group interview started ten minutes after the agreed upon time. Originally, five individuals agreed to participate in the study; however, only four research participants participated. In total five participants (including the facilitator) engaged in dialogue around the topic. The conversation flowed smoothly and the facilitator effectively engaged the group and maintained focus throughout the discussion. The researcher

served as a process observer and occasionally interjected as deemed appropriate. The primary questions that guided the focus group interview are listed in Table 8.

<p>Table 8</p> <p><i>Focus Group Interview Questions</i></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tell me about yourself. Please include your name, date of birth, and all pertinent demographic information.</li> <li>2. Please tell me about your educational background.</li> <li>3. Discuss your current profession.</li> <li>4. What are a few primary challenges that urban school districts face?</li> <li>5. What are your personal opinions about teacher quality and the systems that are in place to monitor and support teacher quality?</li> <li>6. Based on your past experience, knowledge, and professional expertise, what is human capital?</li> <li>7. What factors contribute to an urban school district's effective management of human capital?</li> <li>8. What are the perceived characteristics of an effective strategic management of human capital system?</li> <li>9. What structures within an urban school district promote or impeded the district's ability to implement an effective strategic management of human capital system?</li> <li>10. Is human capital important to an urban school district's success? If so, why?</li> <li>11. What else would you like to share about human capital in the context of an urban school district?</li> <li>12. What other areas, if any, would the group like to discuss before this group interview ends?</li> </ol>

## **Data Analysis**

The grounded theory data analyses strategy assisted the research with uncovering the meaning research participants constructed regarding the research topic (Merriam, 2009). The analyses was a process where the researcher captured data throughout the research study and intently sought to understand the researcher participants' lived experiences, which is central to the grounded theory data analysis approach. Individual interviews and a focus group interview served as primary data sources. The specific procedures used during the grounded theory data analysis process included the following: (1) transcribing interviews; (2) line-by-line coding; (3)

open-coding; (4) axial coding; (5) development of concepts; (6) development of categories; (7) creation of category/concept map; and (8) finalization of major emerging themes. Once interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed each interview individually. While this task could have been managed by a third party; the researcher wanted to intimately reflect and process the research participants' comments. Interacting with the data in this manner helped to make the information more concrete and meaningful. The transcribing process afforded the researcher the opportunity to generate insights regarding the data. The information was transcribed verbatim as expressed by research participants. Comments were not edited or altered. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher compared interview field notes to make certain that information was effectively captured. The researcher listened to each interview while reviewing the transcript three times prior to finalizing the transcript. Each transcript was fully reviewed prior to being finalized. The process was labor intensive but afforded the researcher the opportunity to become thoroughly familiarized with the data prior to beginning the data analysis process which began when the first interview was conducted (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In total, the researcher reviewed 176 pages of transcribed interview data.

Next, the open coding process began. Saldana (2013) stated that a code in qualitative inquiry is as simple as a word or a short phrase that "symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence, capturing and/or evocating attribute for a portion of language based on visual data" (p. 3). The coding process was precise and reflected an initial judgment regarding the data captured. The researcher meticulously reviewed each word, phrase, and sentence before assigning an initial code. The intent was to fully understand the human experience as expressed by research participants (Saldana, 2013). As described in qualitative research Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative researchers transcribe data and then complete the line by line coding process.

Each line within the transcript was numbered, and the researcher conducted the line by line coding process. The researcher assigned words and or phrases to each line. As the data were analyzed, each line was read in isolation to determine initial codes; these codes were reflected in words or phrases. The initial codes were noted in the margins of the transcript. There are computer software programs that aid in qualitative data analysis; however, the researcher was not familiar with the programs and did not want to become distracted during the data analysis process. The line by line coding process was very comprehensive and tedious as the researcher reviewed initial codes and wanted to make sure that while subjective, the essence of the research participants' statements was captured correctly (Allan, 2003). In total, the researcher reviewed 3,840 lines of research participant data.

Next, the open coding process was completed. The researcher analyzed each word, phrase, and sentence to determine the perspective of participants. The researcher included all information and recorded initial thoughts based on the data presented. Then, axial coding was completed. During this process, the researcher narrowed down the codes and began to develop categories. Individual codes were grouped into related categories. Initially, all codes were included in order to see a comprehensive view of the data. The axial coding process included the researcher's interpretation and reflection based on presented data. Then, codes were grouped into categories. According to Merriam (2009) "categories are conceptual elements that cover a span of many individual examples" (p. 181). Categories are responsive to the research. Merriam (2009) further stated that categories should be sensitive to the obtained data; exhaustive, meaning that the categories represent all relevant data; mutually exclusive, meaning that the relevant unit of data analyzed can be located in only one category; and finally, the category should be conceptually congruent. Categories that naturally emerged and those that could be evidenced

were maintained with outliers being captured. After review of the open coding and axial coding processes, the researcher determined a set of common categories; again these categories emerged from analyzed data. Thus, the categories were grounded in the data obtained from research participants.

Next, the researcher assigned a name to each category. The process was intuitive and incorporated the overall purpose of the study, the researcher's knowledge of the research topic, and ultimately, the meaning as expressed by the research participants (Merriam, 2009). The categories were validated by referencing the line by line coding captured during the initial coding process. Concepts or the basic unit of analysis were transcribed on a chart. The information is included in a code book that captures the complete data analysis process. Each concept or code was analyzed for its frequency. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher referred back to the data to make sure that the concepts were actually represented in the data captured from research participants.

Finally, the categories represented a broader view of the concepts. It was very important for developed categories to make sense and to accurately reflect concepts from the coding process. The researcher grouped this information and determined commonalities. The grouping process continued as the researcher determined properties and dimensions of the categories. The property related to the actual perspective or experience as expressed by the research participants. The researcher referred to the data to make sure that the categories were accurately captured. The dimension placed this property on a scale based on the research participants' experiences.

The first primary category was the research participants' Understanding of Human Capital in the Context of an Urban School District and particularly the significance of people. Several sub categories emerged: people, attributes, and value. The properties reflected the data captured from

research participants such as the research participants' perspective regarding human capital within the school system and outside of the school system; quality as an overarching premise; and the significance and benefit of having quality people. The properties were further defined by the dimensions, specifics to generalities; quality being able to be developed and cultivated; and the research participants' personal experiences to their experiences within the organization.

Next, the researcher determined Accountability as a primary category. Several sub categories emerged: culture of mediocrity, attributes, and disparate treatment. The properties related to data captured from the research participants. For example "Does accountability have a role?" The properties were further defined by the dimension, "impact to no impact." The process described was repeated for each category and finally, the information was captured on a category map.

The next category is Quality. The sub categories that emerged are as follows: deficit based; determining a common ground; supply and demand; equity; and significance and purpose. The properties related to the research perceptions of how quality of lack of quality impacts an urban school district. The properties discussed the dismal expressed experiences of research participants; the research participants' interpretations of quality; the research participants perception of a district's ability to access quality people; described how research participants believe that quality is important for an urban school district, particularly for children of color-in this instance, race and equity as central premises were explored; and described research participants' personal motivation for wanting to work with an urban school district. The properties were further defined by the dimensions, hopelessness to fear, low to high impact of quality and belief to action.

The next category is Leadership and Governance. The sub categories that emerged are as follows: human connectedness and communication; definition of roles; and last in first out. The

properties related to the research participants' perceptions regarding how leadership and governance impact an urban school district's management of human capital. The properties outlined how the research participants' expressed the need for communication across the school district; describes the research participants' perceived functions of school boards and district administration; and describes the research participants' experiences with policy and state laws. The properties were further defined by the dimensions, effective to ineffective, structure to chaos, and outcome based to arbitrary.

The final category is The Urban School District as a Structural System. The sub categories that emerged are as follows: compensation not reparation and corruption. The properties relate to the research participants' perceptions regarding an urban school district's ability to effectively support the strategic management of human capital. The properties outlined the research participant's perception regarding the pay structure within an urban school district and the research participants' experiences with a dysfunctional urban education system. The properties were further defined by the dimensions, impact to high impact, and opportunity to quality outcome.

The researcher's true intent was to explore the perspectives of educators and individuals who interact with human resources structures, policies, or procedures in a formal or informal way in the context of an urban school district; the grounded theory data analysis strategy was effective. It was important for the data to be broken down into bits of information; as a result some of the categories became sub categories of a whole.

In summary, Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research methodology utilized during this research study and specifically outlined the appropriateness of the grounded theory data analysis approach. In addition key tenants of CRT were explored and discussed. Next, the chapter

discussed the data analysis procedures and methods, including IRB and ethical considerations.

In closing the chapter provides a summary of the research study's findings which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.



## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

In this chapter, the findings from the study—understanding the perspectives of educators and individuals who interact with human resources structures, policies, and procedures in a formal and informal context of an urban school district will be presented. During this chapter, the major themes that emerged from the individual interviews and focus group interview are synthesized. To make connections and provide additional insight, this study’s researcher locates self in the study and provides narratives where appropriate. This storytelling method delivers perceptions of race and its impact on those perceived (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). The researcher maintains voice and provides personal narratives regarding the related themes. The categories that emerged were as follows:

1. Understanding of Human Capital in the Context of an Urban School District
2. Accountability
3. Quality
4. Leadership and Governance
5. The Urban School District as a Structural System

The participants’ understanding of human capital was varied; yet all agreed that the term related to people. In some instances, research participants added value to the term and emphasized the importance of quality. As human capital is critical to the overall study, the category table reflected in Table 10 (See appendix H) reflects a summary of the research participants’ responses related to human capital.

As described above, the research participants have a general understanding of the term human capital. Interestingly, one participant did not concur with the utilization of the term while

he understood that human capital is significant in the context of an urban school district, he wanted to emphasize that the term itself was more impersonal and not appropriate in the context of the urban school district. Human capital is a term that is widely used in the business sector. In recent research relating to school reform efforts, the federal government, educational agencies, and the educational community as a whole are referencing this term when describing the skills, abilities, and attributes within a school system (Brandt, 2011; Campbell, 2004; Odden & Kelly, 2008).

In this section the researcher will discuss the categories that emerged from the data; the significance of human capital will be integral to the discussion. The categories will be presented from the most important to the least important in answering the research question (Chenail, 1995). This means the data that are most important or relevant to the research questions are discussed first, moving to the category that is least important in relation to the research questions.

### **People Business**

People are an organization's most valuable resource (Boudreau, 2010). Numerous dollars are expended in the areas of recruitment, retention, and overall development of people. In the context of the urban school district, people, while understood to be extremely important to the system, are not effectively supported or nurtured (Delpit, 1988; Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999). As a result of this study, three main subcategories emerged that reflect the research participants' perspectives around human capital. The subcategories, properties, and dimensions are listed in Table 11 below.

Table 11			
<i>Understanding of Human Capital in the context of an urban school district</i>			
Category	Subcategory/Code	Property	Dimension
What do research participants perceive to be human capital?	People	Describes internal and external entities	Specifics to generalities
	Attributes	Quality is an overarching premise	Innate ability to be developed and cultivated
	Value	Discusses significance and benefit	Personal experience to experiences of the organization

The participants' understanding of human capital emerged early in the coding process.

Research participants related human capital to their internal experiences, observed experiences of others, and human capital as it relates to the urban school district. Human capital or the importance of people was addressed by all research participants in some manner. When further analyzing the data, variations of their understanding emerged.

Variances were mostly revealed when the participants emphasized quality or lack thereof. It was clearly expressed that the people within a school system are vital to the system's overall success. Examples of participants' comments are below.

I think you have to have some really dedicated people...people who are committed to the organization and willing to do what is necessary to make the organization work. You have to have really creative people. People who are problem solvers (Marcus, Individual Interview, lines 38-41).

I just think to have the right match for the student is very important. I think we focus on the adult on adult needs when we should be looking for people who will match our students and meet their needs (Terry, Individual Interview, lines 89-91)."

The research participants' expressed experiences confirmed recent research in the area of human capital. School systems and school buildings function effectively or ineffectively as a result of the adults who are charged with working with each student (Berry, 2010). When describing how impactful people can be in a school district, Christopher described his experiences. "I have gone into schools where I don't have to take two or three steps and I understand that this is a bad school and the thing that I can always tell is it's the people (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 352-355)."

Urban school districts have very unique needs. Particularly, culturally, children of color require a relentless pursuit of excellence. Oppressed and forced to feel inadequate, the master narrative speaks to quality education for all. Reform efforts are universal and the intentions are improved outcomes. How schools attract and support people in an urban school district mirror structures and systems that are ineffective (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). Research illustrates that urban children and particularly children from high need environments require highly effective people (Delpit, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Marcus supports this premise.

It (human capital) is incredibly important to an urban school district's success because the challenges that the employees face in an urban district warrant some level of view of support and systems all working together in a seamless way and when that doesn't, when it is perceived that it doesn't work that way then there are major, major issues around how people feel and so morale has a great deal of impact on persons in urban districts (Marcus, Individual Interview, lines 83-90).

Can educators effectively teach children when they do not believe that the system values their contribution? Every child needs a quality adult that genuinely cares about their success. Terry illustrated this premise when describing her high school experience.

I had a scheduling dilemma my senior year in high school and I couldn't take the English course that I need to take so the only section that was available was an honors class. And I said, I am not an honors student but that was the class that I had to take...so who do you remember? Her name is Mrs. Fudge, she said to me, Terry, you can do this. I believe in you. I worked hard because I did not want to let her down. I learned so much in that class and I got and (Terry, Individual Interview, lines 199-205).

Children of color need to see quality and they need to believe that they are in fact quality.

Ladson-Billings (2009) described successful teachers who understand how to motivate, nurture, and educate children of color as having high self-esteem and a high regard for others.

Specifically, the teachers possess the following characteristics:

- Sees self as an artist and the teaching profession as an art
- Sees self as part of the community and teaching as a means of giving back to the community while encouraging students to do the same
- Believes all students can succeed
- Helps students make connections between their community, national, and global identities
- Sees teaching as “pulling knowledge out” of students (p.38)

There was a value judgment placed on the quality of individuals employed in an urban school district. Often there is conflict between various entities within an urban school district; however the participants largely agreed with the significance of the people. Initially there was a focus on the classroom teacher but the responses clearly revealed that people throughout the organization are important to the organization's overall success. One participant made connections to the type of teachers needed for children in the urban school district. “I just think to have the right match

for the student is very important. I think we focus on the adult or adult needs when we should be looking for people who will match our students and meet their needs (Terry, Individual Interview, lines 89-91).” Jacob stated “Absolutely it’s the only thing so without the right people, without the right resources, without the proper supports for the human capital you know the employees that are doing the job the system is doomed to fail (Jacob, Individual Interview, lines 127-129).

Research has shown that the quality of the classroom teacher is one of the driving forces of a student’s ability to be successful academically and socially (Borko et al., 2009; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010). In comparison this study’s research participants felt that people within an organization should be developed and supported; however, there was a prevalent belief that the individuals working with children in an urban school district lack the capacity to effectively execute their role.

When I look at the stuff that we employ like are you serious? Where did you find him and where did he get his degree? Were they just handing it out on Page? Yeah when I look at the quality of human capital we have in our buildings, it’s embarrassing. (Kayla, Focus Group Interview, lines 511-514).

Discourse around teacher quality reveals that educators know what quality looks like; yet, educators do not systematically work to attract, hire, and retain quality (Milanowski, 2010; Weisberg et al., 2009). Likewise, the research participants in this study believe that quality is an attribute that needs to be developed and cultivated. Ultimately growing people was described as being paramount to the effective management of human capital.

This work is about humanity-it is about humans, it’s about children, and it’s about building those lasting relationships. How many times do we get teary eyed when we see a

report when its dealing with something a child has done or it comes from the community so the whole piece is about human capital and yes, it is important (Terry, Individual Interview, lines 421-427).

“We also need to raise the standards of the quality of the people that are coming into the classrooms (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 518-521).” Overall, research participants valued and understood the importance of human capital.

The researcher’s personal narrative affirms many perceptions as expressed by research participants. Serving as a human resources administrator for a large urban school district, the researcher experienced firsthand the lack of focus on quality and particularly the support and retention of quality people. The school district did in fact express a value in people; however the operational procedures and practices countered the value in people. For instance, frequently, teachers were reassigned to various schools without real tangible reference to their performance. The changes were due to several factors including declining student enrollment, budget challenges, and in some instances poor planning. So having firsthand knowledge with human capital in the context of the urban school district, the researchers’ lived experiences aligned with perceptions as expressed by the research study participants.

### **Accountability**

The first year teacher enters the school doors, eager to effectively work with students from high need communities (Danielson, 2007). Their quiet humility, yet extreme excitement about the possibilities that lie ahead, permeate their existence. The college preparation journey was met with challenges; however, the student teaching experience proved to be rich, meaningful, and helped to add an additional layer of resiliency to the young teacher’s pedigree (Danielson, 2007). The first few days are daunting. While the lesson plans were well thought out, the students are

significantly below grade level and many lack the behaviors that are deemed appropriate by normal standards. The month goes on and the teacher rarely if ever sees the administrator and her team members refuse to speak with her because she has that attractive, well organized, print rich classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2009). While her students are struggling to learn, she too is struggling to provide the very best she can to the students she has been charged to serve. She observes her colleagues, teachers who have worked in the school for years, engaging in little planning, assuming the teaching role primarily from behind their desk or in a chair next to the promethean board. The administrators have yet to visit her classroom or provide her feedback. In some instances, the young eager teachers observed absolutely no teaching being conducted by their colleagues. During team meetings she is chastised for bringing examples of student work and for posing questions regarding the new assessment and curriculum materials (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Her teammates want her to hurry up so that they have their plan time. You see they typically have an extended lunch during plan time in lieu of planning for instruction.

The scenario above is a real representation of what happens in school buildings but most importantly, is a representation of what happens frequently in urban school buildings and specifically represents the researcher's lived experience. Why is low performance accepted, tolerated, and in some instances indirectly encouraged in urban school systems? The research participants clearly represented accountability as a primary theme. The subcategories were culture of mediocrity, attributes, disparate treatment, and corporate connections. The full category table for accountability is listed in Table 12.



Table 12			
<i>Accountability</i>			
Category	Subcategory/Code	Property	Dimension
Does accountability have a role?	Culture of Mediocrity	Describes a prevalent notion of low expectations for all	Desire to deal with brutal reality
	Attributes	Quality is an overarching premise	Innate ability to be developed and cultivated
	Disparate Treatment	Outlines positional inconsistencies	Power to subordinate
	Corporate Connections	Discusses variance from business sector	Promote to reject

### **Culture of Mediocrity and Attributes**

Research participants overwhelmingly expressed a desire for a higher level of accountability in urban schools. There was a pervasive belief that the current system does not support high expectations and in some instances the current system discourages high expectations.

I can tell you that the difference in the districts that I have seen that are high functioning and the districts that are low function is a sense of high expectations for all quarters. High expectations from the board, high expectations from the central administration, high expectations for themselves, but incredibly high expectations from the community that they serve (Steve, Focus group interview, lines 386-392).

This culture of mediocrity is prevalent in urban school communities across the country. Parents entrust their children to a system that based on actions devalues their worth and potential. There is a self-oppressed state that permeates many urban school districts. In various ways, research participants expressed this oppression. Christopher stated “You’d be surprised at how little faith many of the employees have that the kids can learn. That’s a shocking thing to come to realize

(Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 584-587).” The concern is further magnified, “We have them (students) in our schools for 12 or 13 years counting kindergarten and just keep them down, down, down (Kayla Focus Group Interview, lines 150-151).” There was a personal, a moral responsibility, revealed in the data.

### **Disparate Treatment-Leadership Matters**

You look to the rest of the administration throughout the school, you look to central office. You look to these people who are supervising the personnel at our school and at no point was there communication as to why there was an absence from my administration. At no point was there communication as to what is the next step...you have been placed in a position of power to name what is occurring in our classrooms...you ask me to track all these things, send you emails on all these things but I never get a thank you from the department chair or the administrator but I continue to do my job (Traci Focus Group Interview, lines 432-435; 438).

“For me what impedes is to have a top down autocratic management one that believes in and of itself because of the authority they have all the answers (Jacob, Individual Interview, lines 100-102.”

“Everyone has to be accountable not just one or two departments or individuals but everyone to be accountable. There needs to be clear communication and I’m saying that of the administrative leadership team not necessarily the support departments but the administrative leadership team (Mary Individual Interview, Lines 386-390).”

The research participants expressed a sincere desire to address the lack of accountability in school systems. Some would argue that this is the fault of laws or policies and in some instances a result of administrators choosing to take the easy way out (Odden, 2011). The research

participants from this study affirm at times the concept of laws and policies and associate lack of accountability with the capacity of people. This finding supports the research that states there is little connection between teacher evaluation and student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2009).

### **Corporate Connections- Outliers**

An outlier that relates to accountability draws on connections to the business sector. Researchers have shown that education systems should glean knowledge and wisdom from the private sector where there is a keen focus on talent management (Brandt, 2011; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden, 2011). Ryan's perspective is aligned with the research regarding the corporate connection. "There is really a need for people who have business experience and who can see multiple sides of the issue to engage with it more fully (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 75-77)."

The business connection was important to the research participant. The individual has a strong background in the retail business and has been successful due to her ability to provide a quality customer experience. As a result, the term “retailize” was used to describe how educators should embrace the educational experience for students.

Retailize education meaning make it much more consumer friendly. When we think of schools we think of a hall of education. But what if it was a mall of education where teachers would compete for the students to take their social studies class, take their math class because they were really interested in the subject because everybody heard how much fun it was to learn in that class and how great that class was and how engaging it was (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 110-116).

Outcomes and competition as a result of those outcomes was a consistent theme. To further this comparison, urban school systems as a whole have been plagued with low performance for decades (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Vaught, 2008). Simply put, consistent low performance is an unacceptable standard in the business sector. “We just don’t have 40 years of ups and downs or 20 years of being of business provisionally accredited...it wouldn’t happen. Customers wouldn’t tolerate it...you would be out (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 426-428).” There is much to learn from the business sector; however, Christopher rejected the corporate connection. “Use of terms such as human capital, the push to apply business models in education I think is trying to put a square peg in a round hole (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines, 286-288).”

I believe that when we begin to talk about human capital and why don’t we run our schools like a business...we move away from the public service, the public good that the public schools are there to serve and you know in business there is always an accurate measurement of inputs and outputs. That’s key to a business and when you are counting

beans, that's easy to count but when you are counting the intangibles about what has this child received prior to moving into our district at 6<sup>th</sup> grade, you don't have control of the inputs you know (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 296-304).

Performance management in business is a process by which the organization holds people accountable for delivering agreed upon outcomes. The key components as supported by The Society of Human Resources Management (2012) states that at minimum an effective performance management system must have the following components: (1) goal setting: the process of establishing objectives to be achieved over a period of time; (2) performance review: the process of assessing progress towards goals; and (3) performance improvement plans: the process of addressing a specific individual performance issue and (4) ongoing feedback.

Accountability across the organization is a critical component to the effective management of human capital in the urban context. The perspectives expressed by research participants are congruent with recent research. Specifically, DESE's seven principles of an effective evaluation system reflect high levels of accountability. The principles are listed in Table 2 (See appendix B).

### **Quality**

Research participants possessed a keen awareness regarding the importance of quality in the context of human capital. Many attributed their personal progression as educators or business leaders to their classroom teachers. The category table reflecting quality is listed in Table 13.

Category	Subcategory/Code	Property	Dimension
Do research participants describe how quality or lack of quality impacts an urban school district	Deficit Based	Discusses the dismal expressed experiences of research participants	Hopelessness to fear
	Determining a common ground	Discusses interpretations of quality	Low to high impact
	Supply and Demand	Describes researchers' perceptions of accessibility and quantity	Desire to actualization
	Equity	Describes the importance of quality for an urban school district; particularly children of color	Belief to action
	Significance and Purpose	Describes research participants' personal motivation for working in or with an urban school district	Belief to action

The tensions between accepting deficient teacher quality and a district's ability to insist on high teacher quality are complicated by such laws that shape human resources policies. In order for school systems to effectively address the needs of urban children, human resources policies must facilitate a strategic partnership between the operational and academic functions of performance management (Boudreau, 2010; Campbell et al.; Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Odden, 2011). Effectively addressing the needs of students directly relates to the teacher's skills and ability. Teachers should be required to demonstrate their effectiveness by producing tangible academic outcomes for students. Research participants' experiences support the importance of the individual teacher.

Teacher quality is very important. But it is more than teacher quality it is also sensitivity to the culture that you serve um because some families need more because of their previous experience, because of their educational level and their home and you have to have a teacher who recognizes that and who are willing to take the kids to the next level (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 107-112).

Children of color particularly need to see excellence presented in all facets of their educational experience. Often the child's personal life or societal factors are used as excuses for low performance or the inability of a district to effectively support quality. Christopher challenged this master narrative.

We can't do anything about where the child was born 'the lottery of birth' as a friend of mine put it but what we can do is make sure when they cross into that school, it's a school that as much as we can off-sets the disadvantages of the zip code where they live and it is filled with people who believe these kids can learn (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 580-584).

## Leadership and Governance

Table 14			
<i>Leadership and Governance</i>			
Category	Subcategory/Code	Property	Dimension
How does leadership and governance impact an urban school district's management of human capital?	Human Connectedness/Communication	Outlines how the research participants' express the need for communication across the organization	Effective to ineffective
	Definition of roles	Describes the perceived functions of school boards and district administration	Structure to chaos
	Last in first out	Research participants describe their experiences with policy and state laws	Outcome based to arbitrary

School district personnel matters are generally governed by state law, collective bargaining and/or union agreements, and school board policies. Historically, teachers' unions have greatly influenced the content of state laws and board policies and how they are implemented (Ashby, 2008; Coulson, 2010). Politically intertwined, state laws offer protection for teachers and foster a sense of job security that lacks reference to outcomes or productivity (Curtis & Wurtzel, 2010; Levin & Quinn, 2003; Odden, 2011). As a result, teachers are viewed as being responsible for the inadequate academic progress of students, but are not held accountable for the lack of progress. This premise framed national discussions around teacher quality and the impact it has on student achievement (Borko et al., 2003; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Labaree, 2011).



The responsibility for student outcomes cannot lie solely with the teachers. However, the importance of the teacher was consistently represented in the data captured from research participants.

Yes the classroom teacher is important. They are the foundation. They are the ones besides particularly at the elementary level, besides the parent you know the next person in line that most children are either going to love to death or if something goes awry and they don't like the person it's going to be the classroom teacher (Mary, Individual Interview, lines, 488-493).

While the teacher is the primary individual responsible for the education of the child, teachers need consistent feedback and guidance regarding their practice. As the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education outlines, the key essentials of an effective evaluation system are listed in Table 9.

For instance, Christopher stated,

I think the worse thing we can do and the worst way to manage your human capital or your people is to have them working scared. I do think that is one of the mistakes and problems in public schools and it is structural (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 372-375)

Mary stated "Urban school districts need to ensure that the lines of communication are very clear (Mary, Individual Interview, Lines 264-266)."

Jacob stated

To be effective it must be responsive and if it is not responsive to the continuing changing dynamics of the urban setting and this is ongoing and may change from year to year or from month to month because even with the population being transient in many instances

the society is changing so rapidly and all of the influences. If the district is unable to directly be responsive to the needs of the system and able to identify those needs in a rapid sequence, the district will not be able to succeed (Jacob, Individual Interview, lines 86-92).

An outlier related to the human connectedness between the classroom teacher and the student. Relationships are central to the effective teacher. Researchers have stated that the classroom teacher is the profound factor when predicting the educational outcomes for children, particularly, children of color (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Traci stated

There is a lack of human and interpersonal connection between staff members and that reflects on how we work with our kids...um there is a lack of that same connection between teacher and student that affects how students work with each other and how students work with the content (Traci, Focus Group Interview, Lines 93-101).

Further, due to the lack of effective leadership, the classroom teachers often are left to their own vices which compromise their ability to grow. Traci stated “I feel like we go into survival mode in our four walls or we push the envelopes against our four walls but we don’t connect with other people (Traci, Focus Group Interview, lines 273-274)”.

In the context of governance, the research participants challenged the governing structure currently in place in an urban school district in Missouri. Particularly, the participants expressed that generally; the system is ineffectively and does not promote the effective management of human capital. In the context of quality people, the participants strongly believed the importance of quality extends beyond the school district. Specifically, the research participants referenced the school board. In the state of Missouri, school boards are mostly elected by the community. Individuals do not receive compensation for service and there are limited qualifications or

requirements when identifying potential school board members. Marcus stated

I think that the overly localized structure of school districts that is again around a historical perspective is an impediment to an effective system because I think that you know I often point out that you cannot be a teacher in Missouri without going to college and getting the certification. You can't be an administrator without getting graduate work and then getting certification...same for the superintendency. But any yahoo who can get elected on the board can be the person who makes the final decision for what that school does...I think that is an impediment to effective school systems (Marcus, Individual Interview, lines 678-685).

Mary stated, "And then there are politics. I retired as a principal and I retired primarily because my supervisor asked me to do something that was not in the best interest of children and that was politics (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 397-398)."

Ryan stated

This elected board situation has got its share of challenges and yet I believe in democracy and I believe that people should be able to be represented and I don't think that we are cultivating the right leaders all the way up the chain. I also don't think that school boards function appropriately. They should function more like the way for profit boards function. With a separate set of corporate governance rules. They can't run the schools....they can't. That's the superintendent's job (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 623-629).

The other facet expressed by research participants relates to communication and accountability with building level leadership. The research participants shared that there is a disconnect between the classroom teacher and school principal or instructional leadership team. Traci stated

I feel like there are positives but I just don't know how to name them cause I don't see

structures in place to allow for teachers to not be awesome...there are structures in place that allow and in some instances promote mediocrity in our schools. (Traci, Focus Group Interview, lines 381-383).

“I have an administrator who was supposed to supervise me who was absent for more than a month. There was no communication regarding the absence (Traci, Focus Group Interview, lines 405-407).” The reality of human connectedness and the overall governance structure contributed to the research participants’ perception regarding the urban school district’s ability to effectively manage human capital.

### **Systems and Structure**

A common theme related to the urban school system as a structural system. This theme encompasses the essence of public education. “So part of the human capital is allowing individuals the opportunity to dream and within that opportunity to dream moving some of it to fruition it in operation...we can do it...it can be done...it can be done (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 462-466).” Yes, it is the responsibility of the educational system to effectively educate every child. The comprehensive table is listed in Table 15 below.

Category	Subcategory/Code	Property	Dimension
How does the urban school district as a system support the strategic management of human capital?	Compensation not reparation	Research participants describe their perceptions of the pay structure	Impact to high impact
	Corruption	Research participants describe their experiences with a dysfunctional educational system	Opportunity to quality outcome

Odden (2011) maintained,

The strategic management of human capital in public education is about recruiting teachers and principals for all classrooms and schools in the country, particularly in high-need schools with concentrations of students from poverty and minority backgrounds; equipping those teachers and principals with instructional leadership expertise needed to dramatically improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps linked to poverty and race; and rewarding and retaining those who are successful in attaining these objectives and letting go those who are not. (p. 1).

Research participants expressly want the urban school system to work effectively. Their experiences reveal that the current system is lacking and in many deconstructs the idea of quality outcomes for students. "I believe that right now there is a crisis in the African American community and the foreclosing for meaningful options for youth (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 252-254). "People don't trust the system (Jacob, Individual interview, line 813)" "There's not a basic system of trust in the system...it's dishonest; it's corrupt. Not in the sense of may be legally corrupt but may be...so it's corrupt with human beings having conflict with each other; the American school system is corrupt (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 96-901)." This is a powerful statement, yet representative of the current educational system as expressed by research participants.

Finally, equitable compensation was a concept represented in research participants' perceived experiences. As stated previously, quality is significantly important in the context of an effective strategic management system. Educators understand the impact a teacher has on the educational outcomes for students. According to Curtis & Wurtzel (2010),

The cumulative impact of teacher quality is profound, with showing that if a child has an ineffective teacher for three successive years, the student performs as much as 50 percentile points lower in mathematics than students assigned to three highly effective teachers (p. 5).”

As a result classrooms in urban schools lack quality teachers; educators that possess the capacity and desire to effectively educate children, particularly children of color. Similarly, research participants from this study concur with this premise.

I think there is a stigma about um urban school districts even that kind of taking it a step back to that the percentage of educators that we get in there who you said like whether or not they can do their job if they have the capacity to um so like if my master’s classes in education are any indication um then we are not doing a good enough job of preparing people to go into urban school districts or the people who have the capacity to do what is necessary to help who have the capacity to help our students be successful aren’t interested (Steve, Focus Group Interview, lines 126-133).

When teachers are identified and selected to work in the urban school district, their experiences are traumatic and at times the outcomes do not compare to the input.

Making sure that teachers have enough capital um to get what they need to make sure that their classrooms are effectively facilitating learning but at the same time not having you to make the decision to get a full tank of gas or do I get groceries because I have to go and buy stuff for my classroom” (Rachel, Focus Group Interview, lines 674-678).

“I think that (pay) needs to be changed and I think again if you are looking at it from consumer perspective if parents could pay to have better teachers they probably would (Ryan, Individual Interview, lines 394-396).” In summary, the research participants clearly valued equitable

compensation and express concerns with the current compensation structure in urban school districts.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

This chapter explores the connections between research findings and major themes outlined in the literature review. Then, this chapter discusses the possible implications of the research. Next, I discuss the limitations of the research study. Then, responses as evidenced by the research study's findings will be provided to the research questions. Finally, I offer a conclusion which encompasses the original research questions.

The primary purpose of this qualitative study is to enhance the dialogue around the effective management of human capital in the context of an urban school district. Using a critical lens, the study aimed to capture the lived experiences of educators, and individuals who support educational efforts in the urban school setting while privileging the voice of the African American educator and student, a group that has been marginalized and historically silenced. This study dissected how research participants interact with and perceive the Missouri Revised Statutes as an entity that promotes or impedes the advancement of quality in the area of human capital. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the internal and external forces that negatively or positively impact the pursuit of equity for students in urban school districts. A review of the Missouri Revised Statutes and other human resources policies and practices helped to shape the research study design. Third, the study explored relevant literature that has guided the discussion around human capital. Then, the study examined how race is intertwined in the goal of acquiring and maintaining quality for children of color. Finally, the study outlines the findings from various interviews.

The data collection process included six semi-structured interviews and one focus group interview. When determining research participants, individuals who possessed first-hand



knowledge regarding the research topic, Strategic Management of Human Capital or human resources practices and procedures in the context of an urban school district were identified. Initially, the intent was to conduct five semi-structured interviews; however an additional interview participant was identified early in the data analysis phase. All semi-structured interviews were conducted under the same protocol with the same guiding questions. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How do state statutes impact teacher quality and performance in an urban school district?
2. What role do race and equity play when examining implementation of performance management systems in an urban school district?
3. What structures within an urban school district impede the effective implementation of an effective performance management system in an urban school district?

The interviews were all transcribed by the researcher, and each transcript was analyzed to capture information relevant to this qualitative study. Consistent with qualitative grounded data collection strategies, it was important to carefully analyze data in order to maximize the potential to discover as many dimensions and conditions related to the concept of Strategic Management of Human Capital in the context of an urban school district as possible. Based on perceived experiences as expressed by the research participants, a category table was created and reflected on the research participants perceived their interactions with the research topic. Initially, an individual category was created for each individual research participant. Then a new composite category table that reflected the similarities of all six research participants was created. Next, the initial and the new composite category table were compared which led to a refined category table that reflected five key themes:

1. Understanding of Human Capital in the Context of an Urban School District

2. Accountability
3. Quality
4. Leadership and Governance
5. The Urban School District as a Structural System

## **Meanings and Understandings**

### **People Business**

While research participants' experiences in the area of human capital varied, all agreed that people are critically important to an organization. School reform efforts and particularly those designed to overhaul talent management efforts and strategies focus on people; however, as expressed by research participants, there is little correlation between the ideals and goals of such programs and their actual implementation.

The findings as expressed by research participants can greatly inform educational practice, policy, and the overall management of human capital in the context of an urban school district. Policy and specifically state statutes served as the primary barrier to positive outcomes for students; however, the research has revealed that the quality of people is a significant factor and one that is often not realized in urban school districts. Mandated laws, collective bargaining agreements, and other policies also impact the quality outcomes for students; yet, the study did not reveal their significance.

### **Accountability**

Reform efforts in the area of human capital are in place in many school districts. Specifically, the Race to the Top initiative was highlighted as a major effort designed to impact teacher quality for low performing school districts. Many of the research participants are currently

working in school districts that receive Race to the Top dollars. The primary components of the Race to the Top initiative are as follows:

1. Implementation of objective standards and assessments to prepare students for successful post-secondary experiences, workplace, and competition in the global economy
2. Establishment of data systems that effectively measure students' growth while providing quality information to principal, teachers, and district leaders. Ultimately, the data should be used to help inform instructional decisions
3. Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining high quality staff, especially in critical, high need areas
4. Turning around low achieving schools

Educators and policy makers must listen to practitioners, reflect on feedback, and ultimately use this information to inform future policy and educational reform efforts.

### **Quality**

There was no disagreement regarding quality in the context of an effective strategic management system. It was affirmed that teachers who are weak instructionally typically teach in schools or classrooms that have the greatest need (Cochran-Smith, 2002; Darling-Hammonds 2001; Delpit, 1998). The fact that black children are frequently perceived to be inferior and as a result, are taught by teachers who have low expectations for their academic and social development is not discussed or represented in policy or school reform efforts. As one research participant stated

It is very difficult to secure quality human capital in an urban district for all of the challenges that have been discussed around payroll around systems around challenges of the young persons in those districts. It is just incredible difficult to garner high quality

people well...hire and retain, are two key issues in an urban school district because of the mobility of the staff, the lack of flexibility sometimes in systems and the challenges the employees face every single day (Marcus, Individual Interview, lines 140-146).

### **Leadership and Governance**

Research participants explicitly placed value on the importance of human connectedness and overall interactions with leaders and employees throughout the organization. The participants understood and valued the importance of leadership. Many talked about their current realities and expressed a desire to have the system change. As people were expressed to be critically important to the urban school district's ability to effectively manage human capital, the emphasis on the leadership and governance structure parallels the research regarding human capital (Ashby, 2008; Brandt, 2011; Odden, 2011).

The urban school district's strategic management of human capital must be embraced at the top. This includes the superintendent, building leadership, central office administration, and most importantly, the school board. School boards provide oversight and governance for a school district. They must review and adopt policies that support teacher quality and equitable distribution of resources.

### **The Urban School District as a Structural System**

Urban school districts are complex enterprises that reflect failed practices, bureaucratic structures, and failed outcomes for students. Research participants purport that the system is dysfunctional and in some instances corrupt. As Schlechty (2009) stated, understanding how schools are situated in the social context helps districts transform from bureaucratic organizations to learning organizations.

### **Further Connections: The Literature and the Findings**

Critical Race Theory includes tenets that are not mainstreamed and that challenge the general thinking of how the educational system is structured. The impact this structure has on children of color offers an alternative explanation as to why certain educational reform efforts rarely yield scalable and sustainable results for children of color. As Bell (2002) stated, race affects the livelihoods and plight of people of color, particularly African American people. Bell (2004) proposed three central propositions:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining equity in the United States; consequently, minority individuals are forced to navigate profound inequities, particularly in education.

Research participants embraced this proposition and frequently expressed how urban school districts lack quality people and how race impacts the educational systems' ability to maintain and achieve high academic outcomes for children of color. Understanding how important quality educational system is Christopher referred to education as a means for prosperity, "In our society, the only way you move class-the only way that as a class of people, African Americans are not going to be poor is if we get an education (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 236-240)." Mary further described how race and equity are revealed in an urban school district, "I just feel like black children are I guess measured against another standard so it's important that they learn when and what to do things (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 83-85)." Finally, the research participants preferred to not have race be a factor in determining educational outcomes for children of color; however, their lived experiences reflected that the notion of being a person of color in the educational system was a burden. Christopher stated that

As a graduate of historically Black college, I can tell you it has an impact you don't think about race when it's not a part of your day to day existence and so I think we need to promote the idea that the schools in the city can teach these kids if given the resources. Resources are key. Schools that serve African American do not have adequate resources. Schools that primarily serve white children in white communities are do have additional resources...this is fortunate but a reality. (Christopher, Individual Interview, lines 523-530).

2. Society in the United States is based on property rights.

Whiteness as property while not explicitly acknowledged by research participants, did in fact surface as a shared belief when speaking about educational outcomes for children.

This line of demarcation that we have when we cross over Highway 40 or Interstate 64- there is a perception that it's better "over there." Where African American children live is perceived to be inadequate, poor, or less than. It's about the children and an urban district that serves them. There are phenomenal opportunities to equitably educate all children, and yes urban schools do have some incredible teachers even if they are perceived to be ineffective. (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 632-642).

3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social and consequently, school inequity.

The research findings evidenced this premise. There were perceptions research participants had about being connected with an urban school. Some felt that just because of the name "urban" the schools were destined to be failures.

I think there is a stigma about um urban school districts even that kind of taking it a step back to the percentage of educators that we get in there who you said like whether or not

they can do their job if they have the capacity to um to their job well. There is this stigma where people believe that urban schools have all of the bad educators. (Steve, Focus Group Interview, Lines 126-133).

Major tenets of CRT are further defined as follows:

1. CRT is based on the premise that racism in the United States is a normal and widely accepted idea; it is embedded in culture and is perceived to be a natural component of our society's existence. Paramount to this premise is the notion of institutional colorblindness (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; López, 2001).
2. Storytelling is used as a method to deliver perceptions of race and its impact on those perceived to be oppressed is employed. CRT researchers rely on their individual experiences, knowledge, and struggles when representing their analysis of specific phenomena. It is still crucial for the researcher to maintain his/her voice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).
3. CRT argues that racism requires radical changes (Ladson-Billings, 1998)
4. CRT states that whites have and continue to be the primary beneficiaries of the civil rights movement, particularly legislation in the area of affirmative action (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Race and tenets of race were revealed through the research participants' expressed perspectives.

There was an acknowledgement that children of color have inferior and inequitable learning experiences; however, the research participants rejected the master narrative that indicates that the children are to blame for their current state. Having a commitment to quality and to ultimately realizing the effective management of human capital, research participants challenged the master narrative by providing voice to a population that is silenced.

It doesn't matter if you have a million dollar house and both parents working and you have no coverings to your windows and your children go home to an empty house because parents are working to pay the mortgage. Children are needy and the parents want the very best for their children. Or if a child rides on a bus for 20 plus miles and they come home to an empty house because mom is at a second job or Grandma is at a second job...they want the very best for their child. So this line of demarcation that we have when we cross over Highway 40 or 64, it's about the children and an urban district there are phenomenal oh my gosh phenomenal opportunities and incredible teachers (Mary, Individual Interview, lines,632-642).

In understanding race and how it impacts educational outcomes for children of color, research participants expressed the need for all teachers to be aware of how their knowledge and appreciation for diversity is reflected in their instructional practices.

I believe race does matter as it relates to being sensitive to the population you are serving. I'm not really sure I've met a lot of teachers who seem to really understand the students that they serve or understand where they are coming from and it seems to be a race issue or just a lack of sensitivity to the students they are serving (Sam, Individual Interview, lines 83-87).

State laws greatly affect a school district's ability to effectively manage performance and ensure teacher quality. The research findings reject the impact the Revised Missouri Statutes has on the strategic management of human capital in the context of an urban school district. The primary statutory concern that was articulated related to teacher tenure. Even in this instance, research participants were mixed regarding their perception of the statute. While tenure was expressed to cause challenges in the area of teacher quality, participants exemplified the



importance of quality at the onset of the hiring process. Some stated that administering tenure is the challenge and not the entire system of tenure. I entered the dissertation process with a preconception regarding statutory requirements and the impact they have on the effective management of human capital. Again, research participants rejected this conception and professed that the people that implement or fail to implement the policies are the greatest impediment to the human capital system.

### **Implications of the Research Study**

There are various facets that impact the education of children in the urban setting. This research intentionally sought to explore the concept of human capital as perceived by research participants. While participants represented various backgrounds, genders, and ethnicities (two of the nine participants are Caucasian, the remaining are African American), the concept of race and equity permeated responses and expressed experiences. While race is central to the research findings and related literature it is not a prerequisite for the effective management of human capital. Research participants were equally expressive regarding the management of human capital and did not reference race as a factor when creating the system. However, it should be noted that the research participants are not policy makers or decision makers that inform or directly impact the urban educational system. To that end, based on current research and the current state of urban education and particularly education for children of color, race still is a factor and is still absent from the discussion regarding school reform.

A primary implication of this study is that it emphasizes the importance of quality in the area of human capital. Current research reflects reform systems, evaluation processes, and other efforts that are designed to impact quality outcomes for children in urban settings. However, there is not sufficient research on the importance of people. It is a simple yet significantly

important variable that greatly impacts the educational experiences for children in urban school districts, and we should not underestimate the impact. They include people across the organizational spectrum—state departments, school board members, central administration, building leaders, teachers, parents. The most robust systems are failing because the right people are not in place.

Learning overall is very special to me as an individual. I think too often I will say that it is indefensible for any child to have to wait until their senior year in high school before they feel that a teacher cares about them and that's what happened to me. (Mary, Individual Interview, lines 195-199).

### **Role of Researcher**

The practical implication of prescribed SMHC is essential to understanding the role that race and most importantly equity plays in the context of urban education. While intentions of policy makers and educators may be to affect positive outcomes for students, efforts yield varying results that hinder the progress of poor children and children of color. As a practitioner, the researcher's role is an important component of the study.

Having served as a classroom teacher in an urban school district at a magnet or “integrated” school as well as a non-magnet or neighborhood or “non-integrated” school, I have seen demonstrated tenets of inequities as well as differing approaches to employing education practices particularly in the area of talent management, which is an essential component of SMHC. Due to multiple factors including work conditions, leadership, and overall quality of educational practitioners, the magnet school proved to be a more impactful experience for students as well as teachers. My progression to administration exposed even more of the inequities in the context of SMHC. The role of building leader as well as district administration

became more significant. As I strived to hire teachers to educate the 400 students I was responsible to educate, the hiring timeline was aggressive and not designed to support a strategic approach to selecting teachers who possessed the competencies and dispositions needed to navigate the academic and social challenges of the urban child. There was little to no support at the district office level. While building principals should have autonomy and be empowered to hire the best teachers, there was little understanding on my part regarding what was truly best or the best ways to uncover quality during the teacher selection process. As a result, a well-meaning staff was selected. Again, as a new principal, my ability to fully understand the interview and selection process was not keen. I relied on my personal experiences as a teacher with no professional or formal assistance in the area of talent acquisition. As a result in most instances, the task was effective; however, there were significant challenges and I did in fact hire ineffective teachers.

During this period in my professional career, I experienced the role of governance as well as district leadership structures. The district leadership responsibilities were delegated to a management firm who managed the day to day operational functions. An educational superintendent was no longer responsible for the education of over 40,000 students. This decision was met with mixed emotions from my peers as well as the greater community. In essence, the concept was new and there was little evidence that such a measure would positively address the academic, financial, and organizational challenges the district faced, which were the primary reasons expressed for the leadership change.

Next I transition to the role of human resources administrator, a path that I did not predict or plan. The shift has exposed me personally as well as professionally to the power that personal and group interest play in the decision making within an urban school district. There are many

constituents including the local, state, federal, and business communities. Throughout this experience, there were numerous public controversial decisions that caused tensions throughout the greater community and internally within the district as well as outside the district. One of my challenges as researcher is to remove any subjectivity from the context of the study. Qualitative researchers strive to construct meaning from the perceived lives of participants. While the study is mostly about practices, policies, and perception, it will be impossible to deeply critique the current system without referencing the role that race, power, and societal structure play in the context of the urban school district. This fact is daunting yet a true reality.

### **My Lived Experience**

As I reflect on my roles as teacher, school administrator, and human resources professional, I question if effective management of human capital can ever be realized in the context of the urban school system. I base this reservation on the current internal and external structures that constrain school district personnel on a daily basis. Conditions cause me to wonder whether public educational systems have lost sight of their mission to provide a quality education for all children. As the adults or “people” in a school system are the primary drivers, focus on educational reforms shifts to conditions of students, societal factors, and physical structures within a school building, funding and numerous other issues (Jones, 2005; Paperson, 2010). Individuals responsible for delivering an effective education product to children lack accountability (Cochran-Smith, 2002). It is imperative for educators to possess individual technical or educational expertise but even more important is the educator’s ability to promote positive outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond, Holtzman, Gatlin, & Heilig, 2005; Delpit, 1988; Harris & Rutledge, 2007). I have deliberately sought to address the policy issue as it relates to performance management. While there are numerous factors that may impact the

strategic management of human capital, I privileged the voice of children of color while adding my voice as an African American. In essence I challenged the master narrative around school reform efforts particularly in the context of human capital in an urban school district. Discussion of these issues is limited and rarely examined through the lens of a practitioner.

The study is of particular interest to me as a human resources professional, former school principal, teacher, parent, and advocate for children. My experiences are quite unique. During my tenure, I worked under the leadership of four very different administrative structures—elected school board, external management firm, special administrative board, and both the special administrative board and elected school board. Needless to say, these experiences have helped to shape and mold my educational philosophy as well as my perspective regarding what is needed to transform our schools. My progression started as a student. I experienced a very rich foundation as a student in the Archdiocese school system. My teachers were nurturing, supportive, maintained high expectations, and treated all students with dignity and respect. I vividly recall my 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Vaughn. Mrs. Vaughn was a true professional and actually she was like a mother to her students. She was able to balance high expectations with a sense of motherly care. I really felt that I was an exceptional student and that my ambitions educationally were unlimited. A sense of community was established in our classroom and daily I raced through my neighborhood to meet Mrs. Vaughn on the playground. The school was located in an urban community and all of my classmates were black. Mrs. Vaughn represented me. She was a professional woman with dark brown skin. As person of color, understand firsthand the impact of race on the educational outcomes for children. While the race of the teacher is not a significant factor when determining the characteristics of quality teachers that teacher African American children (Ladson-Billings, 2009), as a result of my lived

experiences, I valued seeing a quality educator who happened to look like me. When Mrs. Vaughn spoke, she clearly articulated every syllable. As I recall, there was no innovative technology or engaging activities; at the time, her instruction was quite traditional, yet all of her students were prompted to and did produce their very best.

As my educational journey continued, a unique educational opportunity was revealed to my mother. The desegregation program was in place in St. Louis/St. Louis County. The program officially known as the Voluntary Interdistrict Coordinating Council (VICC) (the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation since 1999) was designed to provide quality educational experiences for students via a voluntary transfer program. African American students from the inner city were attracted to schools in suburban counties. My mother wanted the absolute best for me as a student so as a result; she applied for me to enroll in a school district in West St. Louis County. I attended this district from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. While I did not realize it until adulthood, my experiences during this time period greatly shaped my philosophical views regarding education and ultimately have helped to shape who I am as an educator. My research focus is not specifically on the VICC program but I would be remiss not to mention how my interactions with teachers and the VICC program as a system proved to be some of my most enjoyable and most miserable educational experiences throughout my preK-12 experience. I appreciate Mrs. Finucane whose no-nonsense approach to education was balanced with a sincere sense of caring for all of the students she served, including me, a transfer student from the city. Prior to attending college my character and overall commitment to children, particularly those from underserved communities were defined. During my college experience, I worked with phenomenal educators and student taught with amazing teachers—teachers who exemplified the belief that all children can and actually do learn. The student teaching process exposed me to

teachers that were serious about educating students. They gave their very best daily and expected no less from their students. I was primed for success in the class because I never knew that there was an alternative.

After earning my bachelor degree in elementary education, I earned a master's degree in elementary education and principal certification. Then, I quickly progressed to administration and became an elementary school principal after serving as a classroom teacher for four years. I was the opening principal of a neighborhood school that had been closed for over 12 years. The task was quite daunting and as I reflect on this experience, I had many lessons to learn, particularly in the area of human capital. People are the foundation of a district and particularly of a school. I embarked upon the hiring process with little guidance. I did strive to identify educators who had a commitment to working with a diverse population and with students that may have acute academic and/or emotional needs. The staff was in place and the school opened. The experience will forever impact my view of leadership, teacher quality, and human capital. I intimately understand how the urban school district as a system affects and impacts the educability of all children. As building leader, I was an instructional leader; however, I lacked the human resources skill and capacity to effectively navigate the nuances of the management of people.

The principal sets the tone for academic excellence or in many instances the lack thereof. As the educational challenges of the urban school district grew, I needed to possess the intellectually ability and practical experiences to understand core competencies of the effective urban classroom teacher. Thus, my managerial approach to leadership was not effective. I was hired for my position in April and the renovated school was to open in August. The building was still under construction; no furniture or supplies had been ordered or identified; and the entire staff

needed to be hired. Nevertheless, the teaching staff was selected. The process was quick and did not allow sufficiently for quality reflection. Many first year teachers were employed and placed in classrooms; some did not at the time possess the skills needed to provide the instructional guidance and support the students so desperately needed. As a new administrator also, I was sometimes ill prepared to provide the guidance and support my staff so desperately needed. Despite these shortcomings, we forged ahead and did see academic and social gains for our students.

My next endeavor led me to central office. As a human resources professional, I experienced firsthand the challenges that many urban school districts face. The beginning of a school year quickly approaches. Throughout the central office of a moderately sized urban school district, central office staff persons work feverishly to prepare for the “First Day of School.” This event occurs every year; however, the opening of school process is plagued with the finalization of last minute details, missed deadlines, haphazard approaches to communicating pertinent information to students and their families and, in many instances, chaos.

Principals work to finalize staff selections for vacant classroom positions. Throughout this process, the Human Resources Division strives to assist; yet, due to inadequate systems and competency levels of all staff, including leadership, processes are ineffective and key customers are met with frustration. Responsiveness is slow and answers are typically inaccurate or incomplete. The selection process for new teachers consists of “paper screening” of potential candidates which includes certification and credential verification. The “induction” or “orientation” process is a review of benefits information, completion of basic human resources paperwork and, if an employee is lucky, a binder containing curriculum materials and the school



year's academic pacing guides is provided. Then, the employee is off to the classroom where he/she is expected to prepare to effectively educate children.

Dismal, yet realistic, the story described reflects the current state of most urban school districts across the country, including the district where I served. Immediately, I understood that I lacked the technical expertise needed to lead a human resources division in an urban setting. To that end I researched and ultimately attained certification via the Human Resources Certification Institute. The certification, Professional in Human Resources (PHR) is a global certification based on the bodies of knowledge described in Table 9 (See appendix G).

The certification program was a stark contrast from my administrative program as the topic of human resources was combined in one course. The modules reflect business human resources principles which ultimately should guide all high performing organizations (Odden, 2011).

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Dialogue regarding the strategic management of human capital is needed. Effectively implementing performance management systems will ultimately promote quality outcomes for children. This research study makes the following recommendations:

1. Acknowledge and utilize the current research to reveal racist practices and policies in the urban school setting.
2. Continue to explore effective strategic management systems and where appropriate adapt those systems within the urban school setting.
3. Maximize opportunities to provide extensive training in the area of teacher evaluation and overall performance to administrators and teachers.
4. Review and revise tenure laws that include performance outcomes as a prerequisite for teacher tenure.

5. Enhance the teacher and general staff selection process in urban school districts.
6. Develop and provide training in the area of human relations for administrators and teachers.

### **Recommendation for Improving this Study**

The following recommendations are offered as possible ways to improve this study.

1. When inquiring about the strategic management of human capital in the context of human capital, explicitly include a question relating to race and equity. While research participants reflected both their responses, specific questions may have prompted more dialogue regarding the impact of race and equity.
2. The data analysis process was comprehensive and included broad perspectives. It is recommended that the participant pool and specifically the focus group be expanded to capture more perspectives regarding the strategic management of human capital in the context of an urban school district.
3. The charter school discussion was absent from the dialogue in a meaningful way. Comparing the performance systems in charter schools to those in urban schools may help inform best practices in both settings.

### **Conclusion**

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do state statutes impact teacher quality and performance in an urban school district?
2. What role do race and equity play when examining implementation of performance management systems in an urban school district?
3. What structures within an urban school district impede the effective implementation of an effective performance management system in an urban school district?

The study consisted of a literature, presentation of findings, and interpretation of findings where the research questions were explored in depth. Urban school districts lack the ability to effectively implement and support the strategic management of human capital. While statutory requirements and human resources policies are factors, they are not as significant as the people that navigate the school system. Urban school districts must understand the importance of people. Also, connected to the Critical Race Theory, this study attempted to privilege the voices of those that are typically silenced or completely omitted from the discussion around race and equity. Using grounded theory data analysis strategies and narrative storytelling methodology, this research study synthesizes the participants' expressed experiences and perspectives around human capital and how it is situated in the context of an urban school district.

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## Appendix A

**Table 1**

<i>Comparison of Revised Missouri Statute (Urban School District and Suburban School District)</i>	
<b>Section 168.221 (Urban School District)</b>	<b>Section 168-116 (Suburban School District)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No teacher whose appointment has become permanent may be removed except for one or more of the following causes: immorality, incompetency, or inefficiency in the line of duty, violation of the published regulations of the school district, violation of the laws of Missouri governing the public schools of the state, or physical or mental condition which incapacitates him from instructing or associating with children, and then only by a vote of all members of the board, upon written charges presented by the superintendent of schools to be heard by the board after thirty day's notice, with copy of the charges served upon the person against whom they are preferred, who shall have the privilege of being present at the hearing, together with counsel, offering evidence and making defense thereto. At the request of any person so charged the hearing shall be public. During any time in which powers granted to the district's board of education are vested in a special administrative board, the special administrative board may appoint a hearing officer to conduct the hearing. The hearing officer shall conduct the hearing as a contested case under chapter 536 and shall issue a written recommendation to the board rendering the charges against the teachers. The board shall render a decision on the charges upon review of the hearing officer's recommendations and the record from the hearing. The action and decision of the board upon the charges shall be final. Pending the hearing of the charges, the person charged may be suspended if the rules of the board so prescribe, but in the event the board does not by a majority vote of all the members remove the teacher upon charges presented by the superintendent, the person shall not suffer any loss of salary by reason of the suspension. Incompetency or inefficiency in the line of duty is cause for dismissal only after the teacher has been notified in writing at least thirty days prior to the presentment of charges against him by the superintendent. The notification shall specify the nature of the incompetency or inefficiency with such particularity as to enable the teacher to be informed of the nature of his or her incompetency or inefficiency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The indefinite contract of a permanent teacher may not be terminated by the board of education until after service upon the teacher of written charges specifying with particularity the grounds alleged to exist for termination of such contract, notice of a hearing on charges and a hearing by the board of education on charges if requested by the teacher. At least thirty days before service of notice of charges of incompetency, inefficiency, or insubordination in line of duty, the teacher shall be given by the school board or the superintendent of schools warning in writing, stating specifically the causes which, if not removed, may result in charges. Thereafter, both the superintendent, or his designated representative, and the teacher shall meet and confer in an effort to resolve the matter. Notice of a hearing upon charges, together with a copy of charges, shall be served on the permanent teacher at least twenty days prior to the date of the hearing. The notice and copy of the charges may be served upon the teacher by certified mail with personal delivery addressed to him at his last known address. If the teacher or his agent does not within ten days after receipt of the notice request a hearing on the charges, the board of education may, by a majority vote, order the contract of the teacher terminated. If a hearing is requested by either the teacher or the board of education, it shall take place not less than twenty nor more than thirty days after notice of a hearing has been furnished the permanent teacher. On the filing of charges in accordance with this section, the board of education may suspend the teacher from active performance of duty until a decision is rendered by the board of education but the teacher's salary shall be continued during such suspension. If a decision to terminate a teacher's employment by the board of education is appealed, and the decision is reversed, the teacher shall be paid his salary lost during the pending of the appeal.</li> </ul>



**Appendix B****Table 2**

<i>Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-Essential Principles of Effective Evaluation (DESE, 2013)</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Measures educator performance against research-based, proven performance targets associated with the improvement of student performance</li><li>2. Uses multiple ratings to differentiate levels of performance</li><li>3. Highlights a probationary period of adequate duration to ensure sufficient induction and socialization support for new teachers and leaders</li><li>4. Uses measures of growth in student learning as a significant contributing factor in the evaluation of professional practice at all levels and ensures that a proficient or distinguished rating cannot be received in educator performance if student growth is low</li><li>5. Provides ongoing, timely, deliberate and meaningful feedback on performance relative to research-based targets</li><li>6. Requires standardized, initial and periodic training for evaluators to ensure reliability and accuracy</li><li>7. Utilizes the results and data to inform decisions regarding personnel, employment determinations and policy regarding employment</li></ol>

## Appendix C

**Table 3**

<i>Characteristic of Schools Operation in a Bureaucratic Versus a Learning Organization Context, Schlechty, 2009 (pgs. 42-44)</i>	
<p><b>Bureaucratic Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The primary purpose of the school is identified in a way that defines the student in a passive or submissive role—for example, the student as product, raw material, client, or conscript.</li> <li>• The willingness and ability of students to comply with uniform performance standards set by various “end users”—such as the business community or colleges and universities—are usually of central concerns.</li> <li>• Student docility and compliance are defined as virtues.</li> <li>• Teachers are customarily viewed as employees and as lower-level members of the adult hierarchy.</li> <li>• There is considerable separation between employee groups and management groups.</li> <li>• The principal is usually viewed as a first-line supervisor, in the lower echelon of management.</li> <li>• Routine, standardization, and predictability of response are desired end states.</li> <li>• Rules, procedures, and policies are elaborate and rigidly enforced.</li> <li>• Communication flows from the top down with little attention to bottom-up communication or horizontal communication.</li> <li>• Management by memorandum is typical.</li> <li>• Coordination of effort is a management function.</li> <li>• Carefully crafted job descriptions are used to delegate and assign responsibility and authority</li> <li>• Boundary disputes are common, especially between school faculties and central office personnel or among middle-level operators and semiautonomous operating units such as departments within schools.</li> <li>• The superintendent is typically viewed as a manager rather than as a leader and is expected to carry out the directives of bureaucratic superiors (school boards, state officials) without significant input into the way such directives are framed.</li> <li>• The role of the board of education is typically defined as representative of various stakeholders, particularly the special interest groups, factions, and parties that elect or appoint them.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning Organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are viewed as volunteers, and it is assumed that for them to learn what the community wants them to learn, they must be provided with work that has qualities and characteristics that respond to the students’ own motives.</li> <li>• A well-articulated set of norms places task engagement and profound learning at the center of the school’s system of values.</li> <li>• Teachers are viewed as leaders</li> <li>• The principal is expected to be a leader of leaders within the school, as well as a member of the superintendent’s administrative team at the central office level.</li> <li>• The idea of continuous innovation aimed at continuous improvement is embraced</li> <li>• Local conventions place emphasis on fairness, equity, excellence, loyalty, courage, persistence, constancy of purpose, and duty as values that define “the way we do business around here.”</li> <li>• Conversations and dialogue about the core business of the school and its success in doing the business are the primary tools for building and maintaining the school culture and ensuring the disciplined pursuit of a shared vision of the future.</li> <li>• The central office staff is expected to work to develop the capacity of both the school district and the community to support and sustain innovations that promise to increase the quality of schoolwork provided to students.</li> <li>• The superintendent is expected to serve as a moral and intellectual leader for the district, focus all participants on the direction in which the schools are heading, reinforce the cultural and moral basis for the direction that has been set.</li> <li>• The school board is expected to establish a clear sense of community for itself and to market the identity it develops to constituencies.</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

**Table 4**

<i>Race to the Top Overview of Program and Possible Allocation of Points (Obama, 2009)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Success Factors (125 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articulating State’s education reform agenda and LEA’s participation in it (65 points)</li> <li>Building strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up, and sustain proposed plans (30 points)</li> <li>Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps (30 points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Standards and Assessments (70 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and adopting common standards (40 points)</li> <li>Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments (10 points)</li> <li>Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments (20 points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Data Systems to Support Instruction (47 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system (24 points)</li> <li>Accessing and using State data (5 points)</li> <li>Using data to improve instruction (18 points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Great Teachers and Leaders (138 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals (21 points)</li> <li>Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance (58)</li> <li>Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals (25 points)</li> <li>Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs (14 points)</li> <li>Providing effective support to teachers and principals (20 points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools (50 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools and LEA’s (10 points)</li> <li>Turning around the lowest-achieving schools (40 points)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General Selection Criteria (55 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making education funding a priority (10 points)</li> <li>Ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charters and other innovative schools (40 points)</li> <li>Demonstrating other significant reform conditions (5 points)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Appendix E

**Table 5**

<i>Individual Interview Research Participant Information</i>	
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>General Description/Biography</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American Female</li> <li>• Native of Alabama but raised in Kirkwood, Missouri; calls Alabama home</li> <li>• Attended a HBCU and then transferred to a liberal arts college in St. Louis</li> <li>• Earned a BA degree in Sociology and Master's degrees in Math Education and Education Administration</li> <li>• Is from a family of educators; father had seven sisters; six were in education and four were principals</li> <li>• Worked as a teacher, math coordinator, and principal in a suburban school district for 30 years and a leadership development coordinator for an urban school district</li> <li>• Currently serves as a consultant for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and two urban school districts</li> </ul>
Marcus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American Male</li> <li>• Native of a southern state</li> <li>• Earned a BA degree in Education; a Master's degree in Education; a PhD in Education Administration</li> <li>• Served as a teacher and administrator for 31 years</li> <li>• Currently serves as a superintendent for an urban school district in Missouri</li> </ul>
Jacob	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American Male</li> <li>• Native of St. Louis, Missouri</li> <li>• Completed course work as a Vocational Educator</li> <li>• Has worked with the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA) for over 30 years</li> <li>• Currently serves as a Uniserv Director for MNEA</li> </ul>
Ryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caucasian Female</li> <li>• Native of Miami, Florida</li> <li>• Earned a degree in Marketing and Communications</li> <li>• Aspired to be a Civil Rights attorney after college but began a successful career at May Department Stores; established a very successful retail business</li> <li>• First generation college graduate</li> <li>• Currently supports various public school initiatives and serves on the board for two non-profit educational agencies</li> </ul>
Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American Female</li> <li>• Native of St. Louis, Missouri</li> <li>• Earned a BA degree in Elementary Education; a Master's degree in Education Administration; and a certificate in Human Resources Management</li> <li>• Served as a teacher, Human Resources Personnel Specialist, instructional coach, and principal for the same urban school district</li> <li>• Currently serves as a Human Resources Coordinator-Systems and Operations for a suburban school district</li> </ul>
Christopher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native of Columbia, Missouri</li> <li>• Earned a dual degree in Law and Education Administration</li> <li>• Raised in a home where both parents held professional jobs-mother was an English and math teacher and father is a Professor of Veterinary Medicine</li> <li>• Both siblings are professors-Computer and Electrical Engineering and Trial Practice</li> <li>• Father is of Caribbean descent and mother is from Scotland</li> <li>• Has served as school law attorney in the state of Missouri for 14 years</li> </ul>

## Appendix F

**Table 6**

<i>Focus Group Participant Information</i>	
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>General Description/Biography</b>
Josh (facilitator)	<p>African American Male            Native of East St. Louis, Illinois            Earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership; Master's in Education Administration; and BA in Engineering            Previously served as teacher, assistant principal, and principal in three urban school districts            Currently serves in a leadership role for a local educational agency</p>
Traci	<p>African American Female            Native of Washington, DC            Attended DC Public Schools kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade            Earned a BA from George Washington University            Pursuing a Master's degree in Education            Currently serving as Biology teacher in an urban school district</p>
Kayla	<p>African American Female            Earned a MA in Business and a MA in Religious Studies            Worked in the finance industry prior to pursuing a degree in education            Served as a substitute teacher in an urban school district            Pursuing a Doctorate in Education            Currently serves as an elementary teacher in an urban school district</p>
Rachel	<p>African American Female            Earned a BA and MBA in Marketing            Pursuing a MA in Education            Attended private schools for elementary, high school, and college            Was recently laid off from an urban school district and will be employed as an elementary school teacher in a neighboring school district for two non-profit educational agencies</p>
Steve	<p>Caucasian Male            Earned a MA in Education and a BA in English Literature and Cognitive Science            Parents are educators in a neighboring school district            Served as an English teacher and instructional coach            Currently serving as the Coordinator, Operations for a local educational agency</p>

## Appendix G

**Table 9**

<i>Human Resources Certification Institute Bodies of Knowledge</i>
<p>Module 1-Business Management and Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic role of human resources in organization</li> <li>• Human Resources business management skills</li> <li>• Strategic planning process</li> <li>• Evaluating the internal and external environment</li> <li>• Human Resources and the legislative regulatory environment</li> </ul> <p>Module 2-Workforce Planning and Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee rights, privacy and consumer protection legislation</li> <li>• Organizational staffing requirements</li> <li>• Job analysis and documentation</li> <li>• Recruitment, flexible staffing, selection and retention</li> </ul> <p>Module 3-Uses multiple ratings to differentiate levels of performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizational development initiatives</li> <li>• Adult learning motivation; training and development</li> <li>• Talent and performance management</li> </ul> <p>Module 4-Compensation and Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation structure and systems</li> <li>• Benefits programs</li> <li>• Compensation and benefits legislation</li> <li>• Evaluating compensation and benefits programs</li> </ul> <p>Module 5-Employee and Labor Relations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee and labor relations legislation</li> <li>• Union organizing and collective bargaining</li> <li>• Unfair labor practices</li> <li>• Discipline and complaint resolution</li> </ul> <p>Module 6-Risk Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization risk</li> <li>• Workplace safety, health, security, and privacy</li> <li>• Risk management legislation</li> </ul>

## Appendix H

**Table 10**

<i>Summary of Research Participants Responses Regarding Human Capital</i>	
<b>Research Participant</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Steve	“Human capital is the resources that I need in human bodies to get the job done.”(Focus Group, lines 449-450); “So like I think quality when I think human capital. It’s not just um it’s not a number it’s not a checklist and it kind of goes to like what you were saying earlier, like there is this culture...I’m going to start ranting...ranting about mediocrity when I think about human capital it is exactly...it goes to teacher quality for me.” (Focus Group, lines 464-468)
Kayla	“Human capital is the resources that I need in human bodies to get the job done.” (Focus Group, lines 449-450)
Ryan	“Human capital is the resources of the people that work in your business. The people that are there now, the people that you are going to attract in the future. The people that your children in a school district that are educating that’s a certain part of the human capital because children actually teach each other and that’s one of the things that I think is vital to a system.” (Interview, lines 408-412)
Christopher	“Being very candid, I don’t like that term, human capital and the reason is because maybe it is in part because of my training as a lawyer. Capital means something very specific to me. Capital is cash, capital is an asset, and yes I believe you can treat and should view and want to view your people as an asset. I think to call somebody human capital in my opinion devalues them.” (Interview, lines 262-267)
Sam	“Human capital is um the people that you have in your organization who are responsible for executing your mission, vision, and goal which would be everyone who work for the

	organization.” (Interview, lines 33-35)
Marcus	<p>“Human capital from my perspective um is the real tangible human resources that have the ability to impact the organization. While you have dollars that can be used to purchase programs, human capital from my perspective are the people who can influence the programs and lives so it’s real people. Its flesh and blood, it’s people who because this is a people business...its people who move it and make it work, outside of the human capital, outside of the people. The quality of the people really determines if it’s a positive human capital or a negative human capital if you will. So human capital is people.” (Interview, lines 22-30)</p>
Jacob	<p>“Human capital to me that term would encompass all that an individual that can bring to the experience in our field to the education of a child. Each individual has their own set of expertise that they would bring. Sometimes you would think of a classroom teacher, they are not just a teacher. They are a counselor, they are parent, they encompass all that they have experiences in life and you can just multiply that across the spectrum. They bring support, a kind word, a smile in the morning. That’s the capital they bring to the profession of education so education covers all.” (Interview, lines 42-50)</p>
Terry	<p>“Human capital from me going to be every adult that impacts children and impacts teaching and learning or impacts achievement as we say from those who give the support in the cafeteria, to those who give you the support um to making sure that your transportation you know its human capital that makes the buildings function and operate efficiently um so that there are no glitches for children.” (Interview, 245-250)</p>