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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP:
Culturally Responsive District Strategies to Retain School Principals

Dissertation in Practice by

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Culturally Responsive District Strategies to Retain School Principals**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies districts use to retain principals in their complex roles through the framework of culturally responsive district leadership. This qualitative case study explored how district leaders in one Massachusetts school district focused on principal retention and whether their actions influenced a principal's decision to remain in their role. The study took place during a global health pandemic placing principals at the center of navigating this crisis. This study is part of a larger study that investigated how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools. Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with district level leaders and principals. Findings demonstrated that there are things districts can do that positively influence principal retention, although these practices are not necessarily culturally responsive. Data supported the literature that professional development and mentoring, improved working conditions, and autonomy all positively influence principal retention. In addition, this study concluded that focusing on positive relationships and “growing your own” leadership are also key strategies to promote principal retention. In

order to enact culturally responsive retention, recommendations include exploring whiteness in leadership and the influence of race on principal retention. Additionally, further investigation needs to be done examining the influence of higher accountability for student outcomes on principal retention.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family who have been a constant source of encouragement and support throughout my doctoral journey. To my children, Tyler, Sydney, and Emily, you are my everything. This work is also dedicated to the Gardner Pilot Academy community where I have grown up as a principal. I am so appreciative of the amazing educators who inspire me each day. I am also grateful to the incredible students and families who continue to teach me such invaluable lessons about leadership and love. This work is dedicated to all the children I have had the privilege of knowing and loving.

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CHAPTER 1¹

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Statement of the Problem

Principals matter to the success of schools. They play a critical role in supporting student achievement; attracting, developing, and retaining educators; and creating a culturally inclusive community (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Levin et al., 2020). Furthermore, the job of the principal is intensifying in terms of its complexity, volume of responsibilities, and increased accountability (Pollock et al., 2015, Wang et al., 2018). High-stakes accountability for student achievement, increased school choice options, the adoption of the common core standards, and revised teacher evaluation systems have added to the intensification of the role (Pollock et al., 2015; Grissom et al., 2021). Moreover, a heightened attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion nationally has dramatically added to the work of the school principal (Grissom et al., 2021). Given the increasingly complex and sometimes competing measures for success that principals are expected to meet, it should come as no surprise that the principalship has seen increased job stress, higher turnover rates, and elevated transfers from urban schools (Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012).

We contend that the goal of education is to ensure that every student is successful in school. Therefore, every school must have a strong school principal. Unfortunately, many school districts and policymakers have relied on superhero behaviors displayed by school principals, reinforcing strategies that are not sustainable or scalable, leading to

¹ This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Marc A. Banks, William R. Hahn, Erica M. Herman, Christine L. Landry, and Lauren M. Viviani

high principal turnover and high burnout (Ikemoto et al., 2014). For instance, the average tenure of a principal is a mere three to four years (Wahlstrom et al., 2010). Our study is important because the principal's role has intensified; therefore, the conditions for hiring, supporting, and retaining school principals need to change in order to see dramatic and sustained improvements in schools. Yet in the literature, empirical research focused on the strategies to effectively hire, support, and retain principals is still evolving (Grissom, 2021). As a result, our research team sought to contribute to the literature and to inform practice through exploring how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, their relationships, and their abilities to make decisions.

Literature Review

In order to better understand how the role of the principal is viewed and experienced today, this literature review begins with an overview of the demographics of our nation's principals. We then discuss the ways that principals matter, focusing on the impact principals have on student achievement, teacher quality, and school culture. We then review the ways that the principal role has intensified in the areas of accountability and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Following the literature review, we apply and extend concepts relating to professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) to the principalship.

Our Nation's Principals

While our nation's schools are more racially diverse, the vast majority of our schools' principals identify as White (Davis et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2017). Only 20 percent of the principals leading schools identify as people of color and there are gender disparities at the secondary level for women in principal positions (Khalifa et al., 2016; Tran et al., 2020; US Department of Education, 2016; Welton et al., 2015). The myth

remains that the ideal leader for most schools conforms to a White, masculine stereotype (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). This incongruence is important to note because studies have found that diversifying the role of school principal by gender, race, and ethnicity has positive influences on students and overall school success (Castro et al., 2018; Fuller et al., 2019; Grissom et al., 2021). Despite the importance of diversifying the role, studies have indicated that leaders of color face systemic barriers, bias, and discrimination when they are trying to enter the principalship (Guthery & Bailes, 2021; Sanchez et al., 2008). As well, principals of color continue to be placed in more urban, racially, ethnically and economically diverse schools with less funding and fewer school resources (Tillman, 2004).

Ways in Which Principals Matter

Principals matter greatly to the success of their schools (Cruickshank, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2020). Effective principals develop strong relationships within the school community among adults, families, students, and community partners. Loewenberg (2016) describes the principal's role as the anchor for high-quality implementation of education reforms. Leithwood et al., (2020) argues that the principal plays a critical role in supporting student learning, structuring the school setting and mediating external demands. As experienced educational leaders serving as school principals and district administrators, we strongly agree with Leithwood et al. (2020) that principals make a significant impact. King Rice (2010) argues that the importance of principals has long been recognized by educators and researchers; however, empirical studies on the effectiveness of principals have been undermined by the lack of data on principals' complex work and their impact on schooling. When it comes to the

importance of principals, we highlight three important areas: student outcomes, teacher retention, and school culture.

First, principals are important to student outcomes because they create clear educational goals, influence high quality instruction, and supervise the delivery of rigorous and relevant curricula (Cruickshank, 2017; Gajda & Militello, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Loewenberg, 2016; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Branch et al. (2013) found that principals increased achievement levels of a typical student within the school in a single year, while ineffective principals lowered achievement within a similar time frame. While teachers are the number one influence on increased student outcomes, effective principals make developmentally appropriate teaching a top priority, in effect, making greater student outcomes far more likely to occur (Cruickshank, 2017; Loewenberg, 2016). This means that effective principals need to prioritize their time to visit classrooms, observe instruction, and provide feedback to improve the level of instruction students receive. Consequently, principals who do not increase outcomes for students as measured by standardized tests face increased sanctions, which could include removal from the role of principal and increased job stress (Li, 2015; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). Therefore, increasing student outcomes must be a top priority for school principals.

Second, principals matter through their influence on educators. Specifically, principals matter in how they hire and retain effective teachers as well as develop and encourage educators to create strong conditions for teaching and learning in the classroom (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004). Nationally, 16 percent of public-school teachers leave their schools annually (Burkhauser, 2017), therefore

demonstrating the need for principals to develop the knowledge, skills, and relationships to effectively work with their teachers to retain them in their roles. When teachers leave, there are multiple negative consequences, including reduced teacher quality, decreased student achievement, and interrupted family partnerships (Brown & Wynn, 2007). For these reasons, principals must support teachers to improve their work through a culture of excellent instruction, a professional community of shared norms and values, and a culture of trust (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). Principals also create the workplace conditions that enable teachers to have a strong sense of self-efficacy and perform at their best to remain in the field (Huberman et al., 2012). This is particularly true in urban school settings where principals need to provide professional development focused on developing educators' knowledge and skills to teach within a diverse school setting (King, 1993; King Rice, 2010). Furthermore, principals are responsible for creating the conditions for collaborative structures that support teacher effectiveness and retention such as professional learning communities and mentoring (Berry et al., Brown & Wynn, 2007; Leithwood et al., 1999). As such, principals influence student learning through their ability to foster collegial relationships among educators and within the different stakeholder groups across the school community (Berry et al., 2021).

Third, effective school principals are responsible for establishing school cultures that focus on student learning and foster culturally responsive school communities (Khalifa et al., 2016; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). The culture of a school is defined by the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges (Jerald, 2006). A strong school culture is one where members routinely connect around shared problems

and goals (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011). In order to establish a strong culture, principals must be honest and transparent with decision making, especially in the context of addressing issues of race and racism in schools (Rivera-McCutchen & Watson, 2014). Principals create strong, trusting, and inclusive learning environments for students and for the adults by fostering a climate of continuous growth, empowering staff, students, and families to assume leadership roles, and making data-informed decisions (Banwo et al., 2021; Levin, 2020). While these findings add weight to the argument that principals matter in establishing a strong school culture, Bryk and Schneider (2002) argued that the need to improve school culture, climate, and interpersonal relationships has received too little attention in research, practice, and policy. The components of the work that contribute to the ways in which principals matter are also the components that have led to the intensification of the role.

Intensification of the Principalship

The principalship has intensified over time, mimicking societal changes. Research on work intensification illuminates a conception of nested expectations and responsibilities that continue to expand (Pollock et al., 2015). This phenomenon is true for principals. As new demands are placed on school principals, the old responsibilities persist, making the sheer number of tasks to be completed in a day nearly impossible (Hallinger, 1992; Rousmaniere, 2009; Kafka, 2009). Over time, the position of the principal has ranged from disciplinarian to the lead change agent in schools, and everything in between. At its core, the job of a principal is that of a middle manager who both implements the vision of the central office and advocates for the individualized needs of educators and students (Honig & Coburn, 2008; Pollack et al., 2015). While

principals are still responsible for managing buses, budgets, and buildings, principals today are also overseeing the most dramatic shifts in public schooling in more than a decade (Grissom et al., 2021). As outlined below, we contend that the two greatest shifts in the principalship center around accountability and diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Accountability

Accountability measures have contributed to the intensification of the role of the principal. There is higher accountability for teaching and learning outcomes with major repercussions on schools and on the principals themselves for not meeting these accountability targets (Daly, 2009; Pollack et al., 2015; Kellar & Slayton, 2016; Knapp & Feldman, 2012; Seashore & Robinson, 2012). The increased accountability on schools emerged from the fears of parents that their children would not be prepared for the changing economy sparked by the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Guthrie & Springer, 2004). The report provided an alarmist message about the state of American education if immediate changes were not taken to focus on outcomes over inputs (Murphy, 1994). Although *A Nation at Risk* has been widely questioned for its inaccuracies and dramatic tone, its key role in shifting the focus to student achievement has had a lasting and, some would argue, positive impact on public education and the role of the principal (Seashore & Robinson, 2012; *A Nation at Risk*, 1983). Others have argued the increased pressures arising from the focus on outcomes as measured by standardized tests has had negative influences on schools, including increased job stress, high turnover of principals and teachers, and negative school cultures (Daly & Finnigan, 2011; Ford, et al., 2020). Further reports developed in the 20th century highlighted that

our schools were failing to support students, especially students of color, to achieve on standardized measures of core subjects, resulting in the push for greater accountability for schools and principals (Daly & Finnigan, 2012; Hallinger, 1992; Seashore Louis & Robinson, 2012).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

A focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has intensified the work and expectations of principals, especially as they educate the most diverse student population in our nation's history (Ingersoll et al., 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Pollock et al., 2015; Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012). Specifically, a renewed focus on culturally responsive practices and DEI policies have emerged as priorities for schools and districts. The structure for DEI initiatives often begins with school leaders, specifically, by providing educators time and tools to engage with each other and new skills to address implicit biases and explicit racism (Bristol et al., 2021). As the research around implementing DEI policies and culturally responsive practices continues to evolve and grow, school principals are tasked with the immense responsibility to address these challenges and respond appropriately to meet the needs of students and staff. This additional focus is an important aspect of the role, but another condition that intensifies the position. Because of the significant intensification, further research is necessary to investigate how principals use professional capital in their roles to meet the complex demands of the principalship.

Professional Capital as an Organizing Framework

Our research team used professional capital as the conceptual framework for our study because each aspect of professional capital, taken individually, was a useful

framework that provided synergy for our individual research problems (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Professional capital is defined as “the systematic development and integration of three kinds of capital - human, social, and decisional” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. xv). Although Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) primarily conceptualize professional capital in terms of teachers, our team considered the literature on the importance of the principals and therefore used professional capital to focus on building principals. Our research team sought to expand the conceptual framework to include building leadership to identify how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, their relationships, and their abilities to make decisions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). We used the diagram below (Figure 1) to capture how professional capital is a product of three dimensions of capital and how they amplify each other (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). We further defined each kind of capital within this conceptual framework to fully address our research problem and how it relates to the principalship.

Figure 1

Professional Capital, Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012



Human Capital

In the practice of education, human capital is the knowledge, skill and expertise necessary for educators (Spillane et al., 2003). Similarly, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explain human capital in education as having the skills and knowledge to carry out your role, combined with the desire to continually improve in support of all students. It is the emphasis on education and content knowledge that is crucial to the development and success of all professionals. Examples of human capital in education are measured by college degrees, advanced coursework, or types of teacher or content level certification (Sanders et al., 2018). Human capital is the accumulation of knowledge and skills over time, which suggests that seniority, years of experience, and participation in professional development like peer evaluation or mentoring, all improve productivity and effectiveness (Daly et al., 2020). Moreover, in their definition, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) challenge the idea that human capital can be developed in isolation, which brings us to the next form of capital.

Social Capital

Social capital can be understood as the ways in which individuals use resources and social relationships to increase success (Finnigan & Daly, 2010). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) credit economist James Loury and sociologist James Coleman as early influencers of social capital. According to Coleman, social capital exists “in the relations among people,” a statement he confirmed in his late-1980s studies of Catholic and public-school dropout comparisons (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 90). Bryk and Schneider (2002) go a step further when they claim that these relations and trust between teachers and students have a direct correlation to increased student achievement. Districts

that intentionally provide opportunities for teachers and principals to foster relationships and engage in meaningful collaborative experiences build social capital. Professional learning communities that promote trust, respect, and mutual regard among novice and experienced educators also promote social capital (Sanders et al., 2018). By building social capital, leaders better support their staff through the development of trust that leads to improved efficacy (Daly et al., 2015; Myung et al., 2011). The development of knowledge and skills through collaborative relationships leads to decisional capital.

Decisional Capital

The final category of professional capital is acquired through experience, practice, and reflection to make wise decisions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Using decisional capital requires individuals to draw on the insights of colleagues in forming judgments and is solidified through interactions with peers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Ultimately, decisions improve when educators collaborate with colleagues and apply their professional expertise from experience in the field. Decisional capital is important to principals as they make discretionary judgements between the managerial and instructional imperatives of the role (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood, 1994). The principal's obligation to promote and enhance both human capital as well as social capital within their buildings is an added charge that principals must undertake as part of their ever-expanding job. Building principals that can use their professional judgment and collaborative relationships to effectively make decisions have demonstrated that their discretion is crucial in leadership (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Professional Capital and Our Individual Studies

The conceptual framework of professional capital relies heavily on the work of Hargreaves and Fullan. It should be noted that while Hargreaves and Fullan did not invent any of these individual kinds of capital, it is their multi-dimensional approach that best summarizes and connects to our study. Their definition of professional capital recognizes the complex and evolving nature of education, while providing a framework for this research on the leadership of school principals. Fullan (2013) notes, “the role of school leaders is to build ‘professional capital’ across and beyond the school. All three must be addressed explicitly, and in combination” (p. 26). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) offer a powerful concept that brings these three kinds of capital together by developing individual human capital, fostering social capital, and promoting decisional capital that will cultivate and empower educators.

Given the three components of professional capital, and the ways in which they intersect with one another, we argue that using professional capital as a framework to study principal leadership better correlates with the intensifying demands of the role, the relationships needed to be successful in the role, and the adaptive changes needed for long-term success in inclusive schools. Therefore, districts should invest in school leader development by creating the conditions for principals to shape and benefit from professional capital (Fullan, Rincón-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015). Each of our individually authored studies explored the dimensions of professional capital with regard to principal leadership. Specifically, Banks (2022) studied leadership strategies that impact educator of color retention considering human capital; Hahn (2022), using a social capital framework, studied the principal pathway and its impact on principal recruitment;

Herman (2022) examined district strategies that influenced principal retention, combining human and decisional capital; Landry (2022) examined the organization of social relationships and their impact on principal efficacy, while considering social capital; and Viviani (2022) studied principal decisional capital and its impact on policy implementation. Table 1 reflects how the individual studies fall under the umbrella of our overarching research statement. Given the influence of school leadership, providing each school a strong principal should be a top priority of every district (Cruickshank, 2017; Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood, 2004).

Table 1*Five Studies on How Principals Benefit From and Shape Professional Capital*

Author/Year	Title	Research Questions
Banks (2022)	The Principal's Influence on the Retention Educators of Color	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What leadership strategies, if any, do principals use to support the retention of educators of color in the Elody Public School District? 2. Why do those educators of color remain in their district?
Hahn (2022)	The Individual Journey of the Building Principal and its Impact on Recruitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do principals make sense of how they became principal? 2. What influences a building principal's decision to recruit, "tap," or recommend a potential school leader?
Herman (2022)	Culturally Responsive District Strategies to Retain School Principals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What strategies, if any, does the district employ toward the retention of school principals? 2. How, if at all, do these strategies influence a principal's decision to remain in their role?
Landry (2022)	The Influence of Relationships on Principals' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what ways do districts organize and encourage relationships with and among principals? 2. To what extent do strong relationships with central office leaders and other principals impact principals' feelings of efficacy?
Viviani (2022)	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the organizational factors that contribute to principals' decisional capital about DEI policy implementation? 2. What are the individual factors that contribute to principals' decisional capital about DEI policy implementation?

CHAPTER 2²

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by five researchers who were interested in investigating how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools (see Table 1). The data collected for this study contributed both to the overall findings as well as each individual team member's study. As a team, we worked together on a majority of the pieces of this investigation; therefore, in the following sections we discuss the shared methodological approaches to our study, including the case study design, site selection, data collection, and data analysis. Any methodological approaches specific to an individual study are discussed in the individual chapters. In addition, for the purposes of confidentiality, we gave the pseudonym Elody to this district.

The five members of our team employed a qualitative case study design which “generates theories based on participant perspectives” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 63). This allowed us to collectively examine how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools. This case study was bounded because it focused on one urban school district, Elody, in Massachusetts during the Fall of 2021.

District Context

Our team selected the Elody Public School District using purposeful sampling. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) define purposeful sampling as intentional selection of “individuals and sites to learn or understand [a] central phenomenon” (p. 206). With both our team and individual studies in mind, we engaged in purposeful sampling related to

² This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Marc A. Banks, William R. Hahn, Erica M. Herman, Christine L. Landry, and Lauren M. Viviani

four specific criteria. First, we wanted to conduct our research in a large, urban public school district that employed at least several principals in similar grade bands. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Elody School District met the criterion for size with 15,265 students and 22 principals. Having multiple principals across grade bands allowed our team to investigate any similarities or differences across buildings with reference to principals benefitting from or shaping professional capital to improve their schools.

In order to fulfill the study requirements for each team member, we wanted a district with five or more educators of color. According to the DESE, Elody met this criterion as the number of educators of color in this district in the 2021-2022 school year was nearly 23%. This criterion was necessary, as Banks's (2022) study focused on how principals shaped their professional capital to help improve the retention of their educators of color. Third, we wanted a district that was implementing at least one policy across schools. The superintendent identified several policies that were being enacted across the district that were suitable for our study. It was important to include this criterion in our purposeful sampling as Viviani's (2022) study focused on how principals shaped their decisional capital with regard to policy implementation. While the studies completed by Hahn (2022), Herman (2022), and Landry (2022) did not need specific requirements of the district, it was helpful that there was evidence of a principal internship program and structures for professional development.

We ultimately chose Elody because it fit all these criteria and it did not establish any conflict of interest for any group member. We also noticed that this district did not use the typical phrasing and acronym for its diversity, equity, and inclusion work in the

same way as its peer districts across the Commonwealth. As a result, we referred to Elody's work on diversity, equity, inclusion in this specific order, using the acronym DEI where appropriate.

Data Collection

Our team collected data throughout the Fall of 2021. Data collection is, of course, critical for approaching the central purpose of our research study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Our data collection plan included gathering multiple sources of data in order to make sense of both how principals shape and benefit from professional capital. In the next section, we describe the data sources we used, which included semi-structured interviews and documents.

Semi-structured Interviews

Our team used a semi-structured approach for all the interviews in this study. A semi-structured approach enabled our team to dig deeper and collect data in a guided way that allowed for some structured variation depending on the participants' answers (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). In the following sections we describe the interview participant selection process, the interview protocols, and the interview process itself.

Interview Participants. Our team interviewed 21 participants from a variety of roles within Elody. While a majority of the interviews were conducted in person, some were done via Zoom because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Though the focus of our overarching study was on building principals, in order to gain a better understanding of their role and how they benefit from and shape the three dimensions of professional capital we included district leaders and educators to support the individual studies. Table 2 illustrates the role and number of participants who agreed to take part in our study.

Table 2*Interview Participants*

Role in District	Number of Participants
Superintendent	1
Central Office Administrator	5
Principal	8
Educator	7
Total	21

We began our study with purposive sampling of each of the participant groups, which was the selection of participants “because they [were] willing and available to be studied” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 143). As our study continued and we established relationships within the district, we then used snowball sampling, “a form of purposeful sampling that typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 209). Additional differing sampling methods are explained in the individual studies.

As seen in Table 2, we consulted several types of personnel beyond principals. We began by interviewing the superintendent and five other central office administrators, all of whom agreed to participate in our study. Through our initial interviews, we identified a central office leader who assisted our team in reaching out to the principals to interview. Our group understood that some principals would not be available or willing to engage in this study, which is why we contacted all 22 principals in the district. As for educator selection, we contacted 12, seven of whom agreed to be interviewed.

Interview Protocols. These interviews were the main source of our data collection. The semi-structured approach was best for the purposes of this study because it accomplished two tasks: allowing participants to voice their opinions through open-ended questions and examining the answers more deeply with clarifying probes (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Examples of probes are included in our interview protocols (See Appendices A, B, C, and D). To prepare for these interviews, we piloted our interview questions with educators in similar roles to those being interviewed who were not a part of this study. Based on the feedback, we modified a few questions. For example, instead of asking an educator how the principal used professional capital to influence their desire to stay, we changed the question to be more colloquial and straightforward. We asked, “Does the principal do anything that makes you want to stay?”

These semi-structured interviews were done in person or over Zoom during the months of August through December 2021. The interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes in duration. All interviews were audio-recorded, except for one individual. This person declined to be recorded for personal reasons. In this case, we typed notes to capture the participant’s responses. Whenever possible, our research team conducted the interviews in pairs, but there were a few occasions when the interviews were conducted singularly because of time commitment and scheduling challenges. Our goal in conducting these interviews in pairs was to make sure that we captured as much of the information as possible.

In these interviews, we gained greater understanding and insight from the participants regarding how principals shape and benefit from professional capital. In thinking about the team’s overall topic and our individual case studies, we decided to

create differing interview protocols based on the position the interview subject held within the district (refer to Appendices A through D). Given that each team member analyzed how principals shape and benefit from professional capital through a different lens, we included a question alignment key that identified the question as either general or one that aligned to a particular individual study. This ensured the team addressed the needs of each individual study.

Documents

Prior to and during the interviews, we asked the participants for documents related to the individual studies. The documents requested related to the administrative internship program and DEI policy implementation. Of these requested documents, our team only received the DEI policy manual. As well, during the interviews, many of the administrators at the district and principal level also referred to the recently completed district review by the DESE. As a result, we also reviewed the DESE's report as part of our study. This type of purposive sampling of documents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) allowed the team to examine how principals used or benefitted from professional capital in their leadership. We excluded any documents not related to the individual studies.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense or meaning of data that have been collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This section describes our approach to analyzing the collected data in order to answer our team's overarching inquiry. The research team engaged in weekly reflexive discussions that contributed to critical thinking and analysis and to ensure group calibration. We used a data management tool for organization, categorization, and coding of data. Further, we utilized a cloud-based document to record

our weekly meetings where we shared our thoughts, hunches, and speculations as they came to mind throughout the data analysis process (Saldaña, 2013). This shaped our group's work by helping us stay focused on the key tenets of professional capital throughout the analysis process. These two systems allowed the group members to synthesize our individual analyses by discovering common themes and topics in our findings across studies. These commonalities informed our collective understanding, conclusions, and impressions.

As we collected and analyzed the data, our team was fully aware of not only the trust that was placed in us by the participants in this study, but also the requirements of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to keep information confidential. With this in mind, we preserved confidentiality by keeping all data collected on a password-protected cloud-based server, accessible only to the researchers of this study. In order to maintain the privacy of all those involved, we assigned pseudonyms to all participants and the district itself from the beginning of our study. We then maintained a pseudonym key for each of the participants in a password-protected file. We continued to use Zotero, our research reference organizer, updating folders as we proceeded with the study.

Interview Analysis

In order to analyze interviews, we each used a variation of an iterative process of condensing, coding, codifying and then categorizing responses to interview questions to aid the analysis and synthesis of codes that emerged (Saldaña, 2013). Interview analysis processes unique to individual studies are discussed in Chapter 3 of each individual authors' respective dissertation-in-practice. The resulting themes, categories, and findings

addressed our research topic and were exhaustive, mutually exclusive, as sensitive to the data as possible, and conceptually congruent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Document Analysis

Similarly, we analyzed the documents and identified themes that we coded to support the validity of the interview data. Just as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, “What someone tells you in an interview can be checked against what you observe on site [and] what you read about in documents...you have thus employed triangulation” (p. 245). For example, checking included looking for similar themes in a document or listening for similar words and codes in interviews for congruence. Ultimately using a document review protocol (see Appendix I), we analyzed documents which allowed us to verify information we gleaned from interviews to complete our research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Document analysis processes unique to individual studies are discussed in Chapter 3 of each individual authors’ respective dissertation-in-practice.

Chapter 3

Statement of the Problem

Principals are vital to the success of their schools (Leithwood et al., 2004; Levin et al., 2020). Yet for many, the school principalship has become a mere three to four year stopping point, with turnover rates in the U.S. among the highest for any industry in the world (Beckett, 2018; Carnegie Foundation, 2014; Learning Policy Institute 2019; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). After all, the principalship is difficult work, requiring one to simultaneously juggle everything from discipline to bus duty to budgeting (Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000; Grissom et.al, 2021). As the demands on school principals have intensified, it is no surprise that principal turnover has increased (Pollock, 2015). At the same time, culturally responsive leadership practices are necessary to respond to the growing diversity in schools (DeMatthews, 2016; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). To complicate matters further, the majority of principals do not come from the same cultural background as the students they serve (DeMatthews & Izquierdo, 2020). While there has been growing research on culturally responsive practices for teachers, there is a gap in knowledge on how districts employ culturally responsive practices (Chang et al., 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Minkos et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2013; Yan, 2020). Considering the importance of the principal, the benefits associated with longer principal tenure, and the growing diversity within our schools, it is crucial to ascertain how districts might retain principals using culturally responsive practices. This is important because district leaders must ensure every school community has a principal that promotes a culturally responsive school environment that is safe, affirming, and academically challenging for students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore culturally responsive strategies districts use to retain principals. This study is particularly relevant as most of the participants interviewed were white, which is representative of the majority of principals in our nation's schools. Their perspectives allowed for greater insight into culturally responsive retention practices in majority white spaces, while also considering the influence these practices have on principals of color within these same majority white spaces. This study addresses the following research questions: (1) What strategies, if any, does the district employ toward the retention of school principals? (2) How, if at all, do these strategies influence a principal's decision to remain in their role? Answers to these questions will be examined through the lens of cultural responsiveness, thus potentially offering the field important strategies for districts and policymakers to employ to reduce principal turnover.

Literature Review

The following literature review includes three sections. First, I discuss the challenge of principal turnover. In section two, I explain why the retention of principals is important. In section three, I describe how district leaders could support principal retention in culturally responsive ways.

Principal Turnover

Turnover rates for principals are on the rise (Beckett, 2018; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Mitani, 2018; Yan, 2020). This is problematic because principal turnover negatively affects student achievement, teacher turnover, school culture and climate, and the ability to secure adequate resources (Leithwood et al., 2004, Snodgrass Rangel, 2018; Yan, 2020). One potential explanation for these high turnover rates is that accountability

measures and external demands on the principal are making the job unsustainable (Daly, 2009; Li, 2015). After all, school reform efforts require districts to replace the principal as a strategy to school turnaround (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sunderman et al., 2006). To improve principal retention, it is important to understand how a district cultivates the human talent and skills of its principals; how the district organizes to promote collaboration among principals; and finally, how the district makes decisions that impact the retention of principals (Finnegan & Daly, 2017; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Tong & Razniak, 2017).

Why Retaining Principals is Important

Principals influence student achievement, teacher quality, and school culture; thus making retaining principals a high priority for improving our nation's schools (Gajda & Militello, 2008; Grissom et al., 2021, Heck & Hallinger, 1996; Leithwood et al., 2010; Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Tekleselassie & Villarreal, 2011). Principals are a key lever for the successful implementation of school reform and the second largest factor contributing to increased positive outcomes for student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Loewenberg, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008). To demonstrate this impact, Levin (2020) found that the effects of having a strong principal on student achievement is nearly as large as having an effective teacher, while also having consequential influence given that principals' efforts affect all students in the school, not just a single classroom. Furthermore, given the positive influence teachers have on student achievement, it is essential that principals attract, support, and retain a high-quality teaching staff (Cruickshank, 2017; Darling-Hammond et. al., 2007). Louis and Wahlstrom (2011), found that principals must establish a culture of excellent instruction, develop shared

norms and values, and create a culture of trust in order to create the conditions for teachers to improve their instruction. Specifically, effective principals build trusting relationships with teachers, community partners, and families to ensure developmentally appropriate teaching and assessment in their schools (Ahern & Loh, 2020; FitzGerald & Quiñones, 2018; Loewenberg, 2016; Sanders et al., 2018; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

Moreover, principals are responsible for navigating the changing demographics of our nation's schools. In addition to the increased racial diversity in our schools, students are experiencing higher levels of need stemming from widespread poverty, homelessness, and challenging societal conditions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the renewed racial unrest across our country (Hodgkinson, 2002; Netolicky, 2020; McCray & McHatton, 2010). Knowing the influence of school principals, it is highly beneficial to our nation to invest in principal retention strategies (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018). After all, principal effectiveness increases with experience suggesting that limiting turnover could improve outcomes (Herman et al., 2016; Norton, 2002; Robinson et al., 2008).

Influence Of Culturally Responsive District Leadership On Principal Retention

Districts can do many things to help retain principals. Aside from dismissal and retirement, there are three key strategies districts can implement to reduce unnecessary turnover of principals: 1.) Provide high-quality professional learning opportunities and mentoring; 2.) Improve working conditions with adequate and stable compensation and; 3.) Increase principal autonomy and redefine accountability (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Sun & Ni, 2016; Wood et al., 2013). Even so, such discussions of principal retention often fail to account for the potential impact and benefits of culturally responsive leadership.

While our schools are becoming increasingly more diverse, the majority of our nation's principals identify as White (US Department of Education, 2016). Sadly, an unintended consequence of *Brown vs. Board of Education* pushed Black principals out of the profession, replacing these principals with White leaders (Tillman, 2004). To date, public education has not been able to recover from this loss resulting in the principalship being a majority White profession (Sanchez et al., 2008). However, there is strong data to suggest that racial diversity in school leadership positively benefits students, teachers, and communities (Sanchez et al., 2008). Despite the benefits of diversity, leaders of color face both systemic barriers, bias and discrimination when they are trying to enter the principal pipeline (Castro et al., 2018). Therefore, the current practices to recruit and hire principals continue to perpetuate Whiteness within the principalship (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017; Sanchez et al., 2008). Hence, demonstrating the importance for districts to employ culturally responsive practices in supporting and retaining principals.

Given our nation's shifting demographics, Khalifa (2012) found that principals must address the cultural needs of students, families, and teachers by promoting a climate that makes the whole school welcoming, inclusive, and accepting of all students, particularly students who are marginalized. Culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) consists of four elements: critical self-awareness; culturally responsive curricula and teacher development; culturally responsive and inclusive school environments; and engaging students and parents in community contexts. Despite the importance of districts on education and school reform, there is limited research focused on culturally responsive practices at the district level (Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). However, it is possible to apply the tenets of culturally responsive leadership to

hypothesize about the nature of culturally responsive district-level human resource strategies to reduce unnecessary turnover of principals. In the next sections I hypothesize how districts might be more culturally responsive in their retention strategies: 1.) Culturally responsive professional development and mentoring; 2.) Culturally responsive working conditions, and 3.) Culturally responsive autonomy and accountability.

Culturally Responsive Professional Development and Mentoring

Professional development and mentoring are key strategies to retain principals (Chapman et al., 2005). With this in mind, professional learning opportunities for principals could also be culturally responsive. Such opportunities might include district leadership working with principals to explore their critical consciousness of race and culture and how this relates to their leadership within their school context (Minkos et al., 2017). In order to achieve this goal, district leaders would need to develop relationships with principals to understand their own self-awareness of the influence of race and to then provide differentiated learning opportunities based on the needs identified (Gooden, 2012; Swanson & Welton, 2019). Engaging in discussions about the influence of race and racism within leadership would look different based on the demographic of the principals within the district. For example, mentoring has been identified as a key strategy for the retention of educators of color, specifically when the mentor identifies as the same race as the principal (Tillman, 2005). Therefore, one might hypothesize that providing culturally responsive professional development and mentoring for school principals could positively influence retention.

Peer support networks can also provide proactive support to principals, may reduce burnout, and increase retention (Beusaert et al., 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2021;

Finnigan & Daly, 2017). As such, one might imagine that districts could promote peer support networks for principals, particularly in times of high stress and crisis like navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and racial unrest in our country. Finnigan and Daly (2017) studied the social networks among principals and found that there was a positive influence on principal turnover when districts ensured that principals were well connected to one another and well supported. This is particularly important for districts to consider as they create formal and informal structures for principals to collaborate and support one another. One unintended consequence of not considering the influence of peer networks is the formation of cliques among principals and a feeling of isolation, which could lead to increased principal turnover (Abdi et al., 2020; Finnegan & Daly, 2017). To avoid this shortcoming, districts might implement professional learning communities among principals with a focus on developing relationships, social networks, and collegial dialogue. Establishing the foundation of trust within a professional learning network of peers could allow for more open and honest dialogue about the influence of race and racism within their leadership (Swanson & Welton, 2019). Such practices developing peer support networks are culturally responsive in that they could promote critical self-awareness among principals and are culturally affirming (Banwo et al., 2020; Khalifa et al. 2012; Johnson, 2007; Minkos et al., 2017).

Culturally Responsive Working Conditions

Improving working conditions is another key strategy to retain principals (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Mann, 2015). Sun and Ni (2016) found that working conditions considering salary, workload, school safety, student demographics, school culture, availability of resources, and parental involvement influence principal retention. Given

principals are experiencing work intensification at a rapid pace (Hunt, 2008; Pollock et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2018), districts need to elevate the importance of improving working conditions for principals. For example, Ikemoto et al., (2014), found that districts were promoting unsustainable and unscalable practices for principals, reinforcing superhero behaviors. To highlight this point, Yan (2020) found the average principal reported working as many as 59 hours a week on all school related activities before, during, and after school, which is a 12-hour average workday for principals. Principal burnout from poor working conditions is a leading factor that contributes to principal turnover; yet, in a review of the literature focused on principal burnout, DeMatthews et. al. (2021) found almost no instances of district-initiated efforts to reduce burnout among principals.

Thus, there is a need for districts to use culturally responsive practices to reconsider the working conditions for school principals (Norton, 2002; Yan, 2020). For example, Yan (2020) found that the school disciplinary environment played a critical role in reducing principal turnover, particularly in schools serving higher numbers of students of color. This is an important finding as districts aim to improve working conditions in schools by providing more support and resources to assist principals in maintaining safe, welcoming, and inclusive school climates, particularly in schools serving students experiencing higher risk factors (Yan, 2020). This finding suggests that support to manage the workload and expectations across school types should be differentiated to meet the needs of the individual school context. As such, one might imagine that districts could promote culturally responsive support to manage working conditions that could include, but are not limited to, principal supervisors focusing on principal well-being,

self-care, and self-worth; demonstrating that principals matter; or valuing principals' professional expertise, culture, and individual identities (Abdi et al., 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Additionally, one might imagine that providing more equitable compensation commensurate with the job responsibilities could reduce principal turnover, particularly in schools serving students experiencing higher risk factors (Pijanowski et al., 2009). For example, Sun and Ni (2016) found that principals with a relatively higher salary compared to peers with a similar background are more likely to remain in their roles. Yan (2020) reinforced the influence that improved salary, job benefits, contracts, and tenure systems can have on principal retention as principals are faced with increased pressure and workload. Although compensation will not change working conditions, the validation and affirmation may positively influence a principal's decision to remain in their role. Furthermore, providing financial incentives may assist in districts recruiting and retaining more diverse leaders to serve in schools.

Culturally Responsive Autonomy and Accountability

Providing principal autonomy and revising accountability measures are strategies districts can employ to retain principals (Adamowski et al., 2007; Chang et al., 2015). Unfortunately, accountability measures and top-down mandates diminish principal autonomy, therefore negatively influencing principal turnover (Chang et al., 2015). Principals are responsible for overseeing all aspects of school functioning; yet they lack the authority over critical decisions that could raise student achievement and improve school performance (Adamowski & Petrilli, 2007). To illustrate, Eck and Goodwin (2010), described the balancing act of defined autonomy for schools. This is where

districts are directive in some areas, such as establishing goals and expectations for achievement, setting a general course for continuous improvement, defining high standards of performance for all personnel, and providing autonomy in school-based decisions like evaluating staff or developing school cultures (Eck & Goodwin, 2010). One might imagine that principals would be given increased autonomy and trust from district leadership to know what is best for their school community, particularly when principals are achieving positive outcomes for students and creating culturally responsive and inclusive school communities (McKenzie et al., 2006; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018). For this reason, principal retention could be positively influenced when given higher levels of autonomy across a range of issues such as spending, teacher hiring, evaluation, and discipline (Chang et al., 2015; Levin & Bradley, 2019).

In contrast, punitive accountability systems can be counter-productive to the retention of principals (Grissom et al., 2021; Levin & Bradley, 2019). For example, Li (2012) found that high ability principals are more likely to leave schools when they face performance sanctions for failing to meet annual yearly progress. Given that school demographics strongly predict test scores, the practice of punitive accountability pulls principals away from schools serving more diverse populations (Li, 2012). Hence, one might imagine that districts could redefine accountability measures using a more culturally responsive approach to retain principals. This might look like the district using measures of success focused on the school's ability to implement culturally responsive curricula; to create culturally responsive and inclusive school environments by engaging students and parents in decision making (McKenzie et al., 2006; Marshall & Khalifa, 2018).

Methods

My study was part of a larger project that explored the ways in which principals used and built professional capital to enhance their knowledge, their relationships, and their ability to make decisions. The purpose of my study was to explore principal retention using a culturally responsive framework. This was studied through a qualitative case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) of a single public school district in the Northeast United States. My study addressed the following research questions: (1) What strategies, if any, does the district employ to retain school principals? (2) How, if at all, do these strategies influence a principal's decision to remain in their role? To capture how this research study was conducted, I begin by describing the school district that served as a setting for this study. Next, I discuss the data collection process, and finally shift into how the data were analyzed in order to answer my research questions.

Elody District

Elody District (a pseudonym) was a large urban district serving approximately 15,000 students. About eighty-five percent of the students identify as students of color, whereas only four of the twenty district principals identify as non-white. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) identified the district as a system that has not served students well (DESE, 2020). According to accountability data, the district met 45% of improvement targets with 14 of the district schools needing targeted support from the district. In a review of DESE principal retention data from 2017-2021, the district had an average of 90% of principals retained compared to the state average of 84% retention rates for principals, thus making Elody the right district for my study.

Data Collection

For my individual study, I drew upon interviews with building principals, district leadership, and the district superintendent. This was necessary in order to investigate district retention policies, practices and relationships. The interviews were recorded using a voice memo and transcribed through an online transcription program.

Participant Data

As outlined by Creswell and Guetterman (2019), I began my study using convenience sampling by interviewing those principals and district leadership staff who were available and willing to participate in the research. As I proceeded through the research process, I employed snowball sampling by asking participants to recommend others to be interviewed to gain further understanding of district practices and principals' experiences. The recruitment process for soliciting participation from district leaders and school principals has been reviewed in Chapter 2.

Semi-structured Interviews

In total, there were 14 participants interviewed for this study (see Table 3.1). I conducted semi-structured interviews with principals, district leaders and the district superintendent, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. A semi-structured interview allowed for flexibility, while still providing structure to the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our team collectively developed an interview protocol for district leaders and one for principals as the interviews informed all five studies. At the start of each interview, informed consent was obtained by verbally reviewing and sharing a copy of the consent form. Participants were interviewed using a protocol asking questions that pertained to our overarching study focused on principal leadership. For my study, I

focused on the questions related to principal retention. A sampling of the questions asked are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1

Interview Participants

Role in District	Number of Participants
Superintendent	1
District Leaders	5
Principals	8
Total	14

Table 3.2

Sample Interview Questions

Research Question	Interview Questions
What strategies, if any, does the district employ toward the retention of school principals?	District Leader Interview Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you think principals decide to stay in this district? 2. What does the district do to retain school leaders? 3. Why do you think principals decide to leave the district?
How, if at all, do these strategies influence a principal's decision to remain in their role?	Principal Interview Questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you stay as a principal? 2. What does the district do to retain you as a principal? 3. Have you ever thought about leaving your position as the principal? 4. If considering leaving the position, is there anything the district could do to retain you in your role?

Data Analysis

In order to answer my research questions, I used data obtained from interviews with district leaders and principals. Interviews were audiotaped for all participants and transcribed using an online transcription service (Rev.com). First, I listened to each interview multiple times and used open coding where I took notes on data that were potentially relevant to answering my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I then went over my notes to try to group the codes together using analytical coding, where coding comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I then used Dedoose (www.dedoose.com) as a data management tool for storing, organizing, categorizing, coding, and analyzing the data. Dedoose allowed me to reorganize and reanalyze my open coding using themes found in the literature on principal retention, identifying professional development, mentoring, autonomy, accountability, and improved working conditions. I utilized multiple cycles of coding to analyze the qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) focusing on each of my research questions.

First, I focused on district interviews to answer research question one exploring the strategies the district employed to retain school principals. I took the notes from open coding and generated a list of words that might be useful (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This first list of words included support, responsiveness, resources, valued, networks, trust and relationships. I then created a table to group the open codes into categories using the literature on principal retention. I identified relationships, hiring within, professional development and mentoring, working conditions, autonomy, and accountability as themes. I then identified specific examples from interviews that correlated to each of the

themes. I then coded the themes as traditional or culturally responsive. This delineated between traditional district retention practices and those that were identified as being culturally responsive.

Secondly, I focused on principal interviews to answer research question two, exploring how district strategies influenced a principal's decision to remain in their role. I used the same system with principal interviews to first identify data that might be potentially relevant to answering my research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). From open coding, I noted words of significance including longevity, students, families, colleagues, support, and the administrative internship program. I then sorted this data into categories to try to make sense of the data. It was critically important during this phase of data analysis that I considered my positionality as a White woman serving as a school principal and the potential influence this may have on the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This data was then sorted into two categories: why principals stay and why principals leave. I identified specific quotes that fell under each of these categories. I then further sorted these into two additional categories under each of the initial themes: personal factors and district strategies. Then within each category, sub themes were identified. Within personal factors, commitment to students, town, and self were all identified as themes. District strategies were sorted by positive and negative influences on principal retention. Positive influences for principal retention were identified as support and professional development. Negative influences for principal retention were identified as increased accountability and decreased autonomy.

Results

In the following section, I describe the strategies the district used to retain principals and then evaluated the culturally responsiveness of these strategies. I then describe how these strategies may have influenced principal retention.

Culturally Responsive District Leadership for Principal Retention

Research question one related to district strategies for principal retention. In line with the themes in my literature review, district leaders spoke about seven key strategies for principal retention: relationships, hiring from within, professional development, mentoring, working conditions, autonomy, and accountability.

Relationships

First, the most commonly heard district retention strategy was fostering the positive relationships with central office and among principals. Every participant named an aspect of “relationships” within their interview identifying the history and longevity of connections with other colleagues in the district. As one district leader recalled, “principals came up together as teachers. Their personal lives are connected as well. [It’s] an extended family.” Another district leader remarked:

I think that [district] is a community where many of the principals who are there actually came from the city, or they have some deep connection to the city. And I think that contributes to that sense of belonging. I think that people's relationships are really important to them and the way that relationships have formed over time. The multiple comments about the deep relationships and connections within the district demonstrated the importance these relationships played for principal retention.

Even so, relationships within the district were also identified as a potential barrier to being culturally responsive. One district leader noted that while relationships were important in the city, there were some who were not as connected and therefore did not have the same opportunities. They talked about the influence the deep-rooted relationships had on decision making at the district level. One district leader explained, “It is an old, small city where people are all related to one another.” They elaborated the point saying, “I started to see how connected people really are. And I think some of those relationships speak to why people stay in positions and in the district as long as they do.” Another district leader acknowledged, “For so long, there's so many relationships that led people to land in certain positions, and they're led by their friends, therefore the expectations fall short and it makes it easy to stay, even when things are going wrong.” Another district leader summarized the challenge with relationships in the district saying:

When we talk about wanting to diversify our staff, when we talk about getting more people into the district who look like the very kids that we are providing an education for, those opportunities are reduced if we're giving preference to somebody because they're related to someone else, and then saying, well, whatever's left is what other people can compete for.

This comment highlighted the tension in the district of practicing their commitment to diversity within the tight knit community with deep interconnected relationships. While relationships were positively attributed to strong principal retention, these findings demonstrated that relationships negatively influenced the district's work to advance culturally responsive practices, particularly within their hiring and promotion practices.

Hiring From Within

Second, the next commonly heard retention strategy was hiring from within, which district leaders commonly referred to as “growing their own leadership.” In the minds of many, hiring from within took the shape of the district’s administrative internship program, which was considered a “stepping stone for aspiring administrators.” One district leader reflected, “I did the administrative internship, it's almost like a rite of passage where if you want to really be an administrator in the school system, you have to go through it.” Indeed, of all the principals and district leaders interviewed, only one principal and one district leader had not participated in the program.

Although growing their own leadership fostered principal retention, it also hindered progress toward Elody’s goal of being more culturally responsive. All of the district leaders identified the lack of diversity of the school principals as an area of challenge. One leader said, “At our elementary level, there are no administrators of color, of any kind.” Another district leader critiqued “grow your own” stating, “there is an automatic assumption who was going into the seat next...once the position is filled, there will not be an opportunity again for a very long time.” This was important because it demonstrated that hiring practices for principals positively influences principal retention within Elody but may be counterproductive to increasing diversity.

Professional Development

Third, professional development was named as a district strategy to retain principals. One district leader remarked, “If [principals] feel valued and supported on an everyday basis and continue to give them opportunities to develop their professional learning, then they stay.” Prior to this year, principals took part in formal professional

development programs through the Lynch Leadership Academy focused on “instruction, excellence, and equity.” A district leader highlighted the benefits of this professional development noting, “We've really worked hard to create a professional learning community [among principals] where they really support one another.”

One example of the district focusing on culturally responsive professional development was the implementation of a district wide day focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion led by the newly established DEI office. The creation of the DEI office was, as one leader exclaimed, “a big deal”. They explained that the office was so much more than a “check box.” They elaborated by saying, “This is a full office that's supported and has the backing of the school committee to actually do the work.” As one district leader remarked about DEI work, “Institutional racism is what it is. It's really like digging a tunnel with a tablespoon. And you just keep going, keep going and keep going, and eventually you get somewhere.”

To illustrate the work of the office, all principals and their staff took part in a professional development day focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. One leader acknowledged the significance of the day exclaiming, “It's a first step of many. We've never done a conference like that before in this district.” While district leadership acknowledged the district was in the infancy stages around DEI work, they noted the importance of naming DEI as a priority to school principals and their faculties. It was important for the district to ensure there was continual professional development and learning focused on discussing race and the influence of racism on their practice. The establishment of the DEI office and the district professional day were examples of culturally responsive retention practices.

Mentoring

Fourth, mentoring was named as a district strategy to retain principals. District leaders identified that informal mentoring occurred within the district to support principals, but formal mentoring was an area of “complete weakness.” The deep connections among district principals and with central office staff resulted in informal mentoring relationships that influenced principal retention. One district leader reflected, “There are, I think, clusters of people emotionally supporting each other. And then there are some outliers who might have support in other ways, but not as part of this team of principals.”

Whereas mentoring was a strategy for principal retention, a culturally responsive approach would be focused on mentoring relationships focused on supporting principals of color. One district leader explained, “We’ll be creating affinity groups as well for all educators and staff of color because we do want to retain them, we don’t want them to go into another district because we’re making it an uncomfortable place.” One district leader talked about the importance of focusing on mentoring for principals of color noting, “You can hire me but can you retain me? Because we’re not playing games here, smoke and mirrors kind of thing.” They shared a concrete example that arose from their informal mentoring relationship recalling:

The principal at [school] is a black male who happens to be a football player from his past, a large black male, so if a student is misbehaving, people are excited to see him show up. When he starts to speak about the misbehavior being connected to engagement and instruction, the assumption is he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. And so finding that space where he can be respected in both areas

has been a challenge for him, and he had no one to speak to about it until I showed up and said, 'I see something happening here. Am I seeing it the way it actually is?' And he said, 'Yes, you're seeing exactly what I'm experiencing.'

This illustration of how racism played out for a leader of color in the district was a clear example of why mentoring was so important to supporting principals in their roles. This example demonstrated how important it was for principals to have someone they trusted to discuss incidents of racism and microaggressions in their leadership. This was important to principal retention, particularly for principals of color, to ensure that they receive the mentoring and support to navigate the influence of race and racism on their practice.

Working Conditions

Fifth, the district worked to improve working conditions and ensure compensation that was commensurate with the job responsibilities as a strategy to retain principals. Although the work of being a principal in the district was described as "very hard," the sentiment shared among both principals and district leadership was that they would not want to ever work elsewhere. One person said being a principal within the district was like "drinking water from a fire hose but it is deeply impactful." District office staff recognized the complexity of leading a school within the district and provided validation and support. One district leader remarked, "I think principals feel like if they need help with something or if there's a really tough situation, there'd be a system right away to give them the resources they need when they really have to make difficult decisions." This overwhelming sense of support of the district office was a key strategy the district employed to retain principals.

One example of culturally responsive working conditions that might have influenced principal retention was fostering self-care leadership provided by the district. One district leader contracted with a mental health clinician to provide a series of workshops for principals and individual coaching. They acknowledged the following:

During the pandemic, what was thrown on [principals] to keep things going, it was significant. They were exhausted. They were out of ideas sometimes. And some of them actually got sick and they were still trying to help their school. So we really focused on the mental health piece of it.

This example of focusing on self-care leadership was significant to the retention of school principals, particularly as they were navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed racial unrest stemming from the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

In addition, the district recently restructured the salary scale for principals so that the compensation reinforced people wanting to stay in their role. While compensation was not necessarily a culturally responsive retention strategy, salary was important to ensure principals felt valued and affirmed for their work. One district administrator stated, “I do think that the compensation is really also an important determining factor in people staying in the district.” The importance of compensation commensurate with the position was highlighted by one district leader who reflected, “What was happening in the past was our union members were earning more than our principals and principals were really feeling devalued.”

Autonomy

Sixth, the district identified autonomy as a strategy to retain principals. One district leader reflected, “I think that our superintendent and all of us here in central, we

do respect the various styles of the principals and I think that that's kind of how they can keep their autonomy, making decisions for the building.” Another district leader noted, “I think principals’ autonomy should be really strong... We're here to support but you need to really fight for what you need and what is the best for your school.” Providing autonomy as a retention strategy demonstrates culturally responsive practices by trusting those closest to the work to make decisions.

Whereas district leaders identified autonomy as important to principal retention, they also recognized the challenges of navigating autonomy in the district, particularly as it related to the teacher’s union. One district leader named the tension of trying to do what was right for kids, while also avoiding a grievance issue. They shared, “I think a number of principals would tell you they don't have as much autonomy as they would like to have.” One district leader recognized the complexity explaining:

Being a principal is really hard because you have the district telling you, ‘This is what is expected.’ And then you have a union saying, ‘You can't make us do that.’ So they're just kind of stuck there trying to navigate how to make those two worlds kind of come together and do what's right for kids. And sometimes people are good at it, and sometimes not.

This example highlighted how outside influences impacted district actions and could potentially interfere with their ability to be more culturally responsive in their approaches.

Accountability

Finally, accountability was named as a reason for strong principal retention. The lack of accountability for student performance was named multiple times by district

leaders as a reason why principals remained in the district. One district leader remarked that there is “a level of protection” for district principals. Another explained, “When you look at our district in the state that it is in, the number of people who have maintained their roles as principals while the school is going into turn around and failing, speaks to the level of accountability.” One district leader explained why principals decide to stay in the district reflecting:

The principals in the district work 11 months. They get paid very well. Like I said, regardless of how things turn out, they still have their jobs. And the evaluation system that we've used has not really put the level of pressure and accountability on them to get results. So it feels comfortable, even when you're not happy with how kids performed, or what happened for the kids, it still has been really comfortable to stay.

This example showed that while retention of principals in the district surpasses the national average, strong retention did not result in increased outcomes for students. One district leader acknowledged the increased pressure and accountability being put on principals stemming from the district audit. They shared the following remark about principals saying, “Trying to grapple with that kind of pressure as a leader when you haven't had it, is probably going to make some talk about leaving, but I'll be surprised if any of them do.”

Another example of a retention strategy that was not culturally responsive was around principal evaluations. Principal evaluations across the district were identified as a major area of needed growth with some principals not receiving an evaluation at all. One district leader acknowledged this gap reflecting, “Doing a good job meant there were no

complaints.” Another district leader reflected saying, “We need to be doing a better job supporting principals as instructional leaders... I think there's been a shift in the role from being business managers in a school to instructional leaders in the school.” A district leader named the tension around accountability for principal performance noting:

I have to say that my judgment is that far too many decisions in this district have been made over the last seven years or so around adult comfort and convenience as opposed to student outcomes. My message has been this is not about adult convenience. This is about getting student outcomes.

This quote highlighted the tension of keeping kids at the center of decision making and holding adults accountable when students were not getting the education they deserve. There were no examples provided of principals leaving due to a performance concern that was captured in an evaluation. In fact, one district leader stated, “We don’t get rid of people. We just move them around.” Principals left their positions for only four reasons within the district: 1.) Principals moved to a different school within the district to serve as the principal; 2.) For a district promotion; 3.) Retirement; 4.) or due to death. In sum, although the district realized the importance of principal evaluation, it was significant to consider the influence accountability for student performance will have on retention rates over time. It was the district's responsibility to provide principals feedback and support to achieve increased outcomes for their students and to hold them accountable when this does not occur.

Factors that Influenced Principal Retention

Whereas the preceding passages described the district’s intentional efforts to retain principals, research question two related to the influence those actions had on

principal retention. Although principal retention in the district was very high, the majority of principals in Elody identified as White, while the majority of students were students of color. As such, white principals benefited from racism that inherently exists within systems at different levels including internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural, particularly as related to hiring, promotion, and retention practices of the district. As a strength, principals were able to articulate the meaning of equity and diversity and identified that the focus on DEI was important for the district. Additionally, principals highlighted their commitment to serving the district's diverse student body and changing demographics of the town. However, as an area of growth, principals were not as confident in leading DEI work in their schools with their staff. Additionally, they were not as aware of the influence of race, racism, and culturally responsive leadership among principals themselves. In the following passages, I outline the personal factors and district actions that influenced principals' decisions to remain in their roles.

Personal Factors to Retain Principals

Findings indicated that principals remained in the district for personal reasons more than external actions of the district. Among all the principals interviewed, there was unanimous recognition as to the challenges of being a school principal in the district. One principal summarized this sentiment sharing, “You've got to do everything. You've got to be the custodian, you've got to be the supervisor for the buses, you've got to be the doctor, the nurse, the psychologist. The job is tough. It's tough. Bar none.” Principals expressed being “so tired,” “stressed out,” and some wondered, “Why am I doing this?” Despite the complex nature of the job, principals expressed a deep commitment to the

work and a desire to remain in the role for three main reasons: commitment to students and families; commitment to community, and commitment to self.

Commitment to students and families. Across the interviews with principals, the most common reason for staying in the role pertained to students and the feeling of making a difference in their lives. Repeatedly, “I love the kids” or “I love the families” was expressed by principals as the number one reason they remain in the role. One principal remarked that, “The relationships you have with families and students are what keep you going. And keep you coming back.” Repeatedly within interviews, “I was one of these kids” was noted as a key reason they stayed within the district.

Commitment to community. Secondly, principals stayed in the district because of their deep commitment to community and to the town. There was a sense of pride in being a district principal and giving back to the community. One principal explained, “You believe in this place” and another shared, “I’ve been here so long that I have no intentions of going anywhere. I have been here my whole career and it has been a wonderful place to be.” The district strategy of “hiring from within” for open principal positions has led to a workforce of principals who are deeply connected to the community, remaining in the role for extended periods of time, and only leaving for retirement, promotion, or death. At the same time, this district strategy of hiring from within has led to an almost entirely White principal workforce, thus not demonstrating culturally responsive leadership.

Commitment to self. Third, principals expressed a desire to finish what they started before they could leave the district. One principal noted, “You’re always chasing something, like, there’s more work to be done. There are more things I can try.” Another

principal reflected on their personal investment in the work saying, “You want to see the outcomes from these things put in place.” Another principal reflected on why they remained as a principal noting, “I am the type when there's a problem, I don't want to go until I've fixed it.” Another stated, “You can't just leave a job half done. So people kind of hang in there because we're not done yet.” Leading in the district was identified by every principal as being challenging with one principal remarking, “There are days here I ask why am I doing this? It's not worth the energy and the aggravation.” Despite the challenges of leading in the district, principals expressed a desire to “to see it through” resulting in high retention rates for principals within Elody.

District Actions to Retain Principals

Whereas internal factors were the leading reasons why principals remained in the role, principals cited “feeling supported” as the main action that influenced their decision to stay. They went on to describe professional development as a second factor that influenced their decision to remain in the district. Although no principal stated that they were leaving their position, increased accountability and decreased autonomy were named as factors that negatively influenced their desire to remain a principal. In the following sections, I describe the influence district actions had on principal retention.

Principal support. First, principals named “support” as the key action that influenced their decision to remain in the role. They identified three different stakeholder groups that provided them support, including district leaders, colleagues, and building based staff. In talking about the district, one principal exclaimed, “They just envelop you and there is this sense of support. I think that's the best thing about this district.” A principal said, “I think they do a lot of trying to keep us. I mean, if you're struggling,

they're not going to let you fail. So we have a sense of, if you need help, you can go to people.” They went on to say, “Yeah, I mean, everybody's a phone call away.”

Principals talked about the influence of their colleagues as another reason they felt supported. They talked about the formal networks established by the district and the informal networks formed among principals as reasons they stayed in the district. One principal remarked about the principals in the district, “We're a pretty tight group, we lean on each other.” Another principal provided a concrete example of networking among principals explaining, “We go back and forth on it [text chain of principals] and it's almost a daily basis because the things that are happening are outrageous and we've never been through this before. So we rely on each other.”

Third, principals named the building-based team as a key support to manage the workload necessary to continue in the district. Support in the schools was identified across different groups including associate principals, instructional leadership teams, coaches, teachers, and assistant teachers. One principal named how they sustained the role sharing, “It comes down to building a really solid team around you.”

Professional development. A second strategy to retain principals was through providing high quality professional development. One principal stated, “I think they try to make sure we're getting the necessary PD and support so we feel as though we can do our jobs.” Principals named the work they have done with the Lynch Leadership Academy and professional development sessions with the chief academic officer as learning opportunities that have helped them grow personally and sustain their role. One example of culturally responsive professional development was the district's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Multiple principals named the complexity of leading DEI work in

their schools with one principal sharing, “Let's put on the table the fact that, hey, 80% of our students are students of color, 3% of our staff is. I mean students come in, this is what they're seeing.” Principals named professional development focused on DEI as important to their learning and expressed the need for additional professional development to lead this work in their schools. Principals identified the equity checklist, establishing DEI teams in schools, and the revised hiring practices as professional development that was impactful and contributed to their desire to remain in the district. One principal acknowledged, “I think we have more work to do, but I think we have a focus on it [DEI] now. It's something we know we're working on.” Principals also named the creation of the new DEI office and the new executive director as key strategies to support their professional development and the work within schools.

Influence of Accountability and Autonomy

While support and professional development were named as reasons principals wanted to stay in the district, increased accountability and decreased autonomy were named as reasons principals considered leaving the district. Principals named the state audit issued in March of 2020 and subsequent district actions to respond to the audit as key reasons they would consider leaving the district. Principals shared that the state audit resulted in a greater oversight of principals and less autonomy for decision making around professional development and district goals. One principal remarked, “This year it feels like we are the problem.” They went on to say, “There is no voice from principals right now. It was not like this in the past.” Multiple school principals reported that the return to school this year has felt “different” than in the past. One principal said they felt “micromanaged” and another stated they were “feeling as if they needed to defend their

work.” One principal shared that two of their colleagues recently put in their papers to retire and they attributed this decision to the top-down mandates and lack of trust. One principal noted, “Before this year it was, I would tell you, the best job ever. I would mean that with my whole heart. This year, I'm struggling and it's not a good place. I feel like we're micromanaged.” Principals expressed they had no input into the district's response to the state audit and they were only responsible for implementing top-down mandates. When asked if they have ever thought about leaving the principalship, one principal reflected saying, “Honestly, never before this year. This year, yes.” Principals were naming the tension between the need for increased student outcomes for performance and principal accountability for achieving these outcomes. Hence, principals were expressing frustration caused by the heightened sense of urgency and increased accountability. This was thereby resulting in a desire to leave their role but not necessarily taking action as a result.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine strategies districts employ to retain principals and whether these strategies influenced a principal's decision to remain in their role. In line with prior research, findings showed that principals remained in their roles when the district created conditions for principals to feel supported, provided high quality professional development and mentoring, and focused on improved working conditions. However, findings also highlighted principals' feelings of wanting to leave the district when they felt heightened accountability and decreased autonomy. Whereas relationships and growing one's own leaders were positively attributed to strong principal retention, these were identified as barriers to enacting culturally responsive district leadership

practices. In the following sections, I discuss research and district practices for principal retention that are culturally responsive, focusing on three key recommendations: representation in leadership; whiteness in leadership; and doing a hard reset for principal evaluation and accountability.

Representation in Leadership

Representation in leadership matters (French et al., 2000; Moore et al., 2017). Districts like Elody should consider the racial congruence between the students and staff in the district and enact culturally responsive hiring practices to increase representation in the principalship (Davis et al., 2016; Johnson, 2007; Moore et al., 2017). Although principal retention in Elody surpassed the national average, most principals there were white demonstrating the need to focus on diversifying the role. In this way, Elody was representative of national trends, where schools are becoming more diverse, but most principals continue to be white (Davis et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2017).

Racial congruence has been defined as a match between an individual's race and the majority race of the organization or community in which the individual is situated (Davis et al., 2016). Racial mismatch for school principals is common throughout the US (Davis et al., 2016). While less studied than teacher racial congruence, principal racial congruence with the school community has been attributed to lower principal turnover, higher job satisfaction, increased teacher diversity, lower teacher turnover, higher student engagement, and developing a positive student self-identity (Davis et al., 2016).

Although retention is the focus of this research study, it is important to recognize that hiring practices influence a district's ability to be culturally responsive in their retention practices.

In effect, districts cannot enact culturally responsive retention without enacting culturally responsive hiring (McMahon, 2007; Tran et al., 2020). Districts like Elody may consider culturally responsive strategies to recruit diverse leaders, viewing the diversity as an asset to the organization (Yosso, 2005). Districts could offer incentives such as scholarships for additional coursework or loan forgiveness for educational debt with a specific focus on providing these incentives for educators of color. They also should consider how to support educators of color within the district to advance within the profession and become district principals (Banwo et al., 2021; Khalifa, 2012). Elody could reimagine the administrative internship program focusing on a pipeline with a priority focus of elevating diverse educators within the district. It would benefit the district to place an urgency on culturally responsive hiring practices for school principals as a first step towards demonstrating culturally responsive district leadership.

Whiteness In Leadership

As identified above, principals in Elody were majority white. For this reason, exploring whiteness in leadership is a critical area to explore for the district to enact culturally responsive leadership. When districts fail to support principals to engage in open and honest dialogue about racism, they are exercising “whiteness” to maintain the status quo and their own power and privilege (Swanson & Welton, 2019). White principals have the racial privilege of not having to face the daily reminders of how race and racism affect them, often leaving antiracism work to fall on the shoulders of colleagues of color. Districts like Elody could support white principals through professional development and mentoring to develop their own cultural competence and antiracist leadership. Principals who practice antiracist leadership not only take action to

identify and eradicate individual and systemic racial prejudices; they also empower others to do the same (DeMatthews, 2018; Gooden et al., 2012; Gooden et al., 2018; Welton et al., 2018). Given the demographic of our nation's principals, white principals have significant influence over shaping the educational experience for our nation's students of color (DiAngelo, 2011; Swanson & Welton, 2019). Therefore, it is critically important to ensure that white principals have the skills and knowledge to lead in diverse settings. In order to support white principals to act as antiracist leaders, districts like Elody should invest in principal coaching focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. They should also elevate teacher leaders to work alongside principals to have ongoing conversations about race and racism within the school community.

As an illustration, principals need the district to provide support as they navigate the complexities of leading antiracism work in their schools, especially when confronted by white fragility. White fragility focuses on the behaviors white people display when talking about race to push back and thus regain their racial position and equilibrium. Such behaviors include withdrawal, defensiveness, crying, arguing, minimizing, or ignoring (DiAngelo, 2011). Despite the necessity of white people engaging in explicit discussions about race and racism (Swanson & Welton, 2019), white people have very low thresholds for enduring any discomfort with challenges to their racial worldviews (DiAngelo, 2012). In short, districts like Elody should focus their retention efforts on principals who engage in professional learning and dialogue where race is acknowledged and racism is confronted, therefore demonstrating culturally responsive leadership.

Hard Reset For Principal Evaluation and Accountability

As one might recall, principal evaluation was a major area of concern in Elody. Although the district had been identified by the state as underperforming, most principals had not received an evaluation at all (DESE, 2020). While principal evaluation can provide principals with regular feedback to support student learning, most accountability efforts for principals have led to increased job stress and turnover (Mitani, 2018). The present study's findings suggest the need for a 'hard reset' for principal evaluation and accountability with a focus on culturally responsive leadership.

Return to Normal

Districts like Elody need to be cautious as they “return to normal” that they do not simply revert to the old ways of doing business but instead transform their behaviors to be more culturally responsive. The current pandemic and racial reckoning happening across our country has unquestionably changed the role of school leaders (Harris, 2020). On the positive side, there has been an acknowledgement of the importance to consider humans before outcomes with a focus on well-being, workload, and health (Netolicky, 2020). However, districts and schools are still being held accountable for student outcomes from high stakes assessments. The COVID pandemic and the anti-Black pandemic are opportunities to reset education using a more robust and culturally centered pedagogy that considers the conditions of students’ lives these occurrences set in motion (Dirani et al., 2020; Ladson Billings, 2021). With this in mind, one might argue the “return to normal” schooling so many people are yearning for is not in the best interest of our marginalized youth. Districts like Elody should examine past practices, policies and behaviors through the lens of culturally responsive leadership. One strategy might be to

engage in a district wide Equity Audit to identify equity goals for district leaders, principals, and educators.

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

Another way in which districts could practice culturally responsive retention strategies is with principal evaluations. District leaders should hold school principals accountable for being culturally responsive leaders using a robust evaluation system. Principal evaluations could focus on the behaviors for culturally responsive school leadership; namely, critical self-awareness, culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students and families in community contexts (Khalifa, 2016). As a first step, district leaders could work with principals to critically self-reflect on their leadership practices to examine personal biases, assumptions, and values. Critical self-reflection should be ongoing and should serve as the foundation for their leadership goals. Furthermore, district leaders should work with principals to develop their own critical consciousness before they start to lead the work within their own school communities. Additionally, district leaders should provide ongoing feedback, professional development, and evaluations focusing on the culturally responsive behaviors in leadership. Data should be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of principals in creating schools to meet the diverse needs of their students. In short, districts should consider how they cultivate the human talent of principals and make strategic decisions about retention through the evaluation process focusing on culturally responsive school leadership.

Limitations

Within this study, the current context of the pandemic, the time this study took place, and the demographics of the principals interviewed are limitations that should be addressed in future research. There was decreased access to people and buildings due to COVID restrictions. In addition, some did not participate in the study because of all the additional responsibilities stemming from COVID. Secondly, the time and context for which this study was conducted is a limitation. Data was collected for only four months during the start of the school year. In addition, the district superintendent started their first year managing a global health pandemic and navigating the racial reckoning across our nation. The data for this study were collected during a transitional phase within the district with a new interim deputy superintendent. Finally, it is important to note that this study focused on culturally responsive retention primarily focused on White principals. Future research should focus on gaining insight about principal retention from a more diverse sampling of principals. As such, my data reflects the opinions and experiences of district leaders and majority White school principals during this limited time period in the context of our current pandemic.

Conclusion

Effective twenty-first century school principals are responsible for increasing student outcomes and for maintaining school cultures that are safe, welcoming and inclusive to all. Unfortunately, the principalship has been categorized as a “revolving door” fueled by pressure and demands of the job. Research clearly concludes, principals matter greatly to the success of our students. Unfortunately, district leadership, policymakers and the media do not treat them as if they actually do matter. My view is

that the role of the principal has been misunderstood and undervalued in policy and school reform efforts, therefore not prioritizing the principal as a key agent of change. The findings from this research study will contribute to the field by identifying culturally responsive strategies districts should implement to retain principals in their roles.

CHAPTER 4³

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of our project was to investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, their relationships, and their abilities to make decisions. To do so, our five studies looked at professional capital through its three different dimensions (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Through a human capital lens, Banks (2022) explored the leadership factors, if any, principals used to promote the retention of their educators of color and why educators of color remained in the district. Herman (2022) used human capital and decisional capital to explore the district strategies employed to retain school principals and whether these actions influenced a principal's decision to remain in their role. Through a social capital lens, Hahn (2022) examined the principal pathway and its impact on principal recruitment practices. Also through a social capital lens, Landry (2022) explored principals' relationships and their influence on perceptions of self-efficacy. And through a decisional capital lens, Viviani (2022) considered how principals made sense of district wide policies and the decisions principals made about how to implement those policies.

We begin with a summary of the strengths of the Elody School District related to professional capital and school leadership. By synthesizing our individual research studies, we explore common findings to better understand how principals benefit from and shape professional capital. We then build upon the existing framework of

³ This chapter was jointly written by the authors listed and reflects the team approach of this project: Marc A. Banks, William R. Hahn, Erica M. Herman, Christine L. Landry, and Lauren M. Viviani

professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) to introduce a new perspective, inclusive capital.

Strengths of Elody

The Elody School District has many strengths, one of which being a tremendous sense of pride about their community and its rich traditions. Educators, principals, and administrators alike spoke at length about their commitment to the community, and most importantly, the students in the district. This strong sense of community was also fostered by a commitment to a grow-your-own program that has existed for several decades. This focus on human capital showed an investment in helping the district's educators grow their talents and skills through paraprofessional training programs and an administrative internship program. As a result, the Elody School District had high retention rates among principals and district administrators.

Most recently, the Elody School District has reorganized their central leadership team and added an entire office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This human and social capital investment to DEI demonstrated their commitment to cultural proficiency and their priority to diversifying their staff, supporting all students, and ensuring an inclusive environment where all members of the community were welcomed. Just as important, Elody implemented a DEI professional development (PD) day required for all certified staff; and open to all district employees. The initial purposes of the PD were to introduce the newly hired DEI executive team, to describe the commitment of the district to DEI, and to outline the guiding principles of the office. These guiding principles were actionable by four focus areas, used for measuring the progress of the newly created office. These measurable areas included increased recruitment and

retention of diverse educators and staff, improved school climate, focused professional development so that they are able to deliver high quality services, and more inclusive curriculum and instructional practices. Furthermore, the day offered the opportunity for staff to engage in critical self-reflection and acquire decisional capital to make the appropriate professional judgements about race and to design ways to implement DEI practices in their daily work.

Like many districts across the country, Elody has confronted a number of challenges navigating their schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the many participants that were interviewed during this study demonstrated incredible resiliency when faced with adversity during this difficult time. Moreover, many stakeholders clearly communicated their commitment to the students of Elody. It is evident that the staff of the Elody School District care deeply about the success of students and will do almost anything to champion that cause.

Harnessing Relationships

We believe that how principals manage groups and harness relationships is critical in meeting the needs of staff and students (Spillane & Sun, 2020). Consistent with Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), we recognize the characteristics of social capital through the quantity and quality of interactions and relationships among people. In most school districts like Elody, group cohesion and personal relationships are important and can lead to better student performance (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). In contrast, some social dynamics can limit diversity of thought, ultimately silencing important stakeholders. For example, Herman (2022) found that relationships and growing one's own leaders were positively attributed to strong principal retention;

however, these were identified as barriers to enacting culturally responsive district leadership practices. Below we define and focus on how homophily, groupthink, and multiplex relationships were common themes across our studies and helped us to better understand how to build on the professional capital framework to improve school leadership.

Homophily

Homophily is the concept of connecting with others who are like yourself: birds of a feather flock together (McPherson et al., 2001; Myung et al., 2011). In a range of organizations, researchers have demonstrated that people associate more with others who are similar to themselves (Kleinbaum, et al., 2013). A homophilous work environment can produce uniformity, illusions of unanimity, and even self-censorship (Hart, 1991). In education, homophilous workforces are created and maintained through outdated hiring practices and deeply rooted traditions that limit diversity, especially in professional and leadership roles (Myung et al., 2011; Daly & Finnigan, 2011). As a result, homophily limits people's access to social capital in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience (McPherson et al., 2001). Moreover, Landry (2022) found in her study that homophilous relationships can hurt those within the relationship by creating a sense of expectation or entitlement. Therefore, urban districts like Elody should work to embrace divergent voices. To do so, districts must look beyond the traditional educator and administrator pools to areas in which talented staff ranging from paraprofessionals to career-switchers may be overlooked (Clewell & Villegas, 1999). Districts must actively recruit a more diverse leadership team by connecting with institutions of higher education who bring a

variety of experiences and personal insights to the table (Honig, 2008). Because homophily is typical in most organizations, districts must create systematic structures that consider formalized relationships and support networks that value inclusivity and reciprocal sharing (McPherson et al., 2001). These actions will demonstrate to candidates that districts are actively engaged in recognizing the importance of diverse voices.

Groupthink

Groupthink is the practice of thinking or making decisions as a group in a way that discourages creativity or individual responsibility (Janis, 1982). Groupthink increases when leaders are under stress or navigating through crises (Janis, 1982; Liou & Daly, 2020). In these circumstances, leaders often perceive threats to their leadership or to their self-esteem when people do not adhere to the decisions of the group (Hart, 1991). In schools, groupthink limits the collaboration and voice of school leaders that districts claim to support. This was true in districts like Elody that unwittingly build or encourage a groupthink mentality that leads to a homophilous workforce (Janis, 1982).

As districts navigate traditional practices, such as hiring, they need to deliberately create conditions that foster creativity and the underrepresented voice. For instance, Hahn (2022) found that mostly White administrators with long term tenures with the district were the ones actually benefiting from the administrative internship program. When pipeline programs are attracting only seasoned veterans, there is a strong potential that educators of color are being overlooked or passed over. When districts rely on historic programs like these they must deliberately give voice to those that are outside of the “group” and target the demographics in such a way that their staff reflects their students. In this case, the groupthink occurs when a historical practice is reinforcing a failed

method that recruits a singular leadership profile and no one steps up to creatively address a failed practice. Ultimately, groupthink does not embrace practices that embody diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Understanding groupthink mentality is important as many districts navigate DEI initiatives and planning in the face of America's response to renewed racial unrest (Altman, 2020; Viviani, 2022). As Viviani (2022) found, educators of color were concerned about their White counterparts not embracing the DEI work initiated by the Elody School District. As districts embrace DEI work, they must ensure that all their educators come to the table prepared to discuss divergent viewpoints and hear voices that are not typically represented in the majority and thereby understand how implicit bias perpetuates groupthink.

Multiplex Relationships

Multiplex relationships are relationships grounded in *both* work and friendship-related interactions, thus leading to more substantive, diverse, and bidirectional interactions with peers (Burt, 1997; Hite et al., 2006; Liou & Daly, 2020). Expressive relationships provide trust and support but often, not the feedback needed to make change. Conversely, instrumental, or work-related relationships provide considerable feedback but not the support required to act on it. As the role of the principalship continues to intensify, districts must consider how to activate relationships that will engender trust and the type of problem-solving needed to respond to new challenges. Building multiplex relationships ensure districts will be better prepared to navigate complex problems such as the underrepresentation of teachers and leaders of color faced in Elody. Banks (2022) found in his study that educators of color desired more critical

feedback on their pedagogical practices in addition to the recognition of being an educator of color within their buildings. By capturing the expressive and instrumental sides of what educators of color need, principals can harness the multiplex relationship to better support their educators of color and create a more inclusive school environment. In short, districts that foster multiplex relationships in a strategic way, will create environments that better support the whole educator and encourage strong leadership practices (Hite, 2005; Liou & Daly, 2020). For example, districts can create professional learning communities among principals focused on developing relationships among colleagues, while also advancing their learning. In addition, leaders in districts have the power to take deliberate action to provide opportunities for educators to build multiplex relationships, where they can demonstrate their expertise and show their authentic identity in an inclusive way (Honig, 2008).

The Influence of Race

In each of our five studies focused on an aspect of professional capital, we found that race had an influence on the way principals acquired knowledge and skills, developed social interactions, and made decisions. Elody mirrored districts nationwide in the fact that most of their principals identified as White (The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce, 2016). As a result, the following sections will focus on how race and critical consciousness affect professional capital and how the importance of diverse representation in leadership leads to greater school outcomes.

Race and Critical Consciousness

As the population of students across the country becomes increasingly diverse, the racial makeup of teachers and principals remain predominantly White, thus requiring

districts to consider the relationship between race and critical consciousness (US Department of Education, 2016). Critical consciousness is a theoretical framework that addresses systemic oppression as the root of individual and organizational dysfunction (Freire, 2000). With a diversifying student population, being critically conscious about race and its effect on curriculum and instruction, hiring practices, and retention have become increasingly important to promote positive outcomes for students (Welton et al., 2015). Especially key in these decisions about how to promote racial equity is the principal (Swanson & Welton, 2019). An effective avenue for creating lasting, systemic anti-racist practices is to examine the way race, especially the role of Whiteness, affects social relationships and decision-making through the lens of critical consciousness.

According to Freire (2000), in order to eradicate oppression, it is necessary to think critically about the realities of systemic inequality. In order to do this, districts must adopt a strength-based, solution-oriented approach for self-determination at both the individual and organizational levels (Freire, 2000). Engaging in authentic discussions about race is key to addressing opportunity gaps for students of color (Swanson, 2019; Bristol 2021; Welton et al., 2015). Examples of practices to make districts more inclusive include the retention of educators of color (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Quirocho & Rios, 2000), the recruitment and retention of principals of color (Banwo & Seashore, 2020, Khalifa, 2012), and the creation of professional development and networks, such as mentoring, professional learning communities, and affinity groups (Alston, 2018; DuFour & Eaker, 2009; Mosely, 2018). Further, critical consciousness includes multiple voices and perspectives which leads to social changes as will be discussed in more detail below (McMahon, 2007).

Critical consciousness goes beyond the adage of “colorblindness” and “multiculturalism” that has been the norm in schools for the past several decades (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012). These old-fashioned doctrines perpetuate systemic inequities by neglecting to challenge the privilege of whiteness through ongoing policies such as insular professional development and hiring practices (McMahon, 2007). In order for individuals to be able to engage in critical consciousness, it is necessary to move from the surface level of multiculturalism to acknowledging the role of race and engaging in an introspective and personal examination of their beliefs about race (Swanson & Welton, 2019).

Leaders in schools must develop and hone their skills to challenge systemic racism. To do this, leaders must acquire knowledge and skills about race, engage in discussions with others about race, and make decisions about how to implement equitable initiatives using a critical-consciousness lens (Friere, 2000). One way this can be accomplished is through district organized affinity groups, ongoing coaching in building equity in leadership, and creating safe places for open dialogue among staff of color and White staff. Only through self-reflection on the role of race and a commitment to understanding the impact of White privilege, can educational leaders begin to actualize the tenets of professional capital. For example, Viviani (2022) found that in her study to authentically meet the organizational changes that DEI policies require, districts must provide more opportunities for introspective growth. Therefore, districts like Elody should provide staff the time and opportunities for professional development and provide resources and tools for staff to understand their own views about race and their identities. Secondly, affinity groups and school-based diversity teams are a starting point for

additional introspective learning (Rogers-Ard & Knaus, 2020). For lasting organizational change, individual school leaders must be critically conscious to improve their own fluency in discussing race and the role of Whiteness to mitigate biases.

Diverse Representation

Diverse representation in leadership matters. Although harnessing professional capital increases the benefits of being a strong leader, it fails to adequately address the importance of representative leadership. There are many benefits to having a diverse, representative leadership, including increased student achievement (Tran et al., 2020; Tillman, 2004), increased retention among principals of color (Levin & Bradley, 2019; Rogers-Ard & Knaus, 2020), and an increased diversity of thought (Crow & Glascock, 1995; Koenig et al., 2011). Diverse leadership leads to increased student achievement in areas such as strong role modeling for students, a drop in disciplinary sanctions for students of color, and an increase in students of color being a part of gifted and talented programs (Moore et al., 2017; Sanchez et al., 2008). Given that student achievement increased for students of color when students had or saw educators in their buildings who were racially congruent to them (Moore et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2020), all districts should ensure that there are leaders of color in their buildings.

As districts create and hone their DEI work, they may find that racial diversity at the principal level also affects retention outcomes for both principals and staff. Districts can look to institutions of higher education for examples of this work, as many have had DEI offices for decades (Nunes, 2021). As Clayton (2021) notes from her study at the university level, DEI must be prioritized and institutionalized as a core competency and made everyone's responsibility. As our team found in our studies, districts may find that

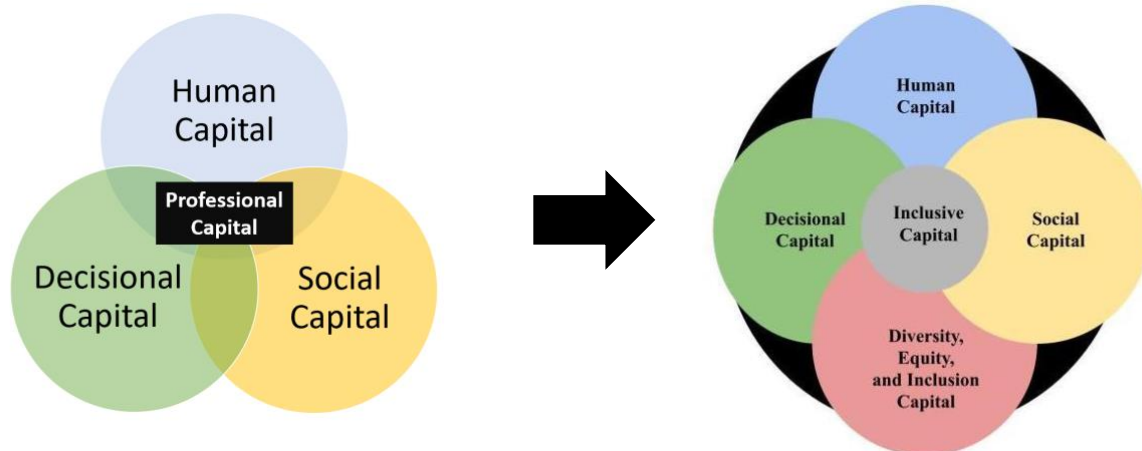
culturally responsive environments that support leaders of color are more likely to lead to increased diverse leadership (Hahn, 2022), stronger self-efficacy (Landry, 2022), and greater retention for the principal (Herman, 2022). Furthermore, in schools in which there are principals of color, the research supports that educators of color are more likely to stay and are also more satisfied with their jobs (Gates et al., 2006; Grissom & Keiser, 2011).

One reason for the lack of representation at the principal level is that a majority of teachers are White, and they use their professional capital to join school administrations. Educators of color generally do not have access to this same pathway. As Hahn (2022) noted in his study of principal pathways, “Building principals often credited [their] collegial connections and interactions as playing an important role in their pathway to the principalship” (p. 26). Districts should therefore consider how they can harness the characteristics of inclusion to help them more fully consider the barriers that prevent educators of color from becoming principals. Some of the barriers educators of color face include a lack of support and mentoring from their principal when they are in the teacher role and a lack of leadership opportunities to develop their administrative skills (Rogers-Ard & Knaus, 2020). And once these educators have advanced to the role of principal, there needs to be a concerted effort to support them; otherwise, the lack of support could quickly lead to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. Districts should continue to focus on growing and supporting their leaders of color, while at the same time recognizing that, “As numbers of nontraditional leaders (women, people of color, young adults) increase in school leadership, particularly in urban settings, districts must adjust to accommodate the needs of this unique (and diverse) population” (Peters, 2012, p. 36). Districts that

deliberately scrutinize human, social, and decisional capital through an inclusive lens become not only more culturally responsive, but also more representative of the diverse student population they aim to serve. The next section critically analyzes the framework of professional capital and introduces a new perspective that our research team calls inclusive capital.

Inclusive Capital

Professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) was developed before the renewed racial unrest and protests across the United States arising from the murder of George Floyd and Breanne Taylor, among others in recent years. We believe Hargreaves and Fullan stopped short of considering the influence of other forms of capital that add value beyond human, social, and decisional capital. Accordingly, we introduce a new perspective that embodies Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital, while adding a fourth dimension that includes the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We call this framework inclusive capital (Figure 2).

Figure 2*The Evolution of Professional Capital to Inclusive Capital**Professional Capital, Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012**Inclusive Capital*

Inclusive capital builds upon the older framework of professional capital by elevating the significance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. A professional capital framework that includes the dimension of diversity, equity, and inclusion is more complete and understands that DEI cannot simply be part of the social, human, and decisional capitals; rather, it must be added as its own dimension. In short, we assert that diversity, equity, and inclusion must be elevated to create a unique form of capital integrated into Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital framework. Consistent with Yosso's cultural capital framework (2005), we believe the DEI dimension must be understood as an asset-based element that elevates the intersectionality of race, gender, and identity in a way that gives power and voice to those who have not historically been included in the conversation (Lugg, 2003). Inclusive capital asserts that in order to collectively transform schools that harness the commitments and capabilities of the many, DEI must be elevated as an equally important dimension to human, social, and decisional

capital. Below we capture how the additional dimension of DEI strengthens the professional capital framework to create more inclusive systems.

Human capital encourages effective human resources practices to make the best hires. With the added dimension of DEI, districts ensure inclusivity by creating pipeline programs that attract and hire educators of color. Social capital encourages professional learning communities that allows educators to collaborate on best practices. With the added dimension of DEI, districts ensure inclusivity by creating affinity groups that support educators of color by enhancing social networks across the district. Decisional capital encourages policies that support strong communication and consensus building. With the added dimension of DEI, districts ensure inclusivity by bringing to the forefront the voices of the most underrepresented staff in all policies. Thus, in each of these examples, inclusive capital is the systematic development and integration of four forms of capital - human, social, decisional, and DEI - into the principalship. This suggests the need for future research focused on different forms of capital related to DEI and the intersectionality with professional capital. Furthermore, it is imperative that studies are conducted by researchers that are representative of today's students. Therefore, through policy and practice, district leaders should seek to establish inclusive capital as a perspective for developing school principals.

Conclusion

In our research, our team found that using the perspective of inclusive capital for principal leadership better correlates with the evolving, intensifying nature of the role and the sustained adaptive changes needed for long-term success in schools. Research has demonstrated the positive influence school principals have on improved student

outcomes, improved school culture, and teacher quality (Leithwood et al., 2004 & Levin et al., 2020). Diversity, equity, and inclusion must remain central to leadership practices and be at the center when observing principals and assessing their leadership practices (Hernandez et al., 2014). Therefore, districts should invest in school leader development by creating conditions for principals to shape and benefit from inclusive capital (Banks, 2022; Hahn, 2022; Herman, 2022; Landry, 2022; Viviani, 2022). Ultimately, true change in the face of adversity requires an individual and collective investment that does not protect the dominant voice; rather, it builds everyone's capacity to learn, be challenged, and move forward towards a shared vision.

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Appendix A

District Leader Interview Protocol

Researcher (to be read to participants):

Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, relationships, and ability to make decisions. We will be asking questions related to teacher diversity, principal recruitment, principal retention, improving self efficacy, and implementing policy.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study. Before starting, we would like to get your consent to participate in this study and permission to record this session.

(Get signature on consent form)

Thank you.

(Once recording starts)

The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the **[Elody] Public Schools**. As a quick reminder, we've allocated 45-60 minutes for this interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so. Your input is important to us and we want you to feel

comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don't understand a question.

Question alignment key

GQ = General Question	BER = Black Educator Retention
OAQ = Overarching Question	PI = Policy Implementation
PP = Principal Pathway	PE = Principal Efficacy
PR = Principal Retention	

District Leader Questions:

1. Why do you think principals decide to stay in this district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: What does [Elody] do to retain school leaders? **(PR)**
 - b. Probe: How do you provide autonomy to principals? **(PI/PR)**
 - c. *Probe - Is there anything specific the district does to retain educators of color? (BER)*
 - d. *Probe: What is your role in school leader retention?*
2. Why do you think principals decide to leave the district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: Could you have done anything different to keep them in their role?
3. In what ways do you see principals supporting each other? **(PE)**
 - a. *Probe - In what ways are relationships of principals developed, formally or informally?*
4. How do you evaluate principals? **(PR)**
5. What are the ways the district supports principals' professional growth? **(PE/PR)**
 - a. *Probe - Tell me some specific ways that you contribute to that growth.*
 - b. *Probe - What structures, if any, are in place to mentor principals? How long do these relationships remain in place?*
6. Equity work is really challenging. How do you promote equity in the district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: How do you work with your principals on topics around race and equity? **(PR/PI/PE)**
7. Tell me about your experiences with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? **(PI)**
 - a. *Probe: Where did you learn about DEI?*
 - b. *Probe: What do you know about [Elody's] DEI initiative?*
 - c. *Probe: What do you think about [Elody's] initiative?*
 - d. *Probe: How do you feel DEI fits in the overall mission of the district?*
8. How are the principals implementing DEI? **(PI)**
9. Why do principals call you? **(PE)**
 - a. Probe: What is the last thing a principal came to you for help with?
10. Tell me about a positive relationship you have with a principal and what sustains it. **(PE)**
 - a. What do you talk about?
11. Is there anything I should have asked you?

Follow Up Demographic Questions (if not answered in questions above):

- How many years have you served in the role?
- Would you consider yourself an educator of color?
 - If so, how do you identify?

Appendix B

Human Resources Director Interview Protocol

Researcher (to be read to participants):

Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, relationships, and ability to make decisions. We will be asking questions related to teacher diversity, principal recruitment, principal retention, improving self efficacy, and implementing policy.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study. Before starting, we would like to get your consent to participate in this study and permission to record this session.

(Get signature on consent form)

Thank you.

(Once recording starts)

The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the **[Elody] Public Schools**. As a quick reminder, we've allocated 45-60 minutes for this interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so. Your input is important to us and we want you to feel

comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don't understand a question.

Question alignment key

GQ = General Question	BER = Black Educator Retention
OAQ = Overarching Question	PI = Policy Implementation
PP = Principal Pathway	PE = Principal Efficacy
PR = Principal Retention	

District Leader Questions: Human Resources Director

1. Why do you think principals decide to stay in this district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: What does [Elody] do to retain school leaders? **(PR)**
 - b. Probe: How do you provide autonomy to principals? **(PI/PR)**
 - c. Probe: What is your role in school leader retention? **(PR)**
2. Why do you think principals decide to leave the district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: Could you have done anything different to keep them in their role?
3. Is there anything specific the district does to retain educators of color? **(BER)**
 - a. Probe: Does the district have any direct conversations with principals regarding the retention of educators of colors?
4. How are principals recruited in [Elody]? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: How is it determined whether a principal is appointed or hired by committee?
 - b. Probe: - What are the core competencies you look for?
5. What is the history of the Administrative Internship Program? **(PP)**
 - a. Probe: How was this program designed and how was the agreement made with the BPS teachers association (contract)?
 - b. Probe: Tell us more how BPS recruits or advertises for the Administrative Internship Program.
6. How do you or your office promote equity in the district? **(PR)**
 - a. Probe: How do you work with your principals on topics around race and equity? **(PR/PI/PE)**
7. How are principals evaluated in [Elody]? **(PE/PR)**
 - a. Probe: What happens to principals who are not performing well?

8. What is the demographic breakdown of principals currently employed in [Elody]?
 - a. Race
 - b. Gender
 - c. Years of experience in [Elody]
 - d. Years of experience as principal
 - e. Did they participate in the administrative internship program?

Follow Up Demographic Questions (if not answered in questions above):

- How many years have you served in the role?
- Would you consider yourself an educator of color?
 - If so, how do you identify?

Document request:

1. Do you have data, rosters, participation of all staff who have participated in the Administrative Internship Program?
 - a. *Probe: District leaders who participated in the program*

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

Researcher (to be read to participants):

Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, relationships, and ability to make decisions. We will be asking questions related to teacher diversity, principal recruitment, principal retention, improving self efficacy, and implementing policy.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study. Before starting, we would like to get your consent to participate in this study and permission to record this session.

(Get signature on consent form)

Thank you.

(Once recording starts)

The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the [Elody Public Schools]. As a quick reminder, we've allocated 45-60 minutes for this interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so. Your input is important to us and we want you to feel

comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don't understand a question.

Question alignment key

GQ = General Question	BER = Black Educator Retention
OAQ = Overarching Question	PI = Policy Implementation
PP = Principal Pathway	PE = Principal Efficacy
PR = Principal Retention	

Principal Interview Questions:

1. How did you end up becoming a principal? **(PP)**
 - a. *Probe: What roles have you had prior to becoming a principal? Were these roles all in the same district?*
2. How did other people/mentor/educators impact your decision to become a principal? Who encouraged you?
 - a. *Probe: Is this how others become principals?*
3. How do you encourage others to become a principal? Tell me about someone you have encouraged to consider the principalship. **(PP)**
 - a. *Probe - What do you like about them? Anyone you would not encourage? Is there someone like this now?*
4. Why do you stay as a principal? **(PR and PE)**
 - a. *Probe: Is anything specific about [Elody] that makes you stay?*
 - b. *Probe: What does the district (or your colleagues) do to retain you as a principal?*
 - c. *Probe: How does the district support you to manage the challenges that you face?*
 - d. *Probe: How much autonomy (flexibility) do you feel as a principal in this district?*
5. Tell me about a time when you felt like you demonstrated your greatest strength as a principal. **(PE)**
 - a. *Probe: Where did this ability come from?*
 - b. *Probe: When it comes to your strengths, does the district do anything to help you build this strength?*
 - c. *Probe: What is your greatest area for growth?*
6. The principal's role is so hard. Tell me about a relationship you have with someone in the district that keeps you going. **(PE)**
 - a. *Probe: Other school leader? District leader?*
 - b. *Probe: What are your conversations generally about?*
 - c. *Probe: Tell me a specific example of a time when this relationship helped.*
 - d. *Probe: Is there a relationship that brings you down?*
7. Tell me about your experiences with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? **(PI)**

- a. *Probe: Where did you learn about DEI?*
- b. *Probe: What do you know about [Elody's] DEI initiative?*
- c. *Probe: What do you think about [Elody's] initiative?*
- d. *Probe: How do you feel DEI fits in the overall mission of the district?*
- 8. Based on what you know about [Elody's] initiative, how are you rolling it out in your school? **(PI)**
 - a. *Probe: How did you decide what to do about DEI in your school?*
 - b. *Probe: How does DEI fit in your school mission?*
 - c. *Probe: Who, if anyone, helped you decide how to implement DEI in your school?*
 - d. *How do you make decisions about the competing priorities?*
- 9. How does race impact your interactions with your staff? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe: Is there a story you can think of when you purposely had race at the forefront of your mind when interacting with one of your staff?*
 - b. **Probe: If race doesn't, why not?*
- 10. What do you do to get teachers to stay at your school? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe - Do you do anything in particular for staff of color to get them to stay?*
- 11. Have you ever thought about leaving your position as the principal?
 - a. *Probe: What made you think about leaving? (PR)*
 - i. *Probe: In what ways has the time commitment of the role factored into your decision? ...Working conditions? ...Accountability? ...Autonomy?*
 - b. *Probe: If considering leaving the position, is there anything the district could do to retain you in your role?*
- 12. Is there anything I should have asked you?

Follow Up Questions (if not answered in questions above):

- How many years have you served as a principal? In [Elody]? Or elsewhere?
- What is it like to be a principal in [Elody]?
- Would you consider yourself an educator of color?
 - If so, how do you identify?
- Earlier we asked you about specific things you may be doing to retain your professional status staff of color. Are there any teachers you recommend we reach out to to interview?

Appendix D

Educator Interview Protocol

Researcher (to be read to participants):

Hi, my name is (insert) and we are here today as part of our dissertation as doctoral candidates at Boston College. Our overarching research study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to enhance their knowledge, relationships, and ability to make decisions. We will be asking questions related to teacher diversity, principal recruitment, principal retention, improving self efficacy, and implementing policy.

ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL.

The information from responses to this semi-structured interview will be compiled by the dissertation team for their analyses. Any data, including race/ethnicity and gender, that is not currently available to the public will only be used in aggregated form that cannot be used to discern the identity of any participant in any report or presentation or in the public use file that will be made available to the public at the conclusion of this study. Before starting, we would like to get your consent to participate in this study and permission to record this session.

(Get signature on consent form)

Thank you.

(Once recording starts)

The recording has started. Thank you for allowing us to record this session. Before we start, do you have any questions?

[Interviewer: Prior to starting the script, ensure that all questions re: consent form & study have been thoroughly addressed]

Thank you for sharing your time so we can learn more about your experiences in the **[Elody Public Schools]**. As a quick reminder, we've allocated 45-60 minutes for this interview. Please let us know if you have any questions during our conversation. We just want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers, we only wish to understand your unique insight. All of your information and responses will be confidential and used for research purposes. No individual information or identifying information will be shared. At any point in our interview, you can end our conversation or take a break for any reason. If for any reason, the interview questions do not apply to you, or you wish to skip any question, you may do so. Your input is important to us and we want you to feel

comfortable during this interview so please ask any clarifying questions you may have or let us know if you don't understand a question.

Question alignment key

GQ = General Question	BER = Black Educator Retention
OAQ = Overarching Question	PI = Policy Implementation
PP = Principal Pathway	PE = Principal Efficacy
PR = Principal Retention	

Educator Interview Questions:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Would you consider yourself an educator of color? **(BER)**
 - a. If so, how do you identify?
3. Why do you stay in teaching?
 - a. *Probe - Have you ever thought about leaving teaching?*
4. Given what you just said, how does race play a factor in your job? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe: How does race impact your decision to stay?*
 - b. *Probe - Tell us a story in which race played a role in influencing how you interacted with a student or colleague.*
5. Do your relationships with other staff factor into your decision to stay? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe: What does your school/district do, if anything, to facilitate interactions with your colleagues?*
 - b. *Probe: What do you do to reach out to other staff?*
6. Have you been mentored by or mentored other teachers? Explain the mentoring experience? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe: Have you been mentored at any point by a staff member of the same race?*
7. Can you tell me about some recent interactions with your principal? **(BER)**
 - a. *Probe - Does the principal do anything that makes you want to stay? Anything that makes you want to leave?*
 - b. *Probe - Does your principal talk to you about race? How often? If so, what kind of things does he or she say?*
 - c. *Probe - Has your principal ever spoken with you about moving into administration? Can you describe the conversation and your reaction to it? **(BER/PP)***
8. Tell me about your experiences with Diversity Equity and Inclusion? **(PI)**
 - a. *Probe: Where did you learn about DEI?*
 - b. *Probe: What do you know about [Elody's] DEI initiative?*
 - c. *Probe: What do you think about [Elody's] initiative? **(PI)***
9. What has your school done about implementing DEI? **(PI)**
 - a. What do you think about the school's DEI initiative?

10. What brings you joy? **(BER)**

11. Is there anything we should have asked you?

Follow Up Demographic Questions (if not answered in questions above):

- How many years have you served as a teacher in this school? Elsewhere?

Appendix E

Principal Recruitment Email

Hello All,

Please see the below message from a Boston College research team approved by the Superintendent and the [Elody] IRB team to conduct a study in [Elody]. As you can see from their message, your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, your contribution will be completely anonymous and will provide valuable information to a study focusing on the principalship.

Thank you,

[Central Office Administrator]

Dear Principals,

You are invited to participate in a research study led by doctoral students at Boston College. You were selected to be in the study because you are a principal in the [Elody] Public Schools. Taking part in this research project is completely voluntary.

The study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools and their own feelings of professional effectiveness. Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, some who are involved may benefit because the researchers hope to use their findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors principals use and benefit from to retain veteran teachers, promote principal retention and recruitment, implement policies, and build principal efficacy.

The researchers would deeply appreciate an opportunity to meet you to support their research study on improving principal effectiveness and retention. If you are able to meet with them, they are eager to schedule some time with you soon. Although meeting in person would be preferable, researchers would be happy to conduct interviews over Zoom. The priority is to schedule a 60 minute interview with you. One of the members of the team will reach out to you individually to check your availability and schedule a time.

During interviews and meeting observations, only the researchers who audio tape recordings will have access to them for the purposes of accurate data collection and coding. The audio recordings will be erased upon the completion of our research, no later than June 30, 2022.

If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the [Elody] Public Schools or Boston College.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact any of the researchers using the contact information below:

Researcher(s)	Email	Cell Phone
Marc Banks	banksma@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
William Hahn	hahnwi@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Erica Herman	hermane@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Christine Landry	landrych@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Lauren Viviani	vivianla@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor		
Dr. Vincent Cho	vincent.cho@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx

We look forward to working with you!

Appendix F

Educator of Color Recruitment Email

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research study led by doctoral students at Boston College. You were selected to be in the study because you are a Black educator in the [Elody] Public Schools. Taking part in this research project is completely voluntary.

The study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools through multiple lenses, one of which is the leadership qualities principals employ to retain their educators of color. Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, some who are involved may benefit because the researchers hope to use their findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors principals use and benefit from to retain veteran teachers, promote principal retention and recruitment, implement policies, and build principal efficacy.

The researchers would deeply appreciate an opportunity to meet you to support their research study on improving principal effectiveness and retention. If you are able to meet with them, they are eager to schedule some time with you soon. Although meeting in person would be preferable, researchers would be happy to conduct interviews over Zoom. The priority is to schedule a 60 minute interview with you. One of the members of the team will reach out to you individually to check your availability and schedule a time.

During interviews and meeting observations, only the researchers who audio tape recordings will have access to them for the purposes of accurate data collection and coding. The audio recordings will be erased upon the completion of our research, no later than June 30, 2022.

If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the [Elody] Public Schools or Boston College.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact any of the researchers using the contact information below:

Researcher(s)	Email	Cell Phone
Marc Banks	banksma@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
William Hahn	hahnwi@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Erica Herman	hermane@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx

Christine Landry	landrych@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Lauren Viviani	vivianla@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor		
Dr. Vincent Cho	vincent.cho@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix G

Educator of Color Recruitment Email with Introduction

Hi [Educator],

My name is Marc Banks and I am a researcher-practitioner from Boston College. With the approval of the [Elody] Superintendent, my research team has been interviewing central office staff, principals, and teachers across the district to gain a better understanding of [Elody's] principals.

Part of the study references specifically what leadership factors principals use to retain their educators of color. We asked if there are any specific educators we should reach out to and your name came up from your principal as someone who may be possibly interested in participating in the study.

Below is the email we have sent to educators of color who may be interested in participating. If you are interested, we would appreciate the opportunity to interview you! We can work around your schedule and meet via Zoom, if that's easier.

Thank you so much for taking the time to consider this request, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

*Best,
Marc*

Dear Teachers,

You are invited to participate in a research study led by doctoral students at Boston College. You were selected to be in the study because you are a Black educator in the [Elody] Public Schools. Taking part in this research project is completely voluntary.

The study will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools through multiple lenses, one of which is the leadership qualities principals employ to retain their educators of color. Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, some who are involved may benefit because the researchers hope to use their findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors principals use and benefit from to retain veteran teachers, promote principal retention and recruitment, implement policies, and build principal efficacy.

The researchers would deeply appreciate an opportunity to meet you to support their research study on improving principal effectiveness and retention. If you are able to meet with them, they are eager to schedule some time with you soon. Although meeting in person would be preferable, researchers would be happy to conduct interviews over Zoom. The priority is to schedule a 60 minute interview with you. One of the members of the team will reach out to you individually to check your availability and schedule a time.

During interviews and meeting observations, only the researchers who audio tape recordings will have access to them for the purposes of accurate data collection and coding. The audio recordings will be erased upon the completion of our research, no later than June 30, 2022.

If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the [Elody] Public Schools or Boston College.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact any of the researchers using the contact information below:

Researcher(s)	Email	Cell Phone
Marc Banks	banksma@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
William Hahn	hahnwi@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Erica Herman	hermane@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Christine Landry	landrych@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Lauren Viviani	vivianla@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor		
Dr. Vincent Cho	vincent.cho@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx

Appendix H

Written Consent Form



Boston College Consent Form
Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development
Informed Consent to be in study, Principal Leadership
Researchers:

Marc Banks
William Hahn
Erica Herman
Christine Landry
Lauren Viviani

Study Sponsor: Dr. Vincent Cho
Type of consent: Adult Consent Form

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. You were selected to be in the study because you are a teacher/principal/administrator/district personnel in the [Elody] Public Schools. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

Our study is important because we contend that there is no stronger investment in education with a higher ceiling on its potential return than improving and retaining school principals (Grissom et al., 2021). It is critical that the principal perspective is considered more seriously in research to enhance principal quality and to ultimately make gains in high school graduation rates and student achievement (Levin et al., 2020).

Therefore, our studies will investigate how principals benefit from and shape professional capital to improve schools and their own professional efficacy.

In line with this mutual interest, each of our individually-authored studies explores and extends different dimensions of professional capital. Specifically, Banks will study leadership factors that impact Black educator retention, Hahn will study the principal pathway and its impact on principal recruitment, Herman will examine district strategies implemented during crisis to influence principal retention, Landry will examine the organization of relationships and their influence on principal efficacy, and Viviani will study principal decisional capital and its impact on policy implementation.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to answer questions about your practice and participate in 2-3 meeting observations at an agreed upon time between September and December. Interviews will occur through the Zoom platform and/or in-person and include note taking and audio recording to collect data. Meeting observations

will include note-taking and if all members consent, audio recording. We expect the interviews to take 45-60 minutes and meeting observations to last the duration of the meeting.

How could you benefit from this study?

Although you may not directly benefit from participating in this study, some who are involved may benefit because we hope to use our findings to better understand specific leadership behaviors principals use and benefit from to retain veteran teachers, promote principal retention and recruitment, implement policies, and build principal efficacy.

What risks might result from being in this study?

We don't believe there are physical, psychological, or informational risks from participating in this research. Risks or discomforts from this research include discussing issues pertaining to racism, job efficacy, recruitment and retention strategies. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You don't have to participate and you can stop at any time. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

Researchers will minimize potential risks by allowing participants to skip interview questions or end at any time. To minimize informational risks we will ensure that survey responses are anonymous, and we will not use identifiable information during observation data gathering.

How will we protect your information?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All electronic information will be coded and secured using both password-protected drives and files.

We will assign to each participant a unique, coded identifier that will be used in place of actual identifiers. We will separately maintain a record that links each participant's coded identifier to his/her/their actual name, but this separate record will not include research data.

During interviews and meeting observations, only the researchers who audio tape recordings will have access to them for the purposes of accurate data collection and coding. The audio recordings will be erased upon the completion of our research, no later than June 30, 2022.

The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

What will happen to the information we collect about you after the study is over?

Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be deleted from the research data collected as part of the project. No later than June 30, 2022.

We will not share our research data with other investigators.

Any data maintained as part of this research project will not contain information that could directly identify you.

How will we compensate you for being part of the study?

There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is fully up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, we will delete any prior data collected, connected to your participation.

If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with the [Elody] Public Schools or Boston College.

Getting Dismissed from the Study

The researcher may dismiss you from the study at any time for the following reasons: (1) it is in your best interests (e.g. side effects or distress have resulted), (2) you have failed to comply with the study rules.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact:

Researcher(s)	Email	Cell Phone
Marc Banks	banksma@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
William Hahn	hahnwi@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Erica Herman	hermane@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Christine Landry	landrych@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Lauren Viviani	vivianla@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx
Faculty Advisor		
Dr. Vincent Cho	vincent.cho@bc.edu	xxx-xxx-xxxx

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Boston College

Office for Research Protections

Phone: (617) 552-4778

Email: irb@bc.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. I/We will give you a copy of this document for your records. I/We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature

Date

Consent to Use Data for Future Research

I agree that my information may be shared with other researchers for future research studies that may be similar to this study or may be completely different. The information shared with other researchers will not include any information that can directly identify me. Researchers will not contact me for additional permission to use this information.

YES _____

NO _____

Signature

Date

Consent to be Audio Recorded

I agree to be audio recorded.

YES _____

NO _____

Signature

Date

Appendix I**Document Analysis Protocol (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)**

Item Name	Date of publication	Format	Author	Intended Audience	Code	Detail