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Urban Teacher Residencies: Indicators of Successful Recruitment

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Abstract

With the current teacher workforce in urban school districts diminishing in size, teacher preparation programs are being called to use creative ways to attract candidates to ensure that schools in urban districts keep their staff filled with highly qualified teachers. This article considers the factors for successful recruitment in an urban teacher residency program for a mid-sized city's urban school district. This study retroactively utilized selection data from four cohorts of residency applicants to determine which factors contributed the most to the program selection process. Among these factors, the demonstration lesson candidates performed and the individual interview correlated with successful selection into the program. One such factor examined was the Haberman Star Teacher Pre-screener Inventory, a test that seeks to determine success based on attitudes toward teaching. The study found that candidate interviews and the teaching demonstration were the most instrumental in the selection process. Mixed findings suggest that more research is required on the Haberman assessment.

Urban Teacher Residencies: Indicators of Successful Recruitment

The United States of America has an aging teacher workforce. Within the near future, over one-third of the nation's teacher workforce will reach retirement age (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014), rendering the need for the preparation of highly qualified teachers to take their place. A larger problem is that many teachers are not remaining in the profession; the workforce is dominated by teachers that are under the age of 30 and over the age of 55 (Goldhaber & Walch, 2014). Reduction in class sizes in secondary classrooms, teacher attrition, and an aging workforce combine to create an increasingly dire teacher labor market (Loeb & Reininger, 2004; Goldhaber & Cohen, 2014). One-third of all teachers leave the profession within the first three years, and more than half of all urban teachers leave within five years (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaeffer, 2007), and this is often the result of a lack of preparation, not a lack of passion for teaching (Urban Teacher Residency United[1] [UTRU], 2014a). Urban school districts experience an annual teacher attrition rate of about 20–25% (Ingersoll & Perda, 2009), leaving low-income and minority students the hardest hit by this constant turnover (Ingersoll, 2001). This not only means that a population with some of the greatest academic needs has the least experienced teachers to teach them, but that school districts with some of the most thinly stretched resources have to expend millions annually to attract, hire, and train new teachers (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). Funds that could be used to purchase additional classroom resources have to be spent on this task.

Teacher residency models have been offered as a manner in which to prepare effective teachers (UTRU, n.d.). This model draws from aspects of both traditional teacher preparation models and alternative teacher preparation models. Similar to a medical residency model, teacher residency

[1] In September 2015, UTRU became the National Teacher Residency Center (NTRC).

programs feature a pairing of theory and practice, where prospective teachers co-teach alongside an established teacher for an entire year while taking course work on pedagogy. The Obama administration has promoted this model and the U.S. Department of Education (2014) has funded grants creating several teacher residency models in urban school districts. Urban teacher residency programs have had success in addressing the issue of urban teacher attrition, with 85% of their graduates remaining in the classroom after their initial four-year commitment of service (UTRU, 2014a). While this success is noteworthy, it remains important to identify those factors that lead to candidates' success in urban school districts. Although the selection process does not guarantee a successful teacher, understanding the selection process will help those who are interested in exploring a teacher residency program. Furthermore, by examining factors of selection, we propose continuing the conversation proposed by Stronge and Hindman (2003) that correlates factors considered in successful selection of teachers as indications of future success. Nevertheless, this paper proposes to discuss the importance of each indicator as individual factors in an applicant's portfolio for admission to the urban teacher residency program under study.

Review of Literature

Teacher Residency Programs

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] (2010) recommends that along with Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores and grade point averages, multiple items should be taken into consideration when selecting teachers for teacher residency models. Useem (2001) examined teacher recruitment in the School District of Philadelphia. The process was perceived to be exceptionally lengthy, but was also streamlined and involved several assessments and interviews. Similarly, Solomon (2009) considered the recruitment strategies of the Boston Public Schools teacher residency program. While elements of NCATE's recommendation are present, and residents cannot be selected without interviews with both university and school district stakeholders; the most important baseline factor for this program is academic test scores. A survey of teacher residency programs from around the country suggests that the selection process for bringing in new candidates is often multifaceted. Every program examined had an application process, solicited writing samples, and conducted in-person interviews as a part of their selection process (UTRU, 2014b; KIPP DC, 2013; Urban Teacher Center [UTC], n.d.; Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012). Test scores (Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012), transcript reviews (Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012; KIPP DC, 2013), group discussions and demonstration lessons (UTRU, 2014b; UTC, n.d.) were also part of the process for the varied programs. Video-recorded responses to prompts and letters of recommendation were a part of the process as well for one urban teacher residency program (Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012).

The purpose of an urban teacher residency is to train and retain effective teachers (UTRU, 2014a). Extended pre-service classroom experience with urban students has been linked to teacher retention (Udesky, 2015) and teacher retention has been linked to successful student outcomes (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wycoff, 2005); a model that can address both of these issues is promising. This is especially true when one considers that the most talented early-career teachers are often the first to leave urban districts and the teaching profession as a whole (Berry, Montgomery, & Snyder, 2008).

By utilizing other evaluations for urban

teacher residencies (Jagla, 2009; Klein, Taylor, Onore, Strom, & Abrams, 2013; Garza & Wener, 2014), we propose to expand on the literature regarding indicators that suggest successful teacher residency selection. Aleccia (2011) provides four criteria for effective teaching including the need for those entering the teaching profession to have the appropriate background and training for the task.

Haberman Star Teacher Inventory

While the selection process for most programs is laborious and extensive, Haberman (1995) established an inventory of the characteristics with which he felt most successful teachers in urban districts identified. This tool was used by the programs described above, and further, the Haberman Star Teacher Inventory is one measure UTRU offers as a predictor of resident and teacher success (UTRU, n.d.). However, some programs, including the Boston and Philadelphia Teacher Residency programs did not report using the inventory. If this inventory can simplify and streamline an arduous yet important process, it seems it could have an important place in the selection process. The instrument was designed to screen potential teachers on ten dimensions: (1) persistence; (2) organization and planning; (3) how they value student learning; (4) ability to translate theory to practice; (5) ability to connect with at-risk students; (6) ability to relate to students; (7) ability to survive in a large depersonalized bureaucracy; (8 & 9) ability to understand teacher and student success; and (10) ability to handle making mistakes in the classroom. Several items screen for one's respect for students and the ability of a teacher to take ownership in his or her classroom as well. However, as with any measure, using this inventory as a sole measure is potentially dangerous in selection of potential residents. This is reflected in currently disseminated research on teacher residency programs and teacher hiring practices outlining selection processes as they rely on multiple data points. Although the validity of a similar interview protocol developed by Haberman has been explored in a few studies (e.g. Gimbert & Chesley, 2009; Baskin, Ross, & Smith, 1996), the Haberman Star Teacher Pre-Screener Inventory is not largely examined (Rutledge, Harris, Thompson, & Ingle, 2008; Waddell & Ukpokodu, 2012). Specifically, we are interested in examining the usefulness of the Haberman Star Teacher Inventory in the selection process for urban teacher residents. It is of interest to learn if the skills highlighted in the inventory are evident in other parts of the candidate screening process.

Interviews and the Hiring of Teachers

This literature is critical as selecting participants in teacher residency programs is essentially hiring soon-to-be teachers for urban schools. As a result, an examination of the literature surrounding teacher hiring practices is also relevant to this study. Rutledge, et al. (2008) argue that teacher selection processes do not place an adequate amount of scrutiny on hiring practices as other comparable organizations do. They posit that by not following a strict protocol, schools are not hiring the best possible candidates. Furthermore, it is possible that administrators therefore attempt to focus too much on a specific indicator to make hiring decisions (Baskin, Ross, & Smith, 1996). Therefore, the reliance on multiple data points is important in selecting teachers. Baskin, Ross, and Smith (1996) examined the use of a specific interview protocol as a method to determine selection and future success of teachers in a university's teacher education program. While the interview provided interesting information about the candidates, the study showed that the interview could not be used as a sole factor

in making hiring determinations. Schumacher, Grisby, and Vessey (2015) recognized that since the interview was generally the most important factor in hiring teachers, they sought to find which interview questions were the most important in the hiring and retention of quality teachers, similarly concluding that limiting data points to one or two areas will negatively impact student achievement.

Current Study

The efforts to recruit quality teacher residents are paramount to achieve this goal. This study sought to answer the following research question: *For which of the various components of the selection process (lesson, personal interview, group interview, writing sample, and Haberman Star Teacher Inventory), if any, does a relationship exist between that component and a candidate being selected to participate in the urban teacher residency program?*

The selection process is lengthy and arduous for the program staff, school district staff, and university faculty to coordinate and implement each selection cycle and it was of interest to the researchers to explore whether relationships existed between the many data points and a candidate's selection status. It was thought that some of the items, particularly the group interview, would be found to be unrelated to whether or not a candidate was invited to participate in the urban teacher residency program. It was thought that demonstration lesson scores, both by the assessors and students, would be related to one's selection status. While the Haberman inventory has been shown to be an effective indicator in a particular urban setting, it was of particular interest to the researchers to explore whether these findings remained true in a different setting from where the original research on the instrument took place.

Methods

The urban teacher residency program included in this study is a partnership between a Mid-Atlantic urban school district and a local university. Those selected for resident positions commit to three years of teaching following a one-year residency program in which participants obtain a master's degree in teaching and state teaching certification. During the 2013–2014 academic year, 256 individuals applied to the program, of which 64 were invited to participate in the on-site selection process. Approximately 64% of the participants were female, which is less than 2014 national figures (74.8%) for elementary and secondary teachers (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Applicant age was not collected as a part of this process. However, program staff members report that the majority of candidates were between the ages of 22 and 29. Eighteen of the 64 candidates were from out-of-state, while the remainder resided in the state where the residency program is located. Candidates applying to be residents teaching secondary core classroom subjects had to have a degree in their area of expertise. For example, a candidate applying to teach middle or high school English had to have a degree in English to be qualified for the program. Candidates applying to be residents teaching special education all had earned an undergraduate degree, however their areas of expertise varied widely. Special education candidates had degrees in subjects ranging from the core subject areas to areas including elementary education, architecture and art history. Program staff recruited these candidates through a variety of avenues. These include events at university campuses across the country, outreach to university faculty, career and graduate school fairs, online job postings, and events sponsored by national service organizations.

In order to be selected as a resident, candidates undergo a rigorous selection process that includes a demonstration lesson, an individual interview with a panel of both public school and university administrators, a group interview, a writing sample, and the score of the Haberman Star Teacher Pre-screener Inventory. This study retrospectively examined the data from the recruitment and selection process for previous cohorts of the teacher residency program.

Results

This study was designed to investigate whether a relationship exists between being selected to participate in the teacher residency program and several variables that are considered as part of the selection process. This study also explored whether a relationship existed between being selected for the teacher residency program and five other variables that were considered in the selection process. While the various components of the program are meant to help the committee make an informed selection of future teachers for the urban school district in principle, the numerous aspects call the utility of each component into question.

Demonstration Lesson

An interview was conducted with two or three assessors, a mini-lesson was scored by seven to twelve assessors, a writing sample was scored by one to three assessors, and a group interview was scored by six to eight assessors. Each measure was scored on a scale from "1" to "4," with a "1" representing a low score and a "4" representing a high score. Since candidates were not assessed by the same number of assessors for each variable, means were taken and totaled for each of the four scores (Lesson, Group Interview, Interview, and Writing). Means and standard deviations for assessor scores for each of the four variables are presented in Table 1. For each of the four variables, the number of candidates who were selected (yes) and the number who were not selected (no) is indicated.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations (SDs) of Assessor Scores by Selection

		N	Mean	SD
Lesson**	No	27	8.2939	1.71637
	Yes	37	10.4948	1.28560
	Total	64	9.5663	1.83313
Group Interview	No	27	13.0936	2.04186
	Yes	37	13.7885	1.78687
	Total	64	13.4954	1.91436
Interview*	No	27	21.1527	4.89240
	Yes	37	24.1936	3.09169
	Total	64	22.9107	4.19896
Writing	No	13	9.9231	1.75412
	Yes	20	10.2250	1.57674
	Total	33	10.1061	1.62863

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$

Since this involved four independent variables and a single dependent variable, the data were analyzed using four independent samples t-tests. Data screening revealed no substantial outliers, and the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for each of the tests. Results indicated a significant difference between the mean assessor scores for Lesson ($t(62) = 5.869$, $p < .001$) with those selected for the teacher residency program ($M = 10.49$) scoring significantly higher than those who were not selected ($M = 8.29$). A reported Cohen's d of 1.45 indicates a very large effect due to the assessor scores for the mini-lessons.

Approximately half of the candidates for the residency program did their demonstration lesson in a high school in the school district and the remainder did their lesson in a middle school. Aside from the assessor scores during the mini-lesson component of the selection process, the students in the class were also given a one-question

assessment to complete for each lesson. Students were asked to indicate whether they could envision the candidate teaching the lesson being their teacher in the future. Each student marked his/her paper either "yes" or "no" and provided additional optional comments if he or she wished to do so. Since the same number of students was not present in each class where a mini-lesson was taught, the proportion of students voting in the affirmative was calculated for each candidate and represented as a decimal. See Table 2 for a presentation of means and standard deviations for student assessments.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations (SDs) for Student Votes

	Not Selected	Selected	Total
Mean	.727	.912	.834
SD	.241	.112	.199
N	27	37	64

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the proportion of students who voted in the affirmative for a candidate and selection. There was a positive correlation between the two variables (r = .463, n = 64, p <.001). Overall, there was a strong, positive correlation between the proportion of students who voted for a candidate and candidate selection for the teacher residency program. A coefficient of determination of .214 indicates that 21.4% of the selection variable can be explained by student votes. Student reaction was a significant factor in whether or not candidates were selected to be a part of the program.

The assessor scores for the mini-lesson were instrumental in the selection decision. The student vote also proved to be important in the selection process. This teacher residency is the only program within the UTRU network that gives students a say in who their future teachers will be (UTRU, 2014b). The selection committee gives the students' collective voice significant weight. This is something other teacher residency programs might seek to emulate.

Personal Interview

Results also indicated a significant difference between the mean assessor scores for Interview ($t(62) = 3.043$, $p < .01$) with those selected for the program (M = 24.19) scoring significantly higher than those who were not selected (M = 21.15). A reported Cohen's d of .74 represents a large effect due to assessor scores for the interview (see Table 1).

Group Interview

An independent samples t-test was conducted to analyze the data for the Group Interview component of the selection process. Data were screened for outliers and all assumptions were met. Results for the Group Interview indicated that no significant differences existed between the scores for those that were selected to the teacher residency program (M = 13.79) and the scores for those that were not (M = 13.09). Given this study's findings, the group interview should be omitted from future selection processes. Its inclusion makes for a longer and more cumbersome selection process. It should either be removed altogether as part of an effort to streamline the process, it should be replaced by another measure, or its rubric should be revamped to increase the likelihood that it will substantially add to the selection process. The group interview did assess for whether an applicant had high expectations for urban students, and it might be a worthwhile endeavor to find another way to screen for this if this facet of the process is disbanded. One particularly troubling factor in urban schools is that many teachers, administrators, and parents have lower expectations for low-income, minority students than they do other students

(Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004). Programs such as this teacher residency, which seek to prepare teachers specifically for the urban classroom, must ensure that their graduates maintain high expectations for all students.

Writing Sample

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine the Writing component of the process. Results for the Writing scores also indicated that no significant differences existed between those that were selected (M = 10.23) and those that were not (M = 9.92). Though this study did not find a significant difference between groups for the writing sample that applicants produced, this should not be discarded. The program under study has since revamped this part of the selection process. UTRU (2014b) released a report on effective recruitment that suggests that candidates should be screened for coachability. Shoffner, Sedberry, Alsup, and Johnson (2014) discussed the importance of new teachers being flexible and open to receiving feedback. Their study found that this disposition was necessary for beginning teachers to possess in order to effectively receive feedback from mentors and to reflect critically on their own practice. A couple of teacher residency programs have candidates re-teach their mini-lesson after receiving feedback to see how open they are to receiving feedback. The new writing prompt asks candidates to respond to written feedback on their mini-lesson. Since this will be one of the only programs to assess coachability in this manner, this warrants additional study.

The data for these four components were also analyzed a second way. Each component for the four assessments (sample lesson, group interview, individual interview, and writing sample) was analyzed individually, not by applicant, but by assessment. For example, if an applicant had seven individuals assess her mini-lesson then seven assessments were included in the data set to represent that applicant's scores. Independent samples *t*-tests were conducted for each component of the four assessments. The findings were similar to those that were obtained when using the means for each individual applicant, as described above. The tests revealed that statistically significant findings existed for all three components for the sample lesson and all seven components for the individual interview. The opposite was found to be true for the writing sample, where tests revealed non-significant findings for all three components. However, the group interview contained mixed findings. Two of the components—*thoughtfulness of response* and *respect for others*—yielded non-significant findings. Those that were not selected to the program were apt to score the same as those that were. However, when data were analyzed that looked at whether applicants were actively engaged, results indicated a significant difference between mean assessor scores ($t(424) = 4.941$, $p < .001$) with those selected to the program scoring higher (M = 3.57) than those that were not (M = 3.18). The effect size of .48 indicates a medium effect due to whether an applicant was actively engaged during the group interview. Results for scores representing a candidate having high expectations for urban students found that those selected to the program scored significantly higher (mean = 3.49) than those that were not selected (M = 3.33). This represents a small effect (d =.20).

Haberman Star Teacher Pre-Screener Inventory

The scores were obtained from the applicants who took the Haberman Foundation's Star Teacher Pre-screener Inventory as a part of the application

process. To analyze the Haberman scores' impact on candidate selection, data from 244 cases were collected from applicants to the teacher residency program from 2012–2014. Since participants in the first cohort did not take the Haberman Inventory, their data were not included in this study. This study looked at the inventory scores in two separate ways. First, the inventory scores were analyzed categorically (Haberman, 1995), coded as being part of one of four quartiles (see Table 3).

Table 3. Haberman Scores by Quartiles

Quartile	Original Haberman Categorization Score Range	Recoded Categorization Score Range
1	40-50	40-50
2	33-39	33-39
3	27-32	26-32
4	0-26	0-25

For the purposes of this study, scores were re-categorized so that a score of 26 was included in the third quartile. Too few individuals whose scores fell in quartile 4 were selected for the program to use the original categories. Data were analyzed using the recoded categories, omitting the remaining five scores in the bottom quartile. Cases were scored as either being selected or not selected for the program.

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the data by selection and recoded Haberman categorization.

Table 4. Haberman Categorization by Selection

		Selected		
		No	Yes	Total
Q1 (40-50)	Count	17	10	27
	Expected	19.6	7.4	27.0
Q2 (33-39)	Count	95	38	133
	Expected	96.5	36.5	133.0
Q3 (26-32)	Count	60	17	77
	Expected	55.9	21.1	77.0
Total	Count	172	65	237
	Expected	172.0	65.0	237.0

Because the data are categorical, they were analyzed using a 3 (recoded Haberman quartile) by 2 (selection) Chi-squared analysis. All assumptions were met since the recoded categorization was used in the analysis. Results indicated that no relationship ($\chi^2(2, N = 237) = 2.47$, $p = .294$) exists between Haberman categorization and being selected for the teacher residency program. Raw Haberman scores (0-50) were analyzed as well. Means and standard deviations of Haberman scores for each of the two groups (selected and not selected) are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Means, Standard Deviations (SDs) and Ns of Haberman Scores for Participants Selected and Not Selected

	Not Selected	Selected
Mean	33.68	35.25
SD	4.317	4.305
N	177	65

The Haberman data were further analyzed by a consideration of the scores as a continuous variable. Since this analysis involved the comparison of two independent groups on a single dependent variable, data were analyzed using an independent groups *t*-test. Data screening revealed no substantial outliers, and the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met. Results indicated a significance differece between the means ($t(240) = 2.497$, $p < .05$) with participants selected for the teacher residency program ($M = 35.25$) scoring significantly higher than those not selected ($M = 33.68$). A Cohen's d of .36 represents a small to medium effect due to raw Haberman scores.

While Haberman's categorical treatment of the data was not related to being selected in the program, there was a difference in the Haberman scores of those who were selected and those who were not when the raw scores were examined. Rockoff, Jacob, Kane, and Staiger (2008) examined the extent to which

the Haberman Star Teacher Prescreener was able to predict success in teaching in New York City. Their findings were mixed, though they did find that those who scored above the median score (32) also exhibited other traits determined to be positive indicators of a successful teacher, such as SAT scores. Further research should be conducted to determine if the Haberman assessment provides any indication of future teacher success, but currently the inventory has produced mixed findings.

Limitations and Future Considerations

There is a major limitation that should be noted with the data used in this study. The Haberman data were obtained from the selection process during the first four cohorts of the program. However, those that were not selected from the first and second cohorts were not included in the study. The Haberman inventory was not used in the selection process until after the second cohort was intact per a recommendation from UTRU. Half of the first cohort and all but two members of the second cohort were administered the inventory ex post facto. Data were analyzed without their scores to compare and the findings were the same; the categorizations were not related with selection, but the raw scores were. With or without this limitation, this study's mixed findings indicate that more work needs to be done around the use of the Haberman inventory and selection into urban teacher residency programs. Another limitation exists concerning the norming of the data. Teacher residency programs, particularly ones in the UTRU network, tend to be small. As such, it becomes very difficult to norm the data derived from any instrument used in the selection process of these programs. Despite this limitation, residency programs are a trending, yet understudied, phenomenon. The findings obtained in this study are still relevant and represent the start of an important conversation around successful teacher residency recruitment. Since selection in the urban teacher residency program effectively selects teachers for a several year commitment, it is important that the program administrators take care in following the protocol set for selecting teacher residents (Rutledge et al., 2008). As we found that some of the procedures were not followed as prescribed, it is also hard to make conclusive statements about which factors are the most important. Nevertheless, this represents a reality in selecting teachers and teacher residents and should be noted as such.

This study is the first step in a line of research that hopes to learn how these different facets of the selection process are related to success in the program and positive teacher outcomes. This paper adds to literature surrounding teacher residency program recruitment practices. Future studies will be necessary to examine how Haberman scores and other indicators used in the selection process are related with program success. However, the data point to similar findings to those of Baskin, Ross, and Smith (1996) whereby a single factor cannot be used as a sole determinant in selection decision making. Future outcomes of interest will be teacher retention, teacher evaluation, and ultimately student success. The teacher residency program under study has not been in existence long enough to yield sample sizes large enough to study academic outcomes, but should be considered in future work, following the hypothesis of Stronge and Hindman (2003) that finding what makes a successful teacher in the selection process can provide positive outcomes for students. Future qualitative work should also be conducted to explore the residency experience and the interaction between the resident and mentor teacher. Such findings could inform what should be considered for future selection processes.

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