Research Article

Do Principals of Color Earn Less? An Examination of the Racial Pay Gap Among a First-time School Principal Cohort

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Abstract

This study examines whether a relationship exists between principals' racial background and pay after accounting for relevant covariates. The study was conducted with a sample of 90 principals (n = 90) from the state of Georgia (United States) over a five-year timeframe (t=5), representing 450 data points. The analysis for the study adjusts for regional wage differences and relevant covariates and employs a mixed-effects regression model to address its research question. Results suggest that early career Principals of Color (POC) earn less than their White counterparts. Findings are interpreted from an equity theory and social dominance orientation perspective.

Key Words

principal pay, principal pay equity, POC, White privilege, compensation

While people of color are often not hired and promoted to school leadership positions (Smith, 2016), research has suggested that even when they are, they often face biases, microaggressions, and even discrimination in their roles (Tran et. al, 2023). One salient area of discrimination that exacerbates the problem of workplace exclusion is pay inequity, especially because salaries represent the economic value the institution places on the personnel. U.S. data suggest that the average White principal earns less than the average principal of color.

For example, in 2017-18, White principals earned an average of $99,400 when compared to Black principals, who earned $101,100, and Hispanic principals who earned $105,100 (Hussar et al., 2020). However, these raw data are purely descriptive and do not account for comparability in other factors such as experience, education, school type, and regional wage differences that influence leadership pay.

If more accurate comparisons reveal that Principals of Color (POC) actually earn less than their White counterparts, these realities not only serve as deterrents from a recruitment perspective for candidates of color but promote turnover for POC as well. Indeed, prior research has suggested that principal pay affects principals' turnover and turnover intention (Young et al., 2010; Tran, 2017), and principal turnover has been linked to lower student achievement (Miller, 2013). Unfortunately, there is a dearth of research on school leadership compensation and even less so on pay inequities across racial groups. As a result, this study seeks to help fill the void by addressing the following question:

> *Is there a relationship between the racial background of first-year principals and their salaries after accounting for relevant covariates?*

Given the interest in diversifying school leadership (Tran et al., 2023), this study targets first-year principals as this stage represents the entry point into the profession when salary offerings are critical for attracting prospective candidates. If starting salaries for POC are disproportionately low, this could deter employment interest from candidates of color. In the state of Georgia, like many conservative southern states, there exist intense political battles, with many legislators and policymakers attacking diversity, equity, and inclusion. As such, many people of color may feel deterred from the principalship due to feeling unwanted.

Prior research has suggested that Black principals, for example, are less likely to be promoted to the principalship relative to their White counterparts (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). Because of this context, the study's focus was placed on the state of Georgia in the United States of America to address the research question. Controlling for a single state also holds constant state-specific nuances that may affect the relationship between principal race and pay (e.g., racial representation in the state).

Per 2021 data from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement, over a quarter of Georgia principals were new to the position, with a slightly higher proportion of new White principals compared to new POC (i.e., 52.8% and 47.2%, respectively) (Flamini & Steed, 2022). What is unknown is how pay is distributed across principal demographics. There are many reasons to suspect that POC may earn less than their White counterparts. For example, research has suggested that teachers of color are disproportionately employed in lower-paying, high-poverty school districts (Ingersoll et al., 2017). If this pattern holds true for principals, then logically, POC would be paid less than their counterparts. Furthermore, even within a district, candidates of color may negotiate their starting salaries differently than their counterparts. The fact that

many principals are paid on salary schedules does not negate this concern, as their placement on salary schedules is often negotiated. Research has suggested that racial differences could influence employers' willingness to negotiate, and this could heavily impact starting salary offerings (Hernandez et al., 2019).

Literature Review

Despite pay and anti-discrimination laws, we continue to see pay disparity between people of different racial backgrounds. For example, according to a report by the Economic Policy Institute (2016), the wage gap between Black and White workers is more prominent today than in 1979, even controlling for education, experience, and locale, with Black women suffering the most significant gap (34.2% less than their White men in 2015) (Wilson & Rodgers, 2016). These types of pay gaps can be seen across the industry.

For example, in the medical and science professions, White males are usually paid substantially more than women and men of color after accounting for degree, rank, and specialty (Dandar & Lautenberger, 2021). From an international perspective, research highlights that the majority of ethnic minority groups in the United Kingdom tend to work in low-paying sector jobs (Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report, 2015). Similarly, South African research reports that the wages of South Africans of color lagged behind White South Africans by more than 20 percent (Salisbury, 2016).

Pay inequity likely results from organizational reproduction of inequality, which perpetuates the same biases and discrimination that undergird inequitable work experiences that people of color experience, ranging from being neglected for hiring and promotional opportunities, as well as biases resulting in micro and macro aggression and other discriminatory treatment (Amir et al., 2020).

In the realm of education, historically discriminatory pay for teachers in the early 1900s explained much of the racial differences in expenditures, especially in the Southern U.S. States, yet at the close of the 20th century, much of the gap closed due to changing labor laws, evolving social attitudes, and the development of a teacher salary schedule (Mango, 1990). Concerning the last point, the teacher salary schedule effectively mitigated much of the discrepancy in teacher pay via a deterministic restriction where experience and education level dictated how much teachers were paid (Tran & Jackson-Smith, 2022). Overall compensation still varied due to differences in whether and where teachers of color were predominately hired (D'amico et al., 2017) and differences in supplemental pay at the school level (Grissom & Keiser, 2011; Viano et al., 2023), but for the most part, it occurred through indirect and subtle mechanism rather than directly.

Salary negotiations are an area ripe and vulnerable to rampant pay discrimination and bias. Grissom et al. (2021), for example, found that gender gaps existed for both base and supplemental pay. While the issue of discrimination in principal pay based on race is less studied, the larger body of pay discrimination scholarship suggests its potential presence.

Case in point, across three studies, Hernandez (2019) found that Black job seekers are penalized if they negotiate higher salary outcomes than their White counterparts, as biased assumptions create expectations that they would negotiate lower salaries instead. To the extent that this same trend exists in the principalship, it represents a potential major barrier to the recruitment and retention of POC into/in the field.

There have been calls to diversify the principalship, given that school leaders are disproportionately White relative to their student body in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Unfortunately, principal demographics are linked to the likelihood of promotion to leadership. For example, Bailes & Guthery (2020) found that holding school and personal characteristics constant, Black Principals have the least likelihood of being promoted and are in assistant principal positions longer than their White counterparts. These represent major barriers to leadership diversification.

From an international perspective, principals in many regions, such as England and South Africa, continue to experience an underrepresentation of Black leaders in schools due to a lack of integration, discrimination, and outright racism (Bush & Moloi, 2007). This finding is particularly unfortunate as racial diversity in principalship has been linked to numerous positive outcomes. For example, principals are more likely to be associated with larger percentages of teachers who racially match with them, and these race matches have been linked with stronger math achievement scores (Bartanen & Grissom, 2023).

In fact, the benefits for students of color, especially for those who are racially matched, are well documented. These outcomes include improved attendance (Meier et al., 2004), test scores (Blazer & Lagos, 2021), and an increased identification of students of color in gifted programs (Grissom et al., 2017). To make matters worse, in an analysis of a nationally representative sample of school principals, Johnston and Young (2019) found that almost 40% of White principals noted they were underprepared to support Black, Latino, and low-income students. From a teacher diversity perspective, teachers who are racially congruent with their principals are more likely to get hired (Bartanen & Grissom, 2021; Grissom & Keiser, 2011), are more likely to earn more supplemental income (e.g., coaching stipends) (Viano et al., 2023), more likely to be satisfied with their job, and leave their position (Grissom & Keiser, 2011; Lindsay & Egalite, 2020).

While the salary gap between a teacher and a principal can be quite substantial, this varies by locale, and for some, the amount is insufficient to compensate for elevated stress and challenging work conditions of the job (Pijanowski & Brady, 2009). Principal pay matters for numerous reasons. First, there is evidence to suggest past research has found that salaries motivate principal movement in the labor market (Papa, 2017; Tran & Buckman, 2017; Tran, 2014). The principal salary offerings can affect principals' reactions to their pay and their sentiments about leaving their schools. Based on results from a structural equation modeling analysis on a sample of California high school principals, Tran (2017) reported that principals' pay satisfaction is influenced by the salaries of their comparative peers (e.g., principals in their district, principals in other districts) and influences their turnover intention.

This is particularly problematic because, on average, principal turnover has been found to be associated with declines in student achievement (Bartanen et al., 2019; Miller, 2013), and principal pay has been linked to student achievement (Young et al., 2010). Moreover, principal turnovers can be financially costly for the districts, with each replacement costing funds that could be spent on other instructional matters in schools (Tran et al., 2018).

Yet, despite our limited understanding of the patterns and trends of principal pay, there is still much that is unknown. For example, Lee and Mao's (2023) systematic review of principal recruitment and selection literature

noted a critical theme of the lack of understanding concerning how to encourage more diversity in school leadership. Assuredly, the disparity in pay between principals of different racial backgrounds, should it exist, would represent a significant barrier that would contribute to the underrepresentation of school leaders from marginalized race groups. This study aims to help advance our knowledge base in this domain.

Theoretical Framework

This study leverages equity theory (see Michener et al., 2004) as an overarching framework for the research. Traditionally, equity theory has been used to examine the ratio of outputs to inputs, with inequities existing when this ratio is less than uniform. From a pay perspective, this suggests someone getting paid less than what they believe their contribution warrants, which results in their reduction of future effort. When equity theory serves as a framework for investigating pay inequity between groups of people, the focus is on differences between ratios for a protected class group and a non-protected class group in a relative comparison rather than examining absolute values. Within this study, the output is the degree of principal pay differences and whether that correlates to differences in principals' race.

Consistent with pay negotiation and discrimination in the past (Hernandez et al., 2019), we also incorporate the theory of social dominance orientation (SDO) (Sidanius et al., 1994) in our framing of the study. Within this study, SDO suggests that people from different backgrounds (i.e., racial demographics) are associated with varying hierarchies of group status. It is theorized that those who are perceived to be a higher status group (e.g., Whites in this study, due to racial bias and stereotypes) will experience better treatment and outcomes (i.e., higher pay in this study). In tandem, equity theory and SDO would predict that White principals will be paid more than POC.

Methodology

Panel data from Georgia (USA) were collected at the principal level across five years for a sample of first-year principals (i.e., a cohort) to address the research question regarding the relationship between principal pay and principal race. By examining a cohort across time (e.g., the 2015 class of new principals' progression for five years) as opposed to analyzing multiple different cohorts (e.g., 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 classes of new principals), this design allows researchers to clearly isolate the particular nuances and dynamics of the group to better interpret the findings. Additionally, panel data (i.e., longitudinal data) was chosen because it has the advantage of capturing changes over time in outcomes relative to predictors, unlike cross-sectional data, which provides only a snapshot of a single period.

Since this study examined the salaries of traditional public school principals, it did not include principal data at other school types (e.g., private and charter schools). The compensation structures, demographics of students, and achievement data of other types of schools vary from those of public schools, and as a result, comparisons would likely be systematically influenced by those factors, rendering the comparisons not representative. Data obtained at the school level included school characteristics such as the school level, location, socioeconomic status (SES), size, diversity (i.e., percentage of students of color), and district-level variables such as revenue.

Procedure

As the study's focus was on first-year public school principals, the researchers obtained assistant principal and principal data from the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE)

from the 2014 through 2015 academic years (i.e., to capture first-year principals), as well as data from the GADOE, the Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA), and the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) from 2015 through 2019 for school and district data.

This study focused on first-year principals because they represent the entry point into the profession and because of the importance of initial pay for recruitment and the diversity of the principals entering the profession. To identify the first-year principal cohort, the researchers used two GADOE personnel data sets (i.e., 2014 assistant principal and 2015 principal) to locate assistant principals who transitioned from assistant principal to principal between the 2014 and 2015 datasets. Through this process, we acquired complete first-year Georgia principal data for principals starting in 2015.

Other factors that were controlled through research design addressed the relationship between principal effectiveness based on school performance and its impact on principal pay (Boyce & Bowers, 2016; Carlson & Johnson, 2010; Young, 2010). According to Miller (2013), it takes school leaders approximately five years to effectively contribute to evaluative effectiveness measures such as a school's climate, teacher recruitment and retention, and student achievement. Based on the importance of principal effectiveness and the recommended five-year retention threshold necessary for a principal to display effectiveness, we removed newly appointed principals who turned over (i.e., left the principal profession) within their first five years to maintain a consistent baseline for comparison.

A total of 130 principals were identified as the 2015 population of first-year principals by the researchers after considering the criteria for inclusion in this study. Of the 130 new principals identified, only 45 of the principals were POC. As such, 45 White principals were randomly selected from the population to remain in the study to balance the sample's strata racially, rendering a final sample of 45 White principals and 45 POC. This stratified sampling technique, in which groups are balanced for comparison purposes, has been used in similar salary discrimination studies when comparing personnel demographics (see Young, 1999).

Variables and covariates

Covariates were used to account for the confounding influence on the dependent variable to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variable (i.e., principal race) and the dependent variable (i.e., principal salaries). Research has indicated how supervisor race can directly or indirectly influence hiring decisions when analyzed through the theoretical lens of representative bureaucracy (Grissom & Keiser, 2021; Goff et al., 2018). Notably, Grissom and Keiser (2021) and Goff et al. (2018) address the influence of racial congruence and incongruence of district leaders and their subordinates, highlighting that minoritized subordinates often receive more negative effects of racial incongruence (e.g., less pay) than their White counterparts.

As a result, superintendents' race was utilized as a control variable to account for this phenomenon. As noted in Table 1 below, 88 percent of the superintendents in the study identified as White.

The analysis also included promotion type because the literature supports the negotiating power associated with external hires (Tan & Buckman, 2017). Unlike those promoted internally, hiring agents must compete with external labor markets with candidates from other organizations for external hires, often resulting in increased

wages for external recruits. Table 1 indicates that roughly 90% of the sample was promoted internally from assistant principal to principal.

Gender served as a statistical control in the study to account for the potential influence of pay differences between male and female principals. On average, female principals make 1% (i.e., $1,000) less than males, and this gap increases when individual characteristics are included (see Grissom et al., 2021). Data from Table 1 indicates that over 61% of the principals in the sample were female, and roughly 39% of the same were males.

Teachers and leaders often must acquire advanced degrees to achieve higher pay and promotion in education positions (Buckman et al., 2016; Buckman et al., 2017; Tran, 2017). In the state of Georgia, the minimum degree level to receive leadership certification to serve as a practicing administrator (i.e., assistant/vice principal) is at the master's degree level; however, to serve as a school principal, a specialist degree is required.

Table 1 highlights that 13.8% of the sample were appointed to the position with only a master's degree. This finding indicates that these participants were rewarded a provisional certification and needed to seek a specialist degree to remain principals. Over 62% of the sample have specialist degrees, and 24% of the sample have doctorate degrees.

Along with degree level, the years of professional experience variable is identified as a form of human capital, can influence principals' pay, and has served as statistical control across pay studies in education (Tran & Buckman, 2017; Grissom et al., 2021). Since all principals in the study were first-year principals, years of experience were defined as total years of education experience (i.e., assistant principal experience is captured in total years of experience).

Table 2 indicates the average years of experience for the sample of first-year principals were approximately 19 years. Schooling level (i.e., Elementary, Middle, High, and Combination) was considered in our model because a school's grade level is linked to its principal's pay (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2008; Tran, 2017; Tran & Buckman, 2017). More pointedly, research has indicated that principals at the elementary level earn less than middle school principals, while middle school principals earn less than high school principals. The sample consisted of 57.8% elementary school principals, 26.4% middle school principals, 14.4% high school principals, and 1.3% combination school principals (See Table 1).

Similar to the school level variable, school locale (i.e., city, rural, suburban, and town) can significantly predict principal pay. For instance, Young et al. (2010) identified that school location influences principal pay; for example, rural school districts purportedly pay less than non-rural districts. The disparity in pay is related to the lower property taxes and labor market wages associated with rural contexts (Tran, 2018) relative to their urban and suburban counterparts. Relatedly, when analyzing pay differences among principals based on gender, Grissom et al. (2021) accounted for school locale, recognizing significant pay differences between the groups.

Our study accounts for locale to address all other geographic pay differences not captured within the labor market via the Comparative Wage Index. School locale was based on the defined classification prescribed by the National Center for Education Statistics (i.e., City, Rural, Suburban, and Town).

Table 1 below shows there were 84 city schools, 156 rural schools, 207 suburban schools, and 3 town schools in the sample.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Frequency

Categorical Variables	N	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Principal Race			
White	225	50	50
POC (People of Color)	225	50	100
Superintendent Race			
White	396	88	88
POC	54	12	100
Promotion Type			
Internal	405	90	90
External	45	10	100
Principal Gender			
Female	275	61.1	61.1
Male	175	38.9	100
Principal Degree Level			
Masters	62	13.8	13.8
Specialist	280	62.2	76.0
Doctorate	108	24.0	100
School Level			
Elementary	260	57.8	57.8
Middle	119	26.4	84.2
High	65	14.4	98.7
Combination	6	1.3	100

School Locale			
City	84	18.7	18.7
Rural	156	34.7	53.3
Suburban	207	46	99.3
Town	3	0.7	100

Note: N represents totals across 5 years of data. To interpret annual averages, divide N by 5

The researchers captured school poverty via the School Neighborhood Poverty Estimate provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This estimate relies on household economic data from the U.S. Census and public school locations. Tran and Buckman (2017) highlights that schools with large concentrations of students in poverty are often perceived as having challenging working environments and conditions, which may require higher salaries to attract principal candidates.

Similar to the percentage of students in poverty, research indicates that increased percentages of students of color in a school are also perceived as having challenging working conditions and environments, making it difficult to attract principal candidates, which requires increased principal salaries to recruit (Levin & Bradley, 2019). Therefore, school poverty and the percentage of students of color were accounted for in this study. Table 2 below denotes the average school poverty estimate and students of color for the sample were roughly 287.2 and 67%, respectively. Although these factors are often related, there was no instance of multicollinearity (i.e., VIF= 1.2756 and 1.744, respectively).

School size, as defined by student enrollment, was accounted for because schools with larger student bodies often necessitate more principals' responsibilities than smaller schools (Rose & Sengupta, 2007). Further, principals who work at larger schools often supervise, develop, and evaluate more employees than principals from smaller schools, thus justifying additional compensation. The average school size was around 798 students ranging from 97 students to 3,712 students (see Table 2).

Considering the influence of student achievement on principal pay (Boyce & Bowers, 2016), school performance was analyzed and captured using Georgia's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) provided by the Georgia Department of Education. The researchers used the overall school score, which scales from 0 to 100 points. Factors such as content mastery, progress, closing gaps, readiness, and graduation rate (high schools only) are determinants used to compute each school's achievement score. Table 2 highlights the average school performance score in the sample was 73.61.

Independent variable

Due to salary discrepancies found in negotiations (Wade, 2001) and the historical nature of pay discrimination in the southern U.S., Principals' race was the independent variable for this study. As noted in Table 1, there were a total of 90 principals in the sample

(45 White; 45 POC). Given the constraint of a limited number of sizable racial categories, all non-White racial groups were collectively referred to as "Principals of Color (POC)." The independent variable was dummy coded whereby White principals were coded as 0, and POC was coded as 1.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics: Central Tendency

Continuous Variables	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Years of Experience	450	38	0	38	19.32	6.19
Poverty	450	685	93	778	287.28	143.66
School Size	450	3615	97	3712	798.25	464.00
Students of Color	450	91.6	8.4	100	66.98	29.72
Revenue	450	2.3507E+9	4308000.00	2.3550E+9	719553295	666057150
School Performance Index	450	70.4	29.6	100	73.61	12.62
Principal Salary	450	94849.00	52964.00	147813.00	99782.10	13072.17
Principal Adjusted Salary	450	91468.62	66789.40	158258.03	109057.17	15415.67

Dependent variable

Principals' baseline salaries and principal's salaries adjusted for geographic labor markets served as the dependent variables for this study.

Specifically, the Georgia Department of geographic labor markets, salary data was then adjusted with the Comparable Wage Index for Teachers (CWIFT), developed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to ensure accurate financial comparisons across geographic regions.

Calculation-wise, principal salaries were divided by the CWI for their district (Taylor, 2006) to compute the adjustment. Education provided salary data. Salary data included total wage (i.e., baseline and administrative supplement) without the cost of fringe benefits. Because salary offerings differ based on wages associated with different

Results

This study utilized two Restricted Maximum Likelihood (REML) mixed-effects multiple regression models that addressed both fixed effects and random effects variables (respectively) to address the research questions.

As there are instances of multiple principals serving in the same school system, the researchers chose a mixed effects model to address principal nesting at the school system level.

School system served as a random effect variable to address the variance of the intercepts across groups (i.e., districts); all other variables served as fixed effect variables as they remained constant across observations.

This approach was taken because it accounted for the statistical dependency resulting from nested data and ensured that estimates of the standard errors associated with the regression coefficients were unbiased (O'Dwyer & Parker, 2014).

This study found significant pay differences between White principals and POC, even after accounting for covariates. Findings from model 1 in Table 3 below highlight that POC received significantly lower salaries compared to their White counterparts (b= -3483.31; $p \leq .001$). This can be interpreted as, on average, POC makes $3,483. 31 less than their White counterparts.

The results remained, even after adjusting for regional variations in wages and salaries (b= -3679.05; $p \leq .01$); see Table 3, Model 2), to which POC earned $3,679.05 less than White principals.

Across both models, other statistically significant variables included principal degree level, principal years of experience, school size, school level, percentage of students of color, promotion type, and school performance. Unique to model 1, principal gender, school locale, and district revenue were found to be statistically significant; however, when principal salaries were adjusted in model 2, these variables failed to remain statistically significant, indicating that changes in size and directionality of the coefficients may be due to chance.

Table 3

Mixed Effects Regression Models of Principal Pay Equity

Fixed Effects Variables	(1) Estimates and Standard of Error	(2) Salary Estimates and Standard of Error
Intercept	79299.42***	94467.71***
	(3955.16)	(4849.58)

Principal Race	-3483.31***	-3679.05**
	(1028.24)	(1296.96)
Superintendent Race	3789.39	4455.77
	(2568.04)	(3178.43)
Principal Gender	2288.59**	1789.80+
	(763.62)	(964.34)
Principal Degree Level	3267.34***	3594.24***
	(570.07)	(719.78)
Principal Yrs. of Experience	469.82***	472.14***
	(60.06)	(75.85)
Poverty	-3.72	-3.61
	(2.37)	(2.99)
School Size	8.09***	8.60***
	(.7686)	(.9728)
School Level	1890.17***	2241.77***
	(500.53)	(632.66)
School Locale	-4464.72*	-3390.14
	(2083.68)	(2450.26)
Students of Color	-53.08**	-63.89*
	(20.23)	(25.48)
Promotion Type (External)	4317.94***	4198.80**
	(1179.88)	(1483.57)
Total Revenue	.0000***	.0000+
	(.0000)	(.0000)

School Performance Index	-111.79***	-117.43***
	(27.69)	(35.03)
AY 2019	7941.93***	9477.10***
	(865.08)	(1083.88)
AY 2018	7144.66***	8282.13***
	(777.50)	(979.22)
AY 2017	6044.77***	7319.45***
	(741.90)	(938.09)
AY 2016	2973.39***	4132.40***
	(709.37)	(898.67)
Random Effects Variable		
School System	83379813.3	112954248
	(19056479.8)	(26011999.6)

Note. N= 450. Standard of error appears in parentheses. Model 1 dependent variable (salary); Model 2 dependent variable (adjusted salary).

+ $p \leq .10$ *$p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$

Discussion and Conclusion

This study found evidence to suggest that POC may be receiving less pay than their White counterparts after accounting for a host of covariates. The findings are consistent with the theories undergirding equity pay theory and SDO, highlighting inequity in pay via race differences in the predicted direction of the theories.

Coupled with our findings, the former theory suggests a lack of pay equity between POC and their White counterparts, and the latter theory provides a possible explanation as to why White principals would earn higher salaries after accounting for the various covariates. Specifically, because Whites are privileged in school leadership and education in general (Adkins-Sharif, 2021), inequity in pay manifests because of the perceived lack of status (and therefore value) of POC relative to White school principals.

This can result in unconscious bias in the compensation process when assessing the market value of individual school leaders from different backgrounds. Some scholars, such as Bonds and Inwood (2016), make an argument from a global perspective that the issue is beyond *White privilege* but rather is rooted in

White supremacy, which emphasizes White domination of material production and dehumanization that is rooted in institutional practices and processes such as pay.

The results also highlighted significant findings for the predictive power of several covariates that were expected to influence pay in the direction they were found to (e.g., principal degree level, experience, school size, school level, percentage of students of color, and promotion type (external)). One variable that seemed somewhat surprising was the negative coefficient associated with school performance.

A theory of why this may occur is because of the "combat pay" philosophy underlying low-performing schools, where a school that has a lower performance score may need to pay higher salaries to attract principals because of its correlated poorer working conditions.

There are several caveats associated with interpreting the results. First, the study focuses only on one Southeastern state. That said, the study does rely on a statewide database of a set of a population (i.e., all new principals) from a given year (2015) to acquire the cohort sample and follow those who did not leave the profession for five years.

Of course, with this specific sampling frame, principals who depart the profession or the state are not captured. Additionally, as 2015 first-year principals were identified using the 2014 assistant principal dataset, individuals who became principals without prior experience as assistant principals (a situation that is more likely to occur in rural or public charter schools) or 1st year principals new to the state were not included in the data.

This limitation is not trivial, as the study utilized a sample of 1st-year principals, and that sample size was large enough to maintain adequate statistical power to produce accurate and generalizable findings for this particular group.

The findings should be interpreted with these limitations in mind; however, given the larger number of data points in the sample (90 principals over five years, representing 450 data points), the care of analysis (e.g., adjusting for regional wages, adjusting for relevant covariates, relying on a mixed-effects regression model), the global relevance of the study's topic of school leadership pay equity, and the extreme dearth of research on the issue, this study makes a major contribution to scholarship in advancing our understanding about an important aspect of education leadership and administration.

Future research should examine whether other states and countries observe the same pay inequities as the ones identified in this study. If so, a deeper qualitative focus should interrogate why these pay inequities occur and whether the theory of SDO is supported by the narrative shared by the pay decision-makers and school principals who receive the compensation.

As K-12 schools evaluate their compensation systems, pay disparities by factors such as gender, race, and other protected classes highlighted by anti-discrimination agencies such as the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the European Commission should be examined and interrogated.

To further address the issue of racial inequity in pay, district leaders should continue to evaluate their compensation structure, evaluate their standardized factors for pay negotiations, and engage in discussions to determine if their compensation practices have biases that put leaders of color at a

disadvantage. Pay equity is not the only factor affecting the dearth of diversity of leadership; but pay inequity is a major factor that sustains the scarcity. As a result, it should be better understood, identified, and directly addressed.

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