

HOW DO CERTAIN STRESSORS DIFFERENTLY IMPACT EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP IN CHARTER AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

BY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation asks: how do certain stressors differently impact educational leadership in charter and public schools? In order to answer this research question, this dissertation focuses on four elements of administrator stress: governance, organizational legitimacy, financial responsibility, and personnel management. The goal of this study is to examine the degree in which these stressors are felt differently by charter school and public school principals. It also seeks to determine whether the organization of the schools (public school bureaucracy and charter school market economy) offers an explanation as to why these differences might occur. For example, traditional public schools frequently operate in a bureaucratic fashion where teachers report to principals who report to directors who report to executives who report to the superintendent. In many charter schools, though, the bureaucratic structures are less defined. For this reason, it is entirely possible that the job of a charter school principal may be more stressful than a traditional school principal, less stressful, or just stressful in different ways.

A fundamental insight found within this study is that public and charter school principals tend to be stressed by different factors. While both groups feel some levels of stress related to the four elements studied: personnel management, governance, organizational legitimacy, and financial responsibilities, these levels of stress tended to differ based on whether a principal was in the charter school setting or the public school setting. In particular, public school principals seem to be most stressed by governance and personnel management as opposed to charter school principals who appear most stressed by organizational legitimacy and finances.

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“We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.”

-Kurt Vonnegut

When I decided to jump into this doctorate program I did it to create a better life for my daughter Chloe. Chloe is not yet old enough to understand the profound affect that she has had in my quest to complete this program, but I thank her for it. Once in the program I found the most intelligent, funny, and beautiful woman I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. That wonderful woman is now my wife. Christina, your belief, love, and encouragement helped me to develop my wings through this process. Thank you for your help in making me a better friend, father, and student. In addition, I would like to thank my family. I am thankful for the support of my father and mother who taught me the meaning of perseverance. My siblings Beth, Melissa, Grace, and Evan each supported my endeavor in their own ways. Next, I would like to thank my cohort at the University of Kansas. They accepted this proud, black and gold wearing, Mizzou Tiger into their family. Their consistent support and friendship throughout this process have been more meaningful than they will ever truly comprehend. Finally, I would like to thank the ELPS Department at KU for their guidance and support, specifically my mentor and dissertation chair, Dr. Argun Saatcioglu. Thank you all for helping in the development of my wings.

DEDICATION

This dissertation and degree are dedicated to my wonderful wife and daughter. To my wife Christina who was there to offer words of support and encouragement every step of the way, and to my daughter Chloe who motivated me to take the first step in this journey.

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Chapter One

Introduction

This dissertation asks: how do certain stressors differently impact educational leadership in charter and public schools? There is literature that says that being a principal is a stressful profession (Whitaker, 1999; Friedman, 2002; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Wells, 2013). Most of this literature, though, is focused on public school principals as opposed to charter school principals. In contrast with the public school, the charter school is a publically funded independent school established by individuals, groups, or organizations under the terms of a charter with a local or national authority. While principals in the public schools and principals in the charter schools share a title, their job responsibilities often vary due to the fundamental structure of the organization (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Gawlik, 2008). For example, traditional public schools frequently operate in a bureaucratic fashion where teachers report to principals who report to directors who report to executives who report to the superintendent. In many charter schools, though, the bureaucratic structures are less defined. For this reason, it is entirely possible that the job of a charter school principal, as compared to a public school principal, may be more stressful, less stressful, or just stressful in different ways.

The difference between what causes a public school principal stress and what causes a charter school principal stress is an important topic of study because it may bear on the type of person who is interested in a principalship in each realm. It might also provide guidance as to which skill sets are most important for principals in the two different environments. Should these stressors prove to be different, this study may also

influence administrative education programs and allow them the ability to train principals for both settings.

This introductory chapter presents a description of the dissertation beginning with the history of the problem, followed by the research question, the significance of this study, and end with a short summary of the dissertation findings.

1.1 History of the Problem

Schools are an environment in which 75 percent of principals experience symptoms of work related stress (Queen & Schumacher, 2006). Literature suggests that principal roles have changed from a position of management into the role of educational leader and researchers now argue that this role of principal has surpassed what should be expected of one person to do (Copeland, 2000; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001).

The building principal is paramount to the effectiveness of the school (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2005). While research shows that classroom instruction contributes most to what students learn at school (Dean & Hubbell, 2012), it is clear that leadership plays a vital role (Hallinger, 2003). There are many studies that have focused on the leadership and management characteristics of principals as well as those that have focused on principal roles and related stressors (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Catano & Stronge, 2006). However, there appears to be gaps in research when comparing the stressors felt by the public school principal to the stressors felt by the charter school principal.

The differences between public and charter schools exist in the structure of the organization – the traditional public school exists as a political bureaucracy while the charter school exists in a free market environment and possesses the characteristics to

produce effectiveness (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Walberg & Bast, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). Socially controlled organizations like public schools lend themselves to tighter regulations, which may stifle effective reforms. The free market, on the other hand, lends itself to innovation, competition, and school autonomy (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Bulkey & Fisler, 2003; Lubienski, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). Principals in both of these systems face potential stress while leading their buildings, but it is possible that the stressors in the public realm are more, less, or different from those felt in the charter school realm based on the structures of the organizations.

1.2 Research Question

This dissertation aims to answer one research question:

How do certain stressors differently impact educational leadership in charter and public schools?

This dissertation focuses on four elements of administrator stress: governance, organizational legitimacy, financial responsibility, and personnel management. The goal of this dissertation is to examine the degree in which these stressors are felt differently by charter school and public school principals. It also seeks to determine whether the organization of the schools (public school bureaucracy and charter school market economy) offers an explanation as to why these differences might occur.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it looks at principal stress in a new way. Researchers have focused on topics related to educational leadership in regards to principal influences on student achievement, the ability to be educational leaders, and

principal burnout (Whitaker, 1999; Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Friedman, 2002; Hallinger, 2003). There are not any studies, however, that focus on how principal stress differs between the charter school and the public school. This study examines the causes of principal stress in these two educational arenas.

Research on the sources of stress related to the principal position is needed to equip up-and-coming candidates with information regarding their future roles (Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2000). This information may also be useful for those seeking to educate future principals and those seeking to provide support for current principals.

1.4 Summary of Study Findings

A fundamental insight found within this study is that public and charter school principals tend to be stressed by different factors. While both groups feel some levels of stress related to the four elements studied: personnel management, governance, organizational legitimacy, and financial responsibilities, these levels of stress tended to differ based on whether a principal was in the charter school setting or the public school setting. In particular, public school principals are most stressed by governance and personnel management as opposed to charter school principals who are most stressed by organizational legitimacy and finances.

Chapter Two

Review of Literature

2.1 Research Question

How do certain stressors differentially impact educational leadership in charter and public schools?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature that supports the study of the differences in the stresses felt by public school principals and charter school principals. This dissertation investigates the stresses felt by administrators in an effort to compare and contrast public school administrator stress to charter school administrator stress; then, structural differences between the schools are used to suggest possible predictors of these stressors. For this purpose, this dissertation relies on key literature related to principal stress. The theoretical concept of bureaucracy versus the free market provides a framework to review the applicable research and understand why principals from different educational realms might feel stressed by different job responsibilities. This literature provides a disciplinary framework to address the differences in stressors that are explored in this dissertation.

This study contributes to administrator preparation programs by exploring how different stressors impact charter school and public school principals differently. Tirozzi and Ferrandino (2000) assert that research on the sources of stress related to the principal position is needed to equip up-and-coming candidates with information regarding their future roles. This information may also be useful for those seeking to educate future principals and those seeking to provide support for current principals. Although there has been much research over principal stress in the past (Whitaker, 1999; Friedman, 2002;

Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Wells, 2013), the current literature is sparse and there is little research on the differences between stress in the public and charter school realms.

This review of literature will (a) describe the charter school and why it came to be; (b) provide an overview of the differences between charter schools and traditional public schools through the lens of the free market versus bureaucracy; (c) explore principal responsibilities and stressors; and (d) explore potential differences in principal stress and why this might be the case.

2.2 The Charter School Movement

Reforms aimed at causing systematic change in American public school education have never been deep enough or consistent enough to cause much of a lasting effect. Many recent reforms formed as a result of the 1983, *A Nation at Risk* report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). This report fundamentally shook the educational landscape and caused interest groups, politicians, and those in education to see a need to reestablish the United States as the worldwide leader in education. The results of this report still echo throughout the world of education today and are seen through the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (EdGov, 2013).

The *Nation at Risk* report left the United States in a political standoff in terms of education reform. There were many opinions about which reform initiatives should be employed in schools and interest groups were leading the charge in dictating what should be applied in the world of public education (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Many conservative politicians looked to turn the American school system into a private market system by creating an environment focusing on accountability, a standardized curriculum,

and standards-based assessments. Reformers, on the other hand, believed public schools to be an educational monopoly both fueled and constrained by bureaucratic systems that lack the efficiency to properly educate students (Chubb & Moe, 1990). These reformers believed that schooling should be open to market forces that would preserve schools that are successful and force failing schools to close (Berube & Berube, 2007).

One of the outcomes of this movement to privatize education has been the creation of charter schools. Charter schools began to emerge in the United States in 1991 and they carry the banner of “ending public schools as we know them” (Berube & Berube, 2007). With privatization in mind, charter schools have been created to be very dissimilar to their public school counterparts. They typically offer various alternative platforms of instruction, curriculum, and even hours of school operations. They often promise less regulation, more innovation, higher quality, less failure, and more creativity (Moe, 2008). Greater flexibility is meant to foster the ability of charter schools to create programs that are both innovative and diverse. This autonomy, however, comes with significant pressure to make the popular decisions at the administrative level (Wincent & Ortquist, 2009).

Charter schools face significant pressure to become recognized as legitimate organizations in the eyes of the public. They are forced to compete with both traditional public schools and other charter schools. These schools must draw an adequate number of students and resources or they will be forced to close.

Charter schools and their principals are often granted a specific amount of autonomy by local and state law in making decisions related to the governance, curriculum, staffing, and educational practices of the particular school. Typically, charter

schools are given waivers from regulations that in many cases bind traditional public schools (Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). This autonomy does not come freely, as poor academic achievement can result in the school facing suspension or permanent closure. The “autonomy for accountability” model of school reform gives an amount of freedom to charter schools, but it also places a remarkable amount of responsibility upon the shoulders of school administrators in these buildings (Lubienski, 2003).

Charter schools typically specialize in meeting the needs of their individual students or parents. With the absence of many regulations that public schools face, charter schools are able to be more responsive to client wishes. This autonomy allows them to experiment and implement various teaching strategies, curriculum, and assessments if they believe these practices will result in higher test scores or more parent/student satisfaction (Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003).

In addition, charter schools typically have a greater flexibility and support in trying innovative models of education (Cookson, 2002). This support comes from their stakeholders who, in many cases, have an active role in designing the contracts of these schools. Having a voice in the planning and development of the school is believed to increase stakeholder involvement and commitment (Sweeney, 1994). This involvement, however, may lead to an increase in the work-related stressors of the charter school administrators.

2.3 Charter Schools v. Traditional Public Schools: Free Market v. Bureaucracy

The differences between public and charter schools exist in the structure of the organization – the traditional public school exists as a political bureaucracy while the

charter school exists in a free market environment and possesses the characteristics to produce effectiveness (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Walberg & Bast, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). Socially controlled organizations like public schools lend themselves to tighter regulations, which typically stifle effective reforms. The free market, on the other hand, lends itself to innovation, competition, and the exit option promotes harmony, responsiveness, and school autonomy (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

The major characteristics of bureaucracy include a division of labor, a pyramid of positions and authority, administration based on written documents, following general rules, thorough and professional training of personnel, and a commitment to official activities (Weber, 1946). Weber's theory of bureaucracy addresses the advantages of administrative structures relying on rational-legal authority as a basis for governing activities in organizations such as schools. Formal organizations such as public schools were imagined as instruments for realizing explicit goals, thus developing administrative processes for maintaining their organization and synchronizing their activities (Blau & Scott, 1962).

Traditional public schools have been characterized by bureaucracy since their inception. Among the competing organizational models of the time, the promoters of the bureaucratic model of incipient bureaucracy were successful in uplifting the quality of public education through standardizing and systematizing the structure and content. The model of bureaucracy was also successful in stifling democratic localism (Katz, 1971). It was back in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the market demand for schooling started to grow. The first generation, or the model of incipient bureaucracy, of urban schooling began with a rejection of democratic localism and argued for a carefully

structured system of education. The educational market of the time could not meet the public demand for schooling in large city schools at the time, so the government filled the gap by establishing public schooling. Population growth combined with heterogeneity made a decentralized administration an inefficient means of operating these public schools (Katz, 1971). Public school bureaucracy grew in large systems, as various levels of governance, administration, and funding were deemed necessary to satisfy the public requirements of the schools (Sweetland, 2002).

As schools became centralized, there was increased emphasis on supervision. This emphasis on supervision resulted in the hiring of school administrators who were expected to increase educational efficiency. The stress on performance became and continues to be a key aspect of the educational system (Katz, 1971; Bulkey & Fisler, 2003; Zimmer & Buddin, 2007). Education has become a difficult and complex endeavor, which demands specialized talents, knowledge, and experience. These demands are the source of job related stress for school administrators.

Meier, Polinard, and Wrinkle (2000) also found that public schools are bureaucratic in the way they determine public policy. Because there are so many stakeholders involved, there is bound to be dissention over what is a “good” policy. Inefficiency, administrative problems, and other issues within the system will make implementing any reform inherently difficult and frustrating for school administrators (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

In contrast, charter schools can be and often are part of the free market system that lacks the institutional controls of public schools (Walberg & Bast, 2003). The premise of the school choice movement is that with charter schools in effect, leading the

charge with innovative practice resulting in high performance, public schools would be forced to adapt to the new market and become more innovative themselves. The addition of charter schools to the schooling market was meant to spur competition and drive progress in education. In order to drive this change, school personnel are often granted a larger amount of autonomy than their traditional public school counterparts (Lubienski, 2003). This freedom potentially enables effective school organization and, through that effective organization, higher student achievement.

A charter school's survival is based on its ability to fill a distinct niche in the education market, and this is likely to inspire employees to buy into the charter school's guiding principles and goals. This employee buy-in is essential, as charter schools must attract a sufficient number of students and resources to remain viable (Finnigan, 2007).

Charter schools enjoy a high level of autonomy concerning how they are governed and operated. In return for this autonomy, they are required to be strictly accountable to public officials. If the charter school fails to meet the appropriate standards of educational quality and financial management, they may forfeit some of their autonomy or be required to close (Allen & Mintrom, 2009).

There are several researchers who have examined the stress levels of entrepreneurs compared with those working in organizations or bureaucracies (Buttner 1992; Harris, Saltstone, & Fraoni, 1999; Jamal, 1997). The organizationally employed reported less non-work satisfaction, and lower general stress than their entrepreneurial counterparts. Those working in an organization were found to have less stress, fewer health problems, and were more satisfied as well (Jamal, 1997; Buttner, 1992). The findings of Chay (1993) and Harris, Saltstone, & Fraoni (1999) indicate that the reasons

for work stress might differ between entrepreneurs and organizational employees, and according to Haynes & Brockman (2009), “there is evidence that entrepreneurs have an increased level of work stress compared to non-entrepreneurs.” As participants in the free market, charter school principals act more as entrepreneurs than their public school peers and, thus, may feel different levels of stress.

2.4 Principal Job Responsibilities

The job of a school principal is a stressful one. Administrator stress is a topic that has received a great deal of research (Friedman, 1995; Friedman, 2002; Podgursky, 2001; Whitaker, 1996). Most of this research has been completed in traditional public school settings or in the private school. This dissertation focuses on four administrator job responsibilities that may cause public school and charter school principals to feel different levels stress: personnel management, governance, organizational legitimacy, and financial responsibilities. Based on the structural elements brought about by the free market for charter schools and the bureaucracy in public schools, principals in these environments may feel different levels of stress in these areas.

Personnel Management

Personnel management is the management of people in educational organizations. It represents a subcategory of general management in a school district, focusing exclusively on the management of human resources, as distinguished from financial or material resources. This term is used to refer to selected specific functions or activities designated to principals or departments. It is used to identify the entire scope of management policies and programs in the recruitment, allocation, leadership, and training

of teachers and other staff. Principals are responsible for hiring, firing, and maintaining staff within their buildings.

School Governance

School governance can be described as the leadership, direction, and control of the school district. Governing the school may include establishing a strategic direction and goals for the organization and ensuring that the school is managed with professionalism and integrity. Some schools and districts operate within structured layers of well-defined organization while others make decisions under more fluid and flexible systems (Poole, 2007). School principals are responsible for managing their school and making decisions that best meet the organization's goals.

Organizational Legitimacy

Organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization (Meyer & Scott, 1983). An important part of managing a school's environment is the management of social legitimacy. While legitimacy is ultimately awarded outside of the organization itself, the school has to take a number of steps to associate itself with valued social norms (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The organization of public schools has remained relatively consistent over the last hundred years creating a grammar of schooling- a social expectation of what is appropriate for a school (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Principals are responsible for ensuring that the school is socially accepted in the community and maintains organizational legitimacy.

Financial Responsibilities

Public school funding in the United States comes from federal, state, and local sources while charter schools can be funded in two different ways. They can be funded

by their local public school district at a level that is similar to the per pupil expenditure in the district, or they are funded, in some cases directly by the state at the state average of per student funding (Sugarmann, 2002). The principal is often responsible for establishing a building budget, managing building funds, and ensuring that building initiatives are adequately funded.

While much research has been completed on the public school principal (Friedman, 1995; Friedman, 2002; Podgursky, 2001; Whitaker, 1996), few studies examine the stressors felt by charter school administrators and fewer still have been completed comparing the stress of a public school principal to the stress of a charter school principal. The purpose of this study is to understand how these job responsibilities cause stress and affect educational leadership in both the charter school and public school realms differently. The stress felt by public school principals due to each job responsibility was compared to the stress felt by charter school principals. The goal being to investigate whether the job-related stresses experienced by the administrators are felt differently based on the structure of the school organization in which they are employed. Due to the differences in organizational structure, it was hypothesized that charter school and public school administrators suffer different degrees of pressure from like stressors.

2.5 Principal Stressors

Principals function with a certain amount of autonomy while performing the functions of their job. However, the type of educational system by which they are employed influences this autonomy. The degree of stress could vary based on the context of the organization dependent on whether it is a public or charter school. The following

overview is presented to provide a framework for stress related to the organizational characteristics of public schools and charter schools related to their differences in personnel management, governance, organizational legitimacy, and financial responsibilities.

2.5a Traditional Public School Stressors

The stressors impacting principals in the public school setting could stem from the bureaucratic nature of the organization. These stressors include personnel management and governance- both of which are embedded in the red tape and paper-pushing that accompanies a bureaucratic organization.

A. Personnel Management

The amount of autonomy by which principals are able to hire their staff can have a significant impact on their levels of stress (Podgursky, 2008). Principals in public schools are in many cases unable to hire teachers who they think might be the best for their particular school. This is due to the fact that large public school districts often operate a human resources department within the district that typically sifts through eligible candidates and then presents the principal with several from which to choose. This bureaucratic filter eliminates the majority of the candidate pool, leaving the administrator with fewer options. Public school districts are also mandated by NCLB to hire qualified educators. This is another limitation on their pool of candidates. Once hired, public school districts are forced to abide by regulations that determine what teachers are paid. The teachers hired are paid based off of salary schedules determined by teacher unions that reflect only their professional experiences and educational qualifications, not necessarily performance.

Unionization found in the public school setting affects the ways in which principals can respond to teachers who are ineffective in the classroom. Teachers in public schools have the ability to gain tenure status along with the protection afforded by unions. The due process rights afforded these teachers can significantly constrain the ability of a principal to dismiss them, potentially contributing to administrator stress (Chubb, 2006). According to Gilman & Givens (2001), public high school principals reported that dealing with an educationally diverse and low-performing experienced faculty created high levels of perceived stress.

Charter schools are not as regulated when it comes to making personnel decisions (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003; Koppich, Holmes & Piecki, 1998). Because of this, their principals are able to choose candidates that are the best fit for the organization (Boyne, 2002; McTighe, 2005). Collective bargaining, tenure, and due process rights are all typically absent in the charter school setting. This allows charter school principals to make any and all termination decisions. In many cases, teachers in charter schools are at-will employees, working from one year to the next without any sort of contract extension or due process rights. It is up to the principal to determine if renewing a contract is in the best interest of the school. For these reasons, personnel decision-making may cause a different amount of stress for the charter school principal than it does for the public school principal (Levin, 2006).

B. Governance

Complying with state and federal regulations are work related stressors faced by public school principals. External policies fueled by calls for accountability are being imposed on public schools. With these policies come goals such as those set by the No

Child Left Behind Act. NCLB has established a set of goals and norms that must be measured to determine each public school's achievement of these goals. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the measuring stick used to track the performance of these public schools and it is imperative that they reach these goals or they will face sanctions. While these sanctions do not necessarily threaten the survival of the organization itself, they may threaten the professional survival of the principal.

Student achievement and test scores were identified as stressors in a study by Kohn (2000). As part of this pressure, Kohn reported that principals were required to deal with influences that impede good test scores such as student motivation, teacher opinion, and type of curriculum areas being tested. Principals reported stress as they endeavored to tackle parent concerns, work through disciplinary problems, and help garner greater student success on standardized tests.

A study completed by DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran (2003) showed that only fifty-five percent of the principals surveyed in their study perceived that they had the needed level of authority to make decisions in their areas of responsibility. They also found that more than one third (37%) said their level of authority was only moderate, and nine percent indicated that they had little authority to make decisions. Principals in their study also perceived that their influence in the policy arena was limited. Forty percent perceived that they lacked significant policy influence in their own school. Sixty-three percent acknowledged having limited or no policy influence at the district level. These layers of bureaucracy formally stifle the autonomy needed to ensure that schools are as good and efficient as possible. Their study indicates how stressful it can be for principals to operate without autonomy within the confines of a bureaucratic system.

Public school districts consist of a flow chart with the board of education, superintendent, district level administrators, and building level administrators- each with their own set of job descriptions. Depending on the size of the district, there may be HR directors, curriculum directors, etc. The organization is very centralized with specific parameters created for each job description. The vision for the organization is created at the district level. Because of this, innovation is lacking at the building level as most of the important decisions are made at the central office and pushed downward. Instead of being the innovator and creator, the building principal is responsible for implementing someone else's vision and programs. The principal's responsibility is to make sure that these tasks are accomplished.

Complying with district level rules, policies, and initiatives are other sources of potential stress for public school principals. These principals do not have the same autonomy as their charter school counterparts. Public school principals must enact district level goals and initiatives as seen fit by the board of education, the superintendent, or some other district level employee. These initiatives may not appear to be in the best interest of their particular school and the principal may feel stress in being forced to implement them. If these initiatives cross purposes with what a principal thinks is best for their building it can bring about a conflict regarding their role. Marshall and Hooley (2006) note that principals experience role conflict in the course of their daily responsibilities. This can cause conflict largely due to the fact that the role expectations of the school (district) are at cross purposes with what principals might feel would work best in their building.

Literature suggests that charter school principals experience greater levels of autonomy because they function within organizations that are less regulated and more loosely coupled (Arsen et al., 1999; Bulkey & Fisler, 2003; Gawlik, 2008; Lubienski, 2003). The level of autonomy these principals have varies according to the goals and educational environments in which they operate (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Cookson, 2002; Malloy & Wohlstetter, 2003). The goal of the charter school movement is to free principals from bureaucratic regulation, and allow them the ability to be innovative entrepreneurs in fulfilling the mission of their school which may, in turn, reduce stress (Williamson, 2008).

2.5b Charter School Stressors

Stressors that impact principals in the charter school may stem from the free market nature of the organization. These stressors could include organizational legitimacy and finances, which may stem from the market pressure of survival. Charter schools that fail to be innovative and distinct would have a difficult time attracting and maintaining a sufficient number of students to ensure the funding necessary to keep their doors open.

A. Organizational Legitimacy

Public schools generate cultural support by aligning with the grammar of schooling and, thus, do not have a legitimacy concern (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Charter schools alter and design their actions so that they can attempt to fit the concept of established legitimacy while at the same time attempting to market an innovative and distinct school environment (Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012).

Hallinger and Haussman (1992) found that the charter school principal's role includes environmental leadership and a changed position in regard to instructional leadership. The free market charter school landscape has placed a greater importance on the ability of the principal to achieve a positive school environment (Goldring, 1992). These charter school principals may experience stress as they deal with the increased pressure to attract and sustain students. The principal in this setting must don the mantle of entrepreneur: a leader who must be innovative, distinct, and maintain a school that is attractive to those in the market making school choices. In many cases it is the job of principals to physically market the school and its services by developing commercials, fliers, and building relationships with numerous stakeholders and community groups (Hallinger, 1992).

Organizational legitimacy may not be an issue that would cause stress for public school principals. Public schools are part of the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and therefore the general public has been socialized as to what to expect from them. The grammar of schooling hypothetically enables principals to fulfill their duties in a predictable manner and to function as parents and other stakeholders anticipate thus reducing stress.

B. Financial Responsibilities

Charter school principals could face funding related stressors as they are expected to handle the typical costs of education such as teachers, books, and supplies, while at the same time obtaining little or no extra money to pay for the actual maintenance of the school building itself. In many cases principals are forced to divert money from innovative curriculum ideas to pay for rent, security, and counselors. If the school is not

at full enrollment the principal may be required to make up the revenue shortfall by seeking donations from individuals, corporations, foundations, and marketing the school to increase enrollment (Adamowski & Petrilli, 2007; Gawlik, 2008; Spradling, 2009).

These principals may feel high degrees of stress as they bear the weight of responsibility that comes with their autonomy in making funding decisions. They must defend the decisions they make to their stakeholders and operate without the safety net of bureaucracy to save them if they fail. The decisions they make will directly impact whether or not the school will remain open. If a charter school principal makes poor or unpopular decisions, the parents may remove their student and the school will lose money.

Funding of their school is not on the list of job responsibilities for the public school principal. The funding of public schools has been historically based on the local property taxes in which the school district resides in addition to state support. The public school principal is typically given a budget by the district central office and must spend as they see fit (Sugarmann, 2002). These bureaucratic safeguards may cause public school principals to feel less stress in the area of financial management.

2.6 Conclusion

The role of school principal is one that entails many responsibilities that have been drastically increasing. According to Friedman (2002), a wide array of day-to-day responsibilities paired with an environment of educational accountability fueled by No Child Left Behind have caused many principals to experience job related stress.

The traditional public school and the charter school vary in the way that they are organized structurally. The traditional public school usually operates as a bureaucracy

while the charter school operates in the free market. Because of these structural differences, public school and charter school principals may feel different levels of stress in regards to the same job responsibilities.

For example, while personnel management may be stressful for a public school principal due to the organizational layers and red tape that come with a bureaucracy, charter school principals may feel a different type of stress based on their available hiring pool. Or, in terms of organizational legitimacy, a public school principal may feel stress from a heightened focus on state and national regulations while a charter school principal may feel a different type of stress based on the school's need to survive within the perceived educational niche.

Existing literature draws heavily on the public school principal context. While current research shows that governance and personnel management are stressors for public school principals (Podgursky, 2008; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Gilman & Givens, 2001; Levin, 2006; Marshall and Hooley, 2006) the impact of these job elements have not been thoroughly investigated from the charter school perspective. Undoubtedly, charter school principals also feel the stresses of governance and personnel management, but these elements may be less of a concern for these principals based on the organization of the charter school. Stressors such as school legitimacy and funding may weigh more heavily on charter school principals based on the free market structure (Walberg & Bast, 2003; Preston, Goldring, Berends & Cannata, 2012). This study attempts to study these issues in greater depth.

Chapter Three

Methods

3.1 Goals of this Dissertation

The goal of this dissertation is to determine if public school and charter school principals feel different levels of stress as related to the same job responsibilities and suggest possible reasons to explain why these discrepancies occur. In order to accomplish this, the researcher selected a qualitative method of study, interviewed ten traditional public school principals and ten charter school principals, and coded their responses based on the four job responsibilities outlined in the literature review. The differences between the stress felt by public school principals and charter school principals were then analyzed to determine if the structure of the organizations could be seen as a contributing factor to the stress. Because charter schools operate in the free market and are arguably open to innovation and flexibility, principals in this environment may feel different levels of stress than public school principals in regards to the same job responsibilities. The goal of this dissertation is to explore whether these differences exist and to determine if the organizational structure plays a part in creating these stress differences.

3.2 Methods

The methodology of this study is grounded theory. The investigator is the primary instrument of data collection analyzing the data and assuming a stance based on the meanings gathered by the data. Grounded theory is a research methodology that was introduced in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss in their book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. The data from this methodology come from observations, interviews, and other

documentary materials. Data collecting is conducted by sampling where “the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes... data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop...theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Then these data are analyzed using the constant comparative method of data review. This allows for the comparison of one segment of data with the other parts to figure out what is the same and what is different. This allows for the researcher to be able to identify patterns seen in the data and arrange in the relationships with each other (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research and grounded theory are used when a complex and detailed understanding of an issue is desired, and when the researcher seeks to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue (Creswell & Clark, 2007). In this case, the contexts and/or settings of the principal stress may play a direct role in the stress felt by these individuals. For this reason, qualitative research was most appropriate.

The goal of this research was to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of their situation (Merriam, 2009). Often these particular meanings are discussed through the lens of their own personal experiences. In other words, they are not simply stamped on individuals but are formed through relations with others and their life experiences (Creswell & Clark, 2007). For this reason, it was important to conduct both thorough and flexible interviews. The interview needed to be thorough enough to determine the core roots of the principal stress but also flexible enough to adapt to each individual with his or her own experiences.

3.3 Data Sources

The data for this study were obtained in the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area. Kansas City, Missouri is a strategic choice because of the way in which charter schools are operated. Many charter schools across the country, including in the neighboring state of Kansas, fall under the umbrella of a local traditional school district in their governance and operation. Charter schools in Kansas City, Missouri, though, are typically chartered and sponsored by state universities. They are bound less by state and local rules, and they report directly to the state department of education rather than to a local school district. Limiting the study to charter school principals in the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area ensures consistent contexts for comparison with public schools in the same area.

Subjects for this study were identified first by their position of principal in a secondary public or charter school and second by their willingness to participate. This study did not focus on elementary school principals. An e-mail invitation to participate in the study was sent to twenty public school principals and fifteen charter school principals. Based on whether or not a response was received, a call was made to determine a suitable time and place for a face-to-face interview.

The final sample used in this study consists of twenty principals, ten from the public school setting and ten from the charter school setting. All of these participants are either secondary principals in a public school district or a charter school district principal in the Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area. Two of the public school principals were administrators at the middle school level. The other eight public school principals functioned at the high school level. All ten charter school principals were from high schools. Five of the public school principals and three of the charter school principals

interviewed for this study were women. This sample was selected because it demonstrates the average person in relation to this study, tying in the phenomenon of job-related stress.

The following tables outline the enrollment for the schools represented in the study.

Table 3.3A
Charter School and Public School Distribution by Coding Number

| Charter School | Enrollment | Public School | Enrollment |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 424 | 1 | 650 |
| 2 | 910 | 2 | 763 |
| 3 | 176 | 3 | 1185 |
| 4 | 359 | 4 | 914 |
| 5 | 169 | 5 | 553 |
| 6 | 103 | 6 | 382 |
| 7 | 901 | 7 | 314 |
| 8 | 348 | 8 | 496 |
| 9 | 215 | 9 | 296 |
| 10 | 1131 | 10 | 284 |

Table 3.3B
Charter School and Public School Distribution by Size

| Charter School | Enrollment | Public School | Enrollment |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 6 | 103 | 10 | 284 |
| 5 | 169 | 9 | 296 |
| 3 | 176 | 7 | 314 |
| 9 | 215 | 6 | 382 |
| 8 | 348 | 8 | 496 |
| 4 | 359 | 5 | 553 |
| 1 | 424 | 1 | 650 |
| 7 | 901 | 2 | 763 |
| 2 | 910 | 4 | 914 |
| 10 | 1131 | 3 | 1185 |
| Median | 353.5 | Median | 524.5 |
| Mean | 473.6 | Mean | 583.7 |
| Range | 1028 | Range | 901 |

As shown in the second table, the sizes of the schools from the public and charter school realms are comparable. Based on the similarities in enrollment distribution, size of school was not found to be a contributing factor to the results of this study.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were gathered through the individual interviews using a semi-structured process. This means that while interview questions were developed in advance, the researcher took the liberty of changing the interview based on the subject's responses. For this reason, no two interviews were the same. Because this study was meant to examine a comparison of how certain job responsibilities impact stress in public and charter school principals, the interview subjects were allowed to change the course of the interview at any time based on their responses. For example, when asked, "What do you think about on your way home from work?" a participant may have responded that s/he thinks about the staff, the budget, professional development, or a myriad of other topics; Then, based on his/her response, the interviewer delved deeper into the topic in order to determine if the response could fit into one of the four defined categories used in this study.

In order to complete the interviews, several steps recommended by Merriam (2009) were followed:

1. Chose interviewees based on purposeful sampling.
2. Decided one-on-one interviews were most appropriate.
3. Chose a digital audio-recording device for interviews.
4. Developed and implemented an interview protocol.
5. Reworked the interview questions and procedures through pilot testing.

6. Chose a place for holding the interview that was good for audio-recording and limited distractions.
7. Advised on the amount of time needed for the interview.
8. Kept to the questions of the interview and finished the interviews within the time specified.

While detailed information on the types of questions asked is included in

Appendix A, a typical interview addressed the following issues:

1. Stress
2. Autonomy
3. Decision making
4. Necessary skills

These issues were addressed in order to delve into job related stressors without leading or guiding the interview subject to the particular topic.

3.5 Procedure

The interviews were transcribed and reviewed systematically using codes chosen to identify the four job responsibilities. These codes were simply abbreviations of the categories chosen: personnel management (PM), governance (G), organizational legitimacy (OL), and financial responsibilities (FR). A colleague from the university reviewed the coding to ensure that the analysis did not merely reinforce any preconceived beliefs of the researcher. The codes were then tallied to determine which job responsibilities proved to be stressful themes for each principal.

Through interviews, participants were able to share to what extent job-related stressors did or did not affect them personally. To ensure the integrity and

confidentiality of the study and to meet all ethical concerns, abundant care was taken to preserve the anonymity of all interviewees. A list connecting the names of the participants to their corresponding pseudonyms was kept for cross-reference as necessary.

3.6 Methods of Verification

To enhance the credibility of the study, copies of the transcript were sent to the participants for their review. The coding was reviewed by a university colleague to ensure that the analysis did not merely reinforce any preconceived beliefs of the researcher.

3.7 Limitations of Study

Qualitative research is a form of interpretation. Creswell and Clark (2007) stated that researchers' backgrounds and prior experiences could not be separated from their interpretations. One of the primary limitations of this study is bias in interpretation. In order to address this limitation, the researcher had a university colleague review the interview transcripts and the coding assigned to subject responses.

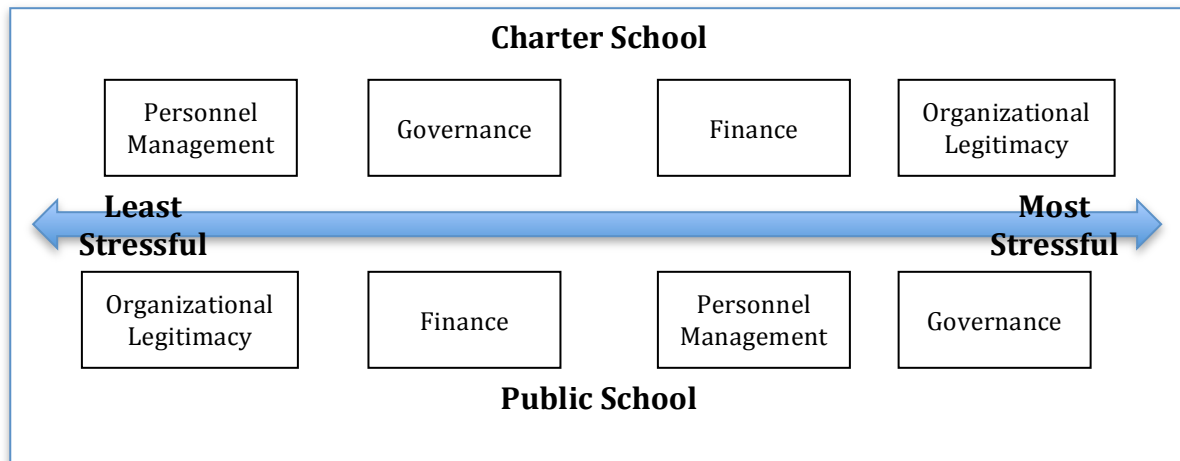
Another limitation in this study is the researcher's inexperience as an interviewer. The pilot interviews revealed that the researcher had a tendency to stick only to pre-determined questions on the protocol. This narrowed the interviews and limited the information collected. As the interviewer became more comfortable with the process, richer conversations were had and the interviews became more organic and flexible. The sample size and geographic location are limitations and this study may not be generalizable.

Chapter Four

Findings

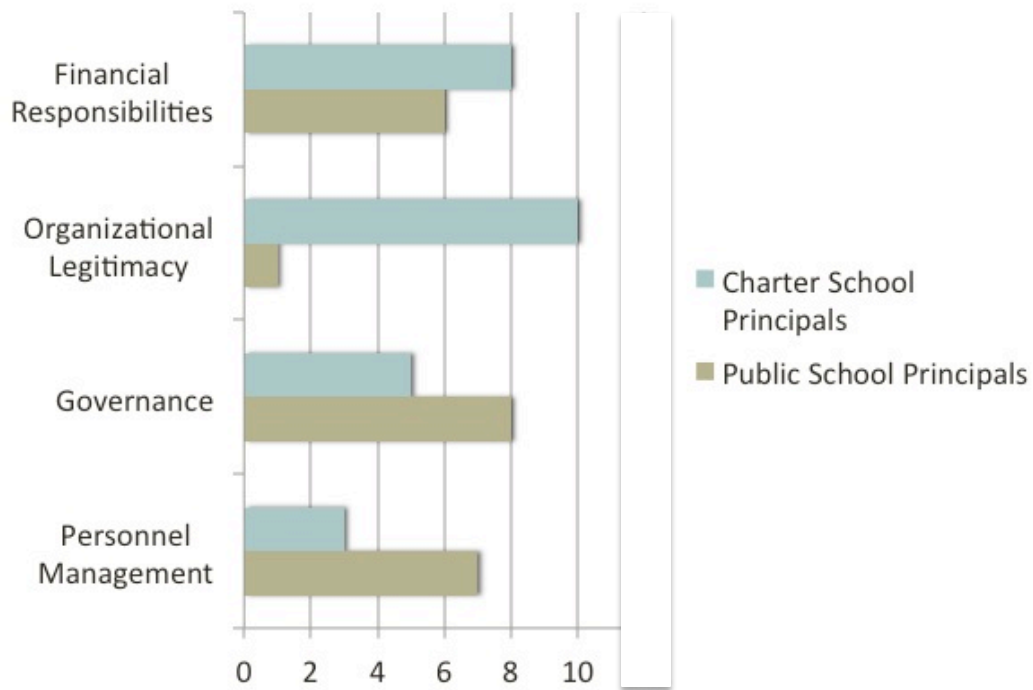
4.1 Organization of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to determine how certain stressors impacted educational leadership in both the charter school and public school realms. The study sought to examine the extent to which the following factors impacted the job-related stress of public school and charter school principals: Personnel Management, Financial Responsibility, Governance, and Legitimacy.



The above chart outlines the key findings of this study. Based on participant responses, charter school principals found organizational legitimacy to be the most stressful aspect of school leadership whereas public school principals found governance to be the most stressful.

The following chart outlines the number of principals who mentioned each of the domains within the interviews and described them as stressors.



As seen above, organizational legitimacy was shown to be significantly more stressful for charter school principals than it was for public school principals with ten public school principals mentioning it as a stressor in interviews compared to one charter school principal. Governance was the most common stress factor for public school principals with eight mentioning it as a stressor as compared to five charter school principals.

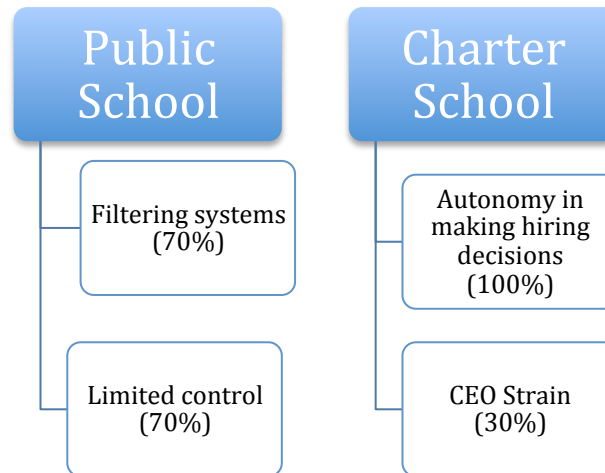
This chapter discusses each element in depth as they relate to the stress levels of both charter school and public school principals.

4.2 Responses to Interview Questions by Domain

4.2a Personnel Management as it relates to Public and Charter School Principals

The first domain of leadership examined by this study was personnel management. The purpose of this domain is to determine how personnel management impacts public school and charter school principals differently. A list of questions asked

can be found in Appendix A. Other organic follow-up questions on this topic were asked based on initial participant responses.



A. *Public School Principals*

Most public school principals found themselves moderately stressed by activities related to personnel. For the most part, public school principals do not feel that they have a great deal of autonomy in narrowing the candidate pool. The amount of autonomy by which principals are able to hire their staff can have a significant impact on their levels of stress (Podgursky, 2008). Seven of the ten principals (70%) interviewed shared that they do not have a say in which candidates filter through the system to be viewed at the building level as potential hires. One principal stated:

I never really feel like I get to see the people I really want to interview. In my district, an applicant has to survive a TeacherFit profile test. If they are successful in passing that test as the district sees fit, then they can be screened. If they survive that next screening step at the district office then I get to see them. I am typically given three people to interview and I choose the best one at that point.

Another principal echoed this sentiment, saying:

I guess I don't know if I am interviewing the best candidates that applied for the job. I assume that I am. I mean, that is what our computer screener is for, but I guess I really don't know.

In order to fill teaching positions in large public school districts, many districts will employ an online screening device that is meant to narrow the large candidate pools. These screening devices are meant to be measures of a candidate's personality to help determine if s/he would be a good teacher. The most popular online screener in the Kansas City area based on my interviews is the TeacherFit screener. Disposition screenings are based on the idea that successful teachers need specific traits. This screening tool asks candidates how they would react to specific scenarios, and include questions about their beliefs and attitudes. Based on my interviews, the use of this instrument limits a principal's autonomy in personnel management and causes a measure of stress.

This is my second year in my building and my first year as principal, we did not meet the performance objectives set by the district. I was kind of excited by [the turnover] in my building because I was hopeful to build a really quality staff and improve this year. I'm not sure if no one applied and it was a shallow candidate pool or if my building just wasn't a priority, but the candidates that were passed my way were not what I was hoping to find [...] I asked for more and was told that was what I had to choose from. Sorry.

Principals who are not impressed by the three candidates that pass the online screener and district screener are not given options to hire outside of the narrowed pool.

These principals feel stressed by the bureaucratic nature of their large districts. The multiple layers or "hoops" prevent these principals from actually seeing the candidates until the very last step.

It is hard to become a teacher in our district. We actually call it running the gauntlet. Teachers fill out interview questions, a ten-page application, a 45 minute interest or personality test online, have their references called, and they still might not ever get an interview. Sometimes I wonder if we should just

interview everyone who actually fills out the whole thing the right way. I mean, at least we know they have tenacity – or patience – however you want to look at it.

They expressed frustration with the fact that they are being held accountable for the progress of their buildings, but had extremely limited authority in the hiring of staff. One public school principal explained:

When I got my job, I was told that I needed to accomplish a certain goal. I needed to raise state test scores. I felt that in order to keep my job, I needed to provide results. It can be difficult to steer the bus when you don't have the right people on it and when the people that you are able to hire aren't necessarily a great fit either.

Another principal stated:

The central office pushes down professional development onto our building about fifty percent of the time. There really is no way to adjust what is sent based on what we are doing well on in our building [...] I'm being held accountable for making sure that we meet certain benchmarks, but I don't always get to choose how we spend professional development time. Like just this month we focused on co-teaching. We don't currently co-teach in our building – they do in other buildings – but that hasn't been an initiative here. But that is what the district chose to do professional development over, so that is what we did.

The disconnect between what a principal in one of these larger systems sees as appropriate, relevant, or important and what the district views as the same causes role confusion for the administrator.

Teachers in public schools have the ability to gain tenure status along with the protection afforded by unions. The right of due process afforded these teachers can significantly impact the ability of the building principal in terminating them, potentially contributing to greater levels of principal stress (Chubb, 2006).

My superintendent asked me to list the three weakest links in our building and to work on “getting them off the bus.” I know who these people are and am starting the documentation process so we'll see how that goes. I will be interested to see how the teachers react to the pressure and how [the superintendent] follows through on it. Without his support, it really could get ugly.

This resulting stress is exacerbated as the principal is caught in a difficult position – between district policy and what s/he feels is best for the building.

One public school administrator interviewed (10%) came from a smaller school district than the other nine principals surveyed. During his interview, it was clear that he felt more autonomy than other administrators from larger districts.

Really I just do all of it. I write the job descriptions, look over the applications, choose the candidates for first interviews, choose the finalists, and ultimately hire my favorite person [...] I try to find people who I like as people. You can help someone in their content, but you can't help make someone likeable.

This principal did not feel that there was any interference from central office; in fact, central office functioned as a secretarial element of the process rather than as a filter.

I send central office my recommendations and they send out the paperwork. I have to make sure that all of the references check out, but once I know who I want, they send out the paperwork and make sure that person is ready to start in August.

The bureaucratic hoops that were shared by other principals were not something that this principal experienced.

B. Charter School Principals

Most charter school principals in the Kansas City Metro Area report that they have situational control over hiring decisions. One principal reports:

I have a lot of autonomy to make personnel decisions. You aren't dealing with many people. There aren't many hoops to jump through.

This principal who had worked in both the charter and public school settings felt that the charter school provided him with more control over the hiring process. This correlates with the notion that charter schools are not as regulated when it comes to making personnel decisions (Bulkey & Fisler, 2003). This also reflects the research that shows

that charter school principals are able to choose those candidates they see as the right fit for their particular school (McTighe, 2005).

I like being able to make the ultimate decision. I didn't have that the last place that I worked [...] I guess it might be more work, so that might turn some people off, but I am a control freak and I like being able to screen, interview, and offer the spot to the person I like rather than the person somebody higher than me likes or knows.

The charter school where this principal worked did not have a human resources department to screen applicants. Rather, the principal was in charge of screening, interviewing, and offering positions.

While all ten charter school principals interviewed (100%) did express that they had autonomy in making hiring decisions, it became obvious throughout the interviews that the director or CEO has ultimate control. Three of the principals interviewed highlighted this as a frustration. The first of these three principals stated:

Sometimes [the CEO] gets involved in who I hire. Very involved. Like, she picks who gets hired and I might not even know we had a position. At one point, I learned we were adding a section at the same moment that I met the teacher who would be teaching the new section.

While in most cases the principal has the ability to hire and fire as needed, it is possible that the director or CEO may fill a position based on personal contacts and political needs.

I think that [the CEO] actually attends church with a good portion of our administrative staff. When a new admin is hired, I usually know which church they attend before I even ask.

Charter schools are not held to the standard that public schools are in regards to hiring highly qualified teachers or staff.

Actually, the new human resources hire was a CPA before starting here. He didn't have any experience in human resources until day one here. Which is fine,

but it made it clear that he was hired based on political or personal ties [...] I have a number of teachers who are trying to finish their credentials while they are working in the building [...] based on some of their connections, I don't know that it matters if they finish or not.

In the previous interview, the first of these three principals shared that the director appointed a teaching position within the building to an individual who was not certified in that subject. The director did not allow the principal to post the position or have input in the hiring process.

To echo this sentiment, another principal stated that when he was hired, he was told that due to personal relationships, some of the staff should not be “messed with.” He commented:

I came in and was told I had to leave half the teachers alone, and that I was only allowed to hire a certain number of teachers per grade level. So for half the staff I had no input on hiring or firing. I had no input on this at all.

This principal was frustrated by a lack of bureaucracy in this case. Because the CEO was friends with or liked those staff members this particular principal's hands were tied.

The third principal who spoke to this point voiced frustration about her input into hiring decisions.

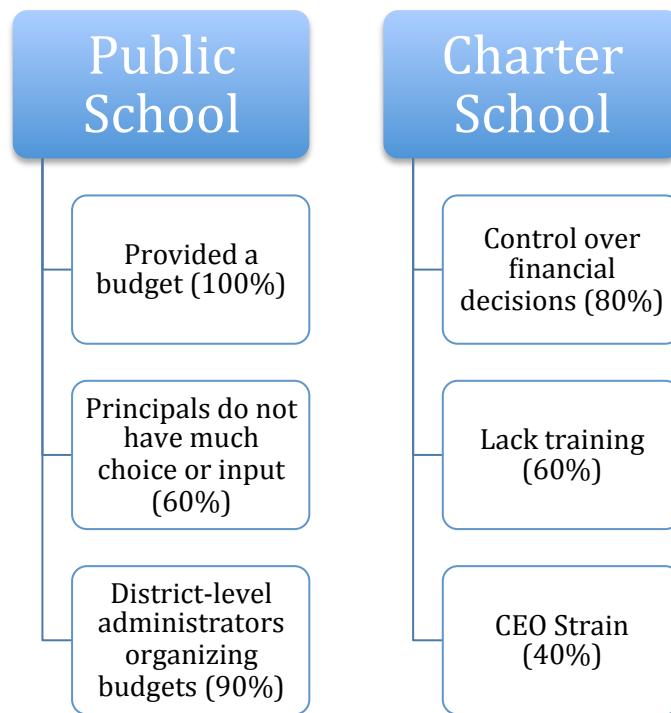
I make the best with what I have. You have to do that. Play your hand the best that you can. I have the staff that I have and I know that my boss doesn't want that to change very much. I have to try and make it so that I can still meet my goals with the staff that are in the building.

She felt stressed because she was being held accountable for the building outcomes, but she could not make final staffing decisions.

4.2b Financial Responsibilities as they relate to Public and Charter School Principals

Public school funding in the United States comes from federal, state, and local sources while charter schools can be funded in two different ways. They can be funded

by their local public school district at a level that is similar to the per pupil expenditure in the district, or they are funded, in some cases directly by the state at the state average of per student funding (Sugarmann, 2002). Financial responsibility was the second domain of leadership examined by this study. The purpose of this domain is to determine how financial responsibility impacts the stress of public school and charter school principals differently. A list of questions asked can be found Appendix A. Other organic follow-up questions on this topic were asked based on initial participant responses.



A. Public School Principals

The principals interviewed from public schools (100%) explained that they are provided a building budget by the district to use as they see fit.

The district provides me with a budget spreadsheet for my building.

I receive my building budget at the beginning of each year.

[The budget director] distributes building budgets in the first administrative meeting each year.

This was not a surprising discovery as the funding of public schools has been historically based on the local property taxes in which the school district resides with some additional state support (Sugarmann, 2002). These principals do not determine the amount of money that they have for their building; rather, they are given an allowance.

I am told how much money our building has to spend and then I figure out essentially how to spend it.

Once I receive our building budget, I break it down into categories so that each of my teachers know how much money they have for resources.

They have autonomy in the sense that they can organize some of their building funds at their discretion, but they are bound by state and district regulations in the way that some other funds are managed.

One principal shared that her district office provided her with a spreadsheet that outlined how much money she could spend on each line item. She had a certain amount of money for instructional supplies, a certain amount of money for professional development, etcetera. She also had a discretionary amount that she was able to spend based on her building needs. She commented:

I am not overly stressed by my budget because I don't really have a choice. I can decide how some of the money is allocated, but for the most part, this is determined for me by [district office personnel]. I just get to make decisions on how the money is spent within the budgets assigned.

This principal echoed sentiments of five other public school principals in the sense that financial management was not overly stressful due to the fact that they did not have much choice or input.

To this end, another principal stated:

I have the training to manage my facilities on site. I am told, “Here is the money you have, you figure out the best way to spend it.” Much of the major stuff is done for me.

Due to high-levels of bureaucracy in the large public school districts, these principals do not have a large amount of input on financial matters and, thus, do not feel a great deal of stress.

One principal interviewed was from a smaller school district. He had significantly more autonomy in financial management and shared evidence of higher levels of stress related to the building budget.

I basically take the state-allotted funds and divide it into line items each year. There are some restrictions and laws that guide me [...] a lot of it is up to me.

This principal faced challenges with state-determined funds and district restrictions. For example, because the state requires that all funds raised through students must be spent directly on students, general student fees cannot be used on professional development or staff appreciation. He commented:

It is just a shell game that gets moved around and many times there isn't enough money for the students or if there is some left over you can't spend it unless it is spent a certain way.

The other public school principals did not face this stressor as they had district-level administrators organizing their building budgets. Due to the small district not having as many layers of bureaucracy, the principal in this district felt more stress.

B. Charter School Principals

Most charter school principals in the Kansas City Metro Area report that they have significant control over financial decisions (80%). One principal reports:

I have the ability to spend money as I see fit. I do not usually have to run it by anyone unless it reaches a certain level [...] There are times that this really wears

me out. I am afraid that maybe I am not spending the right amount of money on things because I really do not have a background in financial management.

The lack of training in financial management was a common stressor for the charter school principals.

I actually trained myself [how to run a budget]... I took classes in college, but nothing prepared me for anything this extensive.

Although administrative programs required for licensure typically include a building finance class, many of the principals (60%) felt unprepared to budget the building funds.

It's funny. I remember when you [the interviewer] did your internship and identified budget as the area that you thought you still needed more practice in. I don't know that anyone goes into this job and feels like they are ready for the budget.

Without the bureaucracy and administrative layers found in typical public schools, these principals were on their own to manage their funds and make ultimate decisions on what is best for students. These principals feel degrees of stress as they bear the weight of responsibility that comes with their autonomy in making funding decisions.

Basically, I don't want to mess up. There are two things that get people fired in this business: money and relationships. The last thing that I want to do is mess up the money.

Also if the school is not at full enrollment the principal may have to find methods of recovering revenue shortfalls as found by Adamowski & Petrilli (2007) and Gawlik (2008).

Unlike a public school, we have to recruit for enrollment. We literally go door to door and hand out flyers to try and increase enrollment and increase funding.

Although eight principals interviewed (80%) did express that they had independence in making financial decisions, it became clear that similar to the personnel management, the director or CEO has ultimate control. Four of the principals

interviewed highlighted this as a frustration. While in most cases the principal has the ability to manage finances as seen fit, it is likely that the director or CEO may step in and make a final financially driven decision.

In the charter school it is supposed to be the principal that does the actual budget, but you fall back into the gray area where many charter principals get caught between the director and the board and what they think is the best way to spend the money.

This principal and the three others felt that their decisions about budget were generally honored but that, at times, the director of the school overrode their input.

Two principals explained that they had no control over financial management because the CEO made all financial decisions. One principal stated:

There have been times where I wanted a particular professional development and I couldn't do it. There were times I wanted to purchase a particular reading program but I could not do it. I felt like my hands were tied because I was at the mercy of the director to tell me what I could or could not do, but yet I was the one held accountable for test scores and other results of the school.

Rather than having full control like four of their charter school peers, partial control like four other charter school peers, or even regulated control like their public school peers, these principals had zero control. The second principal stated:

I really don't make any budget-based decisions. My boss makes all of the money decisions and I make the most of what I have.

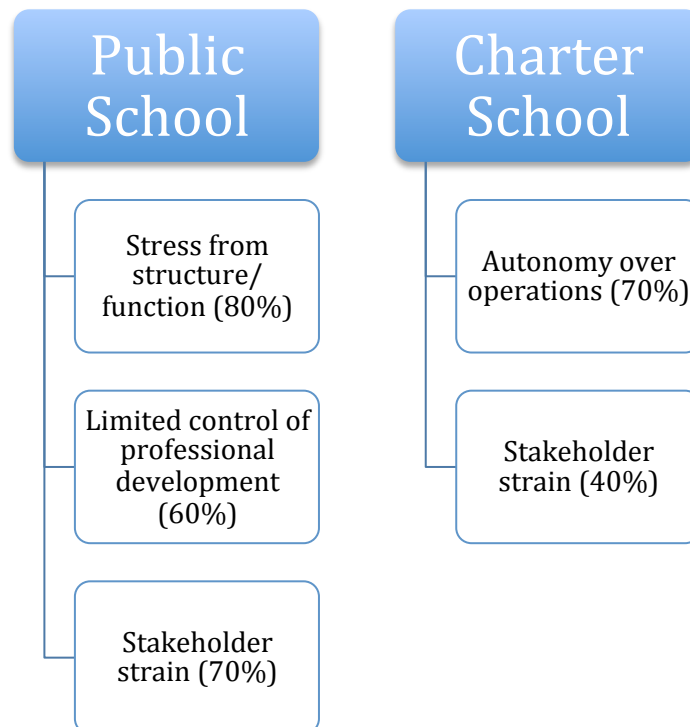
This caused these principals stress because they were the face of the school and were required to produce results and yet they were unable to control what was purchased to facilitate these outcomes.

Charter school principals interviewed as part of this study experienced financially related stress from two sources. The first being a lack of training or experience in regard

to financial management and the second being the pressure they felt from their directors as referenced above.

4.2c Governance as it relates to Public and Charter School Principals

School governance can be described as the leadership, direction, and control of the school district. How autonomy and flexibility over school governance of the school impacts the job-related stress of public school and charter school principals was the third domain of school leadership examined by this study. The purpose of this domain is to determine how school governance impacts the stress levels of traditional school and charter school principals. A list of questions asked can be found in Appendix A. Other organic follow-up questions on this topic were asked based on initial participant responses.



A. Public School Principals

Most public school principals (80%) found themselves moderately stressed by the structure and function of their district.

I guess I would say that I worry about getting everything done. There seem to be a lot of balls in the air, if you will, this year... The district just seems to have a lot going on.

It is really all about balance. I find myself trying to balance between what I know my building needs to grow and what has to be done [based on district instruction].

Oh, this year the district has us focusing on improving ACT scores, state assessments assuming that there will be one, technology integration, Marzano's Classroom Instruction That Works, McRel evaluation tools, boosting credit recovery success percentages, adding CTE pathways... There really just isn't enough time in the day.

In most cases, public school principals do not feel that they have a great deal of autonomy in the way they want to manage their building. One principal stated:

From a building standpoint I would say that you have to accept the fact that you are part of the district and there is a place where we have to fit in inside the district. Your goals essentially need to align with the district goals.

Another principal echoed this sentiment, saying:

You have so many people to answer to. You have to play politics to get things done. You cannot just make arbitrary decisions. You have to pick up the phone for everything.

These principals feel stressed by the bureaucratic nature of their large districts. The multiple layers, red-tape, or "hoops" frustrate them as they attempt to do what they feel is in the best interest of their particular building. They expressed frustration with the fact that they are being held accountable as instructional leaders of their buildings, but had extremely limited authority in implementing their own initiatives or programs without district support.

These principals do not have the same autonomy as their charter school counterparts. Public school principals must enact district level initiatives as one principal explained:

Of our six full professional development days, three are district driven and one is flexed for conferences. So I basically get to develop a third of the professional development for my building.

If these initiatives or policies cross purposes with what the principal thinks is best for their building it can bring additional stress as found by Marshall and Hooley (2006).

Another principal shared:

There is an elementary school that is using a mystery piece type of curriculum. They basically have the students on an academic scavenger hunt trying to get them to figure it out. One board member heard about this and said that they don't want the kids at [school name] to have more of an advantage than students at the other elementary schools. Because of this board member, they were not allowed to continue that curriculum.

Governance over curriculum was a stressor for this elementary school principal because she felt that she knew what was best for her students and, because of the board policy and the layers of bureaucracy, she was not able to continue this practice.

Professional development was also seen as a structurally-related stressor.

Although these principals felt as though they had a hand on the pulse of their buildings and knew in detail the specific things that their staff needed to work on, principals in these systems may not be able to focus on these initiatives. One principal stated:

The district basically sets professional development for you. You may have some input but pretty much it is given to you to deliver to your staff.

Professional development is an important part of a principal's job because this is how the principal moves the staff towards achieving building and district goals. When a principal does not have governance over professional development, it seems to cause stress.

The disconnect between what a principal in one of these systems sees as appropriate, relevant, or important and what the district views as the same causes role confusion for the administrator.

When I was hired, they told me that they were looking for someone who was strong in curriculum... So, basically, I was hired to be a curriculum expert... It's funny because the district decides what we do with curriculum. It was supposedly why I got the job, but I really have no say in [developing curriculum].

This may result in stress as it puts the principal in a difficult position – caught between district mandates and what s/he feels is best for the building.

B. Charter School Principals

Seven of the ten charter school principals interviewed reported that they have control of the day-to-day operations of their building.

Really, I decide what happens instructionally in my building.

Yeah – I would say that I have a lot of control over the way things operate at [my school]... Those are decisions that I make.

Literature had suggested that this might indeed be the case as charter school principals experience greater levels of autonomy because they function within organizations that are less regulated and more loosely coupled (Aresen et al., 1999; Gawlik, 2008; Lubienski, 2003). These principals described an environment with much creative freedom and local control. One principal stated:

The charter school structure is set up for the principal to make decisions on site. There are still politics but not as many layers that you have to fight through [as you would in a public school].

Another principal echoed that sentiment:

There aren't many walls or strings to pull. The accountability is an issue, but your method on how you get to your goals is as you see fit.

These seven principals felt that they were able to make important decisions for their building based on the vision that they had for the school. Chubb & Moe (1990) found something similar in that the level of autonomy that principals have varies according to the goals and educational environments in which they operate.

Actually, I would say that my boss is pretty hands off... I am a part of deciding what we will work on each year.

This likely reduced administrator stress because these principals felt that they were able to develop a plan for school improvement and then implement it.

The charter school principals differed from their public school peers in these interviews in the sense that the charter school principals were focused on fulfilling building goals whereas the public school principals also had to attend to district goals. In regards to what he worries about on his drive home from work, one of the charter school principals commented:

I would worry most about if whether or not I was able to complete the objectives of the year: building and personal objectives.

This is worth noting because he does not mention district objectives or board objectives. Whereas the public school administrators commented on the board and the district in discussing governance, those stakeholders were absent in most interviews (60%) with charter school principals.

The freedom felt by the charter school principals seems to provide these principals not only with less stress but also with more job-related satisfaction. These principals spoke to their ability to make a difference and have an impact on student lives.

That is actually why I switched to [the charter school]. I know here that I am the one making a difference in these kids' lives... I see them growing based on the work that I do each day.

Because of their autonomy, these principals were able to act as change agents in their buildings allowing them to have a great deal of influence on their students and staff. To this point, one principal stated:

A charter school principal will have a large impact and see the fruits of their labor almost immediately. You have a great sense of direction and accomplishment. You can be a change agent in a charter school you are not constrained by layers of people above you.

Without the layers of bureaucracy and organizational red tape, these principals felt more empowered and less stressed.

While seven of the charter school principals interviewed (70%) expressed that they had autonomy in making building decisions, it became obvious throughout my interviews that the director or CEO has final authority. Three of the principals interviewed shared frustration related to this issue. In these cases, the three principals felt that the director or CEO intervened often based on personal opinions and perceived needs. In one interview, a principal shared:

The superintendent would really frustrate me. I could evaluate a situation and devise a plan of action and then have it shot down for no justifiable reason as to why it was shut down. I dealt with that a lot and camouflaged that to keep my support people happy.

A second principal shared something similar. When he was hired, he was told that he would have the authority to make building level decisions, but he commented:

Many times the organizational structure can impede the vision you have for the school. You need to know who really has the power. It is not nicely layered like a public school district.

This principal was frustrated by a lack of bureaucracy in this case. The organizational structure of his charter school was changing and he was struggling to determine who truly “had the power” and with whom he needed to align.

A third principal also spoke to this point and felt stressed because he was being held accountable for increasing the state test scores, but he could not make final decisions regarding curriculum programs. He shared:

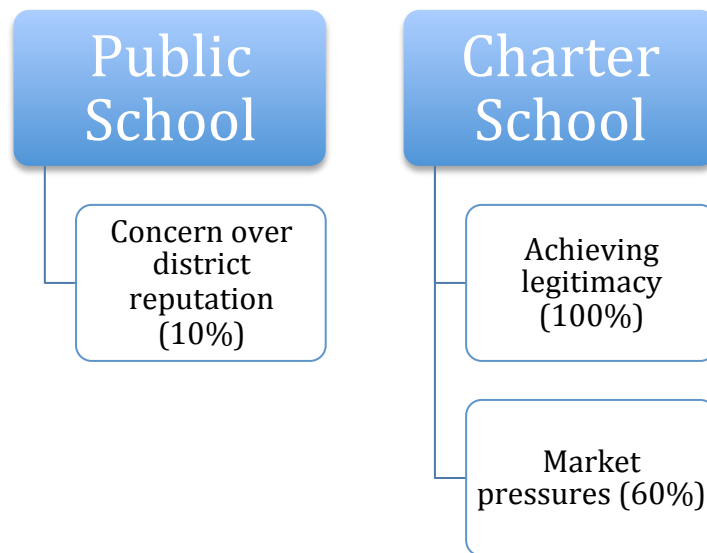
At one school I felt like I had earned trust. If there was a program or something I wanted to experiment with then I could. At another even after the trust was earned I didn't have any input. There was always something. There was no collaborative thinking, there was one perspective and that was of the superintendent.

In seven out of ten charter schools, the principals had complete autonomy to make decisions. The three principals who voiced these governance frustrations were in positions more similar to those of their public school peers. These principals faced difficulties that are not part of the goal of the charter school movement. The movement is designed to free principals from bureaucratic regulation and allow them the ability to be innovative entrepreneurs in fulfilling the mission of their school (Williamson, 2008). These particular principals were instructed in which direction their building should go and informed of the goals that they should pursue.

4.2d Organizational Legitimacy as it relates to Public and Charter School Principals

Organizational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organization (Meyer & Scott, 1983). An important part of managing a school's environment is the management of social legitimacy. While legitimacy is ultimately awarded outside of the organization itself, the school has to take a number of steps to associate itself with valued social norms (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The organization of public schools has remained relatively consistent over the last hundred years creating a grammar of schooling- a social expectation of what is appropriate for a school (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The fourth domain of school leadership studied was organizational legitimacy. This study sought to determine how much stress organizational legitimacy

elicits for public school and charter school principals. A list of questions asked can be found Appendix A. Other organic follow-up questions on this topic were asked based on initial participant responses.



A. Public School Principals

Organizational legitimacy does not seem to be an issue that causes stress for public school principals. Public schools are part of the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and therefore the general public has been socialized as to what to expect from them. The grammar of schooling enables principals to fulfill their duties in a predictable manner and to function as parents and other stakeholders anticipate. Public schools have fewer legitimacy concerns and, thus, it was difficult for the public school principals to speak to this topic. It was almost impossible for these principals to envision a schooling system where their school did not exist. While No Child Left Behind promises sanctions for schools that do not perform up to standard, even then the school continues to operate.

No, I don't really ever worry that the school will close. We are a growing district and our enrollment continues to increase each year... I don't see any reason that the district would close our school.

When public school principals were asked to explain how they legitimize their building with their constituents, public school principals (90%) spoke of their district and/or the reputation that their district has.

You are part of the district and the district's reputation sort of becomes your reputation. You might be the worst school in your district, but as long as the district has a good reputation, you are still seen as a good school.

[The district] has been struggling lately... Our school is seen as the best school in the district, but yeah, I know that we are still looked down on because we are in [this district].

Public school principals had a difficult time answering questions related to what they specifically do in order to make their school legitimate. With this taken into account, it is clear that organizational legitimacy is not a stressor for public school principals.

B. Charter School Principals

Achieving organizational legitimacy was found to be a stressor for all ten charter school principals (100%).

Yes. I worry about staying open.

Actually, I spend a lot of time improving our public relations... we need community support.

I think about ways to reach out to the people [in the community] and show them what we are all about.

In order to have a successful school, a charter school must be viewed as legitimate in the eyes of the public. Because of the current emphasis on accountability and student achievement as evidenced by test scores, charter school principals must find a way to

show the public that their school is just as good – if not better – than the area public schools.

As a charter school in [this district], our calling card is that we will be better than the schools in [this district].

Organizational legitimacy in charter schools is driven by results. The public expects for schools to improve learning as evidenced by these state assessments and legitimacy lies in reaching the goals set forth by local, state, and federal guidelines. Due to social pressures to achieve on these exams, obtaining positive test results is also paramount to the school's survival. This stress of producing good scores on the state assessment was evident in many interviews.

One charter school principal explained:

One of the reasons that we have been so successful in the past is because we achieve the scores that people want to see. We take struggling kids and help them do great things... Scores are a measure we use, yes.

Another principal shared:

You won't get five years to bring up your scores in the charter school world; you might in the public school world. You have engaged parents in the charter school world, an engaged sponsor, board president, and director. Public schools might have more wiggle room; the charter school principal is front and center when it comes to just about everything – but especially when it comes to test results. There are no departments to hide behind, as is the case in many public school districts.

Yet, another stated:

Sure. If we don't improve [on assessments], I think that we will close.

Without the layers of bureaucracy and the district reputation to fall back on, charter school principals are essentially on their own.

Sometimes, when I try something new and it blows up, I wonder if that will be the end of me and my job... The biggest difference you will find [from a public school] is that when the school fails, the school closes. So, you don't want to fail.

This correlates with the findings of Goldring, (1992) in that the free market landscape has placed a greater importance on the ability of the principal to achieve a positive school environment. As one principal noted:

In a charter school, all eyes are on you. You are either the hero or the scapegoat... You don't have a lot of time. You are responsible now, immediately. The board wants results immediately.

It was evident that this pressure caused these principals a great deal of stress. As evidenced by another principal:

The pressure is time in the state of Missouri. Everyone wants results now. Principals will feel it and make bad decisions.

Achieving results is key to achieving organizational legitimacy in the charter school realm. Where public school principals are able to rely on the district to buffer them from their constituents, the charter school principal is the face of the organization.

On top of the need to achieve and show academic results, charter school principals (60%) also shared that they felt market pressures. For a charter school to operate, it must have students. As Hallinger and Hausman (1992) found, it is often the principal who is responsible for the recruiting of students and the public relations of the building. One principal stated:

The bottom line is selling the charter school to parents who feel like their child has become disenfranchised by the public schools. It boils down to relationships. It is not the curriculum it is relationships. You have to sell yourself. You have to do what it is that you say you are going to do. If you put out brochures stating that you have a better curriculum or whatever, you better do what it is that you said you would do. You have to show that loyalty to your constituents. They are trusting you with their child, whether an engaged parent or not. As you go out to the community, the centers, the clergy, it is not just the school but it is you. That relationship is most important.

This principal felt stress because he is not only the instructional leader as he would be in a public school, but he is the community leader as well. Another principal shared that sentiment:

I try to build relationships with the parents. I go out of my way to make sure the parents still get the public school feel because that is what they want.


Parents, business owners, community members, local government members are all constituents to whom the charter school principal must reach out. The human resources component was less prominent in the public school interviews, but charter school principals mentioned this often, insinuating that this aspect caused them a relatively high amount of stress.

4.3 Discussion of Results

Data collected in this study have been analyzed and presented in sections corresponding to the leadership domains identified for this study. Interview questions were developed to investigate these domains and all of the data were derived from responses to these questions. Twenty principals were selected for this study: 10 from the traditional public school setting and 10 from the charter school setting. Analysis of the data resulted in the following findings as summarized for the research question:

Research Question: How do certain stressors differently impact educational leadership in both the charter school and public school realms?

| | Public | Charter |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Most Stressful | Governance | Organizational Legitimacy |
| | Personnel Management | Finance |
| | Finance | Governance |
| Least Stressful | Organizational Legitimacy | Personnel Management |



4.3a Public School Principals

In the public school realm the aspect that the principals found most stressful was governance. Principals (80%) found themselves stressed by the structure and function of their district. In most cases, public school principals did not feel that they had a great deal of autonomy in the way they wanted to manage their building. This is stressful because they felt caught between what the district wants and what they feel is best for their particular building.

Personnel management was the second most commonly felt stressor by public school principals. These principals did not feel that they had control of selecting candidates for positions in their schools. Seven of the ten principals (70%) interviewed shared that they do not have a say in which candidates filter through the system to be viewed at the building level as potential hires. This is stressful because they are being held accountable for their building's performance, yet they are limited in filling open positions as they deem appropriate.

Following personnel management, school finance was the third most felt stressor. The principals that I interviewed from public schools (100%) explained that they are provided a building budget by the district to use as they see fit. These principals do not

determine the amount of money that they have for their building; rather, they are given an allowance. They have autonomy in the sense that they can organize some of their building funds at their discretion, but they are bound by state and district regulations in the way that some other funds are managed. The stress they feel is mostly related to state and district regulations on how particular monies can be spent. They do not feel a great deal of stress in this area as most of the funds are outlined for them and they are merely spending what is allowed rather than determining how things should be allocated. In addition, building budgets do not include salary or benefits for staff. This function is determined and monitored at the district level. The building budgets are typically used for materials, supplies, professional development, and, on occasion, discretionary federal funds.

Organizational legitimacy was the least felt stressor. It was not an issue that caused stress for public school principals. Public schools are part of the grammar of schooling (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and therefore the general public has been socialized as to what to expect from them. Public schools do not have a legitimacy concern and thus, it was difficult for the public school principals to speak to this topic. It was almost impossible for these principals to envision an educational system where their school did not exist.

4.3b Charter School Principals

In the charter school realm, achieving organizational legitimacy was found to be the most stressful aspect studied. Because of the current emphasis on accountability and student achievement as evidenced by test scores, principals must find a way to show the public that their school is just as good – if not better – than the area public schools

(Lubienski, 2003). The stress they felt was entrepreneurial in nature as they are the face of the organization. These elements of building leadership leave the principals feeling pressure to succeed and stress over whether or not their school will survive.

Financial management was the second most commonly felt stressor for the charter school principals. Although administrative programs required for licensure typically include a building finance class, many of the principals (60%) felt unprepared to budget the building funds. Without the bureaucracy and administrative layers found in typical public schools, these principals were on their own to manage their funds and make ultimate decisions on what is best for students. These principals felt stress because there was no one there to fall back on if a mistake was made. It is up to them to make the right decision, the first time.

Following financial management, school governance was the third most felt stressor. In seven out of ten charter schools, the principals had complete autonomy to make decisions. The three principals who voiced governance frustrations were in positions more similar to those of their public school peers. These principals were instructed which direction the building should go and informed of the goals that they should pursue. This caused the principals stress as they were being held accountable for school results, but did not have the input in making key decisions that could affect the school's success.

Personnel management was the least felt stressor. Most charter school principals in the Kansas City Metro Area reported that they have situational control over hiring decisions. Due to the lack of bureaucracy or a human resources department, principals were left with a great deal of autonomy in making hiring decisions. This resulted in less

stress as they were able to screen candidates, schedule interviews, and offer positions at will.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation set out to address the following issue: how do certain stressors differently impact educational leadership in both the charter school and public school realms? The basic findings are that that public and charter school principals tend to be stressed by different factors. While both groups felt some levels of stress related to the four elements studied: Governance, Finance, Personnel Management, and Organizational Legitimacy, these levels of stress tended to differ based on whether a principal was in the charter school setting or the public school setting. In particular, public school principals were most stressed by governance and personnel management as opposed to charter school principals who seemed to be most stressed by organizational legitimacy and finances.

So is there a difference in how certain stressors impact charter school principals versus their public school peers? Yes, this study shows that there are important bureaucratic factors that constrain and therefore caused stress for regular public school principals while charter school principals felt relatively free of bureaucratic pressures.

The school choice movement advocates innovation and advertises freedom from bureaucratic constraints and the impediments that come along with being in a bureaucratic system. This does not mean, though, that these charter school principals were free from stress. This study found that rather than bureaucratic stress, charter school principals faced entrepreneurial stressors instead. School choice literature reviewed for this study rarely addressed this pressure – the entrepreneurial stress. The school choice movement tries to achieve legitimacy by pointing to the ills of

bureaucracy; alternatively, the charter school context is not necessarily stress free. These charter school principals appeared to have their own stressors related to innovation, accountability and performance. It could be argued that charter schools would find greater success if charter schools principals possessed the necessary skills in order to mitigate these particular stressors. It would follow that a good charter school leader should be one that can manage these issues and excel in these areas. Contrary to public sentiment, being a charter school and being free of bureaucracy is not necessarily equate to charter school success. Success requires leadership traits and leadership commitment that can assist principals to manage the stressors found most prevalent in this research.

5.1 Implications for Research

The fact that school choice literature does not delve deeply into the leadership traits of charter school principals is an issue. This apparent gap in literature is alarming as these leadership traits and skill sets may be the underlying factors that determine the success or failure of the charter school realm. Future research could examine these traits to better inform public policy, educational institutions, and those interested in pursuing charter school principal positions.

In examining charter school outcomes, it is important to avoid simply comparing charter schools to public schools. Rather, researchers could attempt to determine if charter school leaders are equipped to handle job related stressors in order to manage them and sustain effective leadership practices.

This conclusion raises the following questions for future research:

1. What types of leadership skills are needed to manage an effective charter school?

2. Given that organizational legitimacy and finance are the main stressors for charter school principals, what skills are needed to manage them effectively?
3. Are there different skills needed to be a successful charter school principal versus a successful public school principal?

Future research could examine these traits and skill sets. Successful charter schools could be observed to determine the leadership strengths of their principals. Are these charter schools successful because of these leadership strengths or for another reason?

The premise of the school choice movement is that with charter schools leading the charge with innovative practice resulting in high performance, public schools would be forced to adapt to the new market and become more innovative as well. The addition of charter schools to the schooling market was meant to spur competition and drive progress in education. In principle, entrepreneurial stressors felt by charter school principals would also be felt by public school principals because they would feel pressure to reform due to the success of the charter school movement. Thus, in the perfect world of charter school legitimacy, all principals, both charter and public, would feel the pressures to innovate and achieve.

In the current climate, this is not always the case. There are a few reasons why this may not happen. For example, a charter school principal not equipped to face the challenges of innovation and accountability would not manage a successful school and, thus, would not motivate public school principals to innovate within the traditional setting.



If the leaders of the charter school system are not ready to innovate themselves, they will not drive innovation within the public realm.

Conversely, charter school principals who are very successful and implement effective innovations may not drive change in the public realm either because change in the public system partially depends on the public school principals and other school leaders.



If the leaders of the public school system are not capable of innovation, change will not occur and, again, the school choice market sentiment fails.

Based on my study, it does not seem that the entrepreneurial stressors have made their way into the public sector. Future research could examine whether this is stemming from failures in the charter school leadership realm or the public school leadership realm.

5.2 Implications for Practice

Keeping and recruiting high quality principals is increasing in significance. It would stand to reason that individuals who are capable of handling the stresses of the principalship, both public and charter, will be more successful and would, thus, remain principals. Retaining principals creates stability and develops experienced principals who can then serve as guides to those less-practiced principals. Schools should endeavor to hire those that are mentally and emotionally equipped to handle the stressors that are connected with the position of principal. There are several screening instruments available to districts such as Principal Fit that may assist in identifying the best possible

candidates. It could be argued that those who are best equipped to handle the stressors would have the most success in this position of leadership.

Familiarizing prospective administrators with the role and types of stressors that principals face could assist school administrator preparation programs in better equipping these students for long-term success. Universities would be better able to assist principal candidates in the development of skill sets that will enable them to recognize and cope with work related stress. This assistance would not only help prospective principals in recognizing stressors but could also lead to better retention in the field.

Many principals in this study voiced the concern that they were not educated enough to feel comfortable in handling their financial responsibilities. It would stand to reason that school administrator preparation programs should have an increased and more in-depth academic focus on the aspects of finance and business management.

Staff at the school district level could use this research to intensify responsiveness to the stressors that principals face and create and improve ways to support them. These districts and charter schools could craft professional development activities and programs to better support principals with the purpose of aiding them in managing and easing work related stress.

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Appendix A

The interviews were semi-structured. The interview protocol included some of the questions listed, but each interview was slightly different in terms of the exact questions asked. Not every question was asked over the course of the interviews. Questions were chosen from this bank based on participant responses in order to assist in expanding on experiences.

1. Tell me your daily work.
2. What is your job about? What is the whole point?
3. What do you do during the day?
4. What do you worry about when you go home at the end of the day?
5. What do you worry about at the end of the year?
6. What would you tell a new charter school principal that you care about the most?
The least?
7. If you were to write a book on charter school principalship, what would your chapters be?
8. What are your priorities? Why are you focusing on these?
9. What do you think makes a successful principal?
10. What is an effective school?
11. What does innovation mean to you?
12. What stresses you out about budgets or financial responsibilities?
13. How/what did you do to make the school come across as more of a legitimate school to those who aren't familiar with charter schools?
14. How does the governance structure of your school affect your stress?
15. What is the hiring process for teachers in your district?
16. Do you feel like you are able to access the best possible candidates that you want to interview?
17. What are some differences between a charter school and a public school principal?
18. Please describe your perceptions of what it's like to be a school leader in your practice setting.
19. What are your primary building-level responsibilities as a principal/assistant principal?
20. What are your perceptions of the term "principal autonomy/independence?"
21. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest level of autonomy and 1 being no autonomy, how would you rate your level of autonomy? Explain your rating.
22. Can you give concrete examples that demonstrate how you are experiencing independence as a leader in everyday practice?
23. Do you feel your ability to lead effectively is constrained by forces beyond your control? What are those forces beyond your control?
24. What impact does independence have on your decision-making process and how does it affect your workload?
25. What is the collective vision of your school?
26. In what areas do you perceive you have sufficient flexibility and autonomy to achieve the collective vision of your school?

27. In what areas do you perceive that you do not have sufficient flexibility or autonomy to achieve the collective vision of your school?
28. How would you describe your school's governance structure?
29. Do you agree that you have the flexibility and authority to make decisions that lead to increased student achievement in your context? Why or why not?
30. What specific organizational obstacles negatively affect your ability to act as you see fit, if any?
31. What support structure is in place that encourages you to exercise autonomy?
32. To what extent are you able to exercise autonomy in the area of school budgeting?
33. What specific obstacles negatively affect your flexibility and authority to manage resources at your school and diminish your autonomy, if any?
34. How much discretion do you have in the spending and/or budgeting with regard to controlling the school facility and general purchases?
35. What accountability measures affect your role as an instructional leader?
36. Please explain how national NCLB mandates, state accountability measures, and/or local accountability measures affect your everyday practice
37. What amount of autonomy do you have in the area of recruiting, hiring, and evaluating teachers?
38. To what extent are you able to exercise independence when it comes to firing teachers?
39. What do I have to know to understand your school?
40. How do you evaluate your school's success?
41. What do think of your school's organization?
42. What type of a leader must the head/principal be?
43. How often do staff members who want to talk interrupt your work?
44. How often do you spend time writing letters, memos, and other communications?
45. Do you ever feel like you have too much responsibility delegated to you by your supervisor?
46. How do you feel about your daily workload? Are you able to complete it?
47. How many meetings do you have on a daily or weekly basis?
48. What are your responsibilities in preparing and allocating budget resources?
49. What is your role in gaining public approval and/or financial support for school programs?
50. Do you feel like you get the information needed to carry out your job properly?
51. Do you ever experiencing conflicting demands of those who have authority over you?
52. How do you typically resolve differences with your superiors?
53. Do you know what your supervisor thinks of you, or how he/she evaluates your performance?
54. Do you feel that you have the authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to you?
55. Are there times that you attempt to influence your immediate supervisors' actions and decisions that affect your or your building?
56. Do you feel it is your responsibility if the school does not make Adequate Yearly Progress?
57. How do you feel when your school is publicly being compared to other schools?

58. Are you clear about the scope and responsibilities of your job?
59. In the past, metaphors have been used to represent the role of the principal, for example, “bureaucratic executive, values broker, and scientific manager.” What metaphor(s) do you believe best exemplify the principalship today?
60. What do you see as the major differences in your leadership role at a charter school as compared with a conventional public school?
61. How has the element of parental choice affected your role in your charter school? Has this affected your behavior and actions as a principal? If so, please explain.
62. Do you experience a tension between the leadership and the managerial roles? If so, describe how you manage to get accomplished what needs to be done.
63. As a principal what would you prefer to spend more time on? Less time on?
64. Describe some of the systems, structures and supports you have created in your charter school that help you to accomplish the many roles and tasks.
65. What difficulties have you encountered in creating these supports or structures?
66. Have these additional tasks affected your workday and/or work year?
67. What are some of the important qualities or characteristics necessary to be successful charter school principals?
68. Are there some special skills that you feel need to be developed in charter school principals that may be unique to this group?
69. What advice do you have for educators who wish to become future charter school principals?

Appendix B

Definition of terms

Principal: a person who fills the role of school site leader who does not directly report to any other administrator on that particular school site.

Bureaucracy: any policy, law, mandate, goal, or initiative that is imposed on the principal by the school district or any government agency.

School Choice/ Market: the concept itself can include a myriad of options- magnet schools, postsecondary enrollment opportunities, alternative schools for dropouts or at-risk students, charter schools, intradistrict/interdistrict transfers, and private school choice through voucher, tuition tax credit, or tuition grants.

Governance: refers to different structures, processes, and participants depending on the level of the public educational or charter school systems.

Organizational Legitimacy: the generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within a social system. So it appears that a central element of legitimacy, as currently understood, is meeting and adhering to the expectations of a social system's norms, values, rules, and meanings (Hirsch & Andrews, 1984; Parsons, 1960).