AN ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE AND EXPERIENCED AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE PRINCIPAL RETENTION IN A LARGE SUBURBAN/URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my family. Without family members’ love, support, encouragement, and prayers, I would not have been successful in this endeavor. First and foremost, I dedicate this work to my wife, Gaylen, and my daughters, Gabrielle and Charlize, for their unconditional support and their many sacrifices. Not only did they bolster my efforts to acquire my doctorate; they also were willing to make countless sacrifices during this journey.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents as well. I owe them infinite gratitude. My mother, Annie Cramer, and my late father, Theo Cramer Jr., also made many sacrifices for me. They always believed in and supported my endeavors, and they provided me with a solid foundation for life. I also dedicate this work to my sister and my brother. My sister and educational role model, Priscilla Cramer Carter, recommended that I pursue the field of education as a profession, and she always supported my efforts in that regard. My brother, Rodney Cramer, continues to serve as a source of encouragement and support and has always been proud of his younger brother.

The dissertation is also dedicated to my dear late aunt, Lois Cramer Allen, for her spiritual inspiration and her high expectations of me throughout my life. And I dedicate this dissertation to my mother-in-law, Lois Carpenter, for her encouragement. Last, I dedicate this dissertation to my paternal and maternal extended family—both my Cramer and Abraham family members.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I thank my dissertation chair, Dr. James Lytle, for accepting the huge responsibility of chairing my dissertation committee. Dr. Lytle’s knowledge and vast experience as both a practitioner and a scholar provided me the pertinent expertise and professional background I needed as I developed a concept for my study. Dr. Lytle was the perfect dissertation chair, and I hope he will remain a mentor and friend for many years.

I also thank my other committee members—Dr. Diane Waff and Dr. Will Jordan. Dr. Waff was not only kind enough to recommend me to Dr. Lytle, but she also agreed to be on my committee. I thank Dr. Will Jordan for his support and keen insights and for giving me a direction for my study before my committee was assembled. Their collective experience, scholarly insights, and thoughtful recommendations created the ideal dissertation committee; and their collective guidance shaped the development of the study.

Also, I’m deeply grateful to the many principals and executives who took time from their busy schedules to grant me interviews. Without that extensive time and generous patience and selfless willingness to share their personal and professional experience and their insights, I would not have been able to complete my study. Whatever value this study might offer the field of education, it is because of contributions by the principals and executives who elected to participate in it.

I thank Dr. Susan Lytle for her kindness and for allowing me to meet with her husband, Dr. James Lytle, at their home. I thank Dr. Darlene Merry for being an advisor,
for sharing resources, and for her willingness to help when I needed help along the way. I thank my friends and colleagues from Cohort 12 in the Mid-Career Doctoral Program at the University of Pennsylvania. And I particularly thank my friend and fellow doctoral student Dr. David Trautenberg for both his support and his recommending me to Dr. Lytle.
ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF EFFECTIVE AND EXPERIENCED AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALE PRINCIPAL RETENTION IN A LARGE SUBURBAN/URBAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Theo L. Cramer
James M. Lytle

Many large urban school districts contend with many of the same challenges. Such districts are required to address (a) the needs of disproportionately more students from low-income families, (b) low student achievement, (c) high staff mobility rates, (d) fewer resources, and (e) significantly more accountability. Despite those challenges, a large percentage of the African American male principals in this study elected to remain in the large suburban/urban school district under study here. Therefore, examination of the reasons they remain is important. According to Lortie (2009), significant benefits accrue to researching the role of the principal given that the principal’s position is central to the functioning of a school.

The purpose of this study is to understand why African American male principals with five or more years of experience and who earn “effective” or “highly effective” evaluations have elected to remain in their roles as principals in this school district. The study is important because of the dearth of males of color in the field of education. The study results will help provide this district and other districts with valuable information pertaining to the reasons African American male principals continue working in such a district. Learning the motivating factors causing these principals to stay is important.
This qualitative study explores the experiences of veteran and effective African American male principals through in-depth interviews. Experienced and effective African American male principals are coveted by school systems given the lack of such candidates. Other US districts countrywide that struggle to attract and retain experienced and effective educators of color may gain insights from this study and thereby become able to replicate this district’s practices with regard to the recruiting and retention of male principals of color. It is important to study school districts in which people of color are recruited and retained so that we can model their successes (MaGee, 2016). This study provides a model of African American male principals’ success in a suburban/urban school setting.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In this introductory chapter, I discuss why I decided to study principal retention. More specifically, I discuss why I decided to study the retention of experienced and effective African American male principals in a large suburban/urban school district (named fictitiously Queen Charlotte County for purposes of anonymity). Information on the background of the district was made available to provide context. I provide information on a seminal report, Black Male Achievement, which was the impetus for many of the diversity initiatives that led to the recruitment, development, and retention of African American male educators. I then discuss the statement of the problem, and I present the research questions posed in this study. I also discuss the study’s purpose and conclude the chapter with a discussion of the significance of principal retention and African American male principal retention.

Background and Context

The school district in this study is located in a suburban community outside a large U.S. city. Although the district is in the suburbs, most of the schools are located on the border of the surrounding city. Also, many of the issues the school district confronts are similar to those in urban settings. Therefore, I refer to the district in this study as a suburban/urban school district. The county the school district is in has a majority African American population with a growing Latino population. The school district itself ranks among the largest school districts in the nation. There are more than 100,000 students in this school district of more than 200 schools. Approximately 62% of the students are African American, approximately 30% are Hispanic/Latino, the white student population
is approximately 4%, and the Asian student population is approximately 3%. The fastest-growing student population is the Hispanic/Latino population. Approximately 16% of the students are English language learners, and more than 11% of the students receive special education services.

The county is listed in the top 100 wealthiest counties in the nation based on median income (Forbes, 2014), yet despite its wealth, major geographic areas within it are suffering from significant poverty. According to school system data, more than 63% of students in the district partake of free and reduced-price meals. In addition, this school district is one of the lowest performing in both the region and the state. In 2013, the district graduated 74% of its students, based on four-year cohort data released by the state department of education. The state’s 2013 statewide performance was 84%. Thus, the district was 10 percentage points below the state’s average. None of the student subgroups for the district met the state performance level, and the graduation rates for limited-English-proficient, Hispanic/Latino, and special education students were also below the state’s average.

The data reveals that up to 44% of students are not meeting the state’s goal. There are, however, positive signs for the school system in the area of college and career readiness in the form of a 20% increase in Hispanic/Latino students taking SAT and AP exams, which was reported in a local newspaper. But despite those positive gains, the school system’s students lag behind their peers in the state and the region in practically all major testing categories: SAT, ACT, AP, and state standardized tests.

Superintendent leadership in the district has also been very unstable. In the past 25 years, the district has had nine different school superintendents. According to
Hackman (2002), if a “leader” does not provide others in the organization with “clear direction,” it is very probable that individuals in the organization will set their own goals. Because of the lack of stability with this district’s superintendent leadership in the past few decades, it has been difficult to have a leader provide a consistently clear direction. Each leader’s providing a different vision and a different direction for the school district has made it difficult for principals to be able to set a clear vision that aligns with the school system’s ever-changing vision.

**Statement of the Problem**

Many large urban school districts contend with many of the same challenges. Such districts are required to address (a) the needs of disproportionately more students from low-income families, (b) low student achievement, (c) high staff mobility rates, (d) fewer resources, and (e) significantly more accountability. Like many of these urban districts, the district being studied in this research suffers from many of those same challenges. This district ranks near the bottom in student achievement in the region and the state. This district has a very high teacher attrition rate. Not only do large numbers of teachers in this district resign at the end of the school year, but also many teachers quit during the middle of the school year. As a result, children are left with substitute teachers, or, if they’re fortunate, the school district may find a long-term substitute teacher with some knowledge of the content.

Further complicating matters in the district under study is massive instability that has occurred at the leadership level. Given that the school district has not had a two-term school superintendent in more than a quarter of a century, massive turnover in both the
teacher and superintendent ranks has contributed to the school district’s instability and its inability to make any meaningful and lasting improvements. Fortunately, the current superintendent has already exceeded most of his predecessors in length of service. The current superintendent is completing his third year in the position of superintendent. He will, hopefully, be the first superintendent to complete a full-term (4 years) in several years and the first in more than 25 years to complete two terms.

In contrast to those several challenges, the district has experienced significant success with regard to the retention of its African American male principals. In fact, the vast majority of the principals in the district are African American. African American females constitute the largest demographic group, followed by African American males. Moreover, the vast majority of these principals have elected to continue working in this school system. In addition, the district is doing a very good job of investing in its principals and developing their skills. The district is partnering with large national education foundations to train and develop its principals and a cadre of assistant principals and supervisors who are interested in becoming principals. The district has established a viable pipeline of prospective principals who are preparing to become principals in the district.

Despite those advances and gains in the principal development arena in this district, the district has not prepared properly for its rapidly growing Latino population. Approximately 30% of students in the district are Latino, yet only 4 of the district’s 212 principals are Latino: two male Latino principals and two female Latina principals. Although the district has made advances in the area of principal retention among African Americans, it has been woefully negligent with other ethnic groups: Latino, white, and
Asian. Merely having a majority of the principals come from a minority group does not make the district diverse. In fact, I argue that the district currently lacks diversity. The majority homogeneous African American principal group in this district reflects the lack of diversity that can be seen in majority white districts. The only difference is that principals in this district are African American. This new problem the district confronts should be addressed immediately—especially given that Latino students are not seeing themselves reflected in the principal leadership position.

During the past few decades, the district has encountered many challenges. A few of them are high teacher attrition rates, high superintendent turnover, low standardized test scores, large numbers of students in poverty, and changing student demographics. Despite those challenges, many of the district’s African American male principals have elected to remain in the district. The successful retention of those African American male principals did not occur by chance. In fact, retention efforts started when these African American male educators were recruited to the school district as first-year teachers.

The school district has been very purposeful in its efforts to recruit, develop, and retain its African American male educators. Those retention efforts have historical roots: In 1990, the school district released a seminal report titled *Black Male Achievement* (see Appendix G). This report was in many ways the catalyst for the recruitment and development of African American male educators in the district. The recommendations in this report led to a disproportionately large number of African American males’ electing to stay in the district. Not only were many of the recommendations implemented, but also many even received funding. The recommendations in the original 1990 *Black Male Achievement* report consisted of the following:
1. Provide all schools with the level of resources now available in [schools that are receiving additional funds because of court mandates] and increase significantly the allocation for books and materials.

2. Replace what is now a Eurocentric curriculum with one that is multicultural.

3. Obtain more African-American teachers, counselors, and administrators, with an emphasis on increasing the presence of black male teachers and counselors in schools.

4. Ensure that a majority of all students have access to and succeed in advanced levels of the curriculum.

5. Establish a task force to examine causes of the over enrollment of African-American males in the special education program.

6. Offer increased support to families, especially those living in economically disadvantaged communities.

7. Reorganize the Division of Pupil Services to enhance the counseling and other forms of support provided for students, teachers, and families.

8. Develop a student information system that gives a more complete view of student progress and performance.

9. Strengthen mentoring and internship programs to forge stronger ties among academic study, work readiness, and participation in community and family life.

10. Extend the length of the school year for teachers from 10 to 11 months to provide more time for professional development and additional instructional time for students during the regular school year.

As Table 1 demonstrates, African American females constitute well over half of the principals in this school district. African American males constitute the second-highest number of principals, with 42. Whites are in the minority, with a total of 44 principals. Latino representation is nominal, with only 4. Currently, there are no Asian
principals in the district. The following two charts represent the apportionment of
central office.

Table 1 *Queen Charlotte School District Principal Demographics*

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Research Questions

According to Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), not only do effective principal leaders positively affect teaching and learning, but also the impact of effective principal leadership on student learning is “second only to teaching among school related factors” (p. 3). Yet many experienced principals seek to transfer out of challenging schools and into schools with fewer challenges. Branch et al. (2012) assert that experienced principals who leave their current schools do not usually leave the role of principal; they instead seek to be in schools with fewer difficulties. As a result, principals who have the experience to help students in challenging schools are opting to work in less-challenging environments.

This study focuses on the retention of African American male principals in a large suburban/urban school system. The primary questions addressed in this study were:

- Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school system?
- What are the motivating factors causing these principals to stay?
- Why is the school district able to retain a large number of African American male principals?

Purpose of the Study

As a former high school principal of a large urban school with more than 2,000 students, I know that the principalship in such a setting is very demanding. In addition to the teaching and learning demands, there are also social and emotional demands as well as significant demands on the principal’s time. As a result, the national attrition rate
among principals is high. It is estimated that “one out of five principals” leaves a school as principal each year (Béteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2011). In addition, it is estimated that “fifty percent of new principals quit during their third year” (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 1). Principals in the school district under study are confronted with numerous challenges. Despite those challenges, a large percentage of the principals in this district elect to remain in the district in the role of principal.

I decided to study principal retention in this district to determine why experienced and effective principals have decided to remain in the district. My interest in studying African American principal retention was inspired by the fact that the large suburban/urban school district I studied is led predominantly by African American principals. And many of those principals are African American males. Many districts in the United States struggle to recruit and retain principals of color, and they especially struggle to attract and retain male educators of color. The successful retention of experienced and effective African American male principals in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System makes that district an ideal one to study.

Not only has Queen Charlotte County been successful in its efforts to recruit and develop African American male principals, but more important, it also has been able to retain those male principals of color. In many cases, male educators in Queen Charlotte County remain in the district for their entire careers. Thus, the purpose of this study was to understand why African American male principals with five or more years of experience and who earn effective or highly effective evaluations have elected to remain in the role of principal in this school district.
Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it investigated the reasons that experienced and effective African American male principals in this district decided to continue working in a district with fewer resources and greater challenges than many of the surrounding school districts. More students in Queen Charlotte County partake of free and reduced-price meals than do students in most of the jurisdictions surrounding this school district. That data point serves as an indicator of greater poverty in this district than in most of the surrounding districts. Student standardized tests scores are also lower in this district than in the region and the state. Although Queen Charlotte County is affluent compared with most counties nationally—because it is in a very affluent region—it is less wealthy than its neighboring counties.

As a result of Queen Charlotte County being surrounded by wealthier communities and wealthier school districts, some of the teachers who are new to the district begin teaching there as an entry point into the field of education, but they later depart the district for employment in more-affluent neighboring districts once they acquire experience. That trend is, however, significantly different for principals. Many principals—especially African American male principals—elect to stay despite the challenges. Given that trend, African American male principals who are experienced and effective were invited to participate in this study.

I contend that there is significantly more research on teacher retention and its importance than there is on principal retention. Richard Ingersoll has written extensively on teacher retention and asserts that more than 50% of teacher attrition is due to a few factors: “job dissatisfaction, pursuit of a better job, and respect” (Ingersoll, 2001).
Certainly, schools must recruit and retain highly effective teachers, but I contend in this study that significant improvement in schools—especially urban schools with fewer resources and greater needs—requires both highly effective teachers and highly effective principals. This research will contribute to a better understanding of the reasons experienced and effective principals elect to continue working in such a district.

It is even more important that this study assesses why experienced African American male principals elect to stay in this district and not depart for other districts with greater resources, fewer challenges, and better compensation packages. Despite the fact that some African American educators do depart the school system for administrative positions in some of the surrounding communities that are more affluent, a far larger percentage of African American male principals decide to stay. I deem the question pertaining to why African American male principals stay to be a fundamentally important one for this district—and other districts that are attempting to attract and retain a diverse group of effective principal candidates. Whatever Queen Charlotte County is doing to attract and retain effective African American male principals is critically important to study. Moreover, those best practices should be shared with other districts.

Other districts around the country that struggle to attract and retain effective educators of color may be able to gain insight from this study of the retention of diverse principal candidates. As student populations become more and more diverse in the United States, the teacher and administrative ranks are still overwhelmingly majority white. Approximately 90% of the teachers in the United States are white (Gardiner, Canfield-Davis, & Anderson, 2009, p. 142). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Schools and Staffing Survey (2003–04), 82.4% of principals in public
schools are white (p. 65). Students of all races and backgrounds need to see diversity in their schools that is reflective of the student populations in their schools. Even in schools with homogeneous student populations, students benefit from a diverse faculty, staff, and administration.

This study is also important given the dearth of males of color in the field of education. The results of this study will help provide this district and other districts with valuable information pertaining to why these principals continue working in such a district. If superintendents and other district leaders know the reason(s) that experienced and effective African American male principals elect to stay in challenging districts and schools when they have other options, this will enable superintendents, human resources officials, and other school system leaders to better support and meet the needs of this group of principals. District leaders will become able to alter their recruitment and retention strategies, change their professional development opportunities, and modify their support structures to better meet the needs of these principals.

According to Lortie (2009), there are significant benefits to researching the role of the principal given that the principal’s position is central to the functioning of a school (p. 3). All key stakeholders in schools—teachers, students, parents, and central office personnel—must work with the principal when it comes to the collective work performed in a school community (p. 3). The information learned from principals can be applied to broaden our “understanding” of how schools and school systems operate (p. 3). The principal’s role is a very good place to learn about the inner workings of a school given that principals are responsible for a school’s overall operations. As I illustrate in this
study, the “principal effect” is critically important to the success of a school and a school system.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This qualitative study builds on literature that focuses on principal retention. Specifically, the literature review in this study addresses the retention of African American principals. According to Creswell (2014), the purpose of a literature review is to help a researcher decide the importance of a topic so that the research is in a needed area (p. 25). According to Gooden (2012), “Because of the paucity of the literature on African American principals” and African American male principal retention, this study will provide additional research on that topic (p. 68). Given the minimal amount of literature on African American principals, a review and a discussion of the literature pertaining to African American principals are important.

A review of the literature in this study will begin by addressing the importance and relevance of early black principals and the roles they played in black schools and the larger black community prior to school desegregation. Many argue that black schools were more successful prior to desegregation. The study then discusses the significance of principal recruitment. The essence of this study focuses on the retention of African American male principals. Therefore, a section of the literature review addresses principal retention. Given the harmful effects of discriminatory practices on the retention of educators of color, a section of the literature review will address the significance of critical race theory. The literature review in this study will conclude with a discussion of the literature on agency and self-efficacy—specifically, on the beliefs, supports, and practices in this district that are enabling African American male principals to find success in this district. An examination of those successful practices will help define why these principals elect to stay in this district.
African American Principal Leadership

The Legacy of African American Principals

The history of black principals in the United States extends back to the beginning of schools in the black community. There is evidence that supports the well-respected legacy of black principal leadership. According to Morris (1999), early black principals accepted the fact that their roles involved more than being principals and leading black schools (p. 594). Both Morris (1999) and Siddle Walker (1993, 2000, 2005) illustrate how principals during that early era were seen as active members of the community. Khalifa (2012) posits that black principals were as “trusted” and respected as any other leader in the black community. Khalifa also asserts that those principals accepted their roles as leaders and saw themselves as a “bridge” between the black and white communities. They served as advocates for community causes similar to the causes of other black leaders (Khalifa, 2012, p. 430). And they typically represented the interests and views of the black community. According to Tillman (2004), these principals were deemed to be experts on issues pertaining to schools and on other issues affecting the community (p. 104).

Fairclough (2001) argues that during the early period of the creation of black schools, the black community had to fight for control over its schools, and when it gained that control, it hired black principals. As employer of black principals, the black community placed many demands on black principals. According to Brown and Beckett (2007), once black principals were recruited, they were expected to significantly improve education for their students. But in many cases, those principals found themselves
performing more than their principal duties: they represented the many interests of the black community (p. 16). They had to carefully represent the interests of their black schools and seek additional resources while at the same time making certain not to risk their jobs or their standings with the “white power establishment” (Wilson et al., 2013). Indeed, many current principals face similar challenges. One could certainly argue that the greater the economic and social needs in a community, the more principals need to advocate for the interests of their students and schools.

It is widely accepted by many researchers that the Brown decision produced many educational benefits for African Americans, but it is also acknowledged that the black community suffered “educational losses” (Wilson et al., 2013). Such sentiments are shared by many African Americans who were fortunate enough to experience successful schools during segregation. That point was discussed by Foster (1997) in the many interviews she conducted with retired African American educators who served as teachers and administrators during segregation. According to one of Foster’s interview participants, Bernadine B. Morris:

It saddens me that so many of our black kids today are doing so poorly, even after integration. It saddens me that integration didn’t turn out to be everything we had hoped for (Foster, 1997, p. XXXIX). The supportive relationships between black teachers and parents aren’t like they used to be. And as a result children, black children are suffering (p. XLVIII).

As Foster’s interview participant explained, meaningful losses occurred when schools integrated. The sentiments shared by Foster’s participants regarding how African American children are treated in schools today contrast significantly with the way schools were viewed prior to integration. During segregation, black teachers and principals valued the children in their schools by focusing on the children’s talents and not on their...
deficiencies (Wilson et al., 2013). According to Siddle Walker, the students were often looked upon as “community property” (Siddle Walker, 2000, p. 277). Another major advantage that benefited the relationships between students, families, and educators was that they often lived in the same neighborhoods given the limitations placed on where blacks could live (Wilson et al., 2013). In many cases, black families, teachers, and principals attended the same churches as one another and held other social connections within the community. Those social structures created familiarity and close home and school relationships that benefited black students.

There is research that supports the view that children—especially economically disadvantaged children and children of color—find greater success when principals connect with families and the students’ communities. According to Epstein (1987), when the full community works together to meet the needs of its students, the students in such communities are more likely to reach their full potential. Educators who provide a nurturing and caring learning environment for their students are more likely to motivate students and thereby create a setting wherein the entire school community feels respected and included (Dillard, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Lipman, 1995).

Many current African American principals have continued that legacy of early African American school leaders, taking a “strength-based approach” and developing a nurturing learning environment for their students (Wilson et al., 2013). However, because of the recent national obsession with and a sharp focus on test scores at the federal, state, and local levels, I posit that many current principals have not been able to meet the social and emotional needs of their students. Many of those principals, especially urban school principals, have been required to focus on student test scores given that test scores were
connected to additional dollars from the federal government. More specifically, the No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislations of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations have forced modern-day principals to make test scores the priority.

Unlike in the early period of black schools, not only do many present-day African American educators not live in many of the communities their students reside in, but there is also an overall lack of diversity in many cases among the educator population responsible for creating this nurturing learning environment for students of color, especially in impoverished communities. And that social dynamic has created a distance between many present-day black families and the school community. In many urban and economically disadvantaged school communities, both black and white educators are disconnected from the students they teach and the families in those students’ communities. Although diversity matters, ethnic diversity by itself is not enough.

**Recruiting Diversity**

Student populations are becoming increasingly diverse, yet the vast majority of those teaching students in U.S. schools are white. In addition, the overwhelming majority of those leading these schools are also white. Branch (2001) asserts there is a dearth of students of color who decide to become teachers. If fewer African Americans enter the field of education, it will further reduce the number of educators of color who will ultimately aspire to become principals given that a large percentage of principals started their careers as teachers and, later, assistant principals prior to becoming principals. The cultural and racial differences between teachers and administrators and the students they
serve is a national problem (Gardiner et al., 2009). According to Ferguson (2000), educators who fail to value their students’ cultural backgrounds and differences often consider these students to be “culturally disadvantaged.” They further state that such views negatively affect students’ motivation to learn. I contend that it is difficult to value diversity and multiculturalism without an attempt to recruit teachers and principals of color.

Brosnan (2001) asserts that “You can support students of color all you want with white teachers, but it’s pretty clear that they’ll have a stronger self-image if they see themselves reflected in the adults around them” (p. 7). It is impossible for students of color to see role models who look like themselves and have similar life experiences if we fail to recruit and retain educators who can identify with their students both racially and culturally. Not only are groups consisting of diverse students and educators disadvantaged by the inability to work and learn together with individuals from different backgrounds, but also white students suffer as well (Gardiner et al., 2009). Too often, we fail to consider the implications for white students and white educators as a result of not learning and teaching in a diverse learning environment where different languages, nationalities, races, cultures, and religions are represented.

Some contend it does not matter who is teaching students as long as the teachers are competent and providing students with a good education. I argue that both white children and children of color are being deprived of the vast experiences and backgrounds that diverse educators bring to classrooms. A homogeneous learning environment cannot provide such experiences. Given that some teachers of color would be committed to multicultural leadership given their backgrounds and life experiences,
their recruitment and retention could help improve school leadership (Gardiner et al., 2009). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2003), “The number of minority teachers nationwide is not representative of the number of minority students” (NEA, 2004, p. 5). It is further stated that:

Nearly four out of every 10 students is nonwhite (40.5%), yet the teaching profession is overwhelmingly white (90%). Some 40% of all public schools have no minority teachers on staff. And less than half of teachers participate in professional development related to managing diversity in the classroom (p. 5).

As important as racial and ethnic diversity is to successful schools, it is important that central office school leaders be aware that merely staffing a school with majority African American educators will by itself not improve schools. Such educators must be carefully matched to these more challenging schools to ensure that they possess the skill sets, interests, and desires to work in such schools. In addition, those educators need ongoing support by the central office school leadership. Teachers do not represent the only influence on how well students—particularly students of color—experience school or the degree to which students succeed. Effective school leaders, especially principals, are also very important. Principals, too, should be carefully selected based on their experiences, skills, and desires to be in more-challenging school settings. Such principals also need resources and supports if they are to be successful.

**Effective Principal Leadership**

In addition to the ever-increasing reform and testing demands placed on schools from entities at the federal, state, and local levels, schools are required to meet the enormous social and emotional needs of students. A school’s principal is ultimately responsible for ensuring that those myriad demands are getting met. As it pertains to
those “increasingly complex and demanding responsibilities,” Lytle (2010) asks a critically important question: “Are principals adequately prepared to lead in these new conditions?” (p. 148). I contend that the answer to that important question will likely determine whether a principal is an effective leader.

Leithwood et al. (2004) assert that effective principals improve student achievement (p. 3). Moreover, the authors posit that leadership by an effective principal matters, but it is second to that by an effective teacher (p. 3). It is important that principal leadership matters as it relates to student achievement and is “second only to teaching among school-related factors” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 3). In addition, Leithwood et al. assert that “leadership explains only three to five percent of variation in student learning across schools; this is actually about one quarter of the total variation (10 to 20 percent) explained by all school-level variables” (p. 21). When principals provide educational settings that are conducive to teacher success, students are also more likely to be successful (Gallup, 2014, p. 35).

Effective principals create overall effective work environments that are largely responsible for the retention of high-performing teachers. According to a Gallup (2014) study, State of America’s Schools, all other factors related to teacher retention such as “class sizes, disgruntled parents, and standardized tests” pale in comparison to the impact of principals. According to Gallup’s chief scientist, Jim Harter, “managers influence at least 75% of the reasons for voluntary turnover” (p. 33). The report also states that more than one-third “(37%) of teachers” indicated that they left their schools due to the principals.
Results from a study conducted by Branch et al. (2012) indicate that principals who are deemed to be “highly effective” improve student performance for students “between two and seven months of learning” in one school term. The same study reports that “ineffective” principals have the opposite impact on student achievement by the same amount of time in a school term (p. 1). Although many would agree that leadership matters, much of the research has focused on the importance of effective teachers but without much empirical emphasis on principals. According to Lytle (1996), much research has focused on teacher isolation, but principals “at least in urban districts are even more isolated” (p. 668).

Although we should certainly continue to recruit, develop, and retain effective teachers, the same opportunities should be provided for principals. Given the research that substantiates the importance of effective principal leadership, more time should be spent on identifying, developing, and retaining highly effective school leaders, not just teachers. As a result, in the next section, I explore the challenges to principal retention. The retention of principals in all schools is important, but the retention of highly effective principals in underserved schools and neighborhoods serving economically disadvantaged students and students of color is critical.

**Principal Recruitment**

**Principal Recruitment**

Before we can effectively retain quality principals, we must first apply viable recruitment strategies. School systems spend a considerable amount of time and resources recruiting teachers, but they do not spend the same amount of time and resources on the recruitment of another critically important group of educators: the school principal.
According to a report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, the “core of successful leadership practices” consists of “setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization” (Leithwood et al., 2004). Hallinger and Heck (2002) argue that a key component of an effective leader is the nurturing of the talents of other leaders in the organization “that can undergird a sense of purpose and vision.” A Gallup (2015) report, *State of the American Manager*, cites “four human capital strategies” that come together to provide “59% more growth in revenue per year” (p. 36). According to the Gallup report, the four human capital strategies are “select managers with natural talent; select the right individual contributors; engage employees; and focus on strengths” (pp. 36-37).

There are undoubtedly numerous leadership strategies and practices that are essential for recruiting effective leadership. But despite the appropriate or effective strategy selected by a leader, I argue that to be successful, any effective principal also must have support from others in the school community. Successful principals cannot improve teaching and learning without support from students, teachers, other school personnel, and parents. Therefore, it is essential that principals develop other school community leaders’ capacities. The truly “great” principals make every effort to develop the skills, abilities, and talents of their teachers and other school leaders (Gallup, 2014, p. 34).

The Importance of Relational Trust

According to Lortie (2009), beginning principals said they had to learn much during their first few years and cited two areas they needed to improve in. The most
important two categories were identified as “specific relationships and people skills” (p. 33). No matter how competent and skilled principals are in the areas of instruction, content, pedagogy, technology, and other relevant skills, if they are not adept at relating to people and building relational trust with important members of the school community, they will likely struggle in a leadership position like that of school principal. Principals are in constant communication and interaction with important stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, central office leadership, other school personnel, the business community, and civic and social leaders (Lortie, 2009, p. 3). As a result, it is vitally important to a principal’s success and longevity to be able to build positive connections and relationships with all groups in the school community. Such connections build trust.

Interactions in school communities depend largely on relational trust. Such trusting—or non-trusting—relationships exist between principals, teachers, students, parents, central office personnel, and others in the school community. Clearly, the work in both a school and the larger school community can be greatly improved if the relationships between key stakeholders are maintained and mutually supportive. According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), widespread trust in a “school community lubricates” the trust needed for schools to function successfully on a daily basis (p. 5). The authors’ research suggests that it may be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a principal to be successful without building strong relational trust with key stakeholder groups.

The relationship between a school leader and teachers will determine whether teachers on the staff are motivated to tackle new and different reform efforts (Fullan, 1993). A principal who does not have the social capital to motivate, inspire, or compel
teachers to undertake new reform initiatives will, at best, maintain the status quo. It is certainly easier and requires less effort when staff members are motivated to support initiatives because they trust and believe in the school leader who is spearheading the change initiatives. Lack of trust makes it more likely that the school will foster a compliance-driven culture.

Not only is relational trust important for interactions between teachers, principals, and central office personnel, but relational trust between parents and school personnel is essential as well. Positive relational trust is important for all parents, but those relationships are critically important for urban parents and “poor” parents (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, p. 6). Many parents who live in urban environments and are confronting social and economic disadvantages may also be experiencing other challenges in their lives. Bryk and Schneider (2002) indicate that some of those economic and social challenges are “residential mobility, affordable housing, transience, and high levels of violence” (p. 6). One could certainly include other social factors that present these students and their families with many daily impediments. As a result, it would help significantly if these students and their families do not have to maintain a contentious relationship with the school community.

Principals and teachers must find ways to establish and maintain trusting relationships with all parents, but especially parents and children most in need of additional support. Lack of trust between parents and educators is worsened by racial issues (Bryk and Schneider, 2002, p. 6). The authors add that racial issues make a “genuine dialogue about shared concerns” very difficult (p. 6). This research compels principals to initiate positive and trusting relationships, as well as to model such
relationships for others in the school community. Positive relationships between schools and parents require persistence, patience, and authenticity on the parts of principals and other school personnel. Although positive relationships and relational trust are important, they are not enough to ensure that a leader is going to be effective. Thus, identifying effective principals also means identifying those leaders who are able to transform schools by improving student achievement.

**The Leadership Effect on Student Achievement**

The seminal question for any school leader is: Are you able to improve student achievement? Lytle (1996) suggests that with all of the attempts to improve schools, we must ask ourselves the ultimate question: “Does this lead to improved school performance?” (p. 670). In the end, regardless of a leader’s talents, skills, work ethic, and potential, if the leader is unable to improve student achievement, it’s likely that that leader will eventually be removed or demoted. Thus, the single most important metric for a school leader is student achievement data.

A growing body of literature supports the notion that principals must be instructional leaders who possess the ability to improve student achievement. Heretofore, the link between principal effectiveness and student achievement has not been clear. According to Reis and Smith (2013), it has always been believed that principals must be change agents, but the belief that principals must have a greater understanding of how to create change in their school communities has become more prevalent. According to research, the impact of principals and central offices on student achievement has been, until recent years, too difficult to attain (Murphy and Hallinger, 1988). Although the data
available on the principals’ impact on student achievement is relatively recent, the role of school leaders beyond improving a school’s culture and climate is critical.

Although it is difficult to quantify effective principal leadership as it relates to student achievement according to Agosto et al. (2013), still there is a correlation between effective principal leadership and student achievement. The assertion that effective principals can improve student achievement is supported by various forms of research (e.g., Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 21). Such influences are often indirect and difficult to identify. According to Fuller, Young, and Baker (2011), the actions of school principals “indirectly influence student achievement” (p. 186). The authors’ further state that the influences of school principals’ actions are manifested through the “recruitment, selection, and retention” efforts of a highly qualified group of teachers. An effective principal has the ability to recruit, develop, and retain highly effective teachers. And in turn, those effective teachers, with the principal’s support, directly influence student achievement.

Heretofore, not much attention has been paid to the role of principals as it involves student achievement. Research on outlier design supports the fact that the principal effect improves student achievement and that principals can also improve other “school conditions” (Mortimore, 1993). According to Hallinger and Heck (1996), numerous quantitative studies substantiate the principal effect on student achievement. Although the principal effect is only “three to five percent” according to Leithwood et al. (2004), its actual effect is closer to “one quarter of total variation explained by all school variables” (p. 21). It is clear that effective principals make a difference in student achievement.
Although teachers have the greatest direct effect on student achievement, each teacher’s impact is confined to the number of students in that teacher’s classroom. A principal’s impact, albeit less direct than a teacher’s on an individual-student basis, is greater than a teacher’s impact as it relates to the entire school. Thus, a principal arguably has the greatest total impact with regard to overall student achievement in a school. Not only does the principal effect directly impact student achievement, but highly effective principals have the greatest impact in challenging schools (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Given the positive impact effective principals can have on student achievement in a school, it is imperative that district leaders find ways to retain effective and experienced principals—especially effective veteran principals of color given the dearth of such leaders. Therefore, not only is it important to recruit effective principals who can build relational trust and raise student achievement; it also is critical that school systems retain principals with proven records of success in these areas who are working in challenging schools. Once such leaders are retained, they need to be supported and they need resources to be successful. Additional resources can increase student achievement when such resources are managed by an effective principal (Papa, 2007, p. 268).

**Principal Retention**

**Retention Challenges**

According to School Leaders Network (2014) report *CHURN: The High Cost of Principal Turnover*, “Twenty five thousand (one quarter of the country’s principals) leave their schools each year” (p. 1). The report further states that, “fifty percent of new principals quit during their third year in the role” (p. 1). Making matters even worse, those principals who do elect to stay do not often stay in challenging schools, but they
move to schools where there are greater “affluence” and fewer “demands” (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 1). Given those statistics, it is very apparent that children and schools adversely affected by massive principal leadership changes are children and communities that can least afford such changes and the instability that such changes produce.

There is no one problem that makes the principalship challenging, but there are multiple issues that converge to make the challenges confronting principals “unique” (Lortie, 2009). Those numerous challenges can make the role of the principal daunting and sometimes overwhelming. Lortie (2009) identified some of the challenges as “scarcity of time, interruptions, the maintenance of order and safety, paperwork, complex tasks, and parent and teacher concerns” (pp. 119-142). Those challenges get exacerbated in schools and communities where there are already limited resources and significant social and emotional challenges.

The cost of massive principal turnover is expensive for districts in myriad ways. There is certainly the academic cost of low student achievement that is borne by students in schools with massive principal turnover. Students in schools where there is significant leader turnover have lower scores in reading and math the first year of a principal turnover (School Leaders Network, 2014). In addition, there is a significant monetary cost to such schools and school districts for hiring replacements. The School Leaders Network (2014) report states that a conservative estimate “of the cost to develop, hire, and onboard each principal is 75K” (p. 4). Moreover, to have principal retention rates reflect that of more “affluent schools can save U.S. school districts $163 million annually” (Sable, Plotts, & Mitchell, 2010). Research indicates that without a highly
effective principal, no school has ever “turned around” and vastly improved student achievement (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005). Given the research in this area, it is critically important that superintendents and district leaders find ways to recruit, develop, and, most important, retain experienced and highly effective principals for all schools, but especially high-needs schools.

It has also been reported that principals use underperforming schools to acquire their first principalship, after which they then seek principal positions in wealthier communities and schools once they’ve gained experience (Béteille et al., 2011, p. 1). These principals are likely attempting to improve their working conditions and not attempting to necessarily harm the schools they elect to leave; however, the constant turnover and replacement of principals at high-needs schools create further unsteadiness and subvert school reform efforts (Dillon, 2011). In an effort to retain more-effective principals in challenging schools, district leaders must find ways to make such positions more appealing. Principals who accept assignments at challenging schools must be supported and provided the necessary resources to be successful.

**Factors Affecting Retention**

Research reveals a relationship between principal retention and principal experience. Papa’s (2007) research determined that principals with “less than 5 years of district experience are 60.8 percent less likely to be retained than principals with at least five years of district experience” (p. 282). In a study conducted in Illinois and North Carolina, Gates et al. (2004) found that inexperienced principals were more likely to leave their schools. A 1999–2006 Missouri study found that experienced principals stand
a much better chance of remaining in their school systems and their schools than do inexperienced principals (Baker et al., 2010). These experienced principals are usually concentrated in more-affluent school systems and schools.

The research on principal retention is replete with evidence showing that a large number of economically disadvantaged students, students of color, and underperforming students attend schools that have greater principal turnover than their more affluent peers do (Béteille et al., 2011; Fuller & Young, 2009; Gates et al., 2004; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010; Papa, 2007. In a study conducted by Clotfelter et al. (2007), the research revealed that the poorer the school, the greater the principal turnover and that “70 percent of new principals at high poverty schools were first-time principals”—a potential indicator of a cycle of turnover and failure in these often underfunded and underachieving schools.

The constant turnover in schools makes it extremely difficult for either experienced or new principals to improve student achievement. Not only do schools with greater challenges and fewer resources need experienced principals who are provided with the support to effectively improve student achievement, but these principals also need time to help produce those improvements. Fuller and Young (2009) argue that because “reform” initiatives take time to materialize, it is important that principals be provided stable environments. Moreover, research supports the view that not only is principal stability important, but also effective principals must be in place for “five years” or more for large-scale reform initiatives to take full effect (Fullan, 1993).

Not only does principal retention affect student achievement, but principal retention has a direct impact on the retention and quality of teachers (Fullan, 1993). And
Fuller and Young (2009) assert that teacher qualifications are also higher in schools where principals have spent more time in the schools. Those research findings reveal how important the various principal retention factors are in improving student achievement and that experienced principals play critically important roles in our schools. In light of those findings, district leaders must ensure that effective veteran principals with more than five years of experience be placed in schools serving more-impoveryished children and children of color in underprivileged communities.

Why Do Principals Stay?

A great deal of research has focused on why principals elect to leave the principalship and why they elect to leave challenging schools. However, research on why principals elect to remain in the role of principal and why they decide to remain in the same school—especially in challenging schools—is just as important. Given the importance of the role that principals serve for children, families, and entire communities, it is essential that district leaders find ways not only to attract talented educators to the principalship but also to support and retain them as well. District leaders also have to find ways to retain experienced and effective principals in challenging schools.

In a study conducted by Lortie (2009), principals were asked to talk about the “main satisfactions they derived from their work—the aspect they found most rewarding” (p. 95). Lortie found most of the responses to be in two primary categories. The two most frequent responses were “(a) indications that the students are learning, and (b) statements that the school is well-run” (p. 95). In the Lortie study, the principals’ satisfaction had nothing to do with their personal well-being. Instead, principals were most concerned that
their students were learning and that they themselves were leading well-run organizations. One can conclude that principals feel most satisfied when they are perceived to be doing good jobs of educating children and creating environments conducive to teacher and staff success.

A few large national foundations—the Wallace Foundation and the School Leaders Network—are working with large urban school districts to identify successful strategies that will better develop and equip principals with the skills and supports needed for success. If those supports are effective, they can lead to principal success and increased principal retention. According to the Wallace Foundation’s *Cultivating Talent Through a Principal Pipeline* report, there are “four interlocking components” identified through “the Principal Pipeline” (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 1):

- Leader standards to which sites align job descriptions, preparation, selection, evaluation, and support
- Preservice preparation, which includes selective admission to high-quality programs
- Selective hiring and placement based on match between a candidate and a school
- On-the-job evaluations and support addressing the capacity to improve teaching and learning, with support focused on needs identified by evaluation

A School Leaders Network report (2014) shows that investment in principal retention efforts can greatly increase principal retention rates. The report offers four specific proposals.

- Continue to invest in leadership development beyond pipeline investments.
- Engage principals in authentic peer networks wherein principals can learn from other principals the art and practice of leading schools.
- Provide one-on-one coaching support for principals beyond the first two years.
- Revise the structure and purpose of district office principal supervisors’ roles.

In addition to those comprehensive strategies and recommendations, school superintendents and district leaders must differentiate principals’ supports based on the
individual needs of those principals and their specific school situations. If a principal is assigned to a school in a community with greater needs and fewer resources than others, I would recommend that district leaders provide principals in such schools with additional resources—including additional human resources.

District leaders, principal supervisors, central office staff, school staff, and others in the school community must provide a principal with the necessary supports to be successful. A good support network can provide the principal with an environment that can potentially lead to long-term success and growth. Moreover, a principal who feels a sense of success and accomplishment will invariably affect the entire school community and cause the likely result of school improvement.

It is also important to note that principals alone cannot improve schools. The appropriate delegation of essential responsibilities to others in the school community will create synergy that will not only benefit the principal but also improve the entire school community. As a result, principals must distribute leadership responsibilities accordingly. Leadership is not and should not be the sole responsibility of principals (Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond, 2001). Principals must have strong administrative and lead-teacher support in order to assist and support the work of the school. They must have someone in the school community to whom to distribute portions of the workload. Otherwise, the principal might potentially become overburdened.

Although many principals are altruistic and caring individuals, they are also human beings with personal lives and family responsibilities. As a result, there are limitations to amounts of enormous sacrifices that principals are too often asked to make. If experienced and effective principals are going to continue in the role of the
principalship, they must find professional and personal satisfaction without having to sacrifice their personal lives in the process. If being a successful principal means making too many personal sacrifices, it is likely that fewer quality principal candidates will enter or remain in the role of principal. Moreover, it is likely that some quality principals will elect to not work in challenging schools if they have to make too many personal sacrifices.

**Principal Burnout: A Roadblock to Retention**

Principal burnout is a major concern given that it can negatively affect a principal’s success and longevity. That concern is especially prevalent in urban environments, where there is typically greater academic need and where there are typically fewer resources to meet those needs. There is a direct correlation between burnout and principal retention, and several factors contribute to principal burnout. Fuller, Young, and Baker (2010) assert that the job of the principal is in many ways filled with responsibilities that make the job undesirable. According to the School Leaders Network (2014), “principals leave for many reasons” (p. 12). The reasons were workload and extensive managerial tasks; expensive personal costs in the forms of long hours and the toll on physical and mental well-being; local and state policies that tie principals’ hands; and profound isolation (p. 12). Burnout has been deemed to be a “multi-stage process” (Schwarzer & Kleiber, 1996). According to Friedman (1997):

> The first stage of this process is a stress-generated imbalance between resources and demands, and the second involves immediate emotional response to this imbalance, which is characterized by feelings of anxiety, tension, fatigue and exhaustion. The third stage consists of a number of changes in attitudes and behavior, such as a tendency to treat recipients of services in a detached and cynical, or mechanical fashion.
Fuller et al. (2010) assert that when we place principals of color in challenging settings without adequate resources and supports, we are “setting these administrators up for failure.” As a result, these principals are likely to leave the challenging school situation for more-favorable working conditions—if they are fortunate. Unfortunately, many of these principals are dismissed or demoted prior to being able to leave. Many of them may not be given another chance to lead schools as principals. I am reminded of the words of effective school educator and researcher Lawrence Lezotte, when he said at a national conference, “Too often we put good people in bad situations, and too often the bad situation wins.”

Schools with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students and with wide-ranging diversity were found to have greater principal turnover (Gates et al., 2004). Hickman (2011) found that schools with large percentages of students of color were usually staffed with principals of color. When urban and suburban district leaders place African American educators in schools that are extremely challenging, they are seemingly expecting that those principals will be successful because of their race and gender. In my view, that expectation is both unreasonable and unfair. I echo the assertion made by Fuller et al. (2010) that such decisions are “setting these administrators up for failure.” Such failures can have lasting professional consequences and can remove principals’ incentive to accept principalships in schools with chronically low-performing students.
Confronting and Overcoming Discrimination: Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Leadership

The issue of race in schools in the United States has been a long-standing one. Race has affected not only students and learning but educational leaders as well. The introduction of critical race theory (CRT) has provided scholars and educators with a way to frame the issue of race in education. The origin of CRT has a legal foundation that dates back to the critical legal studies movement (Crenshaw, 2011; Tate, 1997). “Critical race studies in education could be defined as a critique of racism as a system of oppression and exploitation . . . with particular attention to how these are manifested in schools” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 282). According to Lynn and Parker, CRT studies utilize methods from other major fields of study such as law, sociology, and ethnic studies (p. 282). Borrowing from those other major fields of study legitimizes and strengthens CRT.

The social construction of racism creates structures that are enduring and difficult to dismantle. Moreover, many people refuse to acknowledge the existence of institutional racism, which makes racism and its impact difficult to define. And it makes the solving of those problems even more difficult. CRT researchers investigate ways that “racism and white privilege” combine to provide systematic advantages for white people (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1995). CRT discards the idea that “scholarship” on race is somehow “neutral and objective” (Gooden, 2012).

CRT also examines “how the law reproduces, reifies, and normalizes racism in society” (López, 2003, p. 83). The real problem with racism is the fact that it is ingrained
in institutional practices. CRT scholars explicitly assert that racism and racist individuals are not limited to single acts or single individuals but are entrenched in society. CRT confronts the idea that racism is some exceptional phenomenon or concept; CRT scholars instead posit that racism is normal and endemic (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism is a daily reality for some educators and students of color.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that an essential component of CRT is that “racism is ordinary instead of aberrational,” which is certainly a nontraditional way to view racism. It is customary to refer to racist acts and racism as things that are rare and occasional, as opposed to normal parts of society. Gooden (2012) asserts that the “subtle characteristics of being ordinary make white racism harder to detect” (p. 69). This presents the additional burden of attempting to identify the problem and agree that the problem exists before becoming able to address the problem. In addition, Gooden (2012) asserts that white supremacy serves some purpose in society. One cannot help but think about the implications of such purpose. How are children of color being affected by these deliberate and intended racist consequences?

Stovall (2013) suggests that CRT scholars should spend less time “with abstract theorizing and more time with . . . issues concerning historically marginalized communities of color . . . towards transformative education equity” (p. 41). I concur with that assessment and contend that educational practitioners, teachers, and administrators, too, have an obligation to take action. Although it is important to identify institutional racism and racist structures, that alone is not enough. Certainly, we cannot dismantle racism and its harmful effects without effectively identifying such acts and structures. But again, it is not enough to merely identify and know about the existence of those
structures; it is imperative that all educators take deliberate steps to eradicate all vestiges of racism if we are to improve opportunities for children and create working environments conducive to collective success.

**Implications of CRT for Educational Leaders**

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), writings that integrate critical race theory into education can be traced back several decades. Capper (2015) says the implications of CRT’s effect did not occur until López (2003) analyzed those implications’ impact on education. He further says CRT’s primary focus has not been on educational leadership (Capper, 2015). Thus, it is essential that more researchers focus on principals and superintendents given principals’ and superintendents’ leadership roles in schools and school systems. If the harmful effects of racism are to be confronted and mitigated, K–12 educators will have to take the lead in addressing these problems.

Educators who prepare principals and other school leaders have an obligation to address issues pertaining to race (Capper, 2015). Not only do scholars have a responsibility to raise questions about race in society, but also educational leaders have the same responsibility to raise similar questions in schools. López (2003) contends that academic institutions that prepare school leaders must do a better job. According to Theoharis and Haddix (2011), principals who find success educating students of color have explicit and “frequent” discussions with their staff about racial issues. Principal leadership programs have an obligation to adequately prepare school leaders for a diverse society, and traditional preparation methods must be revamped to ensure they are meeting the needs of leaders and schools in this area.
As Young and Laible (2000) assert, “White educators and educational leaders do not have a thorough enough understanding of racism . . . nor do they comprehend the ways in which they are perpetuating white racism in their schools” (p. 375). That lack of understanding is not limited to white educators. I argue that many African American educational leaders, too, have not studied CRT or the implications of racism and are as ill prepared as white educators to discuss, understand, and effectively confront racism. As a result, African American principals and other educational leaders may be inadvertently perpetuating the harmful effects of discrimination and bias in their schools as well.

**Racism and African American Male Career Development**

Some research supports the assertion that racism negatively affects African Americans’ “career development” (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). That is especially true for the career development of African American males. Moreover, the issues confronting men in the African American community vary from those confronting women (Bingham & Ward 2001). Cornelius (2013) asserts that as a result of laws that protect women’s rights, black women receive advantages that black men do not receive (p. 446). Therefore, it can be argued that the group that needs the most support—African American males—is in many ways discriminated against the most yet receives the least amount of support from the law.

Lacy (2008) asserted that “African American men may be the most endangered Title VII plaintiff given their unique social position.” African American males lead in many if not most national negative statistical categories: incarceration, unemployment, low academic performance, high school dropout, and so on. Conversely, African
American males are usually last in categories that would indicate academic success. Cornileus (2013) argues that greater attention must focus on African American men and their future professional opportunities. Far greater attention has been placed on African American women’s careers, due in large part to “feminist scholars” (Alfred, 2001). I contend that if African American males are to become more successful professionally, they will have to find far more success as students at the K–12 school level. Until that occurs, I am afraid that large numbers of African American males will continue to be unemployed and unable to navigate the competitive job market and that such a state of affairs will continue to impede career chances and opportunities.

According to a few major career development theories, Super’s life span, and Holland’s career typology theory, choice is very much connected to self-concept. The basic theme of Super’s theory is that “a person chooses an occupation that will allow him to function in a role that is consistent with his self-concept” (Cornileus, 2013). Holland’s career typology is situated in “modal personal orientation, which means that a person’s career choice is an expression of personality, experiences, abilities, likes, and dislikes” (p. 449). Unfortunately, many African American men have not had the luxury to choose careers based on Holland’s career typology. Instead, many African Americans in general—and African American men in particular—are forced to accept jobs that do not align with a positive self-concept.

**African American Male Agency: Repressive and Facilitative Structures**

Cornileus (2013) found that professional men of color are required to navigate the world of both “repressive structures and facilitative structures” as they pursue career
success. Cornileus identified repressive structures as practices that “constrain career development”; facilitative structures are practices that “enable African American men to circumvent the oppressive force of racism” (p. 452). Given the significant amount of attention that has been given to repressive structures in the lives of African American men, I will not elaborate on those structures. Instead, I will merely identify the structures as defined by Cornileus (2013). The four repressive structures found to constrain the career development of African American professional men are: “(1) stereotypes attributed to African American men, (2) subjective and disparate career development practices, (3) differentiated opportunities for the acquisition of sociopolitical capital, and (4) changing priorities in workplace diversity (Cornileus, 2013).”

It is important to focus on strategies that have contributed to the success of African American male principals. In addition, it is important to focus on strategies and facilitative structures that have enabled those principals to overcome racism, stereotypes, and other repressive structures. Cornileus (2013) offers five facilitative structures that likely contributed to African American male principals’ success: “the ability to build and leverage key relationships, bicultural strategies, self-efficacy and personal agency, education and continuous learning, and spirituality and purpose” (p. 455). The five facilitative structures were further explained by Cornileus (2013) as follows:

- The ability to build and leverage key relationships was cited more often than any other structure as a method for navigating around the destructive impact of racism on career development.
- Bicultural strategies help African American men deal with the double consciousness of living in two life worlds: black culture and white-male-dominated culture.
Self-efficacy and personal agency were identified as a facilitative structure. Self-efficacy—the belief in one’s capabilities—is one of the building blocks of career development and the fuel that enables a person to exercise agency (Alfred, 2001). Findings in the Cornileus (2013) study revealed that participants engaged in formal and informal learning throughout their careers. The fifth facilitative structure revealed the altruistic motivators and rewards that participants attributed to their career satisfaction.

The findings in this study provide general insights into what has to occur for African American men to succeed in professional settings. Failure to demand change from mainstream institutions will result in continual exclusionary practices (Drake-Clark, 2009). Those findings can be extrapolated to fit the needs of most professional environments, including school leaders. Not only can African American professional men benefit from implementing facilitative structures and avoid the use of repressive structures, but those leaders who make decisions in the workforce can create a more productive and equitable workforce by utilizing facilitative structures.

**Agency and Self-Efficacy**

To overcome the bleak career outlook, African American males must know how to advocate for themselves. This also applies to African American educators. They must have agency and self-efficacy to successfully attain—and excel in—any leadership position. There is an extensive body of research that supports the benefits of self-efficacy. Noted Stanford University psychologist, scholar, and researcher Albert Bandura has written extensively on the importance of agency and self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1986), substantial research supports the position that a successful career is based largely on an individual’s positive view. Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives.”
Thus, given the many obstacles African American principals confront, it behooves them to exercise self-efficacy. Such advocacy may contribute to the mitigation of stress and may help avoid burnout. Self-efficacy is critically important for African American principal success. Without self-efficacy, it would be difficult to attain or sustain success in schools given the array of expectations and demands.

**Agency Demonstrated through Self-Belief**

According to Bandura (1989), as it pertains to personal agency, a very important factor is one’s ability to control future opportunities. Although one could argue that African American males have not historically had control over their lives and careers, successful African American male leaders have exhibited their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives. It is important to research those effective strategies implemented by African American principals to, hopefully, replicate them in other situations. People who have confidence in their ability to address issues and rectify problems are usually more productive than people who do not possess such abilities (Wood & Bandura, 1989). One might think that to attain success and longevity, African American male principals would have to have problem-solving capabilities to enable them to successfully meet the needs of their students and school communities.

Individuals who know how to successfully advocate for themselves can “visualize success,” and conversely, individuals who do not effectively advocate for themselves often have images of failure (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176). Many of the African American principals in this current study envisioned the former scenario for themselves. They were able to visualize successful scenarios, in large part because of the many African
American role models who held senior leadership positions in the district. Goodly (2007) determined that African American men can foster a greater sense of success by “commingling facilitative structures and personal agency.” By focusing on African American male strengths, challenges, and successes, other African American males are provided with a blueprint of how to succeed and how to overcome obstacles. More studies should focus on the success of African American males.

**Principal Preparation: Developing Agency and Self-Efficacy?**

Education literature is replete with the benefits of a highly effective school leader. Nonetheless, schools in all educational sectors have collectively failed to adequately invest in the development of highly effective school system leaders—especially diverse leaders (Henderson & Delaski, 2015). Obviously, if school systems are to make progress, they will have to make investments in school leaders in addition to their ongoing investments in teachers. Effective schools require that students have highly effective teachers and principals. Thus, we should develop the talents of both groups. According to Henderson and Delaski (2015), although there is a significant amount of literature on the importance of improving the skills of leaders, many organizations have not figured out how to effectively accomplish that task (p. 3).

Numerous studies discuss the implications and enormous cost of failing to adequately invest in school leaders, yet this seems to be a problem that many school systems have failed to address. It is important to acknowledge, however, that some districts are making progress in the area of principal development, and as a result, principals are in turn improving schools and levels of student achievement. According to
Davis and Leon (2011), many improvements are being made in the development of school principals, but even though such progress is being made in the area of principal development, if we are to expedite the school improvement process, we must make significant improvements in the area of leadership development.

**Discontinuing Poor Preparation Practice**

Davis and Leon (2011) argue that it is important to make adjustments and improvements as we critique and assess professional development practices. As is often the case, critical reflections or failure can stimulate the development of successful practice (Kelly & Littman, 2001). Davis and Leon (2011) further state that knowing which poor practices to discontinue must be part of “meaningful reform.” Bad practices must be recognized and understood before better practices can be meaningfully implemented. Davis and Leon (2011) take the position that before we can implement effective initiatives, we must first recognize and stop “bad practices.” As a result, Davis and Leon offer eight recommendations regarding the things principal preparation programs must stop doing.

- Stop emphasizing a subject-specific curriculum
- Stop promoting a faculty-as-experts model of pedagogy (e.g., sage on the stage)
- Stop emphasizing mastery of academic content knowledge
- Stop depending on knowledge-driven measures of student learning
- Stop relying on piecemeal, episodic, and project-based practicum experiences
- Stop rigidly adhering to a fixed set of lesson plans and learning activities
- Stop emphasizing the development of technical skills without a proportional balance of human and conceptual skills
- Stop the preoccupation with individual rather than team performance in leadership development
There is sufficient empirical and anecdotal evidence to inform educators and practitioners about what does not work. Such research is not new, and there are myriad anecdotal experiences to support the research. The larger question is: Why do we continue to implement practices that will, at best, produce only marginal gains? Pink (2011) asserts that “the problem does not rest with a lack of theory or empirically supported literature, but with intransigent perspectives about how adults learn and the factors that motivate adult learners.”

**Summary of Literature Review**

According to Hart (1998), the literature review is vital “because without it you will not acquire an understanding of your topic.” In addition, you will not know the relevant research on the topic you are studying and you will not know the essential “issues” relating to the topic you are studying (p. 1). To construct the literature review for this study, the research questions were used as a guide. The researcher also relied upon information that was attained in the pilot interviews to make modifications to the literature review. In addition, the researcher modified the structure of the literature review following the proposal hearing to better address the questions being asked in the study.

The problem being addressed and the questions being posed, “come from a void in the literature” and the need to include the experiences of “marginalized participants” (Creswell, 2014). The questions in this study addressed the experiences of a group of educators who have not been widely discussed in the literature.

- Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school system?
What are the motivating factors causing these principals to stay?

Why is the school district able to retain a large number of African American male principals?

The review of the literature in this study provided a comprehensive review of relevant literature pertaining to the reasons experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in a suburban/urban school district with greater challenges and fewer resources than neighboring districts. The literature reviewed in this study also coincided with the themes that emerged in the research study and provided empirical support for the reasons cited by the African American male principals regarding the reasons they stay in the district being studied.

Figure 1
Summary of Conceptual Framework

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), “a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied” (p. 20). Moreover, the authors add that a conceptual framework changes as the researcher’s knowledge of the subject matter or “terrain” changes and improves (p. 20). Thus, the conceptual framework should continue to adjust as the research develops. Such is the case with this study, whose conceptual framework adjusted as the research continued construction. After the study was conducted, the researcher made modifications to the conceptual framework in this study.

Unlike most traditional school systems, the Queen Charlotte County Public School System has been able to recruit and retain more African American male principals than most school districts in the nation. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003–2004), 82.4% of principals in US public schools are white (p. 65). In Queen Charlotte County, the numbers are completely the opposite. In Queen Charlotte, 79% of principals are people of color. The question one must ask with regard to the retention of effective African American principals in Queen Charlotte County is: What is being done in Queen Charlotte County to attract and retain so many African American educators? More specifically, what is the district doing to recruit and retain so many African American male educators?

According to the themes that emerged from the study’s research findings, certain obvious strategies have been deployed for many years in Queen Charlotte County. More important, Queen Charlotte County made genuine efforts to attract and retain quality educators of color. Once those educators had been recruited to the school system, Queen
Charlotte County then made concerted efforts to retain them. Many of the principals in
the study discuss the importance of role models of color as well as the trusting, collegial
relationships that extend throughout the school system.

To retain quality educators of color, Queen Charlotte County’s school district
applies additional strategies, initiatives, and efforts: the district offers ongoing
opportunities for professional development and professional advancement; it provides
ongoing support through formal and informal mentoring opportunities; and it has created
a critical mass of educators who see other educators of color in advanced leadership
positions. Those actual role models serve as evidence of legitimate opportunities for the
professional advancement of educators of color. Many of the principals said they did not
think they would be given such opportunities in other school systems or organizations. I
posit that the historical factors outlined in the *Black Male Achievement* report, the
systems of support, the agency of the principals, and many other important factors have
led to the retention of experienced and effective African American male principals in
Queen Charlotte County.

The Framework for Retaining African American Male Principals illustrates how
the strategies and initiatives developed by Queen Charlotte County Public Schools have
insulated African American male principals from some of the traditional challenges that
plague many school districts. Some of those challenges are lack of diversity, lack of
opportunities, racism, discrimination, and professional isolation. The graphic in Figure 1
shows that the system of supports—in the forms of mentoring, professional development,
valuing of diversity, professional advancement opportunities, and other professional
supports—has built a barrier against the challenges that African American principals in
other school districts confront. Some of these challenges pertain to a lack of advancement, a lack of opportunity, racism, discrimination, a lack of diversity, and professional isolation. As a result of these challenges, many African American educators elect to leave such school districts. The supportive work environment in Queen Charlotte County has created a climate that is conducive to a sense of belonging. And as a result of the supports and opportunities, African American male principals have elected to remain in this district.
CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research presented in the literature review and the succeeding sections will help make the argument that more research must be conducted on districts that are successfully retaining experienced and effective principals of color who are also succeeding in challenging school situations. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate why experienced and effective African American male principals in a large suburban/urban school district elect to continue working in a district with greater challenges and fewer resources than neighboring school systems. In qualitative interviews, the researcher conducted interviews either in person, by telephone, or through focus groups; and the interview questions are usually open-ended ones that are designed to reveal the opinions and thoughts of the participants (Creswell, 2014, p. 190). The method used for gaining an understanding of the reasons why principals remain in this district occurred through in person interviews.

The primary questions addressed in this study were:

- Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school system?
- What are the motivating factors causing these principals to stay?
- Why is the school district able to retain a large number of African American male principals?

The methodology and research design in this chapter are presented as follows: the first section discusses the research design and the purpose for the design; the second section sets forth the criteria used in selecting the participants; the data collection section
offers an explanation of the tools and procedures used for collecting the data; the data analysis section has a discussion of how the research questions were answered; and the limitations section provides a discussion on some of the shortcomings of the study. The methodology and research design in this study helped provide a comprehensive view of why experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this large suburban/urban school district.

**Research Design**

Given the uniqueness of this school district as an affluent majority African American district with a high African American principal retention rate, the primary purpose of this study was to determine why the experienced and effective African American principals in this district decided to stay. The level of detail required to obtain such information can best be achieved through qualitative research (Patton, 2002). To accomplish the goal of learning why these principals elected to stay required a better understanding of those principals’ backgrounds, trainings, supports, and overall experience in this district.

Once approval was granted to conduct the research, the principals’ interviews occurred during a period of three weeks. Interviews of the central office executives occurred during a period of six weeks. All of the interviews occurred in the months of February 2016 and March 2016. In those interviews with African American male principals and central office executives, the research explored why African American principals stay in the district, yet teachers leave at a higher-than-average rate. Such interviews provided an opportunity for the “researcher to explore complex, contradictory,
or counterintuitive matters” (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The in-depth interviews in this study enabled the researcher to explore the reasons the retention rate of African American male principals in this district exceeds the rate in most districts in the region and the nation.

In this qualitative study, the researcher used the grounded-theory design. Grounded-theory design occurs when “the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the view of participants” (Creswell, 2012, p. 14). The researcher explored the actions and interactions of African American male principals that resulted in their remaining in the district. Grounded-theory design also “involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information” (Creswell, 2012, p. 14). The researcher used both historical data and current data.

According to grounded-theory design, the researcher in this study used multiple methods to collect data. The researcher interviewed various groups: principals, central office executives, retired executives, and a union official. The researcher used quantitative data and artifacts provided by the school district. In addition, some of the participants provided artifacts and documents. And the researcher administered a brief survey to the principal participants to get written responses on basic background information pertaining to each of the principals. The survey also asked for feedback on the top supports that are provided and on future professional aspirations and plans.

**Participant Selection**

The research on principal effectiveness and principal retention is clear. According to Fullan (1993), for large-scale reform efforts to take full effect, effective principals
must be in place for “five years” or more. As far as principal retention is concerned, principals with “less than 5 years of district experience are 60.8 percent less likely to be retained than principals with 5 years or more of experience in a district” (Papa, 2007, p. 282). Given those studies on the importance of principal effectiveness and principal retention in relation to the importance of principals’ being in place for five or more years, it was determined that two of the essential criteria would be that to be eligible to participate in the study: (1) each African American principal would have to have been a principal for five or more years in the district and (2) each African American male principal would need to be deemed an effective or highly effective principal based on their evaluation.

Given that the researcher was provided access to school system data, the researcher was able to determine the number of years each principal had spent in the school district. The researcher needed a consistent metric to determine the effectiveness of each principal, and the only consistent empirical measure that determined each principal’s effectiveness was the principal’s end-of-year evaluation. Thus, the researcher first determined how many African American male principals were in the district, then determined how many of those principals were currently principals of schools, and then how many of those current principals were determined to be effective based on their most-recent evaluations.

Once the prospective research participants had been identified, the researcher sent a standard email to each principal and prospective interviewee. According to Rubin and Rubin (2011), prospective interview participants are more inclined to grant interviews if they feel some personal connection to the interviewer. Given that the researcher was a
former principal in this district and had personal connections with the majority of the
principals and central office executives in this study who were prospective interview
participants, the overwhelming majority of principals agreed to be interviewed. And all of
the central office executives who were requested to participate in the study granted the
researcher interviews.

Two primary groups of participants contributed to the study, which consisted of
24 total participants: 12 African American male principal participants and 12 central
office executive participants. The first group and the group central to this research was
the group of African American male principals who were either effective or highly
effective in their roles as principals based on their most-recent end-of-year evaluations,
and each had to have had five or more years of experience as a principal in the Queen
Charlotte County Public School System.

Table 2 presents background information on the principal participants, whose
names are pseudonyms to protect identity. The ages of the principals in the study ranged
from 40 years of age to 67 years of age. Seven of the principals either have a doctorate
degree or were doctoral candidates. Given that over half of the principals who
participated in the study either have a doctorate or are doctoral candidates is significant.
The school district has an agreement, a memorandum of understanding, with several local
colleges and universities to offer doctoral programs for cohorts of educational leaders in
the district. The remaining five principals have master’s degrees.

All of the principals have been in the district as educators in other roles before
becoming a principal with the exception of one of the principals who retired from another
school district before becoming a principal in the Queen Charlotte County Public School
System. The asterisk (*) for Principal Bonner indicates that he is the only principal who retired from another school system and began a second career in Queen Charlotte County. Three of the principals met the minimum requirement to be eligible for the study with at least 5 years of principal experience. Ten of the principals are married, one is single, and one is divorced. Eight of the principal participants were high school principals, four were elementary principals, and no middle school principals participated in the study.

Table 2. *Queen Charlotte Principal Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal’s Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Years in District</th>
<th>Years as Principal</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>School Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bonner*</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyson</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Doctoral candidate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lester</td>
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<td>Master’s</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold</td>
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<td>Doctoral candidate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>High school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowie</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second major group of participants in this study consisted of central office executives, who are key members of the superintendent’s leadership group—the cabinet members. This group consisted of the superintendent, a deputy superintendent, a board of education member, the chief of human resources, two associate superintendents, two instructional directors, and the diversity officer. The other three participants included in the central office executive group were two retired executives from the school system, the executive director of the Principals and Supervisors Union, and the first African American superintendent in the district.

The instructional director position was one of the few groups included in the central office executive leadership group not listed as cabinet members. In addition, three other individuals who were not part of central office executives or the cabinet were sought out for their unique perspectives. Two of those individuals are currently retired, but both played essential roles in the diversity recruitment efforts of the early 1990s. They consisted of the first African American superintendent in the school system and one of the diversity recruitment coordinators. The final individual to participate in the study—and the only individual who had never been a school system employee—was the executive director of the Principals and Supervisors Union. The executive director of the Principals and Supervisors Union is not an employee of the school district, but is instead an employee of the school district’s principals, assistant principals, and supervisors.

Table 3 presents background information on the central office executive participants. Although the executive director of the Principals and Supervisors Union, Harriet, is listed as having 27 years, those years reflect the number of years she worked with the district but not in the district. Given that the superintendent, Frost, worked in the
district on two separate occasions, the number of years reflect a combination of both periods of employment. The same is the case for the deputy superintendent, Michelle, who worked in the school district during two separate periods, which have been combined.

Table 3. *Queen Charlotte Central Office Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Office Executive Name</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
<th>Years in District</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harriet</td>
<td>Executive Director Principals and Supervisors Union</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>First African American Superintendent</td>
<td>30 (retired)</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Deputy Superintendent</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McArthur</td>
<td>Associate Superintendent of Development</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Board Member</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>25+</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alana</td>
<td>Diversity Officer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac</td>
<td>Instructional Director</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mac</td>
<td>Diversity Recruiter</td>
<td>30 (retired)</td>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toussaint</td>
<td>Associate Superintendent of Instruction</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobby</td>
<td>Instructional Director</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John</td>
<td>Chief Human Resources Officer</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

Interviews

The study used interviews as the primary source to collect data. Unlike normal conversations, interviews are beneficial because they focus on specific interview questions and because the answers expound on those questions in greater depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The ability to elaborate and follow up on responses is one of the benefits of qualitative interviews. As a result of the in-depth qualitative interview process, the researcher can explore the “experiences, motives, and opinions of others” to better see the world from the perspective of the interview participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Prior to conducting the actual study, the researcher conducted a pilot study in June 2015. Three of the eligible African American principals participated in that pilot study. The pilot study interviews ranged from approximately 25 minutes for one interview and approximately 35 minutes for another. The third interview lasted for nearly 50 minutes. As a result of the pilot study, the researcher determined that the interview questions were not comprehensive enough and the questions were not open-ended. The questions did not allow the participants to tell their stories.

Given that the study was focusing on a positive attribute of the Queen Charlotte County Public School System, the participants seemed to be willing to share data. As the data were being gathered—primarily through interviews—both groups of participants were very willing to share their insights. Throughout the interview process, several of the interview participants referenced additional reports, studies, or people I needed to consult with regarding the study. A few examples of this level of support occurred when one interview participant sent an email link with an additional resource. Another interview
participant provided the researcher with letters, photos, and recruitment material from early recruiting trips that occurred more than 20 years before. And a third participant referenced the seminal report, Black Male Achievement, which enabled school system leaders to enhance diversity efforts.

There are 42 African American male principals out of a total of 212 principals in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. Of the 42, 19 met the criteria to be eligible for the study: at least five years of principal experience in the school district and an effective or highly effective evaluation on the most recent evaluation. Those 19 African American male principals found eligible for participation in the study were sent a standard email with the school system’s institutional review board approval letter and the research consent form. The email asked that they respond to the researcher within a specified period of time.

Of the 19 eligible African American male principals contacted via email, 14 responded that they were willing to participate. One of the four who did not respond participated in the proposal interview. Thus, 15 of the 19 eligible principals participated in the study in some manner. The central office executives were contacted in different ways. Most were contacted via email, but a few were contacted through a phone call. Of the 9 central office executives, the 2 retired executives, and the 1 union official, all 12 agreed to participate and actually granted the researcher an interview.

Eleven of the 12 principal interviews took place at the principals’ schools. Only one principal interview took place in the researcher’s office. Of the 12 central office executive interviews, 7 took place in the respective executive’s office, 4 took place in the researcher’s office, and 1 took place in the home of one of the retired executives.
advance of the interview, the researcher asked for 60 minutes for each interview. Of the 24 total interviews, 12 lasted 45 to 60 minutes, 8 lasted 30 to 44 minutes, and 4 lasted longer than 60 minutes. The shortest interview was 32 minutes, and the longest interview was 226 minutes (3 hours 46 minutes).

Eight structured questions were asked of the central office executives, and 14 structured questions were asked of the African American male principal participants. The advantage of taking a more structured approach to the research design is that it helps make certain that the data gained are consistent (Maxwell, 2012). Although the questions were structured and all interview participants answered the same questions, the interviewer asked varying follow-up questions as deemed appropriate. In addition, prior to the formal interview, each principal was asked to complete a brief survey (see Appendix F). The survey instrument enabled the researcher to more efficiently and expeditiously obtain basic background information without having to use valuable interview time.

Each participant was informed of certain rights as they pertained to the actual interview. After referring to the consent form and reading about participants’ rights, each participant was asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form informed each participant of the right to discontinue participation in the study at any point during the study. Moreover, if a participant elected to discontinue participation even after the interview session, all recordings and documentation pertaining to the participant’s involvement would be destroyed. Each participant was also asked for permission to record the interview session. Qualitative research usually provides
confidentiality (Miles et al., 2014, p. 63). The participants in this study were assured of such confidentiality.

Qualitative data can consist of “interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artifacts, photographs, video, Internet sites, email correspondence, literature, and so on” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 72). The data collected in this study used some of those suggested resources—specifically, interview recordings, interview transcripts, observation field notes, research memos, email correspondence, historical reports, and artifacts. As the research progressed, this iterative process enabled the researcher to uncover the existence of artifacts and reports that had been unknown prior to the beginning of the research study.

**Types of Qualitative Data**

The types of qualitative data used in the study consisted of the following:

- **Recordings.** Each of the 24 interviews was recorded. I informed interview participants that “I am recording today’s interview because I don’t want to miss any of your comments or misinterpret my notes. The recording will then be transcribed, and names or other identifying information will be removed.”

- **Transcripts.** The interview recordings were forwarded to a transcription service and were transcribed from audio to narrative.

- **Field notes.** The researcher took detailed notes throughout each interview. As those notes were being taken, the researcher referred to the notes throughout the interviews. Sometimes the researcher asked follow-up questions and probing questions based on the responses and when more detail was needed.
• **Contact summary memos.** After each interview, the researcher typed up the field notes and converted the field notes into memo format.

• **Email correspondence.** The primary method of communication was via email. In addition to the researcher’s use of email to communicate regarding the logistics of the interview, interview participants used email to send additional information to the researcher.

• **Historical reports.** During the interviews, a few interview participants referenced a report that would be beneficial to the researcher.

• **Artifacts.** A few of the interview participants shared historical artifacts with the researcher. The artifacts consisted of letters, photos, reports, recruitment schedules, and newspaper articles.

Throughout the interview process, the researcher probed participants to answer in greater depth the essential research question: Why do African American male principals elect to stay in this district? The goal was to determine from the participant’s perspective what is being done in Queen Charlotte County that is not occurring in many other school systems around the nation to attract and retain African American male principals. The literature suggests that many early black principals understood that their roles were to be more than principal (Morris, 1999, p. 594). Moreover, Fairclough (2001) argues that the black community had to fight for control over its schools and that once it gained that control, it hired black principals. Thus, the researcher explored the connection between African American principals and those principals’ dedication to African American communities and African American schools.
Data Analysis

Data analysis should not be a singular process. Instead, data analysis should be a process that occurs throughout the research process. Data analysis “involves analyzing participant information” (Creswell, 2014, p. 212). It is strongly recommended by Miles et al. (2014) that the researcher analyze data as data are being collected. As a result, the researcher becomes better able to think about the data collected and how to create strategies for collecting additional and sometimes better data (p. 70). The data analysis process is most beneficial when it is an ongoing and iterative process. In this study, data were analyzed throughout the research process.

The beginning stages of analysis of data have been referred to as entering the participant’s world (Smith et al., 2009). The data analysis process used in this study consisted of compiling field notes during each interview. Following each interview session, the field notes were typed and converted into a contact summary form. A contact summary consists of a compilation of field notes into a one-page form with summarizing questions regarding the field experience (Miles et al., 2014, p. 124). Also, each interview participant was asked for permission to record the interview session so that important information would not be missed. All participants granted permission for their interview sessions to be recorded. The recordings were then transcribed for later analysis.

The initial round of coding consisted of the researcher’s reading through the field notes and converting them into contact summary format. Once the recordings were transcribed into text, the researcher read each transcript while also listening to each recording. During that process of reading transcripts and listening to recordings simultaneously, the researcher began the initial phase of coding. During that initial
process of coding, patterns and themes began to emerge. Miles et al. (2014) assert that the process of coding is “a data condensation task” that enables the researcher to obtain the most-relevant data and to place those data into “readily analyzable units” (p. 73).

After reading and rereading transcripts and after listening to each recording, the researcher began identifying codes. The researcher used an open coding process. An open coding process “involves word by word, line by line analysis, questioning the data in order to identify concepts and categories that can be dimensionalised” (Grbich, 2012, p. 74). Initial identification of the codes consisted of the identification of 54 codes. Table 4 illustrates the initial codes. From those initial codes, the researcher identified the primary codes, which are codes that featured more prominently in the data. Afterward, the researcher identified secondary codes. The secondary codes are codes cited less frequently, but they were deemed to be relevant to the research.
Table 4. Initial Code List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Identification of Code Words and Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accomplishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Most-affluent AA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assistant principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attracting priv. school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Bias against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Being AA male helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Being AA male hurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Black/Latino challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dedicated/committed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Distributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Diversity recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Diversity retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Fraternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Frustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Gentrification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Invested in district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Lack of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Leader experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Left and returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Manage vs. Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. No diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Pockets of poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Prin. prep. programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Professional Dev.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Professionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Sacrifices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Sense of ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Teacher retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Tell our story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Value of principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Why stay (retention)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Why this district (recruit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Work–life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the initial identification of the codes occurred, the researcher looked for themes and consistent words and phrases. The themes were organized based on their consistency, relevance to the study, and rate of frequency. The themes were further organized into primary themes and secondary themes.

Table 5 provides a complete list of the final codes listed in the study.
Table 5. Final Code List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Affluent African American County Value of Principalship Image Diversity Recruitment Why This District: Recruitment Opportunity Role Model Sense of Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports Relationships Mentors Leadership Experience Mission Professional Development Service Advocacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to the existence of software programs, data analysis involved a manual process. Given today’s existence of software programs, interview recordings are uploaded and transcripts are produced that can be “coded or recoded as often as we need” (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). This study used the qualitative coding software ATLAS.ti to assist with the codes’ organization and identification. Once the final codes were identified, they were loaded into ATLAS.ti. As a result, the codes could be extracted and manipulated for purposes of analysis.

**Limitations**

There are two major limitations inherent in this study. First, given that the entire study took place in one school district that is located in a majority African American community and that is atypical and different from most communities in the United States, it is difficult to generalize the findings. The reasons many of the African American male principals in this study mention as reasons they elect to continue working in this school
district have much to do with the larger community. Given that the community, Queen Charlotte County, is a very affluent majority African American community in many geographic areas in the county, and it is very different from most counties nationally. It will be difficult for many counties to boast the same attractions for African Americans as Queen Charlotte County. Therefore, it is my view that other districts could find it difficult to attain the same success as Queen Charlotte County, even if they attempted to implement some of the same strategies.

The second major limitation of this study pertains to researcher bias. According to Creswell (2014), when research is of high quality, it includes an acknowledgment from the researcher about how that researcher’s background shapes interpretation of the data (p. 202). In other words, it is important to acknowledge the bias that a researcher brings to a study. As a result, this is to acknowledge that the researcher in this study had previously been a principal in this school district. Moreover, the researcher had been a colleague of several of the principal interview participants. The researcher attempted to mitigate the bias effect by carefully constructing interview questions that maintained objectivity. And the researcher asked carefully worded questions and follow-up questions that would not lead participants to respond in ways participants did not intend.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Study Findings

This qualitative study attempts to explore the reasons experienced and effective African American male principals continue working in a large suburban/urban school system. The primary questions the study addressed were: Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school system? What motivating factors are causing these principals to stay? Why is the school district able to retain a large number of African American male principals? It is important to note that the district is in an affluent county relative to most counties nationally but is less affluent than most of its neighboring counties, yet many African American male principals elect to continue working in this district despite the fact that the district has fewer resources than neighboring districts. Both the district being studied and other school districts will benefit from knowing why experienced and effective African American male principals have elected to continue working in this school district.

The account by each participant—both principals and central office executives—offered insights into why African American principals have elected to continue working in this district, and several themes emerged from the principals’ and central office executives’ interviews. There were six overarching emergent themes: affluent African American county, why this district (recruitment), why stay (retention), supports, changing Latino demographics, and mission. In addition, each of those overarching primary themes had subheadings. Each of the primary themes were referenced by multiple interview
participants and appeared very prominently in the data. Those themes and the interview responses are addressed in this chapter.

The chapter begins with the historical background of the school district and the county. That historical information will provide an important foundational context for many of the participants’ responses. Following the brief history of the district are brief introductions of the 12 effective veteran African American male principal participants and reasons they elected to become educators. Following that are brief introductions of the various central office and executive leaders who participated in the study. Finally, there is a discussion of the primary and secondary emergent themes that resulted from both the principals’ and executive leadership’s interviews.

History of the District

The Queen Charlotte County Public School District is one of the most affluent majority African American counties in the United States. The demographics of the school district and the county have changed from majority white to majority black. This is evident from the county’s leadership structure. Overwhelmingly, the leaders are African American, with a few exceptions. This majority African American county is led largely by African American leadership.

Currently, the county executive of Queen Charlotte County is African American. The vast majority of the County Council are African Americans. Board of education members are overwhelmingly African American. Of the 14 board of education members, 11 are African American, 2 are Latina, and only 1 is white. Although the current school district’s superintendent is white, a number of recent district superintendents have been
African American. The current deputy superintendents, the chief operating officer, and the majority of the superintendent’s cabinet are African Americans. Approximately three-fourths of the cabinet are African American educators.

Moreover, the county is very affluent relative to most counties in the nation. It is listed in the top 100 wealthiest U.S. counties based on median income, according to (Forbes, 2014). Although Queen Charlotte County is a very wealthy county based on a national ranking, it is not as wealthy as other counties in the region. Neighboring counties are listed not only in the top 100 wealthiest counties in the nation but are also in the top 20, and a few are even listed in the top 10 wealthiest counties in the nation based on median income (Forbes, 2014).

In the 1970s and 1980s, the demographics of Queen Charlotte County began to change. The population moved from majority white to majority African American. Unfortunately, despite the county’s growth and increased affluence, African American students were not faring well academically—especially African American males. As a result, the then school superintendent appointed a committee of community stakeholders in December 1989 to examine school system data and to make recommendations (Black Male Achievement, 1990).

The committee proposed 10 recommendations in its report titled Black Male Achievement. One of the major recommendations was to “hire more black teachers, counselors, and administrators” (Black Male Achievement, 1990). Of the then 5,600-member teaching force, only 313 black male teachers were employed in the school system (Black Male Achievement, 1990). As a result of the Black Male Achievement report, the school district made a concerted effort to recruit, hire, develop, and retain
more African American teachers in general and more African American male teachers specifically.

Many of the veteran African American educators and African American male principals who were hired during that period as teachers are still employed by the school system. Some have been promoted from principalships to central office positions as associate superintendents, executive directors, instructional directors, and supervisors. The historical impact of the *Black Male Achievement* report has changed the demographics, the leadership composition, and the policies of the district for decades.

**Enhanced Recruitment Strategies**

Because of the collective focus and the agreement between the board of education, the county government, and the larger community following the 1990 *Black Male Achievement* report, diversity recruitment became a school district priority in the early 1990s. The district developed a national recruitment focus whose broader recruitment effort was essential given that “in 1992–93, the state graduated only 230 minorities in Teacher Education Programs (State Department of Education, 1993).

Some of the strategies used in the early 1990s were as follows:

- [Provide] a toll-free telephone number which [was] printed on all school system literature
- Twelve hundred recruitment packages distributed annually to colleges and universities, including all 117 historically black colleges and universities as well as colleges and universities with high concentrations of minority students
- School system advertisements in journals, newspapers, and magazines with high numbers of minority subscriptions
• A network established with current minority employers, fraternities, sororities, and business and community organizations to receive referrals of prospective minority teachers

• A continuous effort to expand and support Future Teachers of America clubs for all 20 high schools

• Successful establishment of a new teacher incentive program designed to assist new teachers in offsetting the high costs of establishing and maintaining residences in the metropolitan area by providing many discounts on housing, relocation, automobiles, and banking services

• Mentoring and support groups established to increase the retention of African American male teachers by providing opportunities for sharing, networking, and other activities to help teachers get acclimated to the teaching experience

According to the Queen Charlotte County Public School System Office of Personnel (ca. 1994), “The number of new black male teachers hired increased 100 percent between 1989–90 and 1993–94. Also of importance, black male teachers of the elementary level, during the same period, increased over 100 percent from 43 to 99” (as shown in Table 6).

Table 6. Number of New Black Male Teachers in Queen Charlotte, 1989-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
African American Male Principals

The study consisted of 24 total participants. Twelve of the participants were African American male principals, each with five or more years of experience as a principal in the district. In addition to five or more years of principal experience in the district, to be eligible for participation in the study, each participant was required to have earned an effective or highly effective evaluation for the most recent end-of-year evaluation. Of the 12 principal participants in the study, 11 began their teaching careers in Queen Charlotte County. The principal participants were presented in order of their interviews (as shown in Table 7). In the initial section, the portion of the interviews includes basic background information on each principal. Also, the principals’ responses to why they decided to become educators in this district will be shared.

Table 7. Queen Charlotte Principal Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Principal’s Name</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 17</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>1. Bonner</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 17</td>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>2. Junior</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 18</td>
<td>4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>3. Kennedy</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 22</td>
<td>5:15 p.m.</td>
<td>4. Tyson</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23</td>
<td>4:00 p.m.</td>
<td>5. Rhodes</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>6. Lester</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>3:00 p.m.</td>
<td>7. Harold</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 24</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
<td>8. Randy</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>9. Jacques</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>10. Charles</td>
<td>High school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 02</td>
<td>7:00 a.m.</td>
<td>11. Bowie</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 02</td>
<td>2:45 p.m.</td>
<td>12. Michael</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal 1 (Bonner)

Bonner is a 67-year-old retired African American male principal from a neighboring school district who elected to continue serving as a principal. Thus, he sought a principalship in Queen Charlotte County and was hired in 2001 as an elementary principal. He was one of the more experienced principal participants in the study. He was also the only principal in the study who had not begun his teaching career in Queen Charlotte County. He grew up in a rural community in North Carolina.

When asked about his path to college and education, he said:

In high school, as I said, I grew up in a rural area and was fortunate enough to play football. My football coach had gone to [the same college] and played football there. He told his own college coach what a good player I was, and they offered me a work-study scholarship. When I went there, I said I think I want to do teaching. I want to enter the education field. However, I also wanted to go into counseling at that time, but I didn’t.

He had a successful career in an affluent majority white school system in a neighboring state. Once he retired from that school system as a principal, he wanted to continue working and considered a few options:

After leaving [another county], I chose to come to Queen Charlotte County and was placed as principal. At that point, I still loved doing what I was doing. I interviewed with three different counties, two of which were very much interested in my coming, and I looked at Queen Charlotte County.

When asked why he decided to come to Queen Charlotte County over the other school systems that showed interest, he said:

In Queen Charlotte County, as I stated before, I liked what I saw taking place because [the other county] schools—at the time I was there—and most of the schools I was in were majority Caucasian. As I said, in many of the schools I was in, I was the only African American there as a school leader.
Principal 2 (Junior)

Junior is a 52-year-old African American male principal who began his career as a math teacher in Queen Charlotte County. He was hired by the district in 1993. He had been a student in Queen Charlotte County and then attended one of the nation’s military academies. He later left the military academy and after graduating with a degree in finance from a major four-year college in his home state, pursued a career in business. He later earned an MBA from another prominent college. As a result, his career started in the field of business, as opposed to education.

When asked how he eventually became an educator and how he decided to leave a lucrative career in the business world, he stated:

Corporate America I would say is not devoid of African Americans, but it is certainly not the place where you see an overabundance of African Americans. That’s what initially led me into the county. That’s why I taught math—because it was about the numbers. There is the English language and then there is the numeric language, which is worldwide. That worldwide, international language led me to math, which led me to an assistant principal position.

When asked, more specifically, why education, given that he has an MBA and a finance degree from very reputable academic institutions, he responded by saying:

There is an altruistic aspect that says I want to help someone. I was a sales rep, believe it or not. I was a sales rep for [a Fortune 500 company]. It is truly about the money when you’re a sales rep. It is truly about the money. You’re not necessarily doing anything good for anyone else. You may not be doing anything good for your customer, but you’re a good friend with the stockbroker. You’re doing something good for yourself. There is an aspect that says you’re not doing anything good for anyone but yourself. I wasn’t comfortable. It wasn’t me.

Principal 3 (Kennedy)

Kennedy is a 58-year-old African American male principal who grew up outside a major U.S. city. His father was a salesman at a large company, and his mother was a
teacher who earned a master’s degree in education. He was hired by the school district in 1997.

When asked why he entered the field of education, he said:

I’ve always liked working with students, and I love being with students. I had some phenomenal teachers along the way, including my parents. Education was emphasized in my house as we were growing up. My mother encouraged me to take an education course. I’ve been hooked on education for the past almost 40 years.

He also said that a sense of mission was important to him, as was the need to give back to children who reminded him of the segregated schools he’d attended.

In this county there are a lot of students and families I can relate to. I came up in a segregated school system until I was in third or fourth grade, and all of the African American students lived on one side of town. I had classmates who were very similar to the students I see now day to day as an educator.

Principal 4 (Tyson)

Tyson is a 45-year-old African American male principal who grew up in Queen Charlotte County and graduated from one of the local high schools. He originally majored in mechanical engineering in college because that was the field his father was in, but he realized it was not a good match for him. He wanted to help people.

It didn’t match what I really loved to do, and that’s to help people. I changed my major to political science, then to history, and then to education, all of them with the desire to help people. I probably figured out this is what I really liked to do.

After graduating from college, he accepted a position that returned him to Queen Charlotte County. Before returning to teach, he decided to teach for one year in Africa.

I grew up here and so couldn’t imagine going to another school district first without coming home and teaching at [my old] high school under my old track coach [who was now principal]. And then I received a unique offer to go to Africa to teach for a year through the Teachers for Africa program. I had to cancel my
contract with Queen Charlotte County to teach in Africa, because my exact thought was that that was where home was going to be.

After the year in Africa, he returned and began his teaching career.

When I finished, I came back and applied again to Queen Charlotte County. [The recruiter] remembered me; said, “Not a problem”; and had me interview at several schools.

**Principal 5 (Rhodes)**

Rhodes is a 57-year-old African American male principal who grew up in a small town. After graduating from college with a major in communications, he moved to the Queen Charlotte County area and worked at a public relations company. He started his career as a long-term substitute teacher in Queen Charlotte County.

When asked why he selected Queen Charlotte County, he said:

That’s a good one, because I can’t tell you that I had any other choices. I didn’t really look at anything else. I came in not knowing much about it, but I got involved and just stayed.

Once joining the school district, he became very involved in the school system’s Black Male Achievement program. This was a school-system-funded, after-school mentoring program for black male students. Mostly black male educators were selected to lead a mentoring program for black boys.

The principal there wanted me as I subbed to do the mentoring program: Black Male Achievement. That brought me in. Caught me. That was my program. It felt as if I were making a difference, and the kids really appreciated it. Got a lot of parent participation. Then, the principal hired me to teach full-time.

**Principal 6 (Lester)**

Lester is a 53-year-old African American male principal who grew up in a neighboring county of Queen Charlotte County. He was an education major and was
recruited by Queen Charlotte County. He started his teaching career as a long-term substitute teacher and was later hired mid-year as a permanent teacher. He departed the system and was rehired in 2011.

He decided to become a teacher because of the influence of one of his high school football coaches. He also wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. Even at an early age, he knew that to improve one’s condition requires an education.

When I was a senior in high school, one of my football coaches was also the health teacher and he didn’t convince me, but I had a lot of respect for him and I said, “You know what, I want to do this. I want to have an impact. I want to be positive. I want to change lives for the better.” Even back then, at 16 years old, I knew that education was the real cure for all kinds of social ills. It really is, and the more well-educated society we have, the better society we have. So that part was pretty simple. That’s been in my heart and always will be.

He was also mentored by one of his principals when he was a teacher. The principal convinced him he would be a good administrator. He credits that principal—together with that principal’s encouragement to seek a career in administration—as the catalyst who motivated him to seek a future as a principal.

I still believe that the most important work in the school takes place in the classroom. I tell that to my staff over and over. At the same time, [my principal] and I had long conversations in which he said he believed I’d make a good administrator. I myself wasn’t so sure, but he believed it, so I said, “Well, let me take those steps,” and I did.

Lester is the only principal in the study who left the district, but after a few years he returned. He offers an interesting perspective on why he returned:

I moved to [another county] and was in one of those more affluent areas. Of course, it’s no secret that the grass is not greener. There’s more money, but I can tell you that other than that and the resources, there really wasn’t anything compelling me to stay there. When I made that choice to come back to Queen Charlotte County and got back, it just felt like being at home. It did. I felt so much
more comfortable than I did in [the other county]. The heart of Queen Charlotte County kept calling to me, and I had to answer.

Principal 7 (Harold)

Harold is a 48-year-old African American male principal who grew up in Chicago and moved to the Queen Charlotte County area to attend college. He majored in chemistry and minored in math in hopes of applying to pharmacy school. Although he applied to pharmacy school, he realized he was no longer interested in pharmacy as a career. Given that his mother was a teacher, he was attracted to the education field.

Although he enjoyed teaching, he wanted to have a greater impact on the students in his community and realized that becoming a principal would enable him to improve the lives of even more children.

I enjoyed teaching, I did, but I always felt I had practices that were going on in my classroom with kids who were experiencing challenges that were able to be engaged. They would go other places and they wouldn’t get it. I started thinking that if I could influence an entire school in the manner in which I was influencing my classroom, I would be of even greater value. That’s the big piece with my vision. What I believe is that I should be of service to school communities in order to help children.

After becoming a middle school principal, he later desired to become a high school principal. He started having discussions with high school colleagues about the high school principalship.

Some kids I didn’t think would do well ended up changing; and some kids I thought would do well ended up not doing so well. I felt that the high school was that black box. What was it that went on in that black box in four years that either made kids become extremely successful or made them not do so well?

When asked why he elected to begin his teaching career in Queen Charlotte County, he discussed the uniqueness of Queen Charlotte County.
The area surrounding Queen Charlotte County reminded me a lot of Chicago where I came from. Queen Charlotte County itself didn’t remind me of anything I’d ever experienced. I had never been in an environment with such a large percentage of highly educated middle-class blacks.

**Principal 8 (Randy)**

Randy is a 53-year-old African American principal who classifies himself as a “military brat.” He was hired by the district in 1988. As a child, he moved throughout his early school years as a result of his father being in the military. Once in the Queen Charlotte County area, his family stayed there permanently. After graduating from one of the high schools in Queen Charlotte County, he received a football scholarship from a very prominent university in the Queen Charlotte County area. He majored in education in college.

When asked what motivated him to major in education, he said he had been inspired by his three male physical education teachers in middle school.

About the decision to become an educator, I guess I could say I was in love at my junior high school with three guys who were the male physical education teachers who were on the cusp of physical fitness. They all lifted weights, they all looked healthy, and our physical education program there was great. I wanted to teach physical education and coach basketball and football.

When asked how he became interested in becoming a principal, he said he was encouraged by his colleagues who were moving into administration. Although he was interested in administration, he still wanted to coach basketball. He actually continued coaching basketball for a year after becoming an assistant principal.

I got that itch. I said to myself, “I can do this physical education thing standing on my head.” I’m watching my colleagues who started when I started, moving on into administration, but I still had that coach’s itch, and I had to get rid of it.
**Principal 9 (Jacques)**

Jacques is a 42-year-old African American principal who grew up in New York City. He was hired by the district in 1996. He attended college in Atlanta, Ga., where he majored in English. His original plan was to major in pre-law and later attend law school. He was persuaded that English would better prepare him for law school. As a result, he changed his major to English. After attending college, he felt disappointed with the preparation his high school had provided him. With an English major, he decided to become an English teacher. After graduating from college, he moved to the Queen Charlotte County area.

When asked why he didn’t return to New York, he explained that Queen Charlotte County was a place where he could make a greater contribution.

The area represented a place where I could still do more. I didn’t feel I was ready to go. My hometown in the New York is a grind, everything is a hustle, and everything is hard. I didn’t want to be another one like my friends who graduated and went home and lived in their parents’ basement. I realized I still needed to put myself in a position where I could still forge my own ground.

When asked what compelled him to become a principal, he recounted a story that illustrated what led to the decision to become an administrator.

As a teacher, it’s funny. When I was a teacher, I had a situation happen in the hallway and I got involved in it. Not knowing better, I kept asking the administration, “Why did you make that decision? Why did you do this?” Why, why, why, why, why? A school official said, “If you want to have a say-so in how things run, then you need to get into leadership.” I said okay and filed that in the back of my head.

**Principal 10 (Charles)**

Charles is a 44-year-old African American male principal who is the youngest of three children. He was hired by the district in 1996. He grew up in a mid-Atlantic state near a major city. He was a very good high school student and football player. Although
he had potential football scholarships, he decided he would not play football. Instead, he focused on academics and attended the University of Pittsburgh. His desire was to go into business and become a Wall Street titan. He majored in economics and business, a dual major with a minor in black studies. He excelled at Pittsburgh, was the top black graduate of his class, and graduated summa cum laude. After college, he joined an economic consulting firm. In addition to currently serving as a school principal, he is pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership.

When asked how he became an educator, he informed me that:

As fate would have it, I was playing pickup football and I broke my leg. I was laid up for about a month and had a lot of visitors. One particular family friend came and just started talking to me about life and whether I would consider doing something else. You have time when you’re sitting there to think, and based on those conversations, I decided to go back to school. At that time, I started tutoring algebra to inner-city middle-schoolers, and I loved it. I loved it so much that I started looking forward to my evening tutoring sessions more than I looked forward to going to work. At that point, I realized I needed to make a change. I quit my job and was admitted to a 14-month intensive master’s program.

**Principal 11 (Bowie)**

Bowie is a 39-year-old African American male principal who grew up in Queen Charlotte County as the son of a pastor. He was hired by the district in 1998. He graduated from one of the local high schools. He was an excellent math student and was accepted into the United States Naval Academy with a desire to fly fighter jets. Because of corrected vision, however, he was informed that he could not fly planes. As a result, he decided to attend a local university, where he majored in elementary education. After graduating, he accepted a position in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. He is currently pursuing a doctorate.
When asked why he became an educator, he informed me that:

I’ve always wanted to be in education. I remember that when I was 14 years old, I told a girl, “Listen, I’m going to be a teacher, so I’m not going to make a lot of money. Before I reach 40, I’m going to be a principal.”

**Principal 12 (Michael)**

Michael is a 48-year-old African American male principal who grew up in a military community. He was hired by the district in 1992. His mother was a special education teacher. Both he and his brother were excellent athletes in high school, and both earned athletic scholarships. After graduating, he became a graduate assistant coach for two years. He also enrolled in the business school for two years, where he pursued an MBA. When he decided to pursue other opportunities, he came to a city near Queen Charlotte County, where his coach lined up a few interviews for him. He met some very influential school system officials from Queen Charlotte County who convinced him to consider education.

I came to the Queen Charlotte County area for a couple of interviews my college basketball coach had lined up downtown for me with a couple of companies. I was staying in the area with my in-laws at the time, and some administrators were talking and saying, “Look, if you want to do something, have you ever thought about teaching?” “No.” “They have this program where they’re specifically bringing black male teachers in.”

After teaching for six years in an elementary school, he moved very quickly into administration.

I was a teacher for six or seven years, and then my next position was as assistant principal. After two years, I moved into a principalship.
Central Office Executives

The central office executive leadership consisted of 12 participants, as shown in Table 8. The study included top-level leadership in the district—a board of education member, the superintendent, a deputy superintendent, two associate superintendents, two instructional directors, the chief human resources officer, and the diversity officer. There were also two individuals who are currently retired, but by their involvement in the study, they provided important historical context given the roles they played in early black male recruitment efforts: the first African American superintendent and one of the two recruitment coordinators. The final participant was the executive director of the principals union.

Table 8. Queen Charlotte Executive Interview Schedule

| Executive Interview Schedule | Interview Date | Executive’s Name | Title | |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| Executive Interview Schedule | Feb. 2          | 1. Harriet      | Executive Director, Principals Union |
|                               | Feb. 6          | 2. Barry        | First African American Superintendent |
|                               | Feb. 22         | 3. Michelle     | Deputy Superintendent |
|                               | Feb. 23         | 4. McArthur     | Associate Supt. of Professional Development |
|                               | Mar. 1          | 5. Frank        | Board Member |
|                               | Mar. 1          | 6. Frost        | Superintendent |
|                               | Mar. 1          | 7. Alana        | Diversity Officer/Latino Affairs |
|                               | Mar. 2          | 8. Isaac        | Instructional Director |
|                               | Mar. 2          | 9. Mac          | Diversity Recruiter (retired) |
|                               | Mar. 4          | 10. Toussaint   | Associate Superintendent of Instruction |
|                               | Mar. 8          | 11. Bobby       | Instructional Director |
|                               | Mar. 12         | 12. St. John    | Chief Human Resources Officer |
Executive 1 (Harriet)

Harriet grew up in New Jersey. She attended Fairleigh Dickinson University. She later attended the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and that is where she received a master’s degree in union administration. As a military spouse, she and her husband moved frequently. When they moved to Maryland in 1981, she worked on Capitol Hill on both the House of Representatives and Senate sides. She later moved into the executive director’s position of the principals union in Queen Charlotte County.

She became involved in unions when her husband was stationed in Nashville, Tennessee, and she took a position as a secretary at a local college in Nashville.

Coming out of New Jersey, everybody belongs to a union. I went to Nashville, Tennessee, and I was a secretary. Secretaries there belonged to a union that was a textile union based in New York. Don’t ask me how that happened, but that’s how it was. When I went to work down there, they hadn’t gotten raises in four years. It just wasn’t happening. I ended up becoming union rep for the secretaries at Fisk University.

I went to New York, met with the union people there, and complained about what was going on. “Why are we paying you dues and not getting raises.” They frankly said, “No one has contacted us, and no one has asked this.” I went back to Nashville with a group of people from New York in tow, and we ended up holding a press conference and raising a whole lot of hell that Fisk University had never seen before.

Executive 2 (Barry)

Barry grew up in Indianapolis as one of five children. His father worked in factories and reached the eighth grade in school. His mother had been an outstanding student, but because she was female and poor, she was unable to go to college. He credits his mother for being his first mentor. After working in the public schools in Indianapolis and Washington, Barry later became the first black superintendent in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System.
When he was hired by Queen Charlotte County as a teacher, many of the students had never seen a black educator before. The school system that is now majority black was majority white at that time in the early 1970s. According to his first principal:

They had never seen a black man other than the janitor. He said, “I got to have you on my staff. I’ve talked to your principal in Indianapolis, I’ve talked to your principal in Washington. I can’t let you go. I’m calling down there now, and I want you on my staff.”

Executive 3 (Michelle)

Michelle grew up in Queen Charlotte County. She attended the public schools in the county, graduating from high school in the county. In college, she majored in communication. Given that both parents are educators, she later obtained teaching certification and pursued a career in education. She departed the district for an assistant superintendent position before returning with the current superintendent in the summer of 2013. She is currently deputy superintendent of the public school system. She earned a doctorate from a university in a nearby jurisdiction.

When asked why she accepted the position of deputy superintendent of the district, she said:

That’s a simple answer: the current superintendent. It’s as simple as that. He asked, and he’s a great leader. I would work for him anywhere he went. I was glad to have been able to come back to the district my kids were still in and where I got my start. It was an easy decision to simply want to support a great leader.

Executive 4 (McArthur)

McArthur grew up in New Jersey. Both parents were formally educated. His dad earned a master’s degree and was a CPA and comptroller at a Fortune 500 company. McArthur attended a local university for all three degrees—bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate. He is currently associate superintendent of Professional Development. He
changed his major from business to education in his junior year in college, later accepting a position in Queen Charlotte County after meeting recruiters from the county’s school system.

Interestingly enough, and I will give these gentlemen the credit—St. John and Mac—because they came to see me when I was a sophomore undergrad. I’ll never forget it. I had switched my major to education, having been a business major originally. I guess I was a junior at this point. I just wanted to see what this recruiting fair was like, so I met those two, who said, “You could come to Queen Charlotte County and do a lot of different things. You could be a principal one day.” They literally said those words to me.

Executive 5 (Frank)

Frank is from central New Jersey. His mother and father were former military. He attended Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA. After graduating, he became a Peace Corps volunteer in South Africa. After the Peace Corps, he taught in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System for a year. He later joined a nonprofit organization, Africare, supporting humanitarian efforts throughout Africa in such areas as health care, education, clean water, and agriculture. After working with Africare, he enrolled in the Harvard Kennedy School, graduating with a degree in public policy. He is currently serving as an at-large-member of the board of education in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System.

When asked what prepared him for the role as a board of education member, he referenced his numerous experiences.

That training through the Kennedy School prepared me for this work. Eventually, I experienced another passage around education, but I think that that training, formal and informal, really helped prepare me for the school board. The new configuration of the school board and the opportunity to be an at-large member were really important to me. I appreciate being at large because it lets me view the system from a 30,000-foot view, meaning that I’m not limited to a school district
where I have to be concentrating only on what’s happening in District 8 or District 3 or 4. The inroads I’m trying to make with regard to parental engagement and quality teaching are systematic. I think that’s important.

**Executive 6 (Frost)**

Frost was educated in the public schools in Queen Charlotte County. He later attended a college in the county. After college graduation, he returned to the public schools to teach. He later became a principal, departing the county to become an associate superintendent in a neighboring county and later, superintendent in another neighboring county. He returned home to Queen Charlotte County as superintendent in 2013. In almost 20 years, he is the first superintendent in Queen Charlotte County to have begun his career as a teacher in the school system.

Here in Queen Charlotte County, when I came back, a little over two and a half years ago, I was the [ninth person in this seat in the past 25 years]. Now, that counts interim superintendents and things, but it’s pretty hard for a district—or a business, for that matter—to get traction when there’s constant churning of leadership at the top. We all know that when the superintendent, the CEO, or whoever leaves, it’s not just that person; it’s a philosophy, its other people, it’s a lot of different kinds of things.

When asked specifically why he elected to return to Queen Charlotte County after a very successful career in another school system as a two-term superintendent, he very passionately discussed the importance of improving a school system and a community he refers to as home.

I’d sum it up two ways—and I think I said this the first time we talked about it: First, this is my home, and my home can be much better than it is in terms of its reputation and its quality of life and its quality of education. It has potential and opportunity. And second, because I believe I have the potential to really make a difference here. You know that we’re clustered along the bottom levels of achievement and we’ve got a lot of challenges, but I believe I can make a difference in the time I have available to work here. I believe very strongly that this district will be a better district when I leave than when I arrived.
Executive 7 (Alana)

Alana is the only participant born in another country. She came to the United States from South America when she was almost 7 years old. She went to elementary school in the area surrounding Queen Charlotte County. She and her family then moved to a neighboring county. She was a communication arts major and added another degree—in international business. She later acquired a master’s degree in international education and now has a doctorate in education. In her current role in Queen Charlotte County, she is responsible for all diversity initiatives.

She was asked, “What led to your decision to become an executive, where you’re given the opportunity to work with Latino students and Latino families?”

I think a lot of what I’ve done has prepared me for this position in many ways. As I mentioned earlier, as a fourth grader I was already being pulled out to help and support parents. I’ve shared in a couple of spaces that in 10th grade, I was already writing. I came to this country as an undocumented immigrant, but I didn’t reveal that. But it also shaped a lot of who I am.

She later explained that certain difficult past experiences with immigration have shaped who she is, and this is why she works so hard for Latino students in this district.

I came here in a pickup truck, hiding underneath plywood boards with just enough space so that air could flow in. I was 6 or 7, and my mother was captured in an immigration raid. My family was almost deported, and I guess that awareness as well has shaped my experiences with the population we serve.

Executive 8 (Isaac)

Isaac is a native Queen Charlottian. He attended K–12 schools in the county and a local college in the county as well. He majored in elementary education. He served as an elementary teacher, a middle school teacher, and an elementary principal in the school district. He is currently one of the instructional directors for the district. In that role, he
serves as supervisor of 14 school principals. He earned a master’s degree and a doctorate from local universities.

He discusses his experiences in working with elementary students and how he prepared himself for this age-group.

Even through high school, in my summers, I worked in park and planning summer camps with elementary age students 6 to 12, so I had experience in working with kids; and the camp director said to me, “You know, you’re really good with kids. You need to change your major to education because you’re so good with kids. Kids like you, kids respect you, and you do a good job in engaging kids.”

When asked what led to his decision to become a principal supervisor, he discussed how he developed administrators even while serving as a principal.

It still hinges on the fact of changing outcomes for marginalized or disenfranchised youth, and I felt as if becoming a school administrator would help me influence those outcomes on a greater scale. After becoming a principal, being a principal—a successful principal for 10 years—I would find myself developing people under me, just trying to spread their influence and help build the capacity of other people to have a like mind. During my principalship, I mentored and developed three assistant principals who became principals, and I’ve often found myself mentoring teachers, teacher leaders, and other administrators. My trajectory to education is definitely just to spread the influence of individuals who really have a passion for seeing outcomes change, especially for minority and disenfranchised students.

**Executive 9 (Mac)**

Mac is originally from a county northeast of Queen Charlotte County. He attended college in the county and spent his entire career as a teacher, an assistant principal, and later as the district’s recruitment officer. He was hand selected by the first black superintendent to co-lead recruitment efforts. He retired as one of the two lead recruiters for the district. Although he is currently retired, he is still working in the district in a part-time capacity. His current responsibility is to retain first-year male
teachers. Mac was largely responsible for the implementation of the black male recruitment efforts of the late 1980s and early ’90s. Many of the males hired by Mac are currently in leadership positions in the district.

He discusses how he was hired to focus on the recruitment of African American males so as to reflect the district’s changing demographics at that time, wherein student demographics were moving from majority white to majority black.

At that time, I was still in the school, where one leader said, “You look like a guy who could do really well in human resources. I’m about to take over human resources, and I need some good people down there who know how to talk to people and treat people.” When the time came, he called me up and said, “I want you to come over. This is no interview. I’m hiring you for this job.” He hired me to come into human resources and then said, “Now, I have to get another guy down here because you need to have a partner when you go out to recruit because I want you to especially concentrate on hiring African American men.”

He said that in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, recruitment efforts focused on the hiring of African American males.

I would say the late ’80s and the beginning of the ’90s. We came in because he was looking for people who had the right personality and because, he said, his human resources people didn’t have the right personality—or the right complexion—because everybody, up to that point, was hiring only white teachers.

**Executive 10 (Toussaint)**

Toussaint is currently an associate superintendent in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. He supervises 74 schools in the district as well as all 32 high schools and the middle and elementary schools in this area. And he supervises the six instructional directors who each oversee 12 to 15 schools. He grew up in New York City as an English language learner because his parents were Haitian immigrants who spoke only French and Creole at home. He attended Kennesaw State University, which is near
Atlanta, and he earned a master’s degree in education from Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College and a doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh.

When asked about his work with the instructional directors who supervise the 74 schools he is responsible for, he talked about coaching those instructional directors.

My work with [instructional] directors is to help them have great coaching conversations with principals as they’re working with them around very particular sections. Also making them go through processes and helping them walk through the work so they can get things done right.

His constant exhortation regarding what has to be done in schools is as follows:

What I always say is that central office learners are principals, and principal learners are teachers, and teachers’ learners are their students. If I think about it in that context, then I design professional development and I design all these things differently, right, also parents, right. The best principals are learners, too, because you’ve got to educate your families around your work. The reason I bring it up and give it that context is that progress happens when people understand what they have to do and when they understand how to better serve people around whatever that work is.

**Executive 11 (Bobby)**

Bobby was born and reared in Lafayette, Louisiana. He is of French heritage. He has six siblings. He came to the Queen Charlotte County area to attend graduate school and fell in love with the area. He accepted his first teaching position in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. He has served as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal and is currently an instructional director for the school system, supervising the principals of 14 schools. He has completed 30 years in the school system.

He explains that the educational opportunities kept him here.

Looking at educational opportunities, Louisiana is not a bastion of higher learning, as you may know. I was really impressed with the intellectual stimulation and educational opportunities here. I received a job in Queen
Charlotte County as a teacher. I’ve been in Queen Charlotte County my entire career.

He discusses the influences that motivated him to seek a position as principal.

For many of those years that I was there, almost all of them, I was the teacher in charge. I had an opportunity to see what that was like: running the school when the principal wasn’t there. For me what really made the difference was a fluke. Larry Lezotte had come to town. “I want to be a principal.” It was Larry Lezotte. Again, Bill had already paved the way and set a great example for me. When I heard Larry Lezotte speak about effective schools and what was possible and what an important component leadership played, it opened my eyes and my mind to an entirely other aspect of educational work and educational leadership.

He discusses his commitment to this county and its school system.

I tell you, I am in great shape and very happy to be in Queen Charlotte County, where I’ve learned so much. Queen Charlotte County has been very good to me, and I’m invested in Queen Charlotte County.

Executive 12 (St. John)

St. John is in his 47th year of employment in the school district. He grew up in a small rural county approximately 50 miles from Queen Charlotte County. His mother was a teacher and principal in his home county and instrumental in his becoming a teacher. He has been an industrial arts teacher, a guidance counselor, an assistant principal, and a principal, and he has been in human resources for more than 25 years. He was one of the two recruiters who implemented the black male recruitment efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He has held most positions in human resources and is currently chief human resources officer.

When asked how he became a recruiter in human resources, he credits the first African American superintendent, Superintendent Barry, with the opportunity to work in personnel.
The gentleman in charge of personnel at that time was Barry, and we were principals together. One of the things Barry wanted to do was to bring diversity to the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. One of his charges was to try to find as many qualified minority men and minorities, period, so there would be more minorities in front of our students.

Barry said, “You have the personality. You have the training as a principal. You would just have to learn some of the guidelines and some of the processes in human resources. So I joined. It took him two years to get me. The superintendent at that time didn’t want me to leave my school, because everything was going great.

**Most-Affluent Majority African American County**

The affluent-African-American-county primary theme was mentioned because the county the school district is in is atypical in many ways. The county was mentioned by multiple interview participants as being one of the wealthiest majority black counties in the nation. The secondary themes that were listed as subheadings under the affluent-African-American-county theme were the value of the principalship, the image of the county, diversity recruitment efforts, and pockets of poverty.

Throughout the interviews, many principals and executives pointed out that Queen Charlotte County is the wealthiest majority African American county in the nation. Some mentioned it in a very casual manner, and some were more detailed in their explanations. The board of education member, Frank, provided a very detailed response. He discussed what being known as the most-affluent majority African American county represents for the citizens of Queen Charlotte County and for other African American communities throughout the nation.

Queen Charlotte County is a very special place because of what it represents to black people in America. It represents what’s possible. When I grew up as a kid in New Jersey, I always wondered what it would be like to live in a community with African Americans who were educated and who lived in upscale houses. I lived in
a nice house, but I would drive, or I would ride my bicycle around neighborhoods, even my own neighborhood, where the houses were bigger and maybe had basketball courts, and I’d say to myself, “One day I’m going to have that.” Those houses were owned mostly by white people. And I said to myself, “What if I could have that?” I went to Morehouse and said to myself, “Wow, all these folks who go to Morehouse or Spelman live in those homes. Most likely they’re probably a minority in that community. It’s probably them and they may be the only blacks, but what if there’s a place where we could have what we want and live in a way that most other communities take for granted?”

As a 30-year veteran educator in the school system, Bobby elaborated on the fact that the number of African American educators in general and the number of African American principals more specifically are not numbers that occurred unintentionally.

Instead, he makes the important point that it was very purposeful and deliberate.

We know that Queen Charlotte County is the wealthiest, most-affluent majority African American county in the United States—in the entire country. Queen Charlotte County has spent a lot of time and effort making sure the leadership in its schools reflects the population of children in those same schools. As the county’s African American population has increased, the county has put a lot of effort into making sure its leadership looks the same as the population—or as close as possible. I think the county has welcomed African Americans. We’re all about diversity—and a lot of school systems are behind the curve in that work. I’ve always felt [that Queen Charlotte County] has always been ahead of the curve in so many areas.

Board Member Frank makes the claim that Queen Charlotte County educators and community stakeholders are in a unique position to make a difference not just in Queen Charlotte County because the school system can be a model and a leader for other communities throughout the nation. He acknowledges that although Queen Charlotte County does not have the resources of certain other affluent communities in the region, the county does have more resources than most other school systems in the nation have and more resources than most majority African American communities in the nation have.
There are people in Chicago, St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York, Buffalo, and Atlanta who are saying: “Wow, this is really interesting. We could really use that here. We’re having difficulty retaining quality male educators of color, and we don’t have enough principals of color. What can you do to bring that brotherhood, accountability, and capacity building to our system?

All that’s being placed in Queen Charlotte County. We are a model for the country for what’s possible with resources under predominantly African American leadership, predominantly African American school populations, predominantly African American teaching cores, and predominantly African American school board leadership—not as much in our region, but more resources than you’d see in other parts of the country. If it’s not possible here, it’s not possible anywhere.

**Pockets of Poverty**

Although Queen Charlotte County is a very affluent county, it has major areas of poverty. As a veteran educator in the county and currently an elementary principal, Kennedy said, “Queen Charlotte County is allegedly on a lot of people’s minds and is perceived to be the wealthiest enclave of African Americans in the country—maybe even the world—but there are still pockets of poverty and students who need a world-class education.”

As executive director of the principals union and in regard to the wealth of the county, Harriet discusses the perception of principals from outside the county. She acknowledges that the county is one of the more-affluent majority African American counties in the nation, but she also knows that we don’t tell the other story: that there are significant areas of poverty in the county as well.

Yes, it is the wealthiest majority African American county. We just ignore all the poor people. For instance, I was speaking to someone in San Diego, and she said: “Oh, wow. You’re from Queen Charlotte County?” I said, “Why do you say it like that?” She said: “Oh, well, you know. We’ve seen that that’s the wealthy [majority African American county].” I said we also have a whole lot of poor people in Queen Charlotte County. She said, “What?” I said: “We have a number
of schools that have 80, 90% of the kids eating free-and-reduced lunches. They just don’t talk about that. Really, Queen Charlotte County is seen as wealthy because we have a number of black people who make a whole lot of money. I promise you, I live there and I’m not rich. I guarantee you the people who work for the school system are far from rich.”

The school district’s superintendent, Frost, discussed the importance of ensuring that we provide opportunities for all of our students—inside the beltway and outside the beltway. Most of the impoverished communities are located inside the beltway.

I think it’s just as important to make sure we focus on opportunities for inner-beltway students who have potential and on trying to help them whether they’re Latino inside the beltway or whether they’re African American or whether they’re white, because it’s important for all of them in our high poverty areas of Queen Charlotte County to have opportunities.

The Queen Charlotte County Image

When some of the citizens in Queen Charlotte County—citizens in the metropolitan region—and when many educators in the nation who are familiar with Queen Charlotte County think of the county, it evokes a certain image. For some, that image is positive and provides hope for other majority African American jurisdictions. For others, that image is of an underachieving school district and community wrought with problems.

The executive director of the principals union, Harriet, who interacts with educators in other districts, mentioned that the perception of the county attracts some educators.

I think some of it has to do with the perception of the county. When you talk to principals outside the county and you mention Queen Charlotte County, they go: “Oh, yeah. That’s the wealthiest majority black county.” I think that has a lot to do with it when you talk to some other principals from someplace else, who will say, “Yeah, I came because it was Queen Charlotte County and I wanted to be with these educated black people.” It’s actually the county image that attracts a lot
of them.

Michael, a principal in a middle-class elementary school, also said that the importance of Queen Charlotte County’s significant progress as a school system is important not only for Queen Charlotte County but also for other districts around the country.

There are so many other districts that look at us as a shining light that are minority or urban, and they’re trying to replicate some of the work we’re doing here, but we have to be successful because so many districts around the country are minority and look at us and say they’re going to try to do what we’re doing. If we’re able to make accomplishments, other districts around the country look at us and say they can replicate that and can make themselves look a lot like we look: “If they can do it, we can do it.” We in Queen Charlotte County are in a prime spot to really, really set a tone and be an example to a lot of urban school districts. I think that’s important.

From her vantage point as the principals’ union executive director, Harriet suggests that the perception of Queen Charlotte County is not always the reality. Some educators find that the image does not coincide with their initial perception:

Some will say, “Yeah, I came because it was Queen Charlotte County and I wanted to be with these educated black people.” They get in here and they find out it’s not what you thought it was, but I think that’s what really attracts them.

Black Male Recruitment Efforts

It can certainly be argued that one of the major reasons there are African American male principals to retain in this district is the district’s leadership recruitment effort during the past 15 to 25 years. The result of a focus on the recruitment of African American male teachers in the past has resulted in a large number of African American males who are assuming leadership positions in the school district—especially in the positions of assistant principal and principal. Unlike other school systems in the nation,
where there are few if any African American male principals, Queen Charlotte County was able to develop African American males who started their careers in the county. In fact, 11 of the 12 effective and experienced African American male principals who participated in this study started their careers in Queen Charlotte County as classroom teachers.

According to the *Black Male Achievement* report and according to interview data, two individuals seem to be responsible for the increase in African American male teachers and later, African American male principals in Queen Charlotte County. Those individuals are the people who would go on to be the first African American superintendent, Barry, and the person who would later become the first African American county executive. The superintendent and the county executive had a vision and were able to persuade other leaders in the county that this was a worthwhile pursuit. As the lead recruiter as selected by Barry to lead the recruitment efforts for the district, St. John said:

One of the things Barry wanted to do was to bring diversity to the Queen Charlotte County Public Schools. One of his charges was to try to find as many qualified minority men—and minorities, period—so as to have more minorities in front of our students. So, he told me about it, saying: “You have the personality. You have the training as a principal. You would just have to learn some of the guidelines and some of the processes in human resources.”

According to veteran executive participants, the then human resources associate superintendent who would later become the first African American superintendent, Barry, was explicitly clear and unafraid of implementing the most important objective according to the lead recruiter, St. John, which was “Find African American teachers”—more specifically, African American men.
One of the charges was to go out and find African American men who wanted to really make an impact on kids. Go out and find African American teachers. Again, back in the ’80s, the percentage of African American educators was not at the same level as the numbers of our students of color.

Not only did Barry play a significant role in providing support, resources, and the vision for increasing the recruitment of African American male educators, but future county executive Dwayne played an important role as well. St. John said that County Executive Dwayne commissioned a study that highlighted the low graduation rate among African American boys and the low levels of academic achievement.

That study showed the data, the statistics where kids started school, and then, after third grade, things began to happen all the way up through high school: the low graduation rates and things of that nature. Again, he supported our need for more men. We needed more African American educators in the district. Barry, Mac, and I would chat about what we could do differently. We started out going to all of the historically black colleges and universities in our cars. We would go up to Lincoln University and stay up in Lincoln late into the evening talking to kids and other universities. We said: “You know what? What would happen if we had an RV?” We would see these RVs, even though you’d see only senior citizens driving them, and put our logo on it and go up and down the East Coast. That’s how we got it. The county executive, Dwayne, made that happen.

**The Value of the Principal**

It is very evident from the comments provided by principals and executives that the role of the principal position in Queen Charlotte County is valued. As Bobby, one of the instructional directors, put it: “The principal’s job consists of some of the most difficult, challenging, and important work in any school system. I think we must always be mindful of just the challenges that principals face, much less the rest of their duties.”

In addition, there is an acknowledgment that the principal position has become more complex and demanding.

Board member Frank made very similar comments regarding the importance of
the principal position:

What I’ll say is this: I think the principal in our county is probably the most important position in our entire system. The school principal represents a nexus between policy and practice, between the public and the school system.

When policies on, say, school testing and school discipline come down from the state level, the faces of those policies to Joe Public, to parents, are those of school principals. It’s not the governor, it’s not the state superintendent, it’s not Superintendent Frost, it’s not Board Member Frank, it’s not you; it’s the principal. Unfortunately, the principal cannot say to a parent, “I don’t agree with this.” The principal has to be president and press secretary, right? He has to be quarterback and head of PR for the team. He has to be political about the question and the answers he gives. And he has to motivate teachers. If we have a strong board and strong educators but a weak principal leadership core, we might as well pack it up. On the other hand, if we have strong principals and even if our policies are not sound and our teaching core is struggling, principals make lemonade with those lemons because they’ve been teachers. In most cases, they’ve been assistant principals. Now they’re principals, and they know how to make things happen. I’ve seen it up close.

**Why This School District: Recruitment**

Why do effective and experienced principals elect to work in this school district?

This was one of the seminal questions in this research study. I sought to find out what attracted African American males to this district as opposed to other districts in the region and the nation. Given that the majority of the participants in the study are not native to the district and many are not even from the state, it was important to find out why they were attracted to this district. Also, who and what attracted them to this district were important to know. Moreover, many of the African American male principals in the district were recruited from other regions and other states. Although this is a question these educators are not asked every day, most of the principals and executive participants responded quickly and easily.
For example, Associate Superintendent McArthur told of his recruiting experience when he was a junior in college. His experience was comparable to that of other educators who participated in the study and were hired during that period—especially African American male educators. The recruiters, St. John and Mac, didn’t limit the recruitment opportunity to a teaching position, but they indicated the possibility of career growth beyond the immediate position they were offering. They deliberately spoke of opportunities that would be made available in the future. As McArthur stated:

I guess I was a junior at this point. I just wanted to see what this recruiting fair was like, so I met those two [St. John and Mac], who said: “You could come to Queen Charlotte County, and you could do a lot of different things. You could be a principal one day.” They literally said those words to me.

Superintendent Frost makes the point that recruitment efforts were deliberate and purposeful. The leadership made the decision that we would make a strategic effort to recruit a diverse workforce that reflected the changing student demographic. The district made a deliberate attempt to recruit more African American male educators and thereby became a leader in that effort.

I think that the county, for a long time, has been at the forefront of outreach and recruitment. Decades ago, we made African American male and African American in general recruitment efforts—way before anybody else was doing that kind of recruitment. We really worked to make sure we created an inviting culture for new candidates to come to our school system; we worked hard internally to make sure that the folks we had were supported at whatever level of support they needed; and we also were very focused on providing opportunities for advancement that sometimes—if it’s not a conscious, focused effort—can just get lost. It wasn’t normal practice.

**African American Male Role Models**

The vast majority of U.S. school systems have few African American educators in leadership positions. Unlike many other districts throughout this country, in Queen
Charlotte County there are a plethora of role models that prospective African American educators can look to: Queen Charlotte County has had numerous superintendents of African descent; the current county executive is an African American male; the current deputy superintendents are African American; and the vast majority of the divisional chiefs, associate superintendents, directors, and principals are African American. Thus, when the district recruiters mention advancement opportunities for persons of color in general and for African American males specifically, there is significant evidence to substantiate those claims.

Associate Superintendent Toussaint shares reasons that Queen Charlotte County’s environment and its many African American male role models contribute to the recruitment and retention of African American male educators.

You have a lot of minorities here in this region. You have a lot of successful minorities, right. You have a lot of investment in the area because it’s a place where these black males can see themselves having families and where the environment is conducive to their ultimate success.

One of the elements that black males don’t feel good about is if they’re in an environment that’s always hostile and where they don’t see anybody who’s successful and looks like them. We don’t have that issue in Queen Charlotte County, where the county executive is a black male and the deputies are black males. That gives a different construct, especially for people who don’t know how to navigate in areas where it’s not diverse and they’re the only ones, because I would argue that not everybody can do that.

So, Queen Charlotte County is one district that’s clear about minority development and success. Some other county school districts don’t make that a priority.

**Being an African American Male Helped**

In Queen Charlotte County, is being an African American male an asset? When that question was posed to the African American males in the study, most were a little
surprised by the explicit nature of the question. Principal Bowie prefaced his answer by saying: “I do think it’s an advantage. I’m not going to lie. I think they look to try to promote black males.” Principal Jacques said, “My honest answer is that it’s helped.” They seemed to not want to admit that their race and gender provided them with an advantage in this school district. But once the principal participants in the study reflected on the question, most acknowledged, to some extent, that if you are an African American male and if you work hard in this school district, you can excel professionally.

As Principal Jacques further stated:

I realized that if you were an African American male with some level of integrity and education and some wherewithal and a little bit of vision and gumption, oh, you were definitely an asset.

Principal Charles credits the district’s leaders with investing in him and his development.

I believe it’s been a help. Everyone cannot say this, but I’m sure that Queen Charlotte County has been very good to me. It has supported me. I’ve had leader after leader who has invested in my development and my growth.

Principal Harold reflects on his experience and how he was treated as a research chemist and pharmaceutical sales representative prior to coming into the field of education in Queen Charlotte County.

In this district it helped me. I got kind of jaded by working as a research chemist and as a pharmaceutical sales rep. I saw how I could be just as good as others, but the color of my skin was an impediment. It was. It created a glass ceiling. I saw others be awarded opportunities who hadn’t worked as hard as I had, who weren’t as effective, who didn’t make as much money as I did in pharmaceutical sales but who would pass me by in their careers. Queen Charlotte County was the first place I saw that if I worked hard and proved to be effective that the color of my skin was not going to be an obstacle, was not going to be a barrier.
Sense of Ownership

The participants in the study spoke of Queen Charlotte County in very laudatory terms. There was a sense of ownership that resonated throughout many of the interviews—especially among many of the educators who grew up in the county and for those who graduated from high school in the county.

When asked why he left a successful superintendency in a more affluent neighboring county to return to Queen Charlotte County, the superintendent, Frost, responded by saying:

This is my home. My home can be much better than it is in terms of its reputation and its quality of life and quality of education. It has potential and opportunity. I just believe very strongly that this district will be a better district when I leave than when I arrived.

When referring to Queen Charlotte County, Principal Junior said: “This was my comfort zone. It’s my county. It’s my QC [Queen Charlotte]. It’s mine. I’m all in.” He further stated:

I feel comfortable here. I’m a product of the system. I felt as if I didn’t get into the Air Force Academy by accident. This was a public school that did enough to get me into what I consider one of the top schools in the country.

Principal Randy said this is “our community”:

I think part of it is that you see your people, you see your color. You can go to another county where you don’t feel at home. I think that for African Americans, it is our community.

Opportunities in Queen Charlotte County

Although there are a number of reasons African American male educators come to and remain in Queen Charlotte County, many participants said the opportunities for professional growth that are made available to African American males represent one of
the major reasons many elect to work in this district and remain in this district.

Deputy Superintendent Michelle discussed the possibilities that exist for African American males in Queen Charlotte County.

I think the benefits of Queen Charlotte County and the retention of African American male principals are that those African American males can see the possibilities. What I mean by see the possibilities is that we’ve had a variety of races and both genders in the top position of superintendent, the same thing at the deputy level, the same thing at the associate level, and the same thing at the cabinet level. They see the possibility for upward mobility first of all, which I think is important, just as you would want a student to be able to experience having teachers of a particular race or gender throughout their academic career.

Principal Charles told how the district invested in him and has provided him with many opportunities to grow as a principal:

Sure. Consistent access to professional development. The system has enabled me to attend conferences across the country on different programs: IB training in San Diego, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. AP training in Texas and Philadelphia. National principal leadership training in New York, repeatedly. And various workshops around the state in principal leadership training or otherwise. Over the years, I’ve had a steady stream of opportunities to connect with other principals, teachers, educators, and specialists; and it’s added another tool to my tool belt. Whether it was Boston for assessment training, Boston for instructional rounds, Boston for literacy, or a visit to Brockton High School, I’ve had rich opportunities.

**Why Stay in This District: Retention**

The focus of this study is on experienced and effective African American male principal retention in this large suburban/urban school district. In other words, why do effective male principals of color continue working in this school district when they could perhaps pursue other viable options in a neighboring district with more resources and maybe fewer challenges? I think the reasons were articulated clearly in the interviews by both principals and executive central office staff. And several themes emerged after an
analysis of the data: trust, being invested in, dedication, diversity, and feeling comfortable.

St. John, the diversity recruiter from the 1990s, discusses how the recruitment efforts of 25 years ago are still affecting diversity efforts today.

What I’m finding out today is that a lot of those gentlemen are now principals or are now in executive positions or key positions in our district. A lot of them keep saying it’s all because of what we did as a team back there at that time. What they’re doing now is the same thing. They’re identifying African American men to continue that on, so that we can keep that going, as far as having African Americans in front of our kids.

When asked whether he agrees with the contention that the district does an excellent job of retaining principals—especially African American male principals—Bobby, the 30-year veteran former principal and current instructional director who supervises principals, discussed the myriad reasons African American principals elect to remain in this district:

I definitely agree with that contention. I think that in an overarching kind of way, we know that Queen Charlotte County is the wealthiest, most-affluent, majority African American county in the United States—in the entire country. Queen Charlotte County has spent a lot of time and effort making sure that the leadership in its schools reflects the population of children in those same schools. As the county’s African American population increased, the county put a lot of effort into making sure its leadership looks the same as the population—or as close as possible. I think the school district has welcomed African Americans. It has welcomed African American principals, male as well as female. I think there’s a lot of support here for administrators in general. Queen Charlotte County is a very welcoming place. We’re all about diversity, which a lot of school systems are behind the curve in such areas. Queen Charlotte County I’ve always felt has always been ahead of the curve in so many areas. I think that the supports offered really have a lot to do with that. Again, leadership in Queen Charlotte County is reflective of our school population for the most part.

McArthur discussed the culture that creates a climate that makes principals and other leaders want to stay in this district:
I’ve never been happier than I am right now. It’s because of the people, it’s the culture, it’s the energy, and the traction. I feel there’s focus for us as a district; there’s alignment in our work. I think we’re going to continue to retain people if we maintain that focus.

**Relational Trust**

Some of the leaders were very clear that to be effective in this work, they had to build trusting relationships. They understood that to effectively implement diversity initiatives and to effectively hire and place males of color in schools, they needed the trust of the principals.

Board member Frank discussed the need to build trust as he started working with African American males.

I think there are formal and informal ways, so when I started this work, it was important that I build relationships—relationships that would lead to trust.

Mac, one of the lead diversity recruiters from the late 1980s and early 1990s, said that to effectively place African American males in majority white schools at that time, he needed the trust of white principals.

Well, I think what happened during that time, because I came through the school system and I worked in all different capacities, was that they trusted my judgment, which is good. Because if they trusted my judgment, that meant they would trust the person I’m sending them.

When asked how he built those trusting relationships, Mac talked about knowing the people and the jobs they held. “I think it came from their knowing the jobs I had done before, because at one time, we knew everybody in the system,” he said. But he also, unfortunately, suggested that some of the trust of the 1990s has become lost.

I could be wrong, but I think people in human resources feel a sense of mistrust. I mean, back then, I could send somebody to teach by saying, “He’s great; he’s this; he’s that. And they would reply: “OK. Thank you. Got it.” I don’t know if
they can do that now.

**Invested in the District**

Being invested in the school district was important to principals and executives. As Charles said when discussing principals who supported him and developed his capacity before he became principal, “I’ve always had principals who have invested in me.” There appear to be a need and an obligation to reciprocate the investment made by the district and the district leadership.

Charles further stated:

They all invested in me—not in a superficial way but in a substantive, lasting, and meaningful way to the extent that I would say to myself that if and when I ever became a principal, I would not dare not give back. If a system invests in me and has supported me, I owe that system my work. That’s my commitment. Why would I leave? To do what? To serve another system? For what?

Jacques asserts that investment in him created “a sense of loyalty.”

I’m invested here. I’m invested, and there’s also a sense of loyalty. This is where I grew up. This is where I learned the hard stuff.

Junior expressed his appreciation of the superintendent’s commitment to the school district. There is an appreciation that this superintendent is not seeking another position after this position.

I do applaud the current superintendent. Because it makes you feel good to know he is invested in the community, as opposed to using it as a stepping-stone to the next location, the next job.

**Diversity**

Principal Bonner readily admits he sought out Queen Charlotte County because of its diversity. After spending his entire career in a majority white school system and
retiring from that district, he wanted to continue working as a principal, but in a setting with far greater diversity.

The reason I came to Queen Charlotte County, as I said before, was that I wanted to be in a surrounding where there was more diversity. This was it for me.

Bobby, who is one of the few white instructional directors, cautions that we should focus on “educational leadership and excellence” and not make the assumption that only African American principals can lead majority African American schools.

This is an important point for Queen Charlotte County and, really, any school district: it’s about educational leadership and excellence. That has to be the focus. I’m making that point because whereas we do have now a majority of African American principals and whereas we hope to increase the number of Latino principals, it’s really about excellence. We want to be careful to not say that only an African American principal can lead a majority African American school or that only a Latino principal can lead a majority Latino school. There are many principals of different races here in the county who have done incredible work in leading diverse populations. It’s really about leadership and excellence. I think that that always has to be the focus.

I think Bobby makes a very salient point and I concur with Bobby’s position. I argue that as a majority African American school district, Queen Charlotte County—and its African American leadership—must not make the same mistake that many majority white school systems make in the forms of marginalizing and disenfranchising other races and ethnic groups that are in the minority in the county. White, Latino, and Asian students and staff have to be included and embraced as well. Otherwise, the African American majority will be repeating the mistakes of so many other majority white communities and majority white school districts in the nation.

**Feeling Comfortable**

Many of the principals in the study mentioned feeling comfortable in the
district—in large part because it is majority African American. As Jacques said, “Depending on the person, it can be very comfortable.” Regarding living and working in the county, Junior said: “I’ve grown up here. I’ve spent most of my life here. This is my comfort zone.” Randy was far more explicit: “I think part of it is that you see your people, you see your color. You can go to another county where you don’t feel at home.” Lester is the only principal in the study who departed the district and returned as principal. He discussed how he felt when he returned:

    Of course they’re working hard in [the other county], but it wasn’t quite the same as in Queen Charlotte County. I can tell you this: I made that choice to come back to Queen Charlotte County, and when I got back, it just felt like I’m at home. It did. I felt so much more comfortable, again, than I did in [the other county].

    Participants made it clear that they believed Queen Charlotte County has done an excellent job of welcoming and embracing African American educators and African American male principals.

**Supports**

When principals and executives were asked why they think African American male principals elect to stay in this district, “supports” was cited more often than any other reason. Supports will be further delineated into categories. Some of the categorical supports were supports from (1) central office personnel, (2) community partners and businesses, (3) peer-to-peer principal support, and (4) well-planned and well-structured principals’ meetings. Because of those supports, some of the principals in the study were better able to balance the demands of the principalship. The secondary themes that contributed to a supportive working environment were the relationships established
throughout the district, both formal and informal mentors, other leadership preparatory experiences, and ongoing professional development opportunities.

As Principal Lester said: “Central office, I’ll say it, surprisingly, has been very supportive this year, even last year somewhat. It’s been very supportive.” I will discuss some of these various forms of support.

Central Office Support

Deputy Superintendent Michelle asserted that it is important for central office leaders to be viewed as supportive. “If a principal knows that central office is really there to assist and support in their work and not to tell, do, and ask, I think that that would be helpful,” Michelle said. The superintendent elaborated on that point by saying, “Not playing the ‘I gotcha’ kind of games, but, rather, ‘How can we be helpful, how can we be supportive?’” Principal Bowie discussed the benefits of the new principal supervisory model wherein only approximately 12 to 15 principals are now supervised by one instructional director, as opposed to having one supervisor supervise in excess of 30 principals. Many of the principals were excited about this model and the level of support they are receiving from the various instructional directors.

Principal Bowie stated:

I really appreciate the new model wherein they’ve put in instructional directors in charge of 10 to 15 schools. They do give you specific attention and they’re able to drill down to where they can work with you, whereas before, with the old system, when there was an area director and 30 schools to one person, you were kind of just lost in the sauce. In the model they have now, the instructional director is able to give you more attention. I do think that’s a lot more supportive.

Community Support

Principal Michael discussed the supports his school receives from the local chief
of police and from businesses in the community. He said his school is always supported anytime it asks one of the local businesses or the police department for assistance. He gave me an example of the support he receives from the mayor and the police chief.

For instance, today the chief of police was here and the mayor was here. The mayor loves coming to the school. So, he comes by every single time you ask him to, but he made a point when I became principal of this school: he reached out to me, and said, “Here’s a list of the people in my administration, but if you need something from the city, you call me.” I have his cell phone number. I have his private email. So if I need something, I go directly to him on that level.

Michael also discussed a problem with student drop-off at his school, and the chief of police came to his aid. He told the chief of police that:

No matter how many times I’ve told parents, “This is the drop-off and pickup path or pattern; we don’t want a U-turn; and we don’t want kids to get hit by cars,” there were still problems. And the police chief would say: “No problem. Someone will be there in the morning.” I just pick up the phone. That’s the kind of community I have. I have that kind of support. In addition, I can’t think of a business in the area that we have ever asked something of that has not responded positively—and I’m talking from shopping establishments and retail establishments to restaurants. I can’t think of one that has not supported this school.

Peer-to-Peer Principal Support

Several of the participants reported that the school district has done a very good job of creating formal mentoring opportunities for newly appointed principals, but several of the veteran principals have themselves developed an invaluable informal support network that provides principals with the support they need. As Randy stated, “The best training for me involves talking to other principals and listening to my peers. I’m not a huge fan of 24-hour professional development.”

Principal Rhodes discussed the “sense of camaraderie” and the support that the high school principals offer one another.
When we changed to having all the high school principals meet together, we got to really know each other, and we had a central person. We could call each other. Some of us hang out and do different things together, and then we support each other. If you need something, someone will always say, “I got it for you; here it is.” We don’t have to wait for somebody else to bring it in. I think that helps a lot. That helps you get through.

Well-Planned and Well-Structured Principals’ Meetings

It is evident from the principals’ comments that the principals’ meetings are more focused and that the professional development offered to principals is beneficial. The current superintendent is investing in leadership training beyond what was in place prior to his arrival. He reminded me: “We also reinstituted what had stopped happening in Queen Charlotte County, which was a Summer Leadership Institute, where we bring all the principals and central staff together to study together, to work together, to have a little fun together, and to build on those relationships. I think that’s important.”

From the principal’s perspective, Harold discussed the merit of the principals’ meetings by stating:

We also have principals meetings that have a strong professional development focus. We have summer leadership opportunities. We have opportunities through the National Institute for School Leadership that I got into because of my affiliation with the Queen Charlotte County Public School System.

Relationships

Throughout the discussions with the African American male principals and the central office executives who participated in the study, the theme of relationships was often mentioned. Moreover, individuals at all levels mentioned the importance of relationships. The superintendent discussed the need to “build on the relationships established at principals’ meetings. I think that’s important.”

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Board of education member Frank spoke about the importance of relationships when he discussed the implementation of his overarching initiatives.

I think there are formal and informal ways. And so, when I started this work, it was important that I build relationships.

Deputy Superintendent Michelle expounded by stating:

What I do as well—because relationships are so important not just in Queen Charlotte County but overall probably in any school district—I’ll send three to five messages usually via text message or telephone call. While I appreciate the email, I still feel it’s sometimes a little impersonal. But the relationships you build in this county and as you move up are long standing, and it’s enjoyable working with friends.

As the deputy superintendent asserted, “relationships are long standing” in Queen Charlotte County. An example would be the relationships that the diversity recruiter began establishing more than 25 years ago with the African American males he recruited.

Regarding relationships, he said:

I’ve always maintained close relationships with the men who are hired, because I knew how important it was.

Mentorship

Similar to relationships, another important support that resonated throughout the interview discussions was mentorship. Each of the participants very easily recounted important mentorship connections to district leaders, other principals, and coaches; and several even recalled mentoring connections they made as students that motivated them to strive for success.

Superintendent Frost provided an example of how he used mentors to support him when he was a novice principal.

I think this is good for all new principals, I surrounded myself with some
experienced principals who would help me. I didn’t wait for them to reach out to me; I reached out to them. I asked a couple friends, “Who are the best middle school schedulers in Queen Charlotte County?” I called the ones my friends suggested and said, “Hey, I need some help.”

This culture of being mentored and mentoring others started formally and informally in Queen Charlotte County many decades ago. Diversity recruiter from the 1980s and 1990s, St. John recalled:

One of the things we did with men was to mentor; see them once a month; give them tips; advise them; mentor them. They then mentored each other. We also told them, “Look, here’s where you can be 5 or 10 years.” We gave them opportunities to look at in administration and other jobs.

Associate Superintendent of Professional Development, McArthur, discussed the role of both formal and informal mentoring supports in the district.

I think the district does a really good job of establishing relationships—both formal and informal nurturing opportunities—so we have a pretty extensive mentoring program. Every new principal has a mentor or is provided support directly from one of our leadership coaches in the office. I think that’s a key factor in keeping people engaged. My research also bubbled up the fact that principals really like to learn from other principals. I think the more opportunities we provide, like the Summer Leadership Institute and systemic principals meetings, the more they get a chance to kind of converse, commiserate, and learn from one another.

**Leadership Experience**

When asked about leadership experiences, many of the principals said the leadership experiences are currently superior to what they experienced when they were aspiring principals. The leadership development initiatives are being recognized nationally. Within the past year, several school districts from around the country visited Queen Charlotte County to witness the work that is occurring in the county around leadership development. There were school districts from Iowa, Baltimore, and
Cleveland; and others have scheduled formal visits through the Wallace Foundation.

The superintendent mentioned the impact that this work is having on the district and how the work is influencing other school districts around the country.

The work we’ve done in leadership development in the county is being recognized across the country. Other districts are coming here to see the work we’re doing in leadership development. So I think that in a rather short period of time, we’ve made some significant inroads. There’s certainly a lot more work to be done, but I have a very, very strong and capable team, and we’re committed as long as we’re allowed to make that difference for children.

Given the significance of the county’s leadership development initiatives, I think it is important to elaborate on some of those opportunities. Associate Superintendent of Professional Development McArthur said, “In 2011, we received a Wallace Foundation grant in the amount of $12.5 million, which is the largest private-sector grant we’ve ever gotten in the history of our district. We’ve also received additional funding to continue the work.” As it pertains to some of the leadership opportunities, McArthur informed me that:

We’ve always been good about offering training, but it wasn’t necessarily coherent. I think that during the past five years, we’ve gotten a lot more alignment with regard to how we approach it. To mention some of those programs, we have four university programs that I think are significant because each offers something different to aspiring folks who are trying to get administrator certification.

Internally, we work with the National Institute for School Leadership to develop our own curriculum in the form of a 12-month program called Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success. It actually takes both the theoretical- and research-based approaches of the executive program of the institute, but it’s married to our concepts.

We also have our Assistant Principal Induction Program. What’s nice about this program is that an assistant principal in the first or second year gets surrounded by a leadership team consisting of someone from central office, the assistant principal’s immediate supervisor, and a leadership coach or instructional director to really help along the way. An assistant principal who wants to understand
context in a larger sense than being a principal can actually have that experience in the early years.

Of course, then we have the residency program, which I’m hugely proud of. It’s very similar, I guess, to the teaching model: how you’re a student teacher and then you take over the classroom. It’s basically the same premise as that. The principal works with the resident for the first four or five months of school and then gradually releases some of the responsibilities to the resident. All along, the principal’s been guiding and helping the resident, so the resident is not unfamiliar to the staff. The resident knows the staff and knows what’s going on.

We want residents to really lead the school, and we know that should the need arise, we could obviously support the person and pull in people. This is real life. We understand what the principals’ supervisors want, too, so when we started, we said, “What experiences are you interested in?”

**Professional Development**

The school district’s professional development opportunities have been judged as being of high quality, and they are greatly appreciated and touted as being outstanding.

According to Bonner, the veteran principal who retired from the very affluent neighboring district and who assumed a principalship in Queen Charlotte County after retiring stated:

I’ve received more professional development in Queen Charlotte County than anywhere else. When I go to conferences and I talk to people from various locations, our professional development in Queen Charlotte County turns out to be head and shoulders above that of any other district.

Isaac said Queen Charlotte County is one of the leading school systems in the region when it comes to offering quality professional development.

I think we do an exceptional job in professional development. I think we are the lead. We are second to none in the region when it comes to professionally developing all educators and providing opportunities for exposure on a national level and staying up-to-date on current trends in education.
Mission

The final theme is mission. A significant number of principals explicitly stated that they were attracted to this district and are electing to continue working in this district because they deem this to be their professional mission or obligation. As a result, they are less concerned with career advancement and material gains. In addition, they embrace the challenges that some of the schools pose. Major secondary themes under the mission heading were service and advocacy. Service pertained to support of students and educators in their schools, and advocacy consisted of being a support and a proponent for the students and staff.

When the principals and executives were asked why they selected Queen Charlotte County over other county school systems in the region and the nation, the term mission was used explicitly or it was referred to in more general terms. Several of the study participants referred to mission as if they had an obligation not to merely work in Queen Charlotte County but to work with students who needed their service and support. They discussed needs to work with poor children, African American boys, and marginalized groups. Those missions to provide children in need with access and to eliminate disparities emanate from the top of the organization.

As the school system superintendent, Frost, passionately stated, these are not merely problems we must address locally; they are national issues. He discussed how he can make a difference for more children in his role as superintendent.

Children who live in poverty have just as much right to a high-quality education as other children do. The disparities we see in funding levels across the country and in staffing levels across the country and in opportunity across the country are things we really have to address. I thought I could make a difference. I believe that the equity piece has to be available for everyone, and so I aspired to the
superintendency because first, I could be in charge of the direction of the district and could focus on things I deem important. I believe very strongly that we must focus on providing equal opportunities for all children.

Former principal and current instructional director Isaac stated:

I agree that African American male principals stay in this district, first, because of personal convictions and beliefs. What drew me was that a lot of the young African American males were disenfranchised or being marginalized. I wanted to change that trajectory. During the time I was growing up in the metropolitan area, African American males were characterized as an endangered species in the mid to late ’80s. I was determined that that would not be my story, and so I developed goals and ambitions to change that trajectory. And I helped as many young African American males as I could.

Service

As an extension of work to improve the lives of children through schools as part of their mission, several of the principals discussed the need to fulfill their mission by being of service. Charles’s sentiment seems to represent the view of many of the African American principals in his assertion: “If not us, if not me to serve my children, then who would serve our children?” Many of these African American principals mentioned that part of their desire to become a principal was to be of service at a level that would enable them to support more children than they would be able to support if they remained in the classroom.

Principal Charles talked about the importance of service to his community.

If not us, if not me to serve my children who look like me, sound like me, have the same upbringing as mine, then who would serve our children? That’s always been my mind-set. It’s not about making it easy for me; it’s about service to my community. Queen Charlotte County was therefore an obvious choice for me.

Principal Jacques reflected on an assertion by one of his mentors that a principal’s work cannot be about that principal; it must be about service to others.
She was one of the people who explained how this position has to be egoless. You can’t walk around with an ego. It can’t be about you. It has to be about service. It has to be about being there for everybody. She is the person who taught me about the nature of humility as an administrator.

Principal Harold stated:

I must be of service to school communities and help children. One of my strengths is that I’m a learner, so when I recognize a void in my capacity, I work toward filling that void because I’ve got to be of service, and I can’t be of service if I’m not the leader in that regard.

Advocacy

Advocacy was also considered part of the mission of principals, according to a few principals and executives. Harold stated that he accepts the responsibility to advocate on behalf of his school in the community.

Sure, and that’s what we sell: that our kids go everywhere [to college]. They go everywhere, and we give $20 million of scholarships. Last year amounted to around $18 million. Our kids have opportunities through their experiences, through what they do here to go and do great things.

Challenges

Given that the core of the study addresses African American male principal retention in the district, there were questions and follow-up questions to determine why this group has elected to stay in this school district in the role of principal for five years or longer. The question becomes even more relevant when it is considered that each of these effective veteran African American male principals would possibly be a viable principal candidate in one of the more affluent neighboring jurisdictions that would pay more than the current district pays. The secondary themes were trusting relationships, being invested in the district, being dedicated to the district, system wide diversity, and feeling comfortable as an African American in the district.
In addition to the five primary themes, an additional theme manifested itself very prominently in the data. That theme was *challenges*. Although challenges were mentioned as impediments, the principals found ways to address and, in some cases, resolve many of them. Several secondary themes were also listed under the heading *challenges*: changing Latino demographics, bias against African American male principals, frustrations, gentrification, management versus instruction, and balancing affluence and poverty.

The challenge called *changing Latino demographics* was perhaps the most surprising and one of the most significant discoveries in this study. The Latino student population in this school district is now 30%, yet the number of Latino principals is four. There are only 4 Latino principals out of 212, or less than 2%. Neither does the number of Latino administrators reflect the changing student body. The challenges theme is not addressed in this chapter. It is discussed in chapter 5.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to MaGee (2016), we must become far more purposeful and deliberate in our efforts to diversify educational leadership and in our efforts to retain educational leaders of color. MaGee further states: “We need to take a closer look at districts where people of color hold and keep leadership positions. And then we have to make a plan to model those districts” (p. 21). The Queen Charlotte County Public School System could certainly be considered a school system that warrants modeling in this area. Of the 212 principals in the Queen Charlotte County district, 164 are African American. Of those 164, 42 are African American males. Given that the vast majority of principals in the school district are of color and many are males of color—42 African American male principals out of 212 total principals—I contend that Queen Charlotte County’s success in recruiting and retaining African American male principals makes the district a national model pertaining to the recruitment and retention of African American males.

This qualitative study of 12 experienced and effective African American male principals with more than five years of principal experience in this large suburban/urban school district examined the reasons these principals elect to continue working in this school district. Given (1) the affluence of other, surrounding school districts; (2) the dearth of experienced and effective principals of color; and (3) the potential opportunities for these African American male principals to pursue more-lucrative opportunities in other districts, the researcher explored the reasons these principals elect to remain in Queen Charlotte County. The researcher also investigated Queen Charlotte County’s
practices and strategies that have enabled the district to effectively recruit and retain a large number of African American male principals.

Although the 12 experienced and effective African American male principals were the focus of the study, 12 district leaders also participated in the study and provided their perspectives on why experienced and effective African American male principals continue working in Queen Charlotte County. In addition, conversations were held with other district leaders regarding this study, and a few district leaders provided artifacts and additional information related to the study. This chapter discusses qualitative research findings from chapter 4. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the summary, the findings, the implications of the findings, the conclusion, and a personal reflection.

**Summary**

This study’s essential research questions were answered from the perspectives of 12 experienced and effective African American male principals and other central office district leaders. The questions were:

- Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school district?
- What are the motivating factors causing these principals to stay?
- Why is the school district able to retain a large number of African American male principals?

This study was successful at achieving its goal of acquiring answers to the research questions from the perspectives of experienced and effective African American male principals pertaining to why they have decided to continue working in this school
district. In addition, the study successfully included the perspectives of central office district leaders who supervise and approve the hiring of principals at all levels: a board of education member, the current superintendent, the first African American superintendent, the deputy superintendent, associate superintendents, instructional directors, and other key stakeholders (see Chart 3.2).

**Findings**

Several important findings emerged from the data in the study. Those findings are discussed in chapter 4. The major findings involved the history and affluence of the district, recruitment efforts by the district, retention efforts by the district; supports provided in the district; the changing Latino demographic, and the sense of mission. Each of those findings emerged very prominently in the data, and I provide an analysis of each major finding. Also, I assess whether the research contradicts, confirms, or supports the findings from the study.

**History of the District**

The history and affluence of Queen Charlotte County are what led to the school district’s becoming a “black enclave” as defined by one of the principals who participated in the study. The rich history of one of the more-affluent majority African American communities and school districts in the nation is critically important to the principal, teacher, and central office personnel demographic. In many ways, the history and affluence of this community define Queen Charlotte County and the perceptions of the district. Moreover, many of Queen Charlotte County’s African American principals appeared very proud that Queen Charlotte County is one of the wealthiest majority
African American counties in the nation. Several of the principals and executives referenced that point.

The pride of Queen Charlotte County regarding its reputation was stated by the principals’ union executive Harriet. “I think some of it has to do with the perception of the county. When you talk to principals outside the county and you mention Queen Charlotte County, they go, ‘Oh, yeah, that’s the wealthiest majority black county’” (Harriet, February 2, 2016). “Queen Charlotte County is a very special place because of what it represents to black people in America. It represents what’s possible” (Frank, March 1, 2016). School board member Frank explicitly articulates what other executives and principals only implied. The contention is that Queen Charlotte County is a community with a national reputation for its successful African American middle class.

According to one of Queen Charlotte County’s high school principals, Harold, the surrounding city reminded him of his hometown of Chicago, but the neighboring suburb “Queen Charlotte County didn’t remind me of anything I’d ever experienced” (Harold, February 24, 2016). The uniqueness of Queen Charlotte County serves as both an attraction for many young professionals and a reason to reside in the county. Harold mentioned that he had never been in a community with so many well-educated middle-class blacks. He also cited reasons he elects to remain in the county. “When I started thinking about getting married, raising children, things along those lines, it always impressed me that I could be somewhere that my kids would not be held back by color” (Harold, February 24, 2016).

Although it was evident that the history of Queen Charlotte County is rich and profound, what was less obvious was how that history evolved. How Queen Charlotte
County transitioned from a majority white working class community to an affluent, majority African American community and school system was an important question for this study. When I asked the two diversity recruiters from the early 1990s, in separate interviews, how they were able to exclusively focus on the recruitment of African American educators and, more specifically, African American male educators in a then majority white school system, both responded by mentioning a report known as *Black Male Achievement*. That seminal report changed the professional demographics of school system personnel. Many of those hired in the early 1990s as a result of the *Black Male Achievement* report are still employed by Queen Charlotte County, and many of them are now in leadership positions as principals and central office executives.

Prior to my interviews with the district’s diversity recruiters from the 1990s, Mac and St. John, I do not recall any other participant’s mentioning the *Black Male Achievement* report. This seminal report changed the demographic landscape in the school system. As a result of the report, there was a clear expectation and mandate that Queen Charlotte County would change its recruitment practices to hire more educators of color. Moreover, the county was positioned to recruit more African American educators given that it had an African American associate superintendent of human resources, Barry, who oversaw the school district’s recruitment schedule. In the mid-1990s, Barry would later become the district’s first African American superintendent.

**Why This School District: Recruitment**

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that recruitment efforts to attract African American educators in general and African American male educators more specifically
have proved very effective. As a result of the district’s sustained recruitment efforts throughout the 1990s, significantly more African American educators have been hired in Queen Charlotte County. According to the Queen Charlotte County Office of Personnel (circa 1995), there was a consistent yearly increase in the number of African Americans hired in the school district—especially African American males. The demographics in the district began changing in the 1990s as a result of the *Black Male Achievement* recommendations. Recommendation number 3 in the *Black Male Achievement* report states:

> By September 30, 1990, the superintendent should develop a plan that will identify the strategies and timelines that will be used to obtain African American teachers, counselors and administrators in numbers commensurate with their percentage of the county’s population. Specific emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of black male and female elementary school teachers, guidance counselors and school psychologists. In addition, the plan should address the need to increase the number of African Americans and women employed in the offices listed under the deputy superintendent (*Black Male Achievement*, 1990).

As a result of the implementation of the report’s recommendations, specifically recommendation number three, there was a consistent increase in the number of African American educators hired in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System.

In 1989–90, African Americans represented 29 percent (141) of the new teachers hired in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. Black males accounted for seven (7) percent (31) of the new teachers hired. In 1993–94, African Americans represented 47 percent (206) of the new teachers hired, and black males accounted for 15 percent (62). The number of new black male teachers hired increased 100 percent between 1989–90 and 1993–94. (See Table 9)
Table 9. Number of New African American Teachers in Queen Charlotte, 1989-1994

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<td>Total</td>
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Note. AA = African American. Retrieved from Queen Charlotte County Public School System Office of Personnel

The findings are important because the increase in the number of African American teachers later led to an increase in African American administrators—both principals and central office leaders. The large number of African American teachers hired provided a source of principal candidates to train and develop for future leadership positions. As a result of the *Black Male Achievement* report, the school system’s recruitment focus changed significantly. The district hired two administrators from the schools, Mac and St. John, to lead its new diversity recruitment efforts. The associate superintendent of human resources said he was looking for individuals with the right personalities to lead the new recruitment effort (Barry, personal communication, February 6, 2016).

The individuals deemed to be the right persons for the recruitment effort were Mac and St. John. Mac was an assistant principal, and St. John was a principal in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System prior to the formation of the district’s Diversity Office. In their new roles, Mac and St. John aggressively recruited African American educators in general and men in particular. “We wanted more African American males because we wanted the students to look at a teacher and say, ‘Yeah, I
could do that job. I could be that person”’ (Mac, March 2, 2016). Associate Superintendent Barry and the two new diversity recruiters, Mac and St. John, developed an aggressive recruitment calendar.

They knew that to be competitive in the recruitment of African American male educators, they would have to be aggressive and creative. They first identified colleges and universities with large numbers of African American male prospective teachers. “We sat down and looked at universities and colleges and decided where large numbers of African-American males are going to college” (Mac, personal communication, March 2, 2016). They decided that the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) produced large numbers of African American students majoring in education. They attended dozens of recruitment fairs at HBCUs on the East Coast and throughout the Southeast and Southwest (see Figure 2).

They also knew they would have to differentiate themselves once they arrived on the campuses of the different HBCUs as well as the majority white university campuses with sizable African American education majors. They had to have a way to attract these men because other school systems were recruiting them as well. According to Mac, the head of human resources, Barry, asked: “How about a motor home? If you guys put a motor home together for me so that you can go around campus, you’d get that attraction on campus.” (personal communication, March 2, 2016). Both Mac and St. John said the RV gave them significant advantages over other districts. In addition to those efforts, they advertised in national education publications. They were accompanied on recruitment trips by executives from the school system and county government such as the deputy superintendent, the state’s attorney, and the assistant to the county executive,
who later became the county executive. Widespread support of the recruitment efforts made the *Black Male Achievement* report recommendations a reality. As a result, the recruitment changes have resulted in major demographic changes in the district.

**Figure 2**

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<td>North Carolina A&amp;T State University</td>
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**Why Stay in This District: Retention**

One could certainly argue that recruiting diverse principal candidates is not even half of the challenge. Thus, I posit that the ultimate challenge for districts lies in finding ways to ensure that they retain experienced and effective principals of color and male principals of color. The cost of recruiting, developing, and onboarding each principal has been estimated to be approximately $75,000 (School Leaders Network, 2014). Not only will the retention of effective principals save a district many thousands of dollars each year, but it will also greatly improve student achievement. An effective principal can
have an impact of up to 25% of total school influence on a child’s academic performance (Marzano et al., 2005).

The essential questions in this research pertain to the retention of experienced and effective African American male principals in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. Why do experienced and effective African American male principals elect to continue working in this school system? What is Queen Charlotte County doing differently to retain these experienced and effective principals? Many reasons were cited by African American principals and central office executives in the study. Some contended that retention efforts started during the initial recruitment of African American male teacher candidates.

Once in his new position, St. John discussed some of the efforts that were made to support the new teachers the district hired. He stated that the district brought the new male teachers to the central office once a month to “give them tips; advise them; mentor them; and they mentored one another” (St. John, March 12, 2016). They also discussed future opportunities with the newly hired African American male teachers. They informed the African American male teachers: “Look, here’s where you can be 5 or 10 years from now. So we gave them opportunities to look at if they wanted to go into administration” (St. John, March 12, 2016). The district’s current associate superintendent of Professional Development recalls Mac and St. John literally asking him about his interest in being a principal before he was even hired as a first-year teacher (McArthur, February 23, 2016).

Although multiple reasons were cited as to why African American male principals stay in this district, I focused on the major findings that emerged from the research. As
one of the principal supervisors for a cluster of schools and a 30-year educator in Queen Charlotte County, Bobby, stated why he thinks African American principals elect to continue working in this district. “I think our African American principals stay here in Queen Charlotte County because first, the population they serve is reflective of them” (Bobby, March 8, 2016). That sentiment was consistent among participants.

Relationships and supports, too, were mentioned as reasons principals stay. As one of the principal supervisors, Isaac, said: “I think it goes back to relationships. I think the district does a really good job of establishing relationships—both formal and informal nurturing opportunities—so we have a pretty extensive mentoring program” (Isaac, March 2, 2016).

McArthur offers a very similar view. “I think we have a culture that is conducive to people’s wanting to stay and dig in. It’s because of the people; it’s the culture; it’s the energy. I think we’re going to continue to retain people if we maintain that focus” (McArthur, February 23, 2016).

Although there was acknowledgment that some African American male principals do leave the principalship, but for the most part, they do not leave the principalship for another principalship in a different school system. Elementary school principal Bowie said: “I think the school system wants to keep black males. The only thing I’m nervous about regarding black males is that a lot of them are moving up” (Bowie, March 2, 2016). As a result of professional advancement, Bowie is concerned that many African American male principals are leaving the principalship for other roles in the school system.
Deputy Superintendent Michelle made a very similar assessment. She said there is turnover in the principalship, “but that’s because the principals are moving to the central office level and not leaving our system” (Michelle, February 22, 2016).

When there are central office vacancies, district leaders have focused on promoting from within the school system. Many of those promotions to central office are from the principal ranks. Even though the district periodically loses African American male principals from the principalship role, the district, however, gains from the principals’ experiences in other leadership areas. Queen Charlotte County has been successful in its efforts to recruit, develop, and retain quality African American male principals through its principal pipeline initiatives.

Supports

Another significant reason mentioned with regard to why African American principals elect to stay in this district involves the supports they receive. Those supports are primarily in the forms of mentorship, relationships, professional development, and peer-to-peer support. Board of education member Frank said, “When you’re building the folks on the front end with positive support, you will retain male principals in the long run because they’ll feel they’re part of a larger system and that the system is caring about them” (Frank, March 1, 2016).

St. John said, “A lot of these gentlemen are now principals or are now in executive positions—key positions in our district. A lot of them keep saying it’s all because of what we did as a team back there at that time” (St. John, March 12, 2016).
Several of the veteran principals discussed the supports that were provided when they were first-year teachers.

Although each central office executive mentioned how it provides support for schools and principals, it is important to discuss those supports from the perspective of the principals affected. Are the supports being offered by central office executives helpful, or are they merely ways for the executives to feel good about themselves? Several of the principals did mention they feel supported by central office personnel—specifically by instructional directors. One of the veteran high school principals, Lester, said, “Central office, I’ll say it, surprisingly, has been very supportive this year, even last year somewhat. It’s been very supportive” (Lester, February 24, 2016).

There is certainly evidence to substantiate the fact that central office leadership is providing adequate supports, but it was also very evident that the preferred and most beneficial support was support that came from other principals. Randy said, “The best training for me is talking to other principals and listening to my peers” (Randy, February 24, 2016). Another high school principal said, “We support each other. If you need something, I got it; here it is. We don’t have to wait for somebody else” (Rhodes, February 23, 2016). Veteran elementary principal Michael, said: “They can pick up the phone and say, ‘Hey, I need to come over to your school, or can you come over to mine.’ I really need support for this” (Michael, March 2, 2016).

The realization is clearly understood and supported by executive leadership that the most-meaningful supports are peer-to-peer principal supports. The school district superintendent said, “I surrounded myself—and I think this is good for all new principals—I surrounded myself with some experienced principals” (Frost, March 1,
Through professional development opportunities, the district has created many formal opportunities whereby principals can collaborate. The district has also created formal mentoring and leadership opportunities through which novice principals can learn from experienced and effective principals. By providing principals with supports that best meet their needs, the district is being responsive and is providing principals with relevant and beneficial supports. Formal supports for principals are also being extended to assistant principals. These supports are both making it possible for principals to perform difficult roles and better preparing principals and prospective principals.

**Mission**

Throughout the interviews with the principals, many principals mentioned the need to give back to their community, the need to help children who live in poverty, and the desire to help children of color. I used the term *mission* to capture these statements. The sense of mission was a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Principal Charles stated very emphatically, “If not us, if not me to serve my children, who look like me, sound like me, have the same upbringing as me, then who will serve our children? That’s always been my mind-set” (Charles, February 25, 2016). Jacques simply stated, “Because I’m needed in Queen Charlotte” (Jacques, February 25, 2016).

Principal Lester discussed the need to give back to the community that had embraced him, “For me it’s not so much about the African-American community; it’s that I feel I need to do something for a community, and this community has welcomed me with open arms” (Lester, February 24, 2016). Executive leadership echoed that sense of mission. When asked why he returned to Queen Charlotte County, Superintendent
Frost said: “I really thought I could make a difference. I believe very strongly that we must focus sharply on providing equal opportunities for all children” (Frost, March 1, 2016).

That sense of mission, however, did not start with the current group of principals, executive leadership, and other caring educators. The desire and need to improve the community date back many years in this nation to the inception of the early black schools. And it has been evident for several decades in Queen Charlotte County. As it relates to giving back and helping others in Queen Charlotte County, the 1990 Black Male Achievement report provides evidence of that fact. The preface of the report clearly articulates the mission to give back.

For the past three years, the status of African-American males, particularly those between the age of 15 and 30, has been a source of growing concern across the country. Parents, community leaders and politicians alike have been troubled by disproportionately high rates of homicide, suicide and imprisonment among young black males, high unemployment rates for black teenagers and adults, and a decline in the percentage of African-American males who enroll, and successfully complete college. While these statistics do not characterize the experience of the majority of African-American males, they do reveal that the path to success for a sizable number of black males continues to be blocked by poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, poor health care, inadequate housing, crime, and low educational achievement.

[The] Superintendent of [Queen Charlotte] County Public Schools, was keenly aware of the disparity between the potential and performance of many black male students, and the need to find solutions to this disturbing problem. To propel this process, he invited a diverse group of community leaders to explore what the school system could do to enhance black male achievement in and outside the school system. At the group’s first meeting, which was held in December, 1989, [the Superintendent] documented everyone’s concerns by presenting school system data which revealed that African-American males fared more poorly on a variety of school achievement indicators. [A] former Chair of the [Queen Charlotte] County Chamber of Commerce agreed to chair the Black Male Achievement Committee. To further the committee’s work, [the Superintendent] selected a group of school staff to provide data and information concerning student achievement, school system policy and central office organization.
Some of the recommendations in the *Black Male Achievement* report are still affecting and influencing the Queen Charlotte County community and school system. Some of the male educators who were hired during that time are still in the school system as teachers, assistant principals, principals, and central office executives. Some of these male educators are working with groups to mentor students as well as younger male educators. These men are working in formal organizations to give back to the community and to other young men. And their efforts are being fully supported by the current school system administration and the current board of education.

**Implications**

There are numerous beneficial implications inherent in this study. I contend that other school districts around the country could benefit greatly from the work done by Queen Charlotte County pertaining to the history of the development and retention of African American male educators. I began this chapter with a quote from Michael MaGee regarding the need to diversify educational leadership. MaGee (2016) said, “Diversifying education leadership—and retaining those leaders—will not happen on the wings of our good intentions. We need to take a closer look at districts where people of color hold and keep leadership positions. And then we have to make a plan to model those districts” (p. 21). I strongly concur with MaGee’s assertion. Queen Charlotte County is a quintessential model of how to diversify educational leadership in a school district and how to then retain those educational leaders. Thus, my question to district leaders who purport to want change and diversity in their district is: Are you truly willing to make the
long-term investment and the organizational changes that would result in a diverse workforce?

The numerous positive implications and benefits cited in this study have been discussed numerous times throughout the study. Moreover, those benefits are discussed and analyzed in greater depth in the conclusion section of this chapter. I therefore discussed the implications of some of the challenges that emerged from the findings.

Queen Charlotte County warrants significant credit for its efforts to radically overhaul its recruitment and retention efforts and to sustain those efforts over the past few decades. Such an investment in the recruitment, development, and retention of African American male educators has led to a significant increase in the number of African American educators at virtually all levels of the school district organization: teacher, assistant principal, supervisor, principal, and executive-level leadership.

But the findings also show that the school system faces significant challenges, some of which are universal and prevalent in many education settings throughout the United States and others that are unique and relevant to Queen Charlotte County. Those challenges are in the forms of moving from being managerial leaders to being instructional leaders, the implications of gentrification in the school system, the exodus of middle-class families’ children to private schools, the challenges with unions, historical instability at the superintendency level, backlash or bias against male educators, the enormous demands and responsibilities placed on principals, the growing problem between the black and Latino communities, changing demographics from black to Latino, pockets of poverty, the school system’s image, and chronically low student achievement districtwide. All of those findings emerged very prominently in the data. Some of them
were more conspicuous and prevalent than others. I addressed only the most-apparent and
most-frequently-cited findings.

One of the findings appeared to be very concerning and one that the district has
not, in the past several years, properly addressed. That concern is the challenge involving
the black/Latino situation. Just as student demographics changed from majority white to
majority black in the 1980s and 1990s, another demographic shift is currently occurring.
School system data reveals that approximately 30% of students in the district are Latino,
yet only 4 principals out of 212 are Latino. Although the current administration is
attempting to address that issue through the hiring of a Latino diversity officer and a
Latino executive human resources recruitment coordinator. Additionally, parent liaisons
in the secondary schools are expected to support Latino students and families. The district
is clearly responding to years of inadequate and improper preparation regarding this
matter.

When asked about the district’s support and preparation of Latino students,
Associate Superintendent Toussaint responded by discussing his concerns with current
responses from community members who are seemingly resisting this obvious
demographic shift.

You can’t stop the change of demographics and what I’m more fearful of is if you
fight too much, when the shift becomes 50-50 or when the shift may go 60-40,
people will remember how hard you made it, so when they get to those spaces,
they’re going to make it harder for the community to bridge and collaborate.

The diversity officer, Alana, spoke of her concerns but looked at the challenge
very pragmatically in an attempt to understand the challenge from the perspective of the
African American community as it pertains to meeting the needs of African American children.

Yes, I think that realization is probably what’s most fearsome. A lot of the conversation was around how my [African American] children can benefit before those [Latino] children because those children are already bringing in things that our children are lacking. I think the perception was that those children are not part of us or part of our community, yet they’re going to benefit from our community and they’re going to take away everything we have worked very hard for.

Deputy Superintendent Michelle discussed the need to replicate the successful recruitment practices that resulted in an increased number of African American males’ coming to the Queen Charlotte County school system.

I think that our conversation has been more intentional since [Superintendent Frost] returned to our system. I think that because we were majority African American, we put a huge focus on making sure we had African American male teachers and that those male teachers became leaders. I think the practices we put in place in order to increase that population will have to be the same for our Latino and Latina students.

Many educators would agree that the demands placed on principals are enormous. Many of the principals in the study and some of the executive leadership acknowledged the growing challenges, responsibilities, and demands principals face. As Lortie (2009) said, there is no one problem that makes the principalship challenging, but there are multiple issues that converge to make the challenges confronting principals “unique.”

The executive director of the principals union, Harriet, said principals are responsible to multiple individuals, yet they have limited authority.

When things go wrong in a school, like I said, if the test scores are not up and there’s talk about whether we’re going to reorganize, or whatever the terminology is at the time, they don’t ever move the teachers. They move the principal. All responsibility falls on the principal even though principals don’t have the authority they need to do what they need to do. I think that’s part of the problem. Part of the problem with being a principal is that you are responsible to and for the world. The principal has to answer to the instructional director, the associate
superintendent, the superintendent, the board of education, elected officials, parents, students, and teachers. Everybody in the world is pressuring that principal. Nobody else has to deal with it, nobody else.

Deputy Superintendent Michelle discussed the possibility of shifting the structure of the principalship to a dual-role position given the enormous responsibilities placed on one person.

I’m wondering whether the principalship at this point should be a dual role. What I mean by that is the managerial part versus the instructional part. What I mean by managerial is that it is just as important to make sure the [physical] plant is operational and clean as it is to make sure that the new teacher has support. Is it reasonable to ask one person to tackle both of those roles? Should we take a look at a possible co-principalship?

Instability at the superintendency level has been enormous. In the past 25 years, the district has had 9 different superintendents. The current superintendent, Frost, discussed that massive turnover in the district and how difficult it is for a district to make advancements when there is rapid turnover at the top.

When I came back to Queen Charlotte County two years ago, August—so a little over two and a half years ago now—I was the [ninth person in this seat in past 25 years]. Now that counts interim superintendents, but it’s pretty hard for a district—or a business, for that matter—to get traction when there’s this constant churning of leadership at the top.

One of the few principals to leave the district and return was, Lester. He said that two of the reasons he left were the massive turnover and the instability at the superintendent level. He discussed his frustration and the challenges that such massive change produces.

Well, yes. That’s what made it easier for me to go to [another county]. The instability. I don’t know if that’s something that’s exclusive to large school districts or just any school district, but it’s very frustrating. It doesn’t look good to the public as a whole, and it doesn’t feel good when you’re trying to do your best and it seems as if the powers that be can’t get themselves together because they have turnover. And the teachers: I guess many school personnel have a flavor-of-
the-month mentality and say to themselves, “Well, I’ll just wait because there’ll be someone different. I’ll just wait for the next flavor to come by, and then I’ll decide if I’m going to do something then or not.”

Another major concern mentioned by several principals and executive leadership was the exodus of many middle-class residents in Queen Charlotte County who live and even work in Queen Charlotte County but who began to send their children to private schools. Board of education member Frank discussed his concerns with that middle-class exodus to private schools.

When you give Americans opportunity, they will use the opportunity to engage with other choices, which in our case is private schools, which has led to a lot of the achievement levels’ falling in some areas of our county because you have a tipping point at which parents of certain incomes have left the school system, which in turn led to overrepresentation of certain demographics. When I speak with African American parents, what I get most surprised about is that the choices they’re making for their school-age children are not always based on sound research or sound experience. When we weren’t in a position to go to private schools, we were all sort of forced into the public school model, and it created a good mixing bowl. Now, with income and opportunity that have parents saying, “Okay, I can now send my child to a private school,” that has ripple effects.

High school principal Harold is a principal at a very high-performing high school in Queen Charlotte County. He said his top students can compete with any students anywhere, including students who attend private schools. He mentioned what he is doing to promote his school and to advocate for his school in the community.

We have community showcases in which we open the doors to the community and invite, from our private middles, schools so they can come in and see all the programs we have to offer. We talk a lot about our flagship program, which is our science and technology program, and how the kids in that program have gone to some of the best colleges in the country. I always use the adage that you can spend $15,000 a year sending them to private schools, and when they get to college, they’ll have a roommate who went to the school at which I am serving as principal. I would say at least 7 to 10 kids go to Ivy League colleges every year: to Brown, Penn, and so on. A lot of our kids have been choosing Penn recently. Then we have a lot of kids who are Ivy League potential but are choosing military academies because we’re growing our ROTC program. Last year, we sent two...
kids to West Point [US Army] and one to Annapolis [US Naval Academy], and to me that speaks volumes.

The gentrification of Queen Charlotte County is also creating concerns for schools. The school system has closed four schools in the past two years. The vast majority of the housing development is occurring in the suburbs in more-affluent areas, which has led to school closings and school boundary changes. In addition, gentrification is requiring educators to address the needs of affluent African American children, economically disadvantaged African American children, and a rapidly growing and economically disadvantaged Latino student population.

Although Principal Harold is at a high-performing school, he and his teachers are learning how to address the varying needs of his diverse and growing student population. His school’s economic diversity is a microcosm of the school system.

What people don’t know is that we’re almost 50% Free and Reduced Meals because the school sits in an affluent community, but we get kids from poor neighborhoods, too. We are very diverse on one hand and very homogeneous on the other. The school itself is 95% African American, and we have families whose gross incomes are more than $500,000 a year and whose children sit in the same classroom with students whose families’ gross incomes are less than $30,000 a year.

That’s barely making it, and you can’t tell until you delve into it that there are challenges. My teachers and I train so that we don’t apply a middle-class mind-set when it comes to dealing with our children. You can’t assume that everybody has a computer and the internet at home. You can’t assume that everybody is going to have an enriching, educational experience during summer vacation. You can’t assume that everybody knows how to go about applying for college or has in their home a college-going focus or vision.

You have to be able to think globally even in an environment you think is largely homogeneous. That’s one of the challenges: Getting people to see the whole school and not just the science and tech kids who come already ready or the kids who are living in a community and who come with skills that will make them be prepared to be successful. We must embrace all of our kids and then provide
supports and interventions that ensure they are afforded the same opportunities as every other child.

When people think of Queen Charlotte County, many images emerge. Some think of this majority black county as either a mecca for middle-class African American families or the most affluent majority African American county in the nation—or both. But there is another image that is prevalent in the local news, and that image is reified in the minds of many in the region. The image projects a county whose school system is one of the lowest-performing districts in the region and the state; a county that is less affluent than most in the region; and a school system you do not want to send your children to. Although the school superintendent and the county executive in Queen Charlotte County are working feverishly to change that image, they have not been successful yet.

Board of education member Frank provided a very comprehensive and eloquent explanation that describes the prevailing thinking regarding this concern.

So, a final thought on Queen Charlotte County: Okay, pretty affluent African Americans, nice homes, black college graduates, school system—and then I hear, “Oh, wow, the school system is not very good.” “What do you mean?” If you were creating this county in a book of fiction, the assumption would be that you’d put all these graduates together who go on to South Carolina State and Morehouse and Spelman and North Carolina A&T and Bowie State and Howard University right here and the University of Maryland College Park all in the same district and Harvard and Stanford and all these schools, and you’re telling me the school system is not one of the top in the country? I don’t understand. Well, I’m hearing from parents who say: “Well, once the school system gets better, I’ll come back. Once you all get your act together, then I’ll come back.” Hearing that enough times leads me to believe that unfortunately, people in my generation and yours—educated people—believe they’re powerless to change something. That change is not my responsibility. “Frank, when you all change it, let me know, and then I’ll come back. I don’t want to be part of the change, I don’t want to invest in the change, and I don’t want to sacrifice for the change. I just want to benefit from it.”

When I went to Morehouse, they told me, “It’s your obligation, your responsibility to change the world and to make life better for other people,”
Conclusion

As I analyzed the findings in this study, I concluded that my research and literature review confirm and support the evidence from the findings. The 12 experienced and effective African American male principals who participated in the study are in many ways attempting to provide the kind of leadership that is not only leading to their own personal success but also leading to the success of their students, their teachers, and their communities. In ways very similar to those used by early black principals and educators, these modern-day African American male principals are endeavoring to make contributions to their communities beyond those they’d make in traditional principal roles. It’s in large part because those additional contributions are needed given the students they serve.

As Morris (1999) asserted, many early black principals accepted the need to be more than a principal. Many of the principals in this study concur with that view. The principals discussed the need to “give back” to those who are less fortunate. They discussed the need to give back to the Queen Charlotte County community, which has given so much to them. Both Morris (1999) and Siddle Walker (1993, 2000, 2005) discussed how principals were active members of the community. Despite their very busy schedules, several of the principals in this study cited the many activities and organizations they are affiliated with and belong to. In addition, many of the principals are active in the community by working in the larger community on behalf of their schools.

According to Fairclough (2001), because the black community had to fight for control of the schools in its community, when the black community acquired that control,
it hired black principals. This is reflective of the work that occurred in Queen Charlotte County in the early 1990s. It was the larger community, county government officials, and school system officials who all came together to address a concern in the Queen Charlotte County community. As a result of their collective work, the *Black Male Achievement* report was developed. One key feature in the report as it relates to this study was the mention of advocacy for the hiring and promotion of more African American educators in general and more African American male educators specifically.

According to Brown and Beckett (2007), once black principals were in place, high expectations were placed on them. Similarly, the principals in this study are expected not only to produce improved student achievement but also to be representatives of their communities. In addition, many of these experienced and effective African American male principals are expected to be role models for their students and for other educators in their spheres. In a more formal manner, several of these principals are expected to be official mentors for new principals. As Khalifa (2012) asserts, many of the early black principals were expected to serve as advocates for their community in a manner similar to that of black politicians (p. 430). Many of these modern-day African American male principals perform very similar and official statesmanlike roles for their schools and communities. For instance, they are expected to be present at various community evening and weekend events in addition to accomplishing all of their other responsibilities.

Given that 90% of the teachers in the United States are white (Gardiner et al., 2009, p. 142) and that 82.4% of principals in the public schools are white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-04, p. 65), there is a great need to recruit, develop, and retain diverse educators. With 4 out of every 10 students in the United States being
non-white (U.S. Department of Education, 2003), there is a major imbalance between the students and those individuals leading the students. As Brosnan (2001) states, “You can support students of color all you want with white teachers, but it’s pretty clear that they’ll have a stronger self-image if they see themselves reflected in the adults around them” (p. 7). Equally as important is the fact that we are hurting large numbers of white children as well. White students will suffer as well as a result of not being able to work and learn together with individuals from different backgrounds (Gardiner et al., 2009). If we are to better prepare our children for the future, then we must ensure that there is greater diversity in our schools and school systems.

The 1990 *Black Male Achievement* report provided the foundation for Queen Charlotte County to focus on recruiting diversity. When the student demographic in Queen Charlotte County shifted from majority white to majority African American, the superintendent and community leaders realized there was a need to find large numbers of quality educators of African descent and large numbers of African American male educators to serve as both educators and role models for black male students. Unlike many communities in the United States, the Queen Charlotte County community made the courageous decision to hire educators of color, and the collective effort of the community expedited that process.

The importance of relational trust was also very evident in the findings. Relational trust was evident for African American male principals in numerous relationships with key stakeholders. Lortie (2009) states that principals must be in constant communication with stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, central office leadership, school personnel, the business community, and civic and social leaders (p. 3). According to Bryk
and Schneider (2002), widespread trust in a “school community lubricates” the trust that schools need in order to be successful on a consistent basis. I argue that the trusting relationships that the principals in this study have forged are in part responsible for their success and longevity as principals. Bryk and Schneider (2002) assert that trusting relationships with schools are important for all parents, but they are absolutely essential for “poor” and marginalized parents (p. 6).

As it pertains to retention, Papa (2007) suggests that principals with “less than five years of district experience are 60.8 percent less likely to be retained than principals with at least five years of district experience” (p. 282). Throughout this study, I have discussed the numerous benefits of principals who have five or more years of experience. Moreover, benefits extend to the quality of teachers when a principal has five or more years of experience. Ultimately, students benefit from having experienced and effective principals. And because of the importance of principal experience, only principals with five or more years of service were selected for this study.

Critical race theory and its implications for diversity are critically important. CRT scholars investigate how “racism and white privilege” combine to provide systemic advantages for white people (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995). Moreover, CRT examines “how the law reproduces, reifies, and normalizes racism in society” (López, 2003, p. 83). Queen Charlotte County’s community, government, and school system were able to mitigate the impact of CRT in the public schools’ hiring practices. As a result of changing policies, procedures, and practices that advantaged white educators, the citizens of Queen Charlotte County indefinitely changed the racial composition of the leadership
structure in the county and the school system. In many ways, the essential components of CRT are no longer dominant in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System.

After demolition of the old racial paradigms, it became much easier to recruit, develop, and, most important, retain quality African American male educators. Research does support the notion that racism adversely affects the “career development” of African Americans in the United States (Greenhaus et al., 1990). This is, however, not the case in Queen Charlotte County. Ironically, unlike in many U.S. school systems and communities, in Queen Charlotte County being male and African American was an advantage in the 1990s. It is debatable whether that advantage is as prevalent as it once was.

Many of the African American male principals in this study have exhibited high degrees of agency and self-efficacy in their careers. Bandura (1989) defined self-efficacy as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives.” Many of the African American principals in this study began their post college careers in other fields. When they decided to become teachers, they were required to work during the day and attend classes during evenings, weekends, and summers. And when they decided to become principals, they were required to take additional courses and obtain additional certifications while working in full-time positions.

Bandura (1989) asserts that a very important factor pertaining to personal agency is one’s ability to control future opportunities. I argue that because of the opportunities made available to African American males in Queen Charlotte County, those males could “visualize success” for themselves (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176). As I stated earlier in this study, many African American male educators could visualize and aspire to positions of
leadership as principals and to other executive positions because they could point to multiple examples of successful African American role models as principals and executives.

Because of all the reasons summarized in this section of the study from the research, many experienced and effective African American male principals have elected to continue working in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System. Some of the many reasons African American male principals have elected to stay in Queen Charlotte County are the need to give back to a community that has in many ways given them opportunities they might not have been given in other districts; the sense of mission and the need to serve children of color who are disadvantaged socially and economically; the relationships, the mentoring, and the social and emotional professional supports; the many opportunities to develop and grow professionally; the many opportunities for career advancement; and the sense of belonging to a school system and community that embrace them for who they are—African American and male.

**Personal Reflection**

As I reflect on the past several months of conducting this qualitative research study, I am very pleased that my dissertation committee encouraged me to focus the study on the retention of African American male principals, as opposed to principal retention in general. In addition, I am delighted that I focused on why experienced and effective principals stay, as opposed to why principals leave. Those two fundamental choices made this research study a labor of love. An unintended benefit that accrued is that I was thrust into the roles of practitioner researcher and learner. According to
Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), “When practitioners engage in inquiry, they typically work from expanded rather than narrow views of teaching and learning” (p. 10).

I began my career in the Queen Charlotte County Public School System as a teacher and later became a principal before departing for a senior-level position in another district. My familiarity with the participants in the study and with the role of principalship in this district enabled me to both be a practitioner researcher and learn about a role and its practitioners who shared many commonalities. As I engaged in researching the African American male principals in this study, I could not help but think that I myself would have been a candidate for the study had I not sought other leadership positions.

As a result of studying what is right with the Queen Charlotte County Public School System, as opposed to the many challenges the district confronts made the study much richer and more universally beneficial. I say that for a few reasons: First and perhaps most important, some of the participants were truly excited to be part of a study that focused on their strengths. Each principal had to be experienced and effective to be part of the study. Second, the focus on the uniqueness and the positives that are occurring in the district enabled me to reveal a major positive finding not often discussed pertaining to the district. That major positive is the district’s excellent record of attracting and retaining a disproportionately large number of African American educators in general and African American male educators in particular. Queen Charlotte County is a true leader in this area.

On a more personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed conducting this research project. I enjoyed conducting the interviews and reading the many research books and articles
related to the topic. I enjoyed reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings of each interview. What could have been a typically tedious process of engaging in research was actually enjoyable. I find myself still engaged in practitioner research by having conversations with colleagues regarding the topic, and I am still uncovering facts about the district and the topic. I will not miss the many hours I had to devote to the dissertation study, but I will certainly miss the connections I made with the research participants, the new learning I acquired regarding my topic, and my discussions and interactions with my dissertation chair and my dissertation committee members.

My strong recommendation to those looking for a dissertation topic would be to find a worthwhile topic you feel passionate to learn more about. In addition, find a topic that will make a contribution to your field.
## APPENDIX A: DISSERTATION WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE

### Original Dissertation Work Plan and Timeline for Theo Cramer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Work Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal Hearing</td>
<td>June 17, 2015</td>
<td>• Proposal hearing at the University of Pennsylvania on June 17, 2015 at 2:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisions</td>
<td>June 2015</td>
<td>• By late June 2015, revision of proposal based on committee’s recommendations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Late June–July 2015</td>
<td>• Begin scheduling and conducting interviews of principals who will participate in the study. The interviews will occur from mid-June 2015 through July 2015.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• From an analysis of the interviews, a survey will be devised and administered in July 2015 to all African American male principals in the district who fit the demographic and criteria for the study.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>July 2015</td>
<td>• In early July 2015, the interviews will be analyzed for recurring patterns and themes. The interview data will inform the survey instrument.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In July and August 2015, coding and analysis of the data will occur.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• As the data sets get coded and analyzed during the July and August 2015 time frame, I will continue to seek feedback from my dissertation chair and committee pertaining to ways of incorporating the data into the dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Write-up</td>
<td>July–Nov. 2015</td>
<td>• From July to October 2015, I will write up the results chapters.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• By November 2015, I will submit revised sections of the first three chapters.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation Write-up and Revisions</td>
<td>Late Nov.–Dec. 2015</td>
<td>• From December 2015 through early January 2016, I will revise the dissertation as needed and based on feedback from the committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• I will be on leave for the entire Thanksgiving Break and for two weeks during Winter Break. A significant portion of those weeks will be used for writing and revising the dissertation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dissertation Defense</td>
<td>Mid-Jan.–April 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>• By the end of January 2016, I will submit a revised draft of the dissertation to my chair and committee.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• By the end of February 2016, I will revise the dissertation to conform to the committee’s requests.</td>
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<td>• During March 2016, I will prepare for the oral exam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• From mid-March through the end of April 2016, I will make final revisions to the dissertation and provide the new and final draft for my chair and the committee depending on the committee’s recommendations.</td>
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APPENDIX B: RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Research Consent Form

Participant’s Name: ____________________________________________

Date of Interview: ____________________________________________

Time of Interview: ____________________________________________

Location of Interview: ______________________________________

Interview Statement

It is important that school systems not only recruit quality principals but retain those highly effective principals as well. As a result, this study will focus on why effective veteran African American male principals have elected to continue working in their current school district. Your participation in this study will help determine how the school district is retaining effective and experienced African American male principals who have five or more successful years in the role of principal as determined by the district’s evaluation process.

• Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview for this study.

• Participation in the interview is totally voluntary. The information contained in the study will be held confidential, and all names will be deidentified.

• The information provided through the interviews will better help all stakeholders—school officials and others—better understand what is working well and what needs improvement.

• So that I capture your thoughts accurately, I would like to record the interview. After I transcribe the interview and before I submit the information, you will be given an opportunity to review your responses.

• After the data has been coded, all of the recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed.

• You are not required to answer during the interview any questions you believe infringe on your privacy. You may also end your participation in the interview at any time. If you choose to end your participation, all information connected to your responses will be destroyed.
- The interview will take approximately one hour.

- You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

- Although you have agreed to participate in the interview, I must obtain formal permission from you before we begin the interview process. Therefore, please sign the agreement at the bottom of the page if you agree to the interview and the terms set forth in this document.

_________________________________________________
Signature of Participant

_________________________________________________
Signature of Interviewer
APPENDIX C: INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEW STATEMENT

Introductory Interview Statement

Thank you again for agreeing to participate. I am conducting this interview today as part of my dissertation study of experienced African American male principals. The results of the study will constitute part of the requirements for completion of a doctorate in educational leadership at the University of Pennsylvania.

Through this study, I hope to learn why veteran effective African American male principals have elected to continue working in this school system.

Please remember that **you are not required to answer any questions you believe infringe on your privacy or that you do not wish to answer for any other reason.**

As outlined on the informed-consent document, you may end your participation at any time during the interview process or later. If you choose not to participate, any data collected in connection with you will be destroyed.

I am recording today’s interview because I don’t want to miss any of your comments or misinterpret my notes. The recording will then be transcribed, and names and other identifying information will be removed. I will provide you with a copy of the transcribed interview for your review and approval prior to utilizing any of your responses to inform the study. Your identity and your interview responses will remain confidential. The interview should take 45 to 60 minutes. I do ask that you sign the approved Research Consent Form for my files.

Do you have any questions?
APPENDIX D: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Principal Interview Questions

Personal Background and Experience
1. Tell me a little about yourself. Where did you grow up, where did you go to high school and college, and what did you major in?

2. Tell me about your current principal position and any past positions in the district.

3. Are you currently in your first principalship in the same school?
   a. If not, where did you serve before, and why did you leave your first principalship?
   b. What is different now in your current position?

4. What led to your decision to become an educator and later a principal? Did a mentor or someone encourage this career choice?

Training and Preparation
5. What was your formal preparation? Where did you take administrative courses?
   a. What other leadership experiences did you have prior to becoming a principal?
   b. Were any specific preparation programs especially valuable?

6. Now that you are a veteran principal, what preparation do you wish you had that you did not receive?

School District Context
7. What attracted you to this school district? Why this school system and not a more affluent neighboring district?

8. Do you think being a black male helped or hurt your career growth in this district?
   a. Has there been a time when being an African American has hurt you in your career in this school system?
   b. Have you worked in another school system? If so, did your race help or hurt?

Principal Experience: Supports and Challenges
9. I would like to learn more about your experiences as a principal.
   a. What supports have you received?
   b. What major challenges have you faced?
10. As a principal, how involved are you in the community—both around the school and in the county? Can you give some examples?

**Influences on Retention**

11. Given the vast turnover in the superintendent role during the past 15 or 20 years, was there ever a time you considered leaving as a result of the instability?
   a. If so, why?
   b. If not, why not?

12. What has kept you in the principalship for so many years? How did you survive and even thrive in the role of principal?

13. I contend in this study that the district does an excellent job of retaining principals—especially African American principals. Do you agree? If so, why do you think African American male principals elect to stay in this district instead of leaving for more-affluent surrounding districts?

14. Is there anything else you’d like to discuss regarding your principal experiences?
APPENDIX E: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

District Leadership Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself. Where did you grow up, and where did you go to school?

2. What led to your decision to become a _____________ in the school system? What was your education, and what was your training for your current position?

3. In this current role, how do you interact with principals? Can you give me an example of a typical interaction, meeting, or the like?

4. How do you support principals? Can you provide examples?

5. This district has far more African American principals and African American male principals than most districts in neighboring jurisdictions or the United States do. I contend in this study that the district does an excellent job of retaining principals.
   a. Do you agree?
   b. If so, why do you think the district has been successful at both recruiting and retaining so many African American male principals? In other words, what is happening to make them stay?

6. Given your work with principals, how long do you believe it takes for a principal to become effective in the job? Why? Similarly, do you believe it is important for principals to have experience as assistant principals? If so, how many years?

7. Is there anything you believe would make the role of the principal more desirable?

8. Is there anything else you’d like to discuss that would help me better understand the retention of African American male principals?
APPENDIX F: PRINCIPAL SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Principal Participant No. _____

Analysis of Principal Retention in a Large Suburban School District

How This Survey Was Constructed
This survey was modified and adapted from the 2008 and 2011 RAND National Principal Surveys and the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research’s 2003 Principal Survey. The RAND National Principal Survey questions are not proprietary and are available for public use, as is the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research Survey.

Please provide some information about your background.

1. How long have you been a principal?
   A. 0–3 years  B. 4–7 years  C. 8–10 years  D. More than 10 years

2. How long have you been a principal in Queen Charlotte County Public Schools?
   A. 0–3 years  B. 4–7 years  C. 8–10 years  D. More than 10 years

3. Were you a classroom teacher before becoming an administrator?
   A. Yes  B. No
   If yes, how long did you teach before going into administration?
   A. 0–3 years  B. 4–7 years  C. 8–10 years  D. More than 10 years

4. Were you an assistant principal before becoming a principal?
   A. Yes  B. No
   If yes, how long were you an assistant principal?
   A. 0–3 years  B. 4–7 years  C. 8–10 years  D. More than 10 years
   If no, what was your position before becoming a principal?
   Position before becoming principal: ________________________

5. From the following list, please rank the TOP THREE previous experiences you believe best prepared you for your role as principal.
   A. Classroom teaching experience
   B. Assistant principal experience
   C. Administrator’s preparation program
   D. External programs (e.g., Aspiring Leaders Program for Student Success, New Leaders for New Schools)
   E. University or college program (i.e., certification program)
   F. Having a mentor or coach (e.g., a former principal met with regularly)
   G. Other: Please explain. ______________________________
Preferred Supports

6. Please rank the **TOP THREE** supports you have as a principal.
   A. My immediate supervisor
   B. Other principals
   C. Central-office-assigned mentors
   D. Central-office-provided professional development experiences
   E. Other professional development experiences
   F. Central office personnel
   G. Other: Please specify. _________________________________

Future Professional Plans

7. Which of the following best reflects your future professional plans?
   A. I plan on remaining a principal indefinitely.
   B. I plan on remaining a principal for 1–3 more years.
   C. I plan on remaining a principal for 4–6 more years.
   D. This is my last year as a principal.
   E. I’m unsure.

8. Please rank the **TOP THREE** factors most likely to influence your decision to remain a principal in Queen Charlotte County Public Schools.
   A. Salary or compensation
   B. Quality and effectiveness of building teaching staff
   C. Condition of school building and facilities
   D. Quality of and adequate supervisor support
   E. Availability of a mentor
   F. Supportive school community
   G. Opportunities for advancement in the district
   H. Autonomy to make decisions
   I. Authority to hire staff
   J. Work–life balance
   K. Other: Please specify. _________________________________
APPENDIX G: Black Male Achievement Report 1990

All sections of Appendix G were taken from the 1990 Black Male Achievement report—the executive summary, the introduction, the major findings, and the recommendations. Given the important role of the 1990 Black Male Achievement report to the district being studied, the information provided from the report will, hopefully, help the reader better understand the importance of the Black Male Achievement report.

Executive Summary

Communities across the country have been alarmed by the increasing difficulties experienced by a sizable number of African-American males. The problems confronting black males and the larger African-American community have been documented in a spate of national reports which show that African-American males are subject to higher suicide, homicide, and incarceration rates than other groups, and experience lower levels of educational attainment.

The concerns of the [Queen Charlotte County] community groups (e.g., the Committee of 100 and the County Council of Parents and Teachers Associations) about the status of African-American males mirror those expressed nationally. In December, 1989, [Superintendent of Queen Charlotte County Public Schools], convened a group of community leaders to identify barriers to the achievement of African-American males and solutions to existing problems. This group agreed to become the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee on Black Male Achievement and, for the past 6 months, has listened to the voices of teachers, students and parents, and analyzed hundreds of pages of information concerning student achievement, school staffing, and school policies. The committee’s findings and recommendations are presented in a two part report. Part I contains major findings and recommendations, while Part II contains six chapters which provide further support for the conclusions and information presented in Part I.

The committee identified several factors which contribute to the problems encountered by African-American males. Inadequate school funding, the lack of multicultural cultural curricula, instructional materials and library books, and a shortage of African-American role models among the school system’s teaching and administrative staff were cited as major shortcomings. In addition, the committee underscored the overenrollment of black males in the school system’s special education program and the organization and staffing of the Division of Pupil Services as problems warranting immediate attention. Other major findings touched on the following points:

- Out of [the school systems in the state, Queen Charlotte County] ranks second lowest in per pupil expenditures for textbooks, second lowest in library resources, and lowest in dollars spent for instructional materials;
A review of textbook lists and library catalogues revealed only a superficial rendering of the perspectives and experiences of African-Americans, women and other cultural groups;

African-American males comprised only 6 percent of classroom teachers, and African-American staff, in general, were not represented in numbers needed to ensure that black and white students are exposed to positive African-American role models;

Beginning in fourth grade, African-American males were grossly underrepresented in advanced academic groups and courses—a pattern that worsened from fourth grade through high school such that in twelfth only 44 black males were enrolled in calculus, and in 10th grade, twice as many black males were enrolled in special education English classes as compared to the number of black English classes for the Talented and Gifted; and

African-American males represent approximately one third of the total student enrollment, but comprise 47 percent of all students receiving special education services;

These startling findings led the Black Male Achievement Committee to submit the following recommendations for school change:

Provide all schools with the level of resources now available in [schools that are mandated by the courts to receive additional funding] and increase significantly the allocation for books and materials.

Replace what is now a Eurocentric curriculum with one that is multi-cultural.

**Recruit, hire, and retain more African-American teachers, counselors and administrators, with an emphasis on increasing the presence of black males in our classrooms.**

Ensure that a majority of all student populations have access to and succeed in advanced levels of the curriculum.

Establish a task force to examine the referral, assessment and treatment strategies used by the Special Education Program vis-à-vis their impact on black males.

Offer increased support to families, especially those living in economically disadvantaged communities.
• Reorganize the Division of Pupil Services to facilitate greater coordination among the various departments.

• Develop a student information system that provides a broader view of student progress and performance.

• Strengthen mentoring and internship programs to forge stronger ties between academics and the world beyond high school.

• Extend the length of the school year for teachers from 10 to 11 months to provide more time for professional development and additional instructional time for students during the regular school year.

The Committee also conducted an analysis of community data, producing the following results:

• The public has not held its elected leaders responsible for providing the vision and resources needed to accomplish important education goals.

• Multicultural education is the joint responsibility of the family, the schools and the broader community.

• The community is responsible for reinforcing the view that academic excellence is an important goal and a viable life option for all students.

The Black Male Achievement Committee submits the following recommendations for community action:

• Elect candidates for public office whose positions and records are consistent with the long-term health of the public schools.

• Provide increased opportunities for African-American youth to learn about themselves in the home and in their community associations.

• Increase the community’s support for student achievement by establishing learning centers in local churches and youth activity centers.

• Define, communicate and model the values and behaviors essential to realizing the promise of the youth of our community.
INTRODUCTION

The committee’s work was motivated by a host of troubling findings concerning black males which have been reported in several recent publications…

Queen Charlotte exemplifies the growing interdependence of racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Black [Queen Charlotteans] presently constitute half of the County’s residents and more than 65 percent of the school system’s enrollment. In a society made smaller by new communication and transportation technologies and interconnected industries, what once could be characterized as “their” problem arrives quickly at the doorstep of every citizen. The future of our community, then, is tied inextricably to the success of both its white and African-American citizens; the prosperity of each group depends on the well-wishes of the other. In the realm of education, schools that fail to provide an adequate education for black students will inevitably shortchange white students as well and erode the competitiveness of our entire society. In short, the fate of black, brown and white Americans, males and females alike, is intertwined as never before in this county and in our nation.

This reality should make the achievement of African-American males in Queen Charlotte County a priority for all who live here. Unfortunately, the black community in Queen Charlotte historically has received less than its fair share of economic resources and political power. The vestiges of this neglect are seen in the juxtaposition of a county which is experiencing enormous economic expansion and black male [Queen Charlotteans] who are subject to inordinately high rates of unemployment, school failure, homicide, and imprisonment. The ability of most African-Americans to survive and prosper in what historically has been an often hostile environment attests to unique strengths that should be drawn upon to assist those who are less able.

In this committee’s search for reasons why black males, or average, experience less success than others, we drew upon these strengths by seeking guidance from a variety of groups and resources. This guidance, together with our many meetings and discussions, formed the basis for the observations presented in the remainder of this season. The findings and recommendations presented in Par I speak to specific areas such as school funding, ability grouping, and special education. The formation which motivated each recommendation is discussed more fully in Part II of this report.

Major Findings and Recommendation

Given the relevance of Finding and Recommendation #3 (Lack of African-American Role Models) to this study, this will be the only finding and recommendation that will be listed in full from the original Black Male Achievement report in Queen Charlotte County:

Lack of African-American Role Models

FINDING #3

African-American students in [Queen Charlotte County]—especially males—have far more opportunities to see “themselves” as custodians, groundkeepers, bus drivers and
cafeteria workers, than they do as teachers, principals, and central office administrators. Black males represent 6 percent (313) of the total number of classroom teachers (over 5600) and 3 percent of all teacher aides. In comparison, African-Americans, as a group comprise 34 percent of all support staff (secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, bus drivers).

African-Americans are underrepresented in every occupational category in the school system when compared to their proportion of the County’s overall population (50 percent). African-Americans, as a group (males and females), account for 30 percent of the school system’s classroom teachers, 30 percent of all principals and 32 percent of all central office administrators (Deputy Superintendent, Associate Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Directors, and Special Assistants). This underrepresentation is most grave in positions guiding the development of school policy and curricula, and those governing the school system’s financial administration. In fact, none of the offices listed under the Deputy Superintendent in the school system’s organization chart (i.e., Budget, Grants Administration, Finance, Data Management Systems and Internal Auditing) have a professional staff member who is black. The overwhelming majority of these positions are held by white males. This arrangement personifies a paternalism that has no place in this County’s present or future. If African-Americans and women can teach students and manage schools, they certainly have the expertise needed to administer school finances and information.

RECOMMENDATION #3

By September 30, 1990, The Superintendent should develop a plan that will identify the strategies and timelines that will be used to obtain African-American teachers, counselors, and administrators in numbers commensurate with their percentage of the county’s population. Specific emphasis should be placed on increasing the number of black male and female elementary school teachers, guidance counselors and school psychologists. In addition, the plan should address the need to increase the number of African-Americans and women employed in the offices listed under the Deputy Superintendent.

Discussion

During the years when children begin to form their life’s dreams, our school curricula and staffing patterns offer a restricted range of options (and thus aspirations) to African Americans. In a County that is 50 percent black and a school system that is 65 percent black, few African-Americans are involved in the curriculum development process and in the management of the school system’s financial operation.

The school system should significantly strengthen its efforts to recruit, hire, and retain qualified African-American staff at all levels, with a particular emphasis on elementary school teachers (especially African-American males), guidance counselors, school psychologists, and central office supervisors and administrators; i.e., those who are directly responsible for learning and those who develop the policies guiding the teaching and learning process. To achieve this goal, the school system must depart from
its traditional practice of hiring and promoting almost exclusively from within (the exception being entry level positions—i.e., teachers secretaries, etc.). This policy institutionalizes, for years to come, the 30 percent ceiling which currently exists for African-American staff across occupational levels and types. While the committee appreciates the importance of providing incentives and career opportunities for current staff, the School Board is charged with ensuring that our system possesses the most talented individuals available. We must not restrict ourselves to existing personnel in our search for the best possible staff.

Our school system currently needs more African-American male and female teachers and administrators to broaden the range of role models available for black and white students and to increase the diversity of perspectives used to shape school system policies and priorities. School districts across the nation have similar needs and are competing for the scarce supply of black educators. [Queen Charlotte County Public Schools] enters this national competition armed with a $10,000 budget for recruiting new teachers, supplemented by $9,000 in additional funds and services furnished by the Business and Industry Council. In comparison, the [Queen Charlotte County Police Department] received $250,000 to recruit new police officers. We do not think that the citizens of [Queen Charlotte County] believe that acquiring new and highly qualified police officers is twenty times more important than attracting the best new teachers; yet, this is what the facts imply. The uneven expenditure of recruitment funds by the school system and police department also suggest that the County’s leadership believes that the disproportionate involvement of black males in the criminal justice system is a permanent trend that the County must face in the future. Unfortunately, this belief will be fulfilled if school programs continue to be underfunded. Obviously, the school system needs a substantial increase in the amount of funds and the number of staff devoted to recruiting new personnel.

Strengthening recruitment efforts alone, however, will not resolve the shortage of African-American teachers, and educators in general. There simply aren’t enough blacks being trained in schools of education to meet current demands. The pool of eligible African-Americans has been reduced by declines in the percentage of blacks who enroll in and complete college, and who obtain advanced degrees…

More needs to be done at earlier points in the educational pipeline to encourage African-American youth to pursue careers in education. In the immediate term, the pool of black educators could be increased by encouraging retired teachers and administrators to return on a part-time basis. This would require adjusting state and local provisions in ways that would allow formerly retired personnel to return without jeopardizing their retirement benefits. Offering alternative training and certification programs for individuals interested in teaching but who were not education majors in college is another strategy states and localities have used to increase the pool of people going into teaching. [Queen Charlotte County] and the Greater [Metropolitan] area possesses a wealth of untapped talent in this regard. What we lack is a state initiative enabling school systems to pursue this option. The [State Department of Education] should take immediate steps to explore the feasibility of such a program.

Finally, we applaud the school system for the steps it has already taken to address the general shortage of teachers through the creation of a local chapter of the Future
Teachers of [Queen Charlotte Club] in the County’s high schools. This program identifies young people interested in teaching and provides them with the experiences and guidance needed to pursue careers in education at the postsecondary level. During the past year, 350 students were enrolled in this program.

Here, as in the area of multicultural education, colleges, SEAs and LEAs must work cooperatively to address local and national needs to increase the supply of educators—especially those who are African-American (Murphy, 1990).
References


Forbes magazine. April 1, 2014.


Fuller, E. J., & Young, M. D. (2009). *Tenure and retention of newly hired principals in Texas.* Austin: University Council for Educational Administration, Department of Educational Administration, University of Texas at Austin.


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