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Public Sector Leaders' Strategies to Improve Employee Retention

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Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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2016

Abstract

Public Sector Leaders' Strategies to Improve Employee Retention

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Certificate in Project Management, University at Buffalo, 2010

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2016

Abstract

The U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics consistently reports significant employee turnover in the public sector, including the federal, state, and local levels. High turnover results in compromised public goods and services provided to a community. The widespread nature of the problem and the scarcity of literature focusing on employee retention strategies in the public sector merited this case study. Public sector leaders from Western New York who had implemented employee retention strategies in a public organization comprised the population for the study. Cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory provided the conceptual context for developing and executing the study. A total of 7 public sector leaders participated in semistructured interviews, which provided the primary source of data. Data were open coded, resulting in themes of employee development, engagement and empowerment, and positive work experience. The results contribute to social change by identifying practical business strategies that leaders may use to improve retention in their respective organizations. Maintaining a well-qualified, dedicated public workforce may lead to improved government goods and services on which communities rely.

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Dedication

I dedicate this wonderful accomplishment to my late grandmother, Eda Quigley. Her kindness and gentle way with people instilled in me a desire to always strive to be a better person. There was just something special about that lady. My hope is that this academic pursuit will allow me to serve the community in a way that would honor her.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Some public sector leaders encounter employee retention challenges (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Public sector managers have a direct influence on employee retention (Grissom, 2012). Retention is vital because employee turnover stifles an organization's ability to perform optimally (Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, & Pierce, 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013). When public organizations suffer from low performance, the citizenry may receive subpar services. In addition, organizations may incur high costs with the hiring of new employees (Cho & Lewis, 2012). For public organizations, taxpayers assume the burden of the costs (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Turnover correlates with job satisfaction issues (Kim & Park, 2014). Furthermore, employees with low job satisfaction are likely to state turnover intentions (Kim & Park, 2014). To decrease turnover, leaders may emphasize retention strategies (George, 2015).

Background of the Problem

Scholarship on the topic of employee retention reveals some of the common reasons employees remain with organizations (George, 2015). However, organizational studies typically feature turnover rather than focusing on retention (George, 2015). For example, Jung (2012) studied the relationship between federal employees having clear goals on the job and their intention to leave. Bertelli and Lewis (2012) examined the relationship between federal senior executives' ability to influence policy and employee turnover intention. Ali (2014) conducted a study on turnover intentions in the Federal government and Cohen, Blake, and Goodman (2015) examined the relationship between turnover intentions and actual turnover. The focus of each study was not specifically on

retention. Organizational leaders have the responsibility of addressing employee retention issues (George, 2015). This study includes a thorough review of the extant literature featuring employee retention and related subject matter.

Problem Statement

Public sector leaders are encountering challenges retaining professional employees (Grissom, 2012). In September 2015, approximately 144,000 public sector employees quit jobs (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). The general business problem is that public organizations are incurring costs and losing institutional knowledge from seasoned employees because of employee turnover. The specific business problem is some public sector leaders lack strategies to improve employee retention.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies public sector leaders are implementing to improve employee retention. The population comprised public sector leaders including directors, managers, supervisors, and team leaders working in Western New York. The public sector leaders worked for federal, state, or local government organizations. This study might contribute to social change by providing organizational leaders with specific strategies to increase employee retention. Furthermore, the acquired job-specific knowledge of the seasoned employee would not be lost. Lower employee turnover correlates with observable improvements with respect to organizational performance (Park & Shaw, 2013). Decreasing employee turnover would likely lead to significant cost savings for organizations, as hiring new workers involves training and orientation expenses (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Implementing strategies

to reduce turnover costs in public organizations is necessary for proper stewardship of the taxpayer dollars spent to fund government operations. Focusing on employee retention may result in decreased costs and improvements in organizational performance (Hancock et al., 2013).

Nature of the Study

Qualitative research methods are useful for obtaining a rich understanding of the lived experiences of the study participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers who prefer to gather information and seek meaning from individuals who lived the experiences tend to align with a social constructivist worldview (Andrews, 2012). Social constructivists, therefore, often choose qualitative methods to conduct research (Andrews, 2012). In contrast, quantitative studies involve examination of causal relationships between two (or more) variables (Groeneveld, Tummers, Bronkhorst, Ashikali, & van Thiel, 2015). Therefore, because the research question did not involve such a relationship, a quantitative method was inappropriate for the study. By extension, a mixed method study was inappropriate, therefore, given the quantitative component (Heyvaert, Hannes, Maes, & Onghena, 2013; Patton, 2015; Sandelowski, Voils, Leeman, & Crandell, 2012). For the purposes of the study, a qualitative approach was essential for leaders to discuss the strategies implemented to improve retention levels.

The decision to conduct a case study reflected the attributes of the design as identified by Yin (2014), a seminal author in case study research. Yin (2014) noted that case studies tend to involve how and why questions, concentrate on contemporary events, and do not require the researcher to control behavioral events. One alternative to a case

study design was a phenomenological design. Phenomenological designs also involve researching the lived experiences of informants, but what sets a phenomenological study apart from a case study is the researcher's focus on an extraordinary phenomenon multiple individuals have experienced (Moustakas, 1994). The notion of public sector leaders working to improve retention was not an extraordinary phenomenon warranting a phenomenological study. Another alternative design was ethnographic interviewing. Ethnographic interviewing was inappropriate because of the emphasis on the culture of a group (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Patton, 2015; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). A narrative design was also an option for the study. Narrative designs involve an informant sharing a story, followed by the researcher's analysis of the story (Patton, 2015). For example, Boyd, Tuckey, and Winefield (2014) obtained narrative data from employees experiencing a stressful work environment. King and Learmonth (2015) provided firsthand narrative data of one of the authors' personal experiences with establishing a volunteer organization, though the study was primarily a case study. A narrative design was not suitable for this study because the research question did not necessitate analyzing a full personal story. Alternatively, a deliberate and interactive discussion with a case study interview allowed themes to emerge relating specifically to the research question (Yin, 2014). Additional research design options were realism, systems theory, hermeneutics, and many others (Patton, 2015). However, case study design was fitting because of how the research question aligned best with Yin's (2014) conditions noted previously.

Research Question

Effective research questions are broad enough to obtain varied responses from participants, but specific enough to capture pertinent data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The primary research question relates directly to the research problem and ancillary questions may prompt the researcher to probe further (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher ensures that questions are understandable (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Reviewing the relevant literature assists in developing suitable research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A common approach to developing research questions related to the topic is to make a long list of possible questions, prioritize the questions, and prepare a shortlist of the strongest questions (Wengraf, 2001). Having followed Wengraf's (2001) approach, the primary research question was as follows: What strategies are public sector leaders implementing to improve employee retention?

Interview Questions

To capture data pertinent to the research question, participants answered the following interview questions:

1. What strategies have you implemented to improve employee retention in your organization?
2. What challenges have you encountered when attempting to improve employee retention in your organization?
3. How have your employees responded to the strategies?
4. How will you know if your strategies are successful?

5. What prompted you to implement the strategies in the first place?
6. How are retention strategies for the public sector perhaps different from the private sector?
7. What additional information would you like to share regarding something we did not already discuss?

While interviewing, prompting participants to clarify, elaborate, or repeat something is often necessary (Wengraf, 2001). Probing questions were necessary at times during these interviews, questions such as (a) What details might you add to that? (b) What was the purpose of that? and (c) What did you mean by that? and other such generic questions assisted in soliciting additional information.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework grounding the study drew from cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory. Collectively, the theories provided a strong foundational framework to begin exploring answers to the research question. Cost-benefit theories assert organizational performance diminishes as an organization incurs costs resulting from turnover (Dalton & Todor, 1979; Guilding, Lamminaki, & McManus, 2014; Hancock et al., 2013; Levy, Joy, Ellis, Jablonski, & Karelitz, 2012; Park & Shaw, 2013). Articles involving cost-benefit theory relating to turnover in organizations first appeared in the early 1900s (Alexander, 1916). Human capital theory addresses the loss of institutional knowledge when employees exit (George, 2015; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012a; Mohr, Young, & Burgess, 2012a; Shaw, Park, & Kim, 2013). Organizational studies involving human capital theory appeared in the late 1980s

(Osterman, 1987). Last, social capital theory relates to how social relationships shaping the organization undergo challenges when certain individuals depart (Ellinger et al., 2013; George, 2015; Mohr et al., 2012; Rass, Dumbach, Danzinger, Bullinger, & Moeslein, 2013; Sorenson & Rogan; 2014). Social capital theory in organizational studies first appeared in the late 1980s (Leanna & Van Buren, 1999), though the term *social capital* appeared in literature more than a decade earlier (Coleman, 1988).

As noted previously, the robust nature of the research question dictated a multilayered conceptual framework. Each of the theories presented provided a useful perspective from which to pose interview questions to address the specific business problem. The forthcoming literature review provides an opportunity to expound on the conceptual framework and place the research question into context.

Operational Definitions

The following operational definitions ensure mutual understanding of concepts presented in the study:

Distributive justice. Distributive justice is a type of *organizational justice* referring to the fairness of outcomes of decision-making procedures in an organization (Cho & Sai, 2012).

Job embeddedness. Job embeddedness refers to circumstances or reasons employees choose to remain on the job despite factors normally leading to turnover (Jiang, McKay, Liu, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012b).

Management citizenship behavior (MCB). Management citizenship behavior is a concept expressing how managers behave according to accepted organizational

leadership practices, with an emphasis on workers' rights (Brody, Rubin, & Maume, 2014).

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Organizational citizenship behavior describes how employees perform additional duties and responsibilities apart from normal job requirements, which benefits the organization (Oren, Tziner, Sharoni, Amor, & Alon, 2012).

Organizational climate. Organizational climate refers to the shared perceptions of employees with respect to the working environment experienced together (Whitman, Caleo, Carpenter, Horner, & Bernerth, 2012).

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment refers to the degree of loyalty employees have toward an organization. Employees who share common values and objectives of the organization and who have minimal intention to quit likely have high organizational commitment (Salleh, Amin, Muda, & Abi Sofian Abdul Halim, 2013).

Organizational justice. Organizational justice refers to fairness practices an organization's leaders exhibit, or fairness of established procedures of the organization. Subcategories of organizational justice are interactional, distributive, or procedural justice (Cho & Sai, 2012). Organizational justice may influence job satisfaction and employees' intentions to commit to the organization as opposed to seeking employment elsewhere (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013).

Procedural justice. Procedural justice refers to a situation in which employees perceive the decision-making process to be fair; trust in the organizational leaders

follows, along with a stronger commitment to stay with the organization (Cho & Sai, 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are part of every research design (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Researchers use assumptions to accept certain information based on common sense, specialized knowledge, or expertise regarding a particular subject matter (Wengraf, 2001). Sometimes, researchers base assumptions on incorrect or biased information, however (Wengraf, 2001). A first assumption in qualitative interviewing is that participants will provide true accounts of experiences and that the participants are competent enough to relay the information (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Researchers assume interviewees are providing accurate recollections of experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, any analysis performed and conclusions drawn reflected the data as presented.

A second assumption in qualitative interviewing is that the researcher is capable of conducting the research and will ask questions prompting adequate responses to address the research question (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Approaching the study with extensive real-world business experience and the skills honed in the Walden University DBA program ensured the study reflected an analysis of scientific precision.

Limitations

Researchers identify limitations in studies to identify potential weaknesses, as doing so may prevent unintentional generalization of the results (Wolcott, 2009). Four limitations were evident in the study. First, personal bias may have inadvertently

influenced the data while interviewing and during the analysis process. Moustakas (1994) noted that bracketing personal experiences reduces researcher bias in interviews. The extent to which personal bias remains absent from the research influences the perceived credibility of the data (Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixmith, 2013). Despite attempting to bracket personal experiences and to remain unbiased, eliminating bias altogether likely was not possible.

The second limitation was the time available to conduct interviews. Qu and Dumay (2011) noted that time constraints are a common concern for qualitative research endeavors. The interview duration directly affects the time required for transcribing, validating, coding, and analyzing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Granot, Brashear, and Motta (2012) recommended 90-minute in-depth interviews, which was the approach adopted for the study. However, the primary concern was the quality of the data, not the time taken to collect the data, a point Wengraf (2001) noted as significant for qualitative research. For participants who were willing to continue past 90 minutes, the interview may have exceeded the estimated time. Ideally, the conversation was to reach a point of saturation at which further conversation did not add significant new data germane to the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The third limitation of the study was that though the data reflected strategies public leaders used to improve employee retention, evaluating which strategies were most effective was not part of the study. Determining which strategies are appropriate for particular organizations is a task reserved for the leaders personally. Evaluating the merits of specific strategies may be a topic suitable for a future study.

The fourth limitation was that empirical generalizability is not a concern in case study research (Yin, 2014). The data obtained in the study is not representative of the entire population of public leaders. However, the study design is replicable and future researchers may opt to conduct a similar study with a different population.

Delimitations

Identifying delimitations is worthwhile to help narrow the scope of the study, allowing a focused exploration of the research topic (Wolcott, 2009). Delimitations are the boundaries researchers use to clarify what the study is not about (Wolcott, 2009). Exploring new perspectives or experiences to enhance data in qualitative research is common, but delimiting and establishing bounds prevent the data from becoming irrelevant (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To ensure a focused case study, public employees who worked seasonal, temporary, or part-time schedules could not participate in the study. In addition, employees in nonpay status could not participate because certain biases or opinions relating to employment status could have arisen that were not relevant to the focus of the study. Leaders outside of Western New York were not eligible to participate. Furthermore, although nonsupervisory employees may have offered valuable insight regarding retention, answering the research question would not have been possible; such individuals could not participate because of the absence of authority required to implement strategies. The decision to exclude the above cases reflected a purposeful sampling technique (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Trotter, 2012).

The final delimitation to note regards the nature of the study. The study was not a behavioral study. The objective was not to seek or evaluate information meant to describe the effectiveness of the strategies, the psychology of leader-member relationships, or any other data testing relationships of multiple variables. The study was an exploratory case study of average cases and the purpose of the study was to obtain a description of strategies to improve employee retention. Brewer and Walker (2013) studied how personnel constraints may hinder management's objectives. While leaders for the study indicated challenges encountered with respect to strategy implementation, the discussion did not involve an evaluation of specific personnel constraints.

Significance of the Study

The study is of value to business because the implementation of employee retention strategies may lead to improvements in the performance of public sector organizations (Hancock et al., 2013; Park & Shaw, 2013). The study may contribute to effective business practice because in addition to enhancing organizational performance, cost savings may materialize by maintaining low turnover (Cho & Lewis, 2012). For public sector organizations, taxpayers incur the costs associated with retention issues; therefore, optimizing retention could benefit taxpayers financially (Cho & Lewis, 2012). If leaders invest in social capital extensively, employees' commitment to the organization may strengthen, which might bolster job performance (Ellinger et al., 2013). Preserving human capital (for example, keeping institutional knowledge within the organization) may also assist leaders in keeping organizations' performance levels high (Mohr et al., 2012). The study may contribute to a positive social change because workplace

environments may improve in the areas of social support, employee development, and compensation, among others (George, 2015). Therefore, though improving retention was the core theme of the study, employees may experience other positive outcomes as well.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The focus of the study was to explore strategies public leaders are implementing to improve employee retention in government organizations. Therefore, a thorough review of the literature involved extensive research synthesis on the themes of turnover and organizational performance. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) noted that comparing or contrasting one study from another is a between-study analysis, while performing extensive analysis on a specific study is a within-study analysis. While the focus of the study was employee retention in the public sector, reviewing literature treating retention and turnover in either the public or private sectors provided a well-rounded perspective for approaching the study.

Using a substantial list of key terms and phrases, cross-referencing searches were useful in the continued exploration of the literature. A variety of academic databases such as ProQuest, ERIC, and Business Source Complete were available through Walden University, the University at Buffalo, and the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library System. Google Scholar was the primary search engine used to locate articles; the site linked to Walden University's online library to facilitate access to articles free of charge. The peer-reviewed sources in the literature review (verified with Ulrich's Web Global Serials Directory) were from 2012 to 2015, with the exception of five sources involving the conceptual framework. Throughout the doctoral study, all additional sources used are

within five years of the doctoral study publication year and are peer-reviewed, except for a modest reserve of seminal and governmental sources.

The Journal Impact Factor (JIF) ranking system was not a consideration for journal selection. The JIF is a tool researchers may use to evaluate the apparent academic influence of a journal, based primarily on the number of citations under which the journal appears (Finardi, 2013). Despite widespread use of the JIF since 1963, academic support of the indexing and ranking methods have been mixed, and researchers have questioned the tool's accuracy and utility (Finardi, 2013). Therefore, inclusion of journal articles reflects only the article's relevance to the study and status of being peer reviewed. Table 1 summarizes the sources in the study:

Table 1

Summary of Sources

	# of Sources	% of Sources
Literature Review	99	
Peer Reviewed	95	96.0%
Dated 2012 – 2016	87	87.9%
Full Study	191	
Peer Reviewed	178	93.2%
Dated 2012 - 2016	168	88.0%

Based on an extensive review of the available literature, the trend for research involving employee retention or employee turnover in the workplace (regardless of sector) is to conduct quantitative studies. The preponderance of quantitative studies lent

support to the decision to conduct a qualitative analysis because the benefit facilitated by triangulation is ideal for social science research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wengraf, 2001). A qualitative method allowed for rich data collection, whereby unanticipated responses complemented anticipated responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Furthermore, the quantitative studies in the available literature failed to address sufficiently the research question because the question inherently suggested a need for open-ended responses, which is the opposite strategy of quantitative studies (such as surveys), which typically involve close-ended or single responses to a specific question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The literature review provides a foundation upon which the researcher gains knowledge of the subject matter, develops interview questions, and performs the interviews with an established level of authority and credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The prevailing conceptual framework, namely cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory provided an appropriate lens with which to conduct the case study. Following the discussion of the conceptual framework, the subsequent sections are Commitment, Work Climate, and Job Satisfaction, and Leadership Style and Leader-Employee Relationships. Some overlap in the content appears in sections because of the multidimensional nature of organizational studies. Organizing the literature facilitates comparison with the new data obtained from the interviews.

Foundational Conceptual Framework

Exploring the conceptual framework is essential in organizational studies because identifying the causal mechanisms behind a phenomenon helps inform future research

endeavors (Wiesenfeld & Brockner, 2012). Framing a research question for a new study first involves conceptualizing how earlier scholars treated the same (or a similar) topic (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Among the prominent theories identified in a review of the extant turnover and retention literature were a cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory. The three theories sometimes appear together in turnover and retention studies. For example, Hancock et al. (2013) and Park and Shaw (2013) discovered compelling support regarding the link between turnover and organizational performance, examining each theoretical concept in meta-analytical studies. An expectation regarding the interview data was that the strategies leaders shared would relate to one or more of the conceptual framework theories presented.

The impetus for exploring cost-benefit theory is to highlight why retention might matter to public sector leaders from a financial and economic perspective. An early example of the cost-benefit theory was Alexander's (1916) employee turnover study involving the U.S. metal manufacturing industry. However, Alexander noted that the existence of similar studies in Europe as early as 1913. Alexander acknowledged obvious costs related to employee turnover but stressed managers had insufficient information regarding what the total costs were. Initially, the cost-benefit theory was a tool for studying the negative consequences associated with employee turnover. Some studies focused only on the harmful effects of turnover intentions (Hansen, Byrne, & Kiersh, 2013; Levy et al., 2012). In 1979, Dalton and Todor presented a contrasting perspective by suggesting employee turnover had positive attributes.

Two of Dalton and Todor's (1979) conclusions were particularly relevant to the general business problem of the doctoral study. First, the researchers stressed the importance of evaluating costs alongside positive features with respect to turnover, to determine actual severity (Dalton & Todor, 1979). Second, Dalton and Todor highlighted the benefit of studying more than one individual or organization to understand the issue of turnover. For this study, seven public leaders from diverse agencies and offices contributed to the understanding of the research problem.

A case study in the public sector by Levy et al. (2012) highlighted estimates of turnover costs in the United States education system are not reliable. The cost-benefit problem of Levy et al.'s study was reminiscent of Alexander's 1916 study because both contained the imprecise data the industry leaders had regarding turnover costs. Similar to Dalton and Todor's (1979) study, Levy et al. noted that turnover is not always bad for an organization, depending on who is leaving and the reasons behind the departure. Levy et al.'s study predominantly encompassed the costs associated with teacher turnover but also involved a discussion of the financial benefits associated with layoffs. Concerning the doctoral study, the research of Dalton and Todor along with Levy et al. call into question whether or not public sector leaders have access to reliable turnover data. Though evaluation of turnover cost information was not an objective of the study, the topic was nonetheless relevant in some regards. For example, the fourth interview question may have prompted discussion regarding what kind of metrics, if any, the leaders used to gauge the effectiveness of retention strategies implemented. Furthermore,

the fifth interview question was used to ask what led the leader to address retention in the first place. For example, there may have been cost explanations.

In contrast, in Guilding et al.'s (2014) qualitative study involving cost-benefit theory in the hospitality industry, industry leaders seemed to have reliable cost data available but had no formal way to hold particular departments accountable for the costs. From the interviews, the authors discovered that the managers accounted for turnover by evaluating the staff turnover percentages and by performing exit interviews (Guilding et al., 2014). One of the managers' challenges, however, was determining what turnover percentage was acceptable, as some viewed turnover as desirable in certain instances (Guilding et al., 2014). Regardless of the turnover rate that the organization's leaders deem acceptable, Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, and Collins (2015) suggested monitoring turnover trends over a period of time. The Guilding et al. study reflects the cost-benefit dilemma Dalton and Todor (1979) identified. The cost-benefit theory became apparent in the interview process as leaders revealed some of the reasons for implementing retention strategies in the first place; the fifth interview question prompted the discussion.

Cost-benefit theorists tend to focus on measurable implications of turnover, whereas human capital theorists focus on the knowledge and experience of workers as an asset (Mohr et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 2013). Since Osterman's (1987) study linking human capital to organizational performance, other researchers adopted a similar approach. For example, Park and Shaw (2013) presented evidence revealing the correlation between turnover and organizational performance was curvilinear, depending

on the variables considered. In a different study, Shaw et al. (2013) noted that maintaining human capital creates a competitive advantage; the advantage diminishes with the loss of human capital as workers leave to work for competitors. Jiang et al. (2012a) also noted the popularity of the competitive advantage concept in the literature. In the context of public service, workers may decide to work for the private sector, which may harm the performance levels of public organizations.

Some scholars have focused on human capital resources in conjunction with a firm's liquidity in the event of bankruptcy or other leveraging needs (Akyol & Vermwijmeren, 2013; Chemmanur, Cheng, & Zhang, 2013). In such studies, the performance and even the future existence of the organizations may hinge on human capital investment decisions. For reputable firms placing minimal emphasis on human capital investment, the firm suffers observable negative effects when high performers leave (Kwon & Rupp, 2013). The possibility of a public organization disappearing or subsuming under another public organization exists, as new administrations may work to configure government offices to conform to new objectives (Stanton, 2013). Therefore, the human capital investment principles highlighted in the private sector studies may have relevance in public sector scenarios as well. Cho and Lewis (2012) noted that economists typically indicate concern when employees turnover rather than when employees state intentions to turnover. However, if leaders were aware of employees' turnover intentions and could respond actively before employees exit, the leaders may save the human capital investment (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Interview questions one, five, and six elicited responses related to human capital theory.

The third component of the conceptual framework, social capital theory, focuses on the idea of social relationships made in organizations being beneficial for organizational performance (Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Mohr et al., 2012). When employees leave the organization, the social network experiences communication breakdowns and the organization's performance may suffer (Mohr et al., 2012). Like the competitive advantage concept Shaw et al. (2013) discussed, Ellinger et al. (2013) acknowledged management's investment in social capital as critical. The challenge managers may encounter, however, is finding the time and making the effort to promote the social connections necessary to maximize social capital returns (Ellinger et al., 2013). While social capital theories usually involve relationships with existing coworkers, Korte and Lin (2013) discovered new employees' relationships with existing employees was vital for social capital in organizations.

The social capital theory does not only involve relationships among coworkers. Part of the interest in social capital theory is on how employees have a connection with the organization (Sorenson & Rogan, 2014). Some researchers studying the relationship between turnover and organizational performance discovered social capital has a mediating role in the relationship (Parzefall & Kuppelwieser, 2012; Rass et al., 2013). Social capital theory themes will be apparent in the next section involving organizational commitment. Interview questions one, three, four, five, and six were to yield responses relating to social capital theory. The conceptual framework outlined above will resurface later in the study discussion regarding the data collected and analyzed. In the Presentation

of the Findings section, the conceptual framework will act as a focal reference point from which organization and presentation of the data took place.

Commitment, Work Climate, and Job Satisfaction

The term organizational commitment refers to how strongly employees identify with a workplace, get involved in activities on the job, and the level of desire to stay rather than exit the organization (Salleh et al., 2013). Organizational commitment is of critical importance to organizations because replacing an employee is costly; productivity also diminishes while positions remain unfilled (Cho & Lewis, 2012). When employee commitment is low, employees' perceptions of social capital are also low (Parzefall & Kuppelwieser, 2012). Researchers conducting studies on organizational commitment frequently address workplace fairness issues, apparent when reviewing the literature. The fairness of workplace procedures affects directly employees' commitment to remain with an organization (Cho & Sai, 2012). By valuing and treating employees fairly, leaders may influence retention rates in an organization (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Employees commit to organizations when leaders use (or appear to use) fair decision-making strategies (Bianchi & Brockner, 2012). A strong correlation exists between employees' personal trust with supervisors and turnover intentions (Kim & Park, 2014). A positive relationship exists between employees' perceptions of high ethical standards and behaviors in organizations and organizational commitment (Chun, Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2013).

The topic of workplace fairness ties closely to the specific business problem because of the consistent relationships researchers noted that fairness has with

organizational commitment. Social capital theorists, to recall, focus on the relationships employees have within organizations (Sorenson & Rogan, 2014). Therefore, manager-employee contact is part of the conceptual framework review. When leaders invest in social capital within organizations, employees commit to the organization (Ellinger et al., 2013). Tang, Liu, Oh, and Weitz (2014) demonstrated that early socialization of new employees might establish a firm commitment to the organization. Accordingly, public sector leaders in the doctoral study may have discussed concepts in support of social capital investment strategies in the interviews.

Organizational commitment relates to how loyal employees are to organizations (Salleh et al., 2013), whereas organizational climate relates to employees' perceptions of the daily work experience and functional operations of the organization (Whitman et al., 2012). Some scholars described organizational climate as the shared perceptions of the employees with respect to the working environment experienced together (Whitman et al., 2012). Other scholars focused on a particular aspect of organizational climate, such as *ethical climate*, which denotes employees' perceptions of how individuals in organizations manage issues with ethical considerations (Hwang & Park, 2014). Strom, Sears, and Kelly (2014) noted that to engage employees at work, a climate of motivation and support is necessary. Likewise, Vogelgesang, Leroy, and Avolio (2013) asserted that employees' perceptions of leaders' behavioral integrity mediated the level of transparency of leaders' communication and employees' ratings of the level of engagement.

Using survey data from 764 employees representing 65 separate offices of a state agency, Hassan (2013) developed a structural equation model to explain how various organizational variables affected each other, tested using univariate, bivariate, and confirmatory factor analysis techniques. Procedural justice and distributive justice influence organizational identification (see Operational Definitions section), and organizational identification positively influences job involvement while negatively influencing employees' likelihood to turnover (Hassan, 2013). Furthermore, the procedural fairness variable as well as the distributive fairness variable revealed a mediating influence on how involved employees were at work (Hassan, 2013). In effect, employees had a keener sense of organizational identification (Hassan, 2013). As documented in other research, engaged employees are less likely to turnover (Wollard, 2011). Social capital theory ties in with job engagement as firm social networks contribute to increased innovation and improved organizational performance (Rass et al., 2013).

The term *job satisfaction* may encompass all aspects of the job such as duties assigned, who is in charge, and the working conditions, for example (Yeh, 2014). A multidimensional analysis by Johnson (2012) was one of the first among studies involving job satisfaction of police officers, using the term *organizational environment* in lieu of *organizational climate* (see Operational Definitions). Among 292 Phoenix police officers, a significant correlation was evident between job satisfaction (dependent variable), how supervisors provide feedback, if employees believed positive organizational support was present, and if a perception of cohesion among other workers

was apparent (Johnson, 2012). One of the most compelling conclusions drawn in the study was job satisfaction is not a characteristic inherent in an officer, and therefore, controllable experiences do affect job satisfaction (Johnson, 2012). Johnson also discovered peer support and perceived organizational support (POS) were essential to employees with respect to satisfaction but the correlation was not as strong as for the other variables (Johnson, 2012).

Perceived organizational support links closely with the social capital conceptual framework of the doctoral study because successful leaders foster an environment with social support at the forefront (Kalemci Tuzun & Arzu Kalemci, 2012). The public leaders who participated in the doctoral study could have discussed how to demonstrate support for employees or encourage social engagement. In addition, cultural norms and values may moderate turnover likelihood when considering POS; leaders may consider cultural differences when addressing turnover issues (Kalemci Tuzun & Arzu Kalemci, 2012). In a private sector context, business leaders making adjustments in response to culture may be necessary for retention (Sturman, Shao, & Katz, 2012); transferring the same logic to a diverse public workforce might require similar cultural adjustments on behalf of public leaders. For the doctoral study, participants could have shared if cultural considerations aligned with retention strategies.

Allen and Rhoades Shanock (2013) discovered that POS and job embeddedness encouraged employees to stay with the same organization. Job embeddedness refers to the reasons employees feel attached to jobs despite circumstances otherwise encouraging turnover (Jiang et al., 2012b). Like Allen and Rhoades Shanock, Jiang et al. (2012b)

examined the idea of job embeddedness having a connection with employee turnover. However, Jiang et al. conducted a meta-analysis using articles covering the topic of job embeddedness; the researchers' concluded employees exhibiting job embeddedness were less likely to turnover. Heavey, Holwerda, and Hausknecht (2013) followed a meta-analytical strategy similar to Jiang et al. but the former sought causes for turnover rather than examining one specific motivator (such as the absence of job embeddedness). Heavey et al.'s findings were consistent with Jiang et al.'s with respect to high job embeddedness associating with lower turnover. In contrast, Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh, and Callan (2014) discovered that for the hospitality industry, job embeddedness was not a strong indicator employees would turnover. Considering the public sector for the doctoral study, the possibility exists job embeddedness may not have predictive value either.

The 2005 Public Service Employee Survey (PSES) was the primary data source for Hickey and Bennett's study in 2012. Hickey and Bennett (2012) sought to understand how federal employees perceived the workplace and which factors influenced job satisfaction. Using survey data from a sample of 106,824 federal employees (about 59% of federal employees employed in 2005), Hickey and Bennett discovered the second most significant predictor of employee satisfaction in the workplace was the extent to which employees believed higher-level management addressed concerns. When employees believe promotion opportunities exist, receive recognition from managers, believe a team-oriented atmosphere is present, and believe managers care about subordinates' concerns, job satisfaction will be higher (Hickey & Bennett, 2012).

In a study involving data drawn from the 2008 Federal Human Capital Survey (FHCS), Choi (2013) examined the effect diversity management has on job satisfaction. Choi discovered that perceived procedural justice and employee job satisfaction have a significant connection. Choi also observed significant links between supervisory support and employee job satisfaction. Considering the role of diversity in federal offices is essential because a positive perception of diversity management, perceptions of fairness, and perceptions of supervisory support lead to higher levels of employee job satisfaction (Choi, 2013). Future researchers could replicate Choi's study in the other public sectors to see if the same findings would hold true at the state or local government level.

In yet another quantitative study involving FHCS data, Park (2012) conducted a two-level examination to test leadership behaviors and the motivational factors affecting organizational trust. The first level of the study involved an examination at the employee level, in which Park focused on data from the 2005 Merit Principles Survey (MPS), a biannual survey sent out to United States federal employees by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB); the second level of the study involved a subset of the FHCS data called the Best Places to Work (BPTW). Park's objective in the study was to determine if federal employees trusted leaders and organizations in the federal work environment. Park noted that antecedent conditions, such as incentive motivators and the organization's leadership, which both have a substantial effect on the trust employees have in organizations. Leaders in the doctoral study could have addressed how to gain employees' trust to bolster retention.

Cho and Lewis (2012) and Rubin and Kellough (2011) used the 2005 Merit Principles Survey as well. The level of trust employees have in supervisors influences the strength of the relationship between perceptions of agency or work unit performance and actual performance management practices (Cho & Lewis, 2012). When federal employees perceive procedural justice is high, the employees identify with the organization and report complaints following normal procedures (Rubin & Kellough, 2011). However, the opposite becomes the case when perceptions of procedural fairness are low (Rubin & Kellough, 2011). Organizational justice perceptions affect firm performance and social capital is a mediating variable of the relationship (Mahajan & Benson, 2013).

In another study of public employees, Grissom (2012) observed employee turnover reveals a direct relationship with how well an organization performs (see also Hancock et al., 2013). Because of the emphasis public sector and private sector organizations place on performance, Grissom studied how management effectiveness might affect employee turnover. Grissom did not collect the data, but rather relied upon existing data sets representing employees from 6,300 public schools, with a sample size of more than 31,000 individuals. Utilizing ordinary least squares regression in the analysis, Grissom used employee turnover as the sole dependent variable and effectiveness of principles and involvement of teachers in school policy-making as distinct independent variables. Grissom presented strong evidence to support the first hypothesis suggesting employee turnover would be lower when employees perceive managers to be highly effective.

Another notable finding of Grissom (2012) was while effective principals (managers) are in place, a negative relationship between teacher turnover and teachers' active participation in decision-making with respect to school policy develops; Grissom, Viano, and Selin (2015) drew the same conclusion. Likewise, in a federal study, Kim and Fernandez (2015) concluded that employee empowerment revealed a negative relationship with turnover intention. In contrast, when employees perceive managers as ineffective, employees are likely to turnover even if actively involved in the policy-making (Grissom, 2012). A noteworthy implication of Grissom's study is employees may actively participate in organizational improvements, but leave because of ineffective management operating the organization. Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Keiser (2012) used the same public dataset as Grissom (2012); however, Grissom et al. (2012) focused on job satisfaction and employee turnover. A further distinction of Grissom et al.'s (2012) study was the introduction of a gender variable. The researchers discovered employees have higher job satisfaction when the boss is of the same gender. For the doctoral study, leaders discussed strategies to improve retention. Based on Grissom and Grissom et al. (2012)'s studies, determining a balance between male and female leaders with a corresponding gender ratio of employees may be a strategy for improving retention. Hayes (2015) did not find gender to be a reliable predictor of turnover intentions, though the study did not involve a variable considering the gender of leaders as in Grissom and Grissom et al. (2012)'s studies.

While Grissom (2012) looked to management effectiveness as an independent variable having an influence on employee commitment (the dependent variable), Rubin

and Brody (2011) employed management citizenship behavior as the independent variable in a quantitative study. Management citizenship behavior (MCB) is a concept expressing how managers behave according to accepted organizational leadership practices, with an emphasis on workers' rights, ethical behavior, and level of dedication to work-family balance of employees (Rubin & Brody, 2011). For the study, Rubin and Brody obtained data from the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW), a survey of 3,504 workers (taken every five years), representing the labor force across the United States. Rubin and Brody suggested three areas in which MCB might have an influence, which are employees' loyalty to the workplace, contentment on the job, and mental health (dependent variables). Rubin and Brody discovered the same positive relationship to be true with respect to managers' ethical behavior and each of the three areas of interest. Rubin and Brody's examination of the operational aspect of MCB is somewhat analogous to Grissom's variable of management effectiveness and both studies reflected significant findings revealing how much management's behavior and competency affects the various aspects of the employee work experience.

In contrast to Rubin and Brody's (2011) quantitative analysis, Todd and Binns (2013) conducted a case study to understand how work-life balance was manifesting in four public sector agencies in Australia. The results of the study revealed work-life balance was primarily a tool to attract new employees but was not a permanent fixture in the day-to-day operations within the agencies (Todd & Binns, 2013). In a study involving a public university in Vermont, work-life balance issues contributed to turnover intentions of faculty (Ryan, Healy, & Sullivan, 2012). For the doctoral study, the leaders

could have discussed the prioritization of work-life balance in each respective workplace explored. The concept of work-life balance is becoming a prominent area of concern for managers evaluating retention strategies (Deery & Jago, 2015).

Jung and Lee (2012) analyzed federal employee data and revealed a positive relationship between how participative managers appear with management style and how employees perceive work groups are performing. Guinot, Chiva, and Roca-Puig (2014) discovered that the public servants studied were likely to demonstrate workplace satisfaction and less stress when levels of trust in supervisors and peers were higher. How leaders portray themselves to employees, therefore, is of utmost importance with respect to employee morale and performance.

Salleh et al. (2013) conducted a study to evaluate performance appraisal perceptions in conjunction with organizational commitment. Salleh et al.'s study involved 425 federal employees representing 25 federal agencies across Malaysia. Salleh et al. were also interested in understanding if performance evaluation satisfaction had any mediating effect on the relationship. Salleh et al. tested the latter hypothesis using Sobel statistical tests, used to evaluate if the relationship between variables (independent and dependent) diminishes by introducing a variable acting as a mediator. Salleh et al. discovered a noteworthy association between the perceived fairness of the performance evaluation and the level of organizational commitment and, in addition, revealed performance appraisal satisfaction was indeed a mediating variable. An earlier study of the relationship between the variables of performance appraisal systems and

organizational commitment revealed similar results (Lee & Jimenez, 2011), though the study involved federal employees in the United States.

In contrast to Salleh et al. (2013), Lee and Jimenez (2011) used existing survey data from the 2005 Merit Principles Survey. Lee and Jimenez's population was significantly larger than Salleh et al.'s was, as the former utilized 36,926 usable surveys reflecting responses from 24 federal agencies. For the purposes of the study, Lee and Jimenez used employees' intentions to leave an agency within 12 months as the dependent variable and performance-based management practices as the independent variable. Lee and Jimenez distinguished between turnover intention and actual turnover in the primary study while noting a strong relationship between the variables as well (see also Cho & Lewis, 2012). Researchers Lee and Jimenez discovered a significant connection between employee turnover intentions and the federal government's performance-based reward system, similar to the results of Salleh et al. (2013). Researchers Cohen et al. (2015) noted that turnover intention contrasts with actual turnover because turnover intention is subjective, whereas turnover is measurable. Moreover, turnover intentions are not always strong predictors of actual turnover (Katsikea, Theodosiou, & Morgan, 2015). A firm understanding of the significance of turnover intentions may require an analysis of the reason for the intention (for example, unhappiness with the job versus desire for promotion; Ali, 2014).

Dickinson and Villeval (2012) based a study of job allocation rules and firm productivity on the legitimacy of the *Peter principle*. According to the Peter principle theory, in hierarchical organizations, employees are promoted to a level of incompetence,

with less suitable candidates receiving promotions over truly qualified candidates (Dickinson & Villeval, 2012). The study is relevant to the doctoral study by revealing one of the downsides of misallocating promotions to employees (Dickinson & Villeval, 2012).

The literature topics of organizational commitment, work climate, and job satisfaction focused heavily on the employees of organizations. While predicting the responses of public leaders is not possible in advance, the literature suggested a number of topics might arise in a discussion regarding employee retention. In contrast to researchers focusing on turnover and organizational performance, George (2015) researched reasons why employees choose to stay; George discovered retention was a function of employees' perceptions concerning (a) type of leadership style, (b) perceived management support, (c) conducive environment, (d) social support, (e) development opportunities, (f) compensation, (g) crafted/sculpted workload, and (h) work-life balance. George attempted to narrow in on the external reasons employees remain in organizations. Alternatively, Stanley, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, and Bentein (2013) attempted to investigate at the individual level and developed commitment profiles of a sample employee population. The retention topics that George (2015) identified served as a reference when formulating thematic patterns in the coding process. The next section will concentrate on how organizational leaders interact with employees.

Leadership Style and Leader-Employee Relationships

The extent to which employees engage in the workplace may depend on leadership behavior (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Engagement levels may suggest the

likelihood employees will turnover (Wollard, 2011). Therefore, the leadership style organizational leaders exhibit may influence the likelihood employees will turnover (Caillier, 2014). Some problems with employee turnover result from certain adverse actions leaders have taken, for which employees view leaders negatively (Basford, 2012). Whether the focus is leaders' actions or leaders' style of management, the relationship between leaders and employees is under regular investigation in the turnover literature. Social capital theory becomes evident as the workplace interactions between leaders and employees highlight trust and mutual goals (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Because the literature features such leader-employee relationships so prevalently, a discussion regarding two of the main leader-employee relationship theories is worthwhile.

Social exchange theory is a conceptual framework some researchers use to study the relationship between justice and trust in an organization (Colquitt & Rodell, 2011). In general, exchange theorists focus either on the economic relationship between employees and the leader or organization (as established by procedures and contracts), or social exchanges, which involve the personal relationship between employees and leaders (Zeinabadi & Salehi, 2011). Social exchange theorists view trust as essential in social exchange relationships because each party assumes reciprocation will take place at some point in time (Colquitt et al., 2013).

A positive social exchange relationship between employees and leaders in an organization reflects a corresponding positive relationship with the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) the employees exhibit (Zeinabadi & Salehi, 2011). High levels of OCB are evident in organizations in which employees willingly perform duties

and tasks beyond specific job requirements (Oren et al., 2012). Evidence of trust, loyalty, and respect are leading indicators of high-quality relationships between the leader and the subordinates (Oren et al., 2012). The benefits of the relationship may be tangible (for example, higher pay, additional decision-making power) or intangible (for example, extensive support, additional opportunities for professional development), and the relationship exists through reciprocity (Oren et al., 2012). In a later study, Harrington and Lee (2014) used social exchange theory to explain how a perceived level of managerial support may influence how employees consider appraisals to be fair or not. Levels of perceived management support were one of the focus areas George (2015) also identified in the retention study.

Researchers in leader-member exchange (LMX) theory investigate the quality and variety of relationships between supervisors and subordinates (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014; Meng & Wu, 2015; Oren et al., 2012). Existing studies reflect a focus at the individual level, between supervisor and subordinate, or between supervisor and a team of individuals (Le Blanc & González-Romá, 2012). Some researchers suggest the dyadic relationship is not personal, but rather a *working* relationship (Chen, Yu, & Son, 2014). Zhang, Li, and Harris (2014) provided evidence work relationships and personal relationships between leaders might perhaps have separate consideration as each type of relationship serves a unique purpose for either party. Regardless of how researchers describe particular leader-member relationships, the relationship shapes the attitudes and behaviors of the followers (Harris et al., 2014). The observation is fundamental to the doctoral study because leaders' behaviors influence employee attitudes and behaviors

(Prottas, 2013); therefore, how leaders address turnover may be a function of the relationship with employees.

In a 2013 dissertation, Nelson asserted that the LMX literature featured mainly two dyadic relationships; the first was between leaders and individuals in the favored group (for example, high-quality relationships), and the second was between leaders and individuals in the nonfavored group (for example, low-quality relationships). Nelson proposed a third type of LMX pairing, identified as between leaders and subordinates in middle-quality relationships. Being in such relationships may make followers feel less ostracized from co-workers; in other words, individuals in the *in-group* might believe individuals in the *out-group* perceive *in-group* individuals negatively, and vice-versa (Nelson, 2013). Therefore, having a leader-member relationship somewhere in the middle (with respect to quality), may result in a less divisive workplace (Nelson, 2013). In the context of the doctoral study, Nelson's findings might suggest leaders foster middle-quality relationships to promote an inclusive work climate. In contrast, Le Blanc & González-Romá (2012) provided evidence suggesting at the team level, leaders making a differentiation between low-quality and high-quality relationships may benefit how the team operates.

Other researchers focused on specific variables affecting the strength of the leader-member relationship. For example, Haynie, Cullen, Lester, Winter, and Svyantek (2014) discovered that procedural justice climate (see Operational Definitions section) had a positive relationship with how subordinates perform tasks. Maintaining fair procedures and practices as a norm shared with all subordinates reveals improved

employee performance, in contrast to scenarios in which justice perceptions are at the individual level (Haynie et al., 2014). According to Sun, Hau Siu Chow, Chiu, and Pan (2013), a notably distinct relationship existed comparing LMX and OCB while procedural fairness climate was higher, rather than lower.

Leader-member exchange theory and social exchange theory are not always mutually exclusive in the literature, as researchers like Buch, Kuvass, Dysvik, and Schyns (2014) developed both theories together, demonstrating how the concepts may converge in some workplace scenarios. Buch et al. (2014) differentiated between the economic and social aspects of each theory, denoted as ELMX and SLMX, respectively. Researchers often compare and contrast LMX theory and social exchange theory with other leadership theories such as transactional leadership theory and transformational leadership theory (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Transactional leadership denotes behaviors a leader exhibits to motivate employees to move toward a common goal (Shuck & Herd, 2012). In contrast, transformational leadership refers to how leaders find ways to appeal to employees' higher order needs and excite employees with charisma (Bacha & Walker, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012). In a study from 2013, Tse, Huang, and Lam sought to understand how transformational leaders encouraged employees to remain in organizations, while conducting the study within a social exchange framework. Other research featuring social exchange theory revealed the quality of the social exchange relationship could mediate the connection between justice and task performance, and between justice and OCB (Colquitt et al., 2013).

The leadership style that leaders exhibit may influence levels of employee job satisfaction (Biswas & Varma, 2012). In a study involving 357 business employees, Biswas and Varma (2012) hypothesized that transformational leadership would have a positive and significant influence on job satisfaction. Biswas and Varma further hypothesized job satisfaction would have a similar relationship with employee performance. The researchers revealed evidence to support both hypotheses (Biswas & Varma, 2012). Rivera and Flinck (2011) noted that a lack of engagement on the part of federal employees costs the taxpayers \$65 billion every year, and organizations lose about 35% of payrolls, resulting from employee disengagement. The conceptual framework of cost-benefit theory relates to the doctoral study because, according to Dalton and Todor (1979), the theory involves the economic problems associated with employee turnover. Having established a clear link between job satisfaction, employee involvement on the job and performance, Rivera and Flinck's work supported Biswas and Varma's by relating disengagement to negative economic consequences.

While Biswas and Varma (2012) examined employee performance and its relationship with job satisfaction as part of their broader study, Cascio (2014) identified performance management strategies (from the leader perspective) as being critical for employee retention. Performance management is continuous and leaders may integrate human resource development (for example, specialized training) to assist employees in performing successfully (Cascio, 2014). Furthermore, providing adequate training to employees corresponds to favorable retention outcomes in organizations (Beynon, Jones, Pickernell, & Packham, 2015). From an alternate perspective, Wang, Zhao, and Thornhill

(2015) concluded that a lack of employee participation (resulting from pay disparity) is consistent with eventual turnover and innovation suffers as a result. With respect to the interviews for the doctoral study, leaders could have discussed economic and financial barriers challenging strategy implementation (see interview questions two, four, and six). The interviewees could have also discussed economic or financial factors providing motives to address retention in the first place (see interview question five).

Summary of the Literature Findings

Based on the literature reviewed, studies involving employee retention themes were mainly quantitative. The plenitude of quantitative studies lent support to the decision to conduct a qualitative analysis because multiple methods facilitate triangulation, which is necessary for social science research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Wengraf, 2001). A qualitative method allowed for rich data collection, whereby unanticipated responses regarding retention strategies complemented anticipated responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Furthermore, the quantitative studies in the available literature failed to address sufficiently the research question because the question inherently suggests a need for open-ended responses, which is the opposite strategy of quantitative studies (for example, surveys), which typically involve close-ended or single responses to a specific question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The literature review provides a foundation upon which the researcher gains knowledge of the subject matter, develops interview questions, and performs the interviews with an established level of authority and credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

The prevailing conceptual framework, namely cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social capital theory provided a comprehensive lens to approach the research question. While researchers employing LMX theory and social exchange theory provided valuable insight into the field of employee retention, the established conceptual framework reflects a purposeful business practitioner perspective. For example, cost-benefit theory provides the context behind why public sector leaders might have an interest in employee retention (for example, maximization of taxpayer dollars). Human capital theory gives a glimpse of what might be lost (for example, institutional knowledge) if public employees turnover. Last, social capital theory provides some avenues leaders might be exploring for retention strategy implementation (for example, improving social relationships to help connect employees with the workplace).

Barnard and Simbhoo (2014) noted that the experiences of employees in public sector environments might vary significantly from employees in the private sector (profit-driven) organizations. Rehman (2012) noted that private sector leaders are considering profit, expansion, and competition to stay afloat, while public sector leaders focus on services humans perform (a human capital focus). Access to literature from both sectors provided a more comprehensive overview of employee retention. While the review of the academic literature included both sectors, the doctoral study entailed only the experiences of leaders from the public sector.

Evidence abounds regarding the need for additional studies on employee retention strategies; given the apparent lack of studies featuring public sector retention, the doctoral study may be a valuable contribution to the retention literature across sectors.

Despite the specific attention to the public sector in the doctoral study, employee retention is a topic of global concern (Rehman, 2012; Sturman et al., 2012). Table 2 displays the major retention themes discussed in the literature review.

Table 2

Retention Themes from the Literature

Compensation	Leadership style
Effective management	Organizational citizenship behavior
Empowerment	Organizational justice
Ethical climate	Perceived organizational support
Human resource management	Performance management
Job embeddedness	Training/development opportunities
Job satisfaction	Work environment
Leader/employee gender congruence	Work-life balance

Reviewing the literature involved a constant comparison strategy grouping articles with similar content (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012). The list of retention themes from the literature map closely to the items George (2015) noted as being paramount in employee retention, which were: (a) type of leadership style, (b) perceived management support, (c) conducive environment, (d) social support, (e) development opportunities, (f) compensation, (g) crafted/sculpted workload, and (h) work-life balance. Leaders who participated in the study discussed topics related to George's themes but also introduced new topics not covered in the literature review. As the data for the study emerged,

reviewing the themes represented in the literature facilitated organization and cross-validation of the data (Yin, 2015). Any new themes became search terms for additional literature relevant to the study. Reviewing the literature for new insight was an ongoing task throughout the duration of the study.

Transition

The majority of Section 1 comprised of the literature review, which provided historical and conceptual context to address the research question. The section opened with the identification of the specific business problem, followed by the purpose and nature of the study. As demonstrated in Section 1, a host of literature is available concerning employee retention. The beginning of the section involved a discussion of the background of the problem and an overview of how the research question emerged from the established literature. After having identified some of the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations for the study, a discussion of the significance of the study and implications for social change followed. The section concluded with an exhaustive review of the literature, highlighting first the conceptual framework guiding the study, followed by an evaluation of the turnover and retention literature.

The details of the study method and design comprise Section 2. The section includes a description of research roles, the process followed for identifying suitable participants, and an outline of the interview process. In addition, the section contains details regarding the data collection process, the methods employed for data analysis, and ethical research measures installed and executed. A dedicated section on validity and

reliability ensured the case study had dependability, creditability, transferability, and confirmability.

Section 3 features a presentation of the findings, a discussion regarding how the study might apply to professional practice and promote social change, and recommendations for future actions and studies. The remaining components include a personal reflection on the study, recommendations for further research, and conclusions. The themes identified in the presentation of the findings section have academic foundations, as evident in the literature review and triangulated support. Future researchers conducting similar studies may use Section 3 to compare and contrast findings. The study is replicable with respect to protocol and procedure, population, and geographic location.

Section 2: The Project

This section contains a detailed rationale for selecting the method and design of the study as well as a description of researcher roles and the participants. The section also encompasses appropriate and ethical actions used to conduct the research. Furthermore, the section contains details regarding the data collection process, data analysis techniques, and considerations for reliability and validity of the data. Section 2 contains the preparatory and procedural parts of the study, while Section 3 features the findings and conclusions.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies public sector leaders might implement to improve employee retention. The population comprised public sector leaders including directors, managers, supervisors, and team leaders working in Western New York. The public sector leaders worked for federal, state, or local government organizations. This study might contribute to social change by providing organizational leaders with specific strategies to increase employee retention. Furthermore, the acquired job-specific knowledge of the seasoned employee would not be lost. Lower employee turnover correlates with observable improvements with respect to organizational performance (Park & Shaw, 2013). Decreasing employee turnover would likely lead to significant cost savings for organizations as hiring new workers involves training and orientation expenses (Cho & Lewis, 2012). Implementing strategies to reduce turnover costs in public organizations is necessary for proper stewardship of the taxpayer dollars spent to fund government operations. Focusing on employee retention

may result in decreased costs and improvements in organizational performance (Hancock et al., 2013).

Role of the Researcher

The typical ethics guidelines and procedures institutional review boards and researchers follow evolved from the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research [NCPHSBBR], 1979). Accordingly, I completed mandatory ethics training prior to commencement of the study. Researchers have a responsibility to explain to research participants what to expect during and after the study and to explain the researcher's role (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Draper & Swift, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Prior to initiating the interview, researchers describe both researcher and participant roles, explain the reasons for conducting the study, and note what applications the study might have in the real world (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). To ensure all interview activities were clear, all participants received an interview protocol (see Appendix A) containing the step-by-step procedures of the interview (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview protocol supported dependability in the study because each interview followed the same steps (Draper & Swift, 2011). Conducting interviews consistently was possible with a protocol (Granot et al., 2012). Apart from the qualitative researcher's primary role as the data collector, additional roles may emerge during and after the interviews (Unluer, 2012).

Establishing trust and rapport with participants encourages cooperation and engagement during the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Building trust with participants began by describing what the

study entailed and what roles were to be assumed throughout the interview and data analysis process. At the onset of the interview, the participants learned about the basic requirements of a Walden University doctoral student. The interview protocol (Appendix A) supported the explanation provided. Anyan (2013) noted that rapport is essential for having participants agree to record the session.

Participants likely are aware graduate students do research for a paper and may thus have minimal reservations when researchers are students, as opposed to other possible roles, such as a manager, professor, and so forth (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Anticipating every ethical concern is impossible, but a professional researcher approaches each interview with unwavering ethical diligence (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). All interview procedures set forth in the study conformed to Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements.

The researcher is usually the main data collector in qualitative research, which introduces the possibility of unintentional bias (Draper & Swift, 2011). Participants and researchers alike are open to emotional influences during the interview (Draper & Swift, 2011). Employing an *epoché* technique discouraged researcher bias from influencing the interviews. Researchers employ *epoché* (also known as bracketing) to set aside personal experiences or feelings regarding the research topic (Moustakas, 1994; Tuohy et al., 2013). A challenge that researchers encounter when bracketing is exhibiting transparency about experiences; therefore, staying focused on the new information coming forth becomes a priority (Moustakas, 1994). Researchers are unable to bracket life experiences completely though some scholars noted that previous experiences could help researchers

interpret new data (Tuohy et al., 2013). To mitigate the potential for inaccurately capturing participants' responses, transcript review and member checking procedures were part of the data collection process. Data scrubbing took place to exclude any portion of the interviews for which researcher bias was evident. Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommended documenting such activities in a notebook to ensure transparency of the process.

In contrast to bracketing, Patton (2011) noted that story sharing might be a viable and useful data collection method. However, mitigating the risk of introducing personal bias necessitated strict adherence to the original interview questions, prompting only when necessary for clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Researchers prepare interview questions to avoid bias but during the interview; researchers also avoid strong remarks that risk swaying the interviewee's responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In view of such considerations, body language remained neutral to avoid biasing participant responses. A balanced approach was necessary, as body language may also suggest interest and engagement (Draper & Swift, 2011).

Participants

Careful consideration during the participant selection process ensured the recruitment of individuals capable of providing appropriate data for the study (Patton, 2015). The subsections to follow contain information regarding how eligibility criteria ensured that suitable candidates volunteered and how the recruitment process occurred. The component concludes with a discussion regarding how the researcher-participant relationship developed.

Eligibility Criteria

The case study focus was on how leaders are implementing strategies to improve employee retention in public organizations. Therefore, all participants for the study were public sector leaders who have implemented employee retention strategies personally. For the purposes of the study, a public sector leader was a current director, manager, supervisor, or team leader working for a federal, state, or local organization. Furthermore, eligible leaders had employment in the Western New York region and worked full-time on a permanent basis. Specific strategies used to improve employee retention would have universal application, notwithstanding geographic location. While workers in one geographic location may behave differently from another (Kuntz, Kuntz, Elenkov, & Nabirukhna, 2013), some researchers are proponents of sampling in a particular geographical area by supporting the notion that individuals congregate with other likeminded individuals (Trotter, 2012). The sample did not need to represent the general population (i.e., all public sector employees) because according to Yin (2014), statistical generalizability of findings is not a goal of case studies. Therefore, a sample of public sector leaders from a distinct geographic area was appropriate.

Selecting participants based on specific criteria reflected a purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 2015). A purposeful sample contains cases rich in the information provided (Patton, 2015). Accordingly, demographic identifiers such as race, gender, ethnicity, and so on were not a consideration for the sample because the focus of the study was on the strategies leaders have implemented, not on differences among the leaders personally. Employee retention strategies may have application to public leaders

of any demographic makeup. Other researchers studying employee retention and turnover intentions used eligibility criteria to narrow the focus of studies as well (Al-Hussami, Darawad, Saleh, & Hayajneh, 2014; Brown, Fraser, Wong, Muise, & Cummings, 2012). Performing an eligibility exercise strengthened the credibility and validity of the responses (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). All participants received a detailed consent form to assist in determining eligibility for the study. To minimize any conflicts of interest or perceptions of coercion, participants affirmed not knowing the researcher prior to the study.

Accessing Participants

Having identified the eligibility criteria for participation in the study, a discussion follows regarding how locating and approaching public leaders was successful. Damianakis and Woodford (2012) noted that for qualitative interviews involving small, connected communities, maintaining the confidentiality of each participant is of significant concern. To avoid jeopardizing the confidentiality of participants and compromising the integrity of the study, solicitation of participants did not occur personally in the workplace.

Multiple approaches were available to locate potential participants for the study. The first approach involved soliciting participants via newspaper advertisements. Placing advertisements in newspapers was useful for some researchers who had sample populations challenging to locate (Morgan, Jorm, & Mackinnon, 2013; Williams, Proetto, Casiano, & Franklin, 2012). The advertisement run first in the Buffalo News (see Appendix B) yielded no prospective participants and cost over \$200.00. Patton (2015)

warned about cost considerations with respect to sample size, which became relevant in this research endeavor.

The second approach for advertising the study was the use of a flyer (see Appendix C). Willing businesses and organizations posted the flyer in a window. The flyer advertized the purpose of the study and the eligibility criteria for participation. Williams et al. (2012) used flyers as a recruitment tool for a study with a limited population. Flyers are still common for recruiting participants even when studies are mainly online (Temple & Brown, 2012). The goal of finding appropriate participants is to secure individuals who are knowledgeable about the topic and who are willing to provide relevant information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, the flyer contained eligibility criteria to assist in pre-screening candidates for participation. Two of the seven participants responded to the flyer advertisement.

The third approach, online advertising, was the principal solicitation tool for locating suitable participants. The original intention was to have Facebook as the primary avenue to solicit participation under the page heading of “Public Sector Retention Study”. Wilson, Gosling, and Graham (2012) highlighted the benefits of using Facebook in social science research, with a major benefit being the large number of users. To avoid privacy issues, confidential information, including who was participating, did not appear on the Facebook page. Participants retained the right to share the information. Despite the initial goal of using Facebook as the primary advertising source, LinkedIn was the social networking site from which the remaining five participants responded to the study announcement. Public leaders who posted job locations and job titles received an

invitation to participate, but all invitations were generic and not targeted for specific individuals. The electronic invitation contained the same verbiage found in the Facebook page and LinkedIn message advertisements (see Appendix B). A general post of the study appeared on my personal LinkedIn page for public viewing as well. Participants who responded to the electronic invitations likewise received the study materials electronically in advance of the interview.

Establishing a Relationship

To have a successful interview, researchers work toward building rapport with each participant to ensure comfort and participation without reservations (Englander, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Typically, qualitative interviews involve conversation in which both the interviewer and interviewee have open, two-way dialog (Moustakas, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Furthermore, explaining to participants how involvement in the study may help public leaders in the future, perhaps by leading to a productive work environment, highlighted the positive contribution. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted that individuals agree to participate when solving a problem is part of the project.

The purpose of having an opening discussion with participants is to establish trust and mutual appreciation for the topic of inquiry (Moustakas, 1994), as well as demonstrate a sense of empathy or interest in the participants' experiences (Patton, 2015). Finding common ground is essential to establishing a strong working relationship (Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Fostering rapport early on is vital because the practice may set the tone for the entire interview and even influence if the participants are

willing to stay to answer the questions. Building rapport also helps diminish any potential risk (for example, psychological) to the participant (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). The developing relationship is a conversational partnership (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

To enhance the relationship with participants, Englander (2012) would meet with participants about a week in advance of the interview to discuss what will take place but also would allow the participants to contemplate topics to discuss; Englander argued that the practice would facilitate richer data collection. Preliminary information sessions did not take place in this study because of the challenges of coordinating multiple interviews and the potential burden on the participants. However, participants did have ample time to review the interview protocol prior to the interview, receiving the document along with the interview questions electronically approximately one week in advance. Participants were able to call or send an e-mail to raise any concerns prior to the interview. Qu and Dumay (2011) noted that with semistructured interviews the researcher might not assume all participants would interpret the interview questions the same way. During the interview, if the participant's response required further clarification, additional probing questions were available. Asking clarifying questions is typical for in-depth interviewing (Moustakas, 1994; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). If additional interviews had become necessary to obtain the optimal richness of data, scheduling additional time was at the discretion of participants. However, the time was sufficient for each interview and thus no second interviews were necessary.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

The study involved a qualitative research method. In qualitative research, researchers seek meaning behind the participants' stories (Arghode, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014). A method allowing for open discussion on the matter was essential because the interest of the study was what strategies public leaders are implementing to retain employees, which required dialog to obtain appropriate data.

One alternative to a qualitative method was a quantitative method. Quantitative methods were traditionally mainstream because research sponsors viewed the methods as rigorous and systematic, but qualitative methods are emerging as suitable options for studying the unpredictable, nuanced nature of human experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Research synthesis, which involves making connections between smaller studies to gain a broader understanding of a major research topic, was historically the popular choice for quantitative researchers (Suri, 2011). However, synthesis is increasingly a priority in qualitative research as well (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Suri, 2011).

Accordingly, quantitative and qualitative research methods are converging. Using data sets available to the public (as in quantitative studies) allows researchers to analyze large samples without having to conduct surveys personally, which saves a researcher time, money, and other resources (Hemerly, 2013). However, surveys do not involve opportunities for the participants to describe life experiences with a particular phenomenon as qualitative studies do (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The existing public data

surveys do not specifically focus on strategies to improve retention and, therefore, the data available to address the research question is minimal.

Another alternative to a qualitative study was a mixed method approach. Some social science researchers advanced the notion that qualitative and quantitative research methods should not be combined (Östlund, et al., 2011). It is a subject of ongoing debate. However, despite some researchers' misgivings, proponents of mixed methods cite the benefits of triangulation that the method may offer (Östlund et al., 2011). A mixed methods approach could address the research question, but based on the literature review, extensive quantitative scholarship already existed pertaining to employee retention. Indeed, Groeneveld et al. (2015) examined the proliferation of quantitative methods in the area of public administration. A mixed method study was not suitable, therefore, given the quantitative perspective (see Heyvaert et al., 2013; Patton, 2015). An objective of the study was to adopt a new approach to studying an existing business problem, not to replicate the data already obtained from quantitative surveys. Having provided a rationale for selecting a qualitative method, a justification for using a case study design also warrants a detailed discussion.

Research Design

Case study was the research design adopted for the project. Case study is appropriate for qualitative studies with a bounded system identified and for which in-depth data collection may take place (Patton, 2015). The bounded system under inquiry was the cache of strategies a limited number of public leaders have implemented to improve employee retention.

Alternative designs are available to qualitative researchers, and as Yin (2014) noted, no definitive hierarchical order mandates which design is appropriate for a particular study. For example, a phenomenological research design was under consideration because the approach involves the researcher collecting data from individuals sharing a common experience (Gill, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Moreover, the researcher asks what phenomenon participants experienced and requests details regarding the circumstances surrounding the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological researchers emphasize the interpretation of the participant over the interpretation of the researcher, which to an extent contrasts with quantitative studies (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological studies require the participants to have shared the same type of experience (phenomenon), and the essence of the phenomenon is subject to evaluation for shared meaning (Patton, 2015). No such presupposition existed for this doctoral study, as an expectation was that strategy development might reflect personal and unique results. The absence of a shared, extraordinary phenomenon advanced in the research question rendered a phenomenological design unfit for the study.

Ethnography was another qualitative design considered, but such studies generally require an extensive time commitment in the field and the researcher observes phenomena while also being a participant (Yin, 2014). However, obtaining security clearance from multiple government agencies would have been challenging, if not impossible. There would have been an indefinite amount of time committed to gathering relevant, coherent data for an ethnographic study. Such an outlay of time might have compromised completing the doctorate program in the time permitted by Walden

University. Therefore, an ethnographic design would not have been practical given the research question presented.

A narrative study would also have been an acceptable alternative research design, as one or two participants could have provided an extensive interview. However, narrative studies are appropriate in situations recurring over a long period (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). The emphasis of the study was on what strategies leaders are implementing, but no longitudinal exploration (following every step of the implementation process) occurred.

While phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative theory each offer particular research benefits, a case study design best captured the spirit and intention of the core research question. The qualitative researcher's objective is to determine answers to the *how* questions relating to the research topic (Yin, 2014). For the doctoral study, the case study design was the closest fit to meet the central objectives. In contrast with experimental designs, in which a researcher may manipulate a behavior to observe a particular response, case study research does not have the same flexibility (Yin, 2014). Likewise, a unique characteristic of case study research is that the researcher may pull from any number of sources to strengthen the project, using historical documents, interviews, and observations (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2014).

Comparing and contrasting successful case studies provided additional support in favor of case study design. For example, Rivera and Flinck (2011) conducted a case study on federal employee engagement. Richardson (2014) explored strategies to improve organizational performance. Faokunla (2012) employed case study design to explore the

implications of e-government pertaining to intergovernmental relations and management. Donovan (2012) explored self-actualization of employees and productivity in the modern workplace. The exploratory nature of the research question reinforced the appropriateness and utility of a case study design.

Performing a case study involving a minimum of four leaders from a cross-section of public organizations would likely result in a comprehensive understanding of how leaders are implementing retention strategies. However, the original proposed sample size of four provided no assurance of saturation. Saturation (also known as redundancy sampling) is not predictable (Patton, 2015). When any new data collected ceases to offer further insight regarding the research question, data collection ceases (Draper & Swift, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Achieving saturation was a collaborative effort, as interviewees assisted in identifying the major themes.

Population and Sampling

Qualitative researchers provide a justification for all sampling decisions because poor decisions may compromise the creditability of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Though anticipating every variable influencing the outcome of a study is impossible, the researcher avoids actively the arbitrary selection of participants (Wengraf, 2001). According to O'Reilly and Parker (2012), every participant might add value to a qualitative study by providing information relevant to the phenomenon of interest. Transparency of the sampling method and all ancillary decisions is imperative to ensure creditability of the data (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Population

The sample population for the study was public sector leaders (federal, state, and local employees) working in Western New York (WNY) on a full-time, permanent basis. Leaders were directors, managers, supervisors, or team leaders. Given the preponderance of federal, state, and local offices situated in WNY, the population was adequate to secure study participants. Soliciting residents of WNY was conducive for interviewing in person rather than by phone. The sample population included (exclusively) public sector leaders who implemented strategies to improve employee retention in a public organization.

Sampling Method

Purposeful sampling was the sampling method for the study. A variety of other sampling methods is also available to researchers, such as convenience sampling, snowball sampling, random sampling, criterion sampling, and stratified sampling, among others (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). However, the sampling strategy suited to address the research question appropriate for the study (Palinkas et al., 2013). One of the most common sampling methods for qualitative researchers is purposeful (also known as purposive) sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Draper & Swift, 2011; Suri, 2011). Purposeful sampling requires all participants to meet certain eligibility criteria and have the ability to answer the research question (Patton, 2015).

Palinkas et al. (2013) noted that purposive sampling is a popular choice for qualitative studies because of the emphasis on rich data collection and minimal requirement for resources (largely because of small sample size). Suri (2011) also

highlighted the savings in time and money resources. A weakness of purposive sampling is while reaching data saturation, the analysis of the data does not lead to empirical generalizability (Palinkas et al., 2013). For example, just because four public sector leaders in Western New York report on retention strategies does not mean additional strategies are nonexistent.

Random sampling is popular in quantitative studies, but the option also exists for qualitative studies (Wengraf, 2001). However, unless the researcher interviews a statistically relevant number of samples, a random sample may not be worthwhile; in-depth interviewing a large sample may strain finite resources (for example, time, money) available to the researcher (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). A random sample was inappropriate for the study because the number of hours spent interviewing, transcribing, coding, and analyzing the data would be far too immense for a limited doctoral study (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). When the researcher has a list of the entire population for a sample, a representative randomized sample (also known as a purposeful random sample) is an option for qualitative researchers (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001).

A snowball sample would be acceptable because the possibility exists one person who experienced the phenomenon might share experiences with someone else who experienced the same phenomenon (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). In the recruitment phase, most of the participants offered to mention the study to their colleagues but none of the referrals contacted me to participate. In a study involving a diverse population, Perez, Nie, Ardern, Radhu, and Ritvo (2013) used snowball sampling to maximize the number of participants. Snowball sampling is useful in populations for which obtaining

participants is particularly challenging (Perez et al., 2013); finding public sector employees willing to be on record (despite assurances of confidentiality) could have been such a challenge; the reality was that an adequate number of leaders responded.

Stratified purposeful sampling is appropriate for research studies for which identifying variability in a phenomenon is paramount (Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). For example, Kerski, Demerci, and Milson (2014) used stratified purposeful sampling to explore how secondary schools in various regions of the world taught using geographic information systems. Suri (2011) used stratified purposeful sampling to develop the conceptual framework for a study on qualitative research synthesis.

Eligible candidates for the study received a confirmation to participate in order of expressed interest to take part in the study. Therefore, the order in which any leader responded to the study was random. Such an approach allows a purposeful sample to be random (Palinkas et al., 2013; Wengraf, 2001). Purposeful random sampling provides additional credibility to the study (Patton, 2015). A final issue to resolve after identifying who participated is *how many* participated.

Sample Size

The objective of determining sample size in a qualitative study is to achieve data saturation, the point at which new data ceases to provide additional insight to the problem under investigation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2013; Wengraf, 2001). Depending on the quality of the data obtained, a sample size of as few as one may be useful (Patton, 2015). However, Yin (2014) asserted having at least two would be beneficial with respect to analysis. Having multiple cases facilitates replication, which

strengthens the study (Yin, 2014). The minimum sample was four, with the goal of capturing data from any combination of leaders from the local, state, or federal levels. After interviewing the first four individuals, themes emerged but critical supporting data appeared to be missing in some of the themes. Increasing the sample size to achieve saturation is necessary in qualitative studies (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Ultimately, three additional leaders participated. The total sample consisted of two federal, three state, and two local leaders. The segmented sample reflected Yin's (2013) sampling suggestions regarding replication and analytical robustness.

A debate persists regarding sample size in qualitative studies because some qualitative researchers aim to mirror the sampling requirements consistent with quantitative studies (focusing on statistical relevance), while some qualitative researchers assert the question of sample size is irrelevant because the focus is on a full understanding of the topic, not the sample number (Draper & Swift, 2011; Englander, 2012). The appropriateness of determining sample size prior to commencement of research is also a subject of debate in the qualitative research literature, as doing so preemptively assumes meeting data saturation with an arbitrary, predetermined number of samples (Trotter, 2012). However, as the field of qualitative research is developing, an expectation is becoming apparent for researchers to propose a sample size in advance of conducting the study, despite the emphasis on data saturation (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012).

Generally, researchers base the number of participants in a purposeful sample on precedence (sample size used in similar studies) (Palinkas et al., 2013). For example, Richardson (2014) obtained data saturation with a sample of 20 participants in a case

study regarding strategies to improve workplace performance. Notwithstanding the contrasting opinions of what constitutes a proper qualitative sample size, researchers tend to agree data saturation is the priority (Draper & Swift, 2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In contrast to Richardson, Faokunla (2012) only needed eight participants for saturation in a case study. Snyder's (2012) case study involving schoolteachers had only four participants.

Researchers consider practicality in sample size with respect to time management and resources (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2013; Suri, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). The sample size provides for the collection of sufficient information to address the research question, but too much data might compromise the researcher's ability to engage in an in-depth analysis (Draper & Swift, 2011). In other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with theoretical generalizability rather than empirical or statistical generalizability, a concern of quantitative researchers (Denzin & Swift, 2010; Palinkas et al., 2013; Yin, 2014). Demonstrating data collection is sufficient to support the study objectives is a question of rigorous research, a major tenet of qualitative studies (Barush et al., 2011). The final sample size was seven, which reflected a saturation of data rather than an arbitrary number.

Interview Setting

Determining a potential interview setting was a necessary step in the study planning process because site selection may influence the comfort level of the interviewees and influence how interviewees respond in the interview (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The best sites for conducting interviews are where

the researcher may secure entry and where interview candidates may access the site (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Furthermore, researchers select sites where minimal risk to the quality or credibility of the data is present (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Interviews for the study occurred within the WNY footprint. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommended public libraries because of typical low noise levels and because private or semiprivate locations in the library may exist in which to conduct an interview. Therefore, use of libraries was preferable, though not consistently chosen as a location; the interviews took place at mutually agreed upon settings convenient for the interviewees.

As an alternative to meeting in person, interviewees could have requested a telephone interview. Useful information might be lost in phone interviews such as facial expressions and body language (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Phone interviews do have some advantages, such as convenience for the participant (Trier-Bieniek, 2012). Another interview alternative was online chat. Pearce, Thøgersen-Ntoumani, and Duda (2014) argued online chatting is an effective method of data collection. Barratt (2012) used online chat and noted the utility of the method for interviewing participants on sensitive topics. However, eye contact and other types of body language are not observable in online chatting (Pearce et al., 2014). Eliminating the possibility to observe emotions (via online chats) would have been challenging because of the strong feelings the research question may have evoked. Ultimately, no participants requested a phone interview or an online chat scenario.

A primary responsibility of researchers is to protect participant confidentiality and to avoid imposing any harm (Damianakis & Woodford, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Accordingly, no interviews took place in the same location, which mitigated any risk of loss of confidentiality. The notion of imposing no harm to participants is a matter of ethical protection.

Ethical Research

The purpose of an IRB is to ensure protection of both the participants and researcher while minimizing harm; the researcher considers confidentiality and data integrity during all phases of the project (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012; Martin & Inwood, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Accordingly, only after receiving approval from the Walden University IRB did any research activities involving human subjects commence. Laws, regulations, and ethical guidelines exist to protect the rights of human subjects (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2014). Therefore, all participants signed an informed consent form as a prerequisite to participating; the consent form provided eligibility requirements and contained language excluding individuals who personally knew the researcher.

Consent did not imply an obligation to continue with the study. One of the most central ethical concerns in research is conveying to interviewees that the participation is voluntary and withdrawal from the study at any time is an option (Moustakas, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To ensure rights to withdraw were clear, participants received notice of same in the consent form, the interview protocol, and verbally at the onset of the interview. If participants had elected for an interview over the

phone in lieu of an in-person interview, consent would have been possible via e-mail. Cook (2012) used e-mail exclusively in qualitative interviews and obtaining e-mail consent was part of the ethical guidelines followed. To withdraw from the interview, participants were able to state such intentions in-person, by telephone, or via e-mail at public.sector.retenion@gmail.com; no participants asked to withdraw. Allowing flexibility for participants to withdraw helps establish trust (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The consent form issued in advance of the interview contained all pertinent contact information.

Safeguarding confidential information is a primary ethical concern, and therefore protection of devices or documents storing data is a priority (Harding et al., 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To ensure confidentiality, all transcripts underwent redaction to eliminate any personally identifiable information. A coding system featuring unique numbers for labeling the redacted transcripts facilitated identification of interview data without compromising the confidentiality of individual participants. Accordingly, each transcript had a participant number label reflecting the order in which the interview took place, such as Participant1. The list of actual participants' names matched with the coded name appeared only in one location, on a Microsoft Word document. The document contained contact information necessary for follow-up discussions. The list underwent encryption using an encryption software program. Opening the list requires a unique password. Price (2014) and Richardson (2014) used passwords to protect electronic data. Snyder (2012) stored data in a digital format and stored the data in a safe location. Yin (2011) stressed personal professional ethics accompany guidelines an IRB outlines. The

expectation of privacy and confidentiality remained throughout the interview process, as no participants disclosed (inadvertently or otherwise) of illegal activities necessitating contacting appropriate authorities.

Each recorded interview file received a label according to the following naming convention example: Participant1_12202015_0700PM.wav. The first segment refers to the order of the participants from the first to the last, with the last file labeled as Participant7. A portable thumb drive stores all electronic data for the study. A SentrySafe brand 0.65 cubic foot waterproof safe with standard fire protection houses the thumb drive, the interview notebook, the signed consent forms, and paper hardcopies of the transcription from each interview. The field notebook underwent redaction to eliminate any personally identifiable information. The IRB of the researcher's university dictates the requirements for data retention and protection in academic research (Denison & Stillman, 2012). Therefore, in cooperation with Walden University IRB requirements for data integrity, the data collected during the interviews will remain in the protective safe stored in a private home office, for a period of 5 years. Qu and Dumay (2011) recommended participants receive advance notification of how the researcher will store interview data. Therefore, the interview protocol document (Appendix A) contained information concerning the above safeguards. The IRB approval number is 07-02-15-0308874.

Upon publication, participants may request a two to four page summary of the study results and if requested, an electronic copy of the study via e-mail. After distributing the items, the list of contact information with real names will be subject to

deletion, and all e-mails sent to or from participants will undergo the same deletion process. Participants did not receive a monetary incentive. The appropriateness of offering monetary incentives to study participants is not unanimous in the literature (Sikweyiya & Jewkes, 2013), despite the usefulness for securing participants for a study (Klabunde, Willis, & Casalino, 2013).

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher is usually the primary research instrument in qualitative studies (Houghton et al., 2013) and such was the case for the doctoral study. To obtain meaningful data, the study involved in-depth, semistructured interviews, featuring open-ended questions. In-depth, semistructured interviewing involves participants responding to pre-established questions but also allows for some flexibility for the discussion to go in different directions as well (Moustakas, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Yin, 2014). In a case study on career changes of secondary education teachers, Snyder (2012) used semistructured interviews as one of the data collection tools available. Price (2014) conducted semistructured interviews for a case study regarding data breaches and compliance. Richardson (2014) employed semistructured interviewing to study strategies applicable to improving workplace performance. Culié, Khapova, and Arthur (2014) conducted semistructured interviews on two separate occasions months apart, with the same participants; the study involved career mobility.

In advance of the interview, each interviewee received the same consent form and interview protocol document (Appendix A), as well as a list of the interview questions to maintain consistency for each participant's experience. The interview protocol is a

document containing the procedures and guidelines for the interview from start to finish (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Yin, 2014). Interview protocols feature an overview of the study, interview procedures (including a discussion regarding human subject protections, data recording, and storage) and the interview questions (Yin, 2014).

The primary data obtained was the spoken words of the interviewees, recorded using an iPhone 4 equipped with a recording feature (a Samsung Galaxy S5 and Olympus digital recording device served as backups). Recording the interviews allowed for accurate analysis of the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Both Price (2014) and Richardson (2014) recorded interviews using digital recording instruments. During the interviews, journal keeping allowed for documentation of any relevant observations such as body language, distractions, or events not captured in the audio recordings. Houghton et al. (2013) discussed the importance of taking notes during an interview. Recording body language is useful because body language may demonstrate a host of emotional states the informant exhibits during the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf, 2001). Note taking may replace audio recording in qualitative interviews (Clausen, 2012), but for the doctoral study, the activity supplemented the recorded interview.

Member checking is a way to establish credibility in research (Barush et al., 2011), making the activity appropriate for the study. Member checking is a technique qualitative researchers use to validate data because multiple interpretations are possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Participants had the opportunity to confirm the interpretation of the data as portrayed in the list of themes emerging, for the purpose of verification and validation. Participants provided any updates or corrections to the

interpretations via e-mail. The iterative process of reviewing with the participants facilitates the development of an accurate categorization of the themes (Moustakas, 1994). As a preliminary measure, each participant had the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy; the practice is common in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

Allowing for clarification and reflection is essential for capturing meaningful data (Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). Finding meaning in interviews requires active participation of the researcher and the participants because both parties may be approaching the study with contrasting objectives or intentions (Patton, 2015). Providing participants the opportunity to review and revise the discussion points mitigates unintentional researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Draper & Swift, 2011).

Having participants validate the data is a way to ensure the data reflect the participants' reality, devoid of false interpretation or bias on behalf of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Notwithstanding the benefits of member checking, Barush et al. (2011) warned participants may get confused in the process, or perhaps interpret the data differently than the researcher, which creates an issue of which interpretation may be part of the study. Coming to an agreement is part of the reflexive nature of qualitative interviews (Barush et al., 2011).

Archival documents provided support and triangulated the interview findings. Patton (2015) noted that triangulating the data across sources demonstrates that the data are consistent. Documents reviewed for the study contained (a) public survey data, (b) agency standard operating procedures (SOPs), (c) agency-specific policy documents, and

(d) publicly available employee retention data. Rivera and Flinck (2011) used a variety of archival data to supplement case study interview data including articles, interview notes, and meeting summaries. Snyder (2012) obtained similar types of documents but also collected photographs and drawings. A review of periodicals from 2013-2015 involved Internet searches for retention themes related to public organizations. Similarly, Verner and Abdullah (2012) used newspaper articles, and media reports for triangulation.

By obtaining a rich description of the experiences of seven individuals working in the public sector, the general themes might be similar to the themes developed if a future researcher were to interview other public sector employees who meet the eligibility criteria (Barush et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). Not only may the study resonate with public sector leaders, leaders in the private sector may learn from the results as well. Future researchers may sample either sector or both.

Data Collection Technique

The primary data collection method was semistructured interviews. Conducting in-depth, semistructured interviews allows participants to answer pre-established questions while also permitting open and free discussion to develop (Moustakas, 1994; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Yin, 2014). In-depth interviews contrast with focused interviews because, in the latter, the researcher may have previously drawn some conclusions regarding the phenomenon and is focusing the interview to support the conclusions (Yin, 2014). Scholarship by Richardson (2014), Price (2014), and Snyder (2012) involved semistructured interviews for case study. A downfall of semistructured may be the risk of asking leading questions, which might bias the responses of the participants (Yin, 2014).

Another instrument option for qualitative studies is the structured interview, which involves a set of questions with only close-ended responses (Yin, 2014). Interviewing is not the only way to obtain qualitative data from participants. For example, Basford (2012) used an online survey to collect data for a thematic analysis regarding negative behaviors of supervisors. A weakness of qualitative surveys is the researcher is unable to ask for clarification or ask additional probing questions leading to an in-depth understanding. The primary research question for a study dictates which instrument would best address the question (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, evoking thoughts, feelings, and emotions from participants regarding retention strategies required a full, rich, detailed discussion only possible with an in-depth, semistructured interview.

The data collection device for the semistructured interviews was an iPhone 4, equipped with a digital recording feature to record voice memos. Price (2014) and Richardson (2014) used digital recording devices to capture interview data. Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommended recording data to ensure accuracy. Patton (2015) determined digital recording devices and notebooks to be useful for data collection. The iPhone 4 is a reliable, unobtrusive, and ubiquitous recording device. A Samsung Galaxy S5 and Olympus digital recording device acted as a backup to prepare for the possibility of equipment malfunction or human error leading to recording failure.

Use of a notebook contributed to documenting an accurate audit trail of the interview activities (Houghton et al., 2013). Leading qualitative researchers encourage taking notes during the interview to allow for nonauditory data collection such as observations of body language and facial reactions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf,

2001). The interview is not merely an opportunity to observe what the interviewee says, but also allows the researcher to observe behavior (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Though notetaking was part of the overall data collection process, to avoid distraction and to encourage active listening, notes were minimal and taken conscientiously (see Wengraf, 2001).

A pilot study did not precede the main study. While conducting practice interviews may allow researchers to discover potential issues or anticipate challenges arising in the real interviews (Wengraf, 2001), pilot studies are not always necessary in qualitative studies (Chenail, 2011). As a matter of practicality with respect to how much time interviews take, excluding an interview (even for the sake of a pilot study), would be an unfair use of the participant's time and would be a waste of potentially relevant, usable data if excluded from the study (Chenail, 2011). In addition, pilot studies require IRB approvals, which at times may require as much justification as the full study would (Chenail, 2011).

Some researchers have demonstrated the benefits of conducting pilot studies in qualitative research, such as Yin (2014), but the need may be dependent upon the nature of the research question and population of interest. One of the main reasons researchers conduct pilot studies is to monitor consistent use of the interview protocol (Chenail, 2011), but Moustakas (1994) noted that strict adherence to protocol is not as imperative as obtaining excellent data, even with insufficient time to ask every question. In fact, running out of time may be an indicator the interview produced rich and descriptive data

(Moustakas, 1994). Keeping a journal of interview activities ensured consistency in the interview process (Chenail, 2011; Houghton et al., 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Estimating how much time the interview will take is essential for time management and is a courtesy to participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Granot et al. (2012) rationalized two hours seemed too long for an interview, and one hour conformed too much to a standard time unit. Following Granot et al.'s logic, participants expected the interview to last approximately 90 minutes; in reality, the interview times ranged from under one hour to over two hours.

Member checking was a significant activity in the data collection process. Member checking engages participants in the theme development process and encourages validation of the researcher's interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Not all researchers agree member checking is appropriate for data analysis (Houghton et al., 2013). As Houghton et al. noted, synthesizing the data and developing thematic clusters might pose challenges for participants to recognize a particular contribution. Donovan (2012), Price (2014), and Richardson (2014) each used member checking in the data collection process. An alternative to member checking is peer debriefing, which involves having an expert in the field evaluate the findings (Houghton et al., 2013). A debriefing technique was unnecessary in the study because the research question did not concern evaluating the merit of the leaders' strategies but merely identifying the strategies.

Data Organization Technique

Conversion of all iPhone recordings to .wav files was possible with iTunes software, allowing for versatility of use with various software programs such as Windows Media Player. Yin (2014) encouraged use of a case study database to compile all data. Houghton et al. (2013) stressed an audit trail confirms the study was rigorous. Snyder (2012) organized case study data into multiple categories to accommodate organization of photos, archival data, and drawings, among other data sources. For the purposes of organization, each recording received a label according to the following naming convention example: Participant1_12202015_0700PM.wav. The first segment refers to the order of the participants from the first to the last, with the last file labeled as Participant7. The second segment refers to the date the interview took place, and the third segment refers to the time the interview took place. Yin (2014) recommended that case study researchers store all case study documents electronically and establish a categorization system to include cross-referencing capability. Data organization for the doctoral study conformed to a similar strategy.

A portable USB drive stores all electronic files including recordings and corresponding transcriptions. Snyder (2012) stored data in a digital format and stored the data in a safe location. Both Richardson (2014) and Price (2014) followed similar strategies to protect data. Transcriptions follow the same naming convention with the only difference being the document is in a permanent document format (PDF). A SentrySafe brand 0.65 cubic foot waterproof safe with standard fire protection houses the USB drive, the interview notebook, the signed consent forms, and paper hardcopies of the

transcription from each interview. All electronic documents underwent encryption. In cooperation with Walden University requirements related to data integrity, the data collected during the interviews will remain in the protective safe stored in a private home office, for a period of 5 years. After 5 years, all data will be subject to deletion.

Data Analysis

Method of Analysis

The primary method of analysis was the identification of patterns and themes, via inductive analysis. Qualitative researchers use inductive analysis early on because by developing initial patterns and themes, a researcher may develop the codes used for the remainder of the analysis (Patton, 2015). Analysis of the interview data relied on the text of the interview transcripts with open coding (Yin, 2014). Codes reflected a common pattern and any strings of text fitting the description of the code belonged to the same thematic grouping (Yin, 2014). The purpose of coding was to facilitate the identification of core concepts or themes prominent across all interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Wengraf, 2001). Other qualitative researchers coded transcribed interview data to derive meaning from the text, such as Dincer and Dincer (2013), Forber-Pratt, Aragon, and Espelage (2013), and Taskila et al. (2014). In a case study not involving interviews, Verner and Abdullah (2012) used text coding of documents to explore project failure pertaining to outsourcing.

NVivo 11 assisted in the coding, pattern-matching, and thematic grouping process. Yin (2014) noted the importance of backtracking, which entails ensuring the codes selected relate sufficiently to the research question. As themes emerge, Patton

(2015) noted that the analysis becomes deductive (in contrast to being initially inductive), as the researcher begins to develop hypotheses. The NVivo 11 software was particularly useful in the analysis because the software allows researchers to perform searches, flag text, and create data clusters (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Slaney et al., 2014).

The analytical strategy known as methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978) was the primary method of establishing credibility. Methodological triangulation involves using contrasting methods of data collection to corroborate and strengthen study findings (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2015). Synthesis occurred by analyzing information from various archival records and organizational documents. The archival documents included (a) public survey data, (b) agency standard operating procedures (SOPs), (c) agency-specific policy documents, and (d) publicly available retention data. Verner and Abdullah (2012) also triangulated data using archival data, as did Rivera and Flinck (2011). To analyze supplementary data such as archival records, open coding (Yin, 2014) was the primary analytical tool, as in the verbal interview data. Price (2014) and Richardson (2014) implemented comparable coding strategies for analyzing qualitative data. The major themes identified appear in table form in Section 3. Synthesizing the data adds credibility to the findings (Patton, 2015). Yin (2014) presented figures featuring a variety of case study synthesis mapping strategies (see pages 117, 157, and 159); the figures served as an initial guide in analysis but were not used as a template.

Part of the data analysis process involved coding the new data with respect to the conceptual framework. Codes reflected new data themes relating to cost-benefit theory, human capital theory, and social justice theory. For example, if a leader discussed a

strategy to improve communication in an organization, the data fell under the social capital theory code. The purpose of the strategy was not to fill any particular conceptual “bucket” with data strings; rather, the purpose was to demonstrate the relevance of the data relating to the conceptual framework identified in the literature.

Analysis Software and Data Coding

NVivo 11 was the primary data analysis software to code and categorize the content of the transcripts (drafted in Microsoft Word 2010). Edwards-Jones (2014) recommended NVivo because of the program’s versatility and suitability for novice and experienced researchers alike. Byrne (2013) noted NVivo’s usefulness in creating thematic nodes. Categorizing strings of text into groups of common themes assisted in determining if a need existed for additional data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). NVivo also provided an audit trail of the coding process (Houghton et al., 2013). Microsoft Word also assisted in coding activities, as the program allows for color-coding the text. Richardson (2014) used Microsoft Word for coding, and Price (2014) used the program as well to assist with transcription.

A disadvantage of coding is once the researcher establishes particular categories in which to assign the data strings, considering alternative categorization methods may become challenging (Lincoln & Denzin, 2011). The researcher may want to force data into the established categories, which may be problematic (Lincoln & Denzin, 2011). To avoid the problem, additional interviews ensured saturation. The iterative process of filling in the gaps is a part of developing a good codebook (codes in an organized list)

(Lincoln & Denzin, 2011; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2015). Because the study is a qualitative design, no hypothesis testing or statistical analysis was necessary (Moustakas, 1994).

Reliability and Validity

Qualitative researchers ensure internal consistency and address threats to validity and reliability differently from quantitative researchers (Barush et al., 2011; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012; Yin, 2014). Quantitative researchers tend to focus on reliability, a concept suggesting future researchers may recreate the study by following the same procedures, and draw similar conclusions (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012; Yin, 2014). In quantitative studies, researchers often use Cronbach's alpha to evaluate a study's reliability and consider $\alpha \geq .80$ to be acceptable (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). In contrast, recreating a qualitative study is possible only to the extent a new researcher may follow the procedures used in the earlier study, as new informants providing the same data as informants in the earlier study is unlikely (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Therefore, qualitative researchers focus on the dependability, credibility, and transferability of the research rather than on reliability (Barush et al., 2011; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012)

Reliability

The reliability of the data refers to the extent to which the procedures used in obtaining the data are standard (Wolcott, 2009). Recording the interviews provided dependability of the data (Granot et al., 2012). Some respondents may decide to cease recording in the middle of an interview (Anyan, 2013), though this did not occur in any of the interviews for the doctoral study. Recording promotes active listening during the

interview (Granot et al., 2012). All recorded sessions underwent verbatim transcription, as Rubin and Rubin (2012) and Wengraf (2001) suggested for qualitative studies. Transcribing the interviews personally (rather than hiring a third party) allowed for personal reflection on prior interviews and assisted in the preparation for upcoming interviews. Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted similar benefits. Using coding software also supported dependability by demonstrating multiple examples of a particular theme (Houghton et al., 2013). Participants had the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015) and confirm the absence of any personally identifiable information to protect confidentiality. Participants e-mailed any transcript corrections to the designated study e-mail address, (public.sector.retention@gmail.com).

As mentioned previously, adherence to the interview protocol was the same for each interviewee, which Yin (2014) considered a type of reliability test. While following the protocol is essential for addressing each research question, Granot et al. (2012) cautioned against preventing an in-depth discussion from coming forth. Verner and Abdullah (2012) used an interview protocol for a case study on the failure of outsourced projects. For data accuracy, the doctoral study participants also had the opportunity to engage in member checking, which provides what Yin (2014) referred to as *construct validity*. Poortman and Schildkamp (2012) noted that construct validity is achievable with member checking, by having participants review the data to ensure the researcher's interpretation of the data is accurate. Houghton et al. (2013) explained performing member checking after the analysis phase allows the participant to ensure the researcher

captured the meaning of the spoken words accurately. Barush et al. (2011) noted, despite possible validation benefits, member checking might be problematic if the process creates too much confusion with multiple revisions.

To ensure accuracy and dependability of the transcripts prepared after each interview, each participant received an e-mail of the transcribed interview. Verbatim transcriptions included stalling words, and where appropriate, pauses, interruptions, or moments of silence annotated in brackets (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To protect confidentiality, the transcription underwent redaction to eliminate any personally identifiable information. The body of the e-mail included a request for participants to review the transcript for accuracy and respond to the e-mail with the word *approved*, to provide affirmation of reviewing and approving the accuracy of the transcription. The greatest challenge to the reliability of the data was the extent to which participants were honest about experiences with the phenomenon, consistent with a purposive sampling approach (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012).

Validity

Qualitative researchers ensure validity by addressing creditability, transferability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Barush et al. (2011) noted the use of Lincoln and Guba's research paradigm is prevalent in modern case study research. However, some scholars such as Poortman and Schildkamp (2012) have attempted to build on Lincoln and Guba's work to devise a universal framework suitable for either qualitative or quantitative studies.

To ensure the study has credibility, the analysis included participant transcript review, member checking, and triangulation. Denzin (1978) identified data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation as distinct strategies to support study credibility. Methodological triangulation was the strategy for the study. Methodological triangulation involves implementation of more than one data collection method (Denzin, 1978). Patton (2015) noted that triangulation is useful for establishing consistency though the practices does not necessarily lead to the same results. Acquiring supportive data from a variety of sources provides corroborative evidence lending credibility to the study (Yin, 2014). The foundation for the case study was the data obtained from the interviews with public sector leaders.

Note taking occurred simultaneously with the audio recording to capture both verbal and nonverbal data. Houghton et al. (2013) and Clausen (2012) highlighted the benefits of notetaking for qualitative interviews. Snyder (2012) took extensive field notes in a case study as part of a triangulation technique. The archival documents for the reviewed in the study included the following: (a) public survey data, (b) agency standard operating procedures (SOPs), (c) agency-specific policy documents, and (d) publicly available retention data. Rivera and Flinck (2011) used an array of archival data to support the primary data in a federal study including articles, notes from interviews, and meeting summaries. Verner and Abdullah (2012) also used archival data such as court transcripts, newspaper articles, and media reports. Snyder (2012) used archival documents, photographs, and interview transcripts for triangulation.

Obtaining thick description and allowing for member reflection is essential for transferability (Barush et al., 2011). By providing a detailed report of the entire research process, researchers may achieve analytical generalization (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). While quantitative researchers are seeking statistical generalizability (for example, via sample size and randomization), qualitative researchers are seeking analytic generalization (for example, matching theory up with results) (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) asserted that cause and effect relationships are not pertinent to exploratory research.

Achieving generalization allows study reviewers to evaluate applicability in alternative research scenarios (Barush et al., 2011; Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Transferability allows future researchers to use the knowledge gained from exploring the initial case (Byrne, 2013; Yin, 2013). Qualitative data involves personal experiences both historical and situational; therefore, transferability may be challenging because future situations are not predictable (Poortman & Schildkamp, 2012). Providing a robust description of the case under exploration permits the reader to feel engaged in the research process (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012).

Confirmability in qualitative research entails providing an audit trail of all decisions and directions taken throughout the study (Barush et al., 2011; Houghton et al., 2013). The study involved notation in a dedicated notebook, as well as the creation and maintenance of a case study database. Yin (2015) suggested keeping case study documents in an organized database is useful for future researchers to retrieve them. Particularly relevant to the case study, Poortman and Schildkamp (2013) stated

confirmability provides a way to replicate activities from a prior study. Validity of the data garnered support by rigid adherence to the interview protocol (see Appendix A). Qualitative interviews are by nature nonreplicable, mitigated to an extent by archiving the recordings, transcripts, and notes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Future researchers may analyze the same transcripts but draw different conclusions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

The signed consent form and reminder of voluntary participation allowed participants to opt out if desired. As transcription and data analysis took place, some initial *prima facie* patterns or themes emerged. Concurrently, participants performed member checking to validate the interpretations of the data; Houghton et al. (2013), Poortman and Schildkamp (2012) and Yin (2014) supported the use of member checking strategies. Qualitative researchers make inferences, and finding support for inferences is achievable with pattern matching or finding rival explanations (Yin, 2014). Analyzing and checking the data continuously demonstrates the data has confirmability (Barush et al., 2011).

Thematic saturation was the saturation method utilized in the study. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) noted that thematic saturation involves obtaining additional data until major themes emerge. The condition by which to evaluate no new themes exist is redundancy (Patton, 2015). The minimum sample of four participants was not a guarantee of data saturation. Researchers are flexible with respect to data saturation because predicting saturation in advance is not possible (Draper & Swift, 2011). Therefore, the sample size of participants should increase until the point at which any new participant fails to provide additional, new information to inform the research (Draper & Swift,

2011; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Saturation is noticeable when participants also have no changes or recommendations to the themes reviewed in the member checking process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Rivera and Flinck (2011) reached saturation in a case study with one primary participant though additional participants helped establish the accuracy of the primary participant's account. Patton (2015) noted that a sample size of one could provide meaningful data. Snyder (2012) reached saturation with four participants in a case study. Faokunla (2014) completed a successful case study with eight participants. Saturation for the doctoral study was evident after analyzing the data of the seventh interview participant.

Transition and Summary

Section 2 involved a thorough description of the study and a rationale for selecting the case study design. The section covered the eligibility requirements for the study participants and explained why a purposive sampling strategy best fit the study. A discussion regarding researcher roles and commitment to ethical research followed. The section continued with details regarding the data collection instruments, the process of data organization, and method of data analysis. An overview of the reliability and validity concluded the section.

The bulk of Section 3 includes a presentation of the findings. Following the discussion of retention strategy themes, the section highlights parallels between the findings and relevance to professional practice, as well as relevance to the underlying conceptual framework. Social change implications, recommendations for action and

further study follows. The last components of the study involve reflecting on the entire experience and drawing conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore strategies that public sector leaders might implement to improve employee retention. The most significant finding was that leaders consistently demonstrated a desire or need to develop their staff but learned that developing employees is also a reason that some employees eventually leave their jobs. With the balancing act of developing employees while encouraging them to stay, the possibility of an ethical dilemma may arise. When downward pressure from top leaders requires retention levels to be high, leaders may stifle employee development as a way to keep employees from reaching their potential for promotion or advancement. The leaders interviewed consistently argued in favor of engaging and empowering employees in order to encourage retention, with the caveat that the strategies must be consistent and the leaders must be sincere in their execution. Complementing engagement and empowerment strategies were strategies to make employees feel valued and for leaders to provide an overall positive work experience. The participants each emphasized items related to employees' work-life balance. Each of the participants described facets of their leadership style. Several leaders communicated the idea of being transparent and sharing organizational information with employees to gain trust and inspire engagement. Retention, according to the leaders, happens when the leadership strategies described above are in full force. The most significant challenges the leaders noted were limited financial resources to reward staff, the bureaucratic nature of public organizations, the

inability to implement strategies without union consent, and the inability to match pay to performance.

Presentation of the Findings

The primary research question guiding the study was: What strategies are public sector leaders implementing to improve employee retention? I formulated the interview questions to glean a holistic understanding of the process of implementing strategies and how leaders evaluated the success or failure of the strategy implementation. Table 3 contains a brief overview of the feedback I was expecting to obtain in response to each interview question. The first column lists the interview questions. The second column lists the desired feedback I expected from each question, while the third column captures the main topics discussed in the interviews pertaining to each question.

Table 3

Interview Questions, Desired Feedback, and Topics Discussed

IQ#	Interview Question	Desired Feedback	Topics Discussed
1	What strategies have you implemented to improve employee retention in your organization?	Obtain a comprehensive list of retention strategies.	Climate surveys, workplace environment committees, staff meetings, work-life balance, group and individual incentives and rewards, engagement and empowerment, strategies based on leadership style or personal attributes, employee development
2	What challenges have you encountered when attempting to improve employee retention in your organization?	Determine common barriers prevent strategy implementation.	Limited financial resources, bureaucratic red tape, policy or legal restrictions, lack of trust in leadership
3	How have your employees responded to the strategies?	Gauge employee buy-in of strategies implemented.	Feeling valued and empowered, retention levels high or low
4	How will you know if your strategies are successful?	Ascertain how leaders evaluate strategies.	Reduction in turnover, minimal complaints from regarding organization or its leaders, Engagement, productivity
5	What prompted you to implement the strategies in the first place?	Understand key drivers in strategy implementation.	Organizational mandates, personal commitment of leader, required to maintain operations
6	How are retention strategies for the public sector perhaps different from the private sector?	Contrast use of strategies in private versus public sector.	Flexibility and resources for rewarding employees, access to unions, benefits offered, due process and grievance
7	What additional information would you like to share regarding something we did not already discuss?	Obtain additional pertinent details not provided in response to specific interview questions.	

The coding process (see Data Analysis section) resulted in the identification of seven major themes, displayed in Table 4. As a general note for Table 4 and all future tables that contain a column for frequency of participant responses, all percentages appear as rounded whole numbers and therefore the percentages do not add up to exactly 100% in each table. Furthermore, the number assigned to each theme does not suggest any level of importance but rather reflects the order in which the themes emerged during the analysis.

Table 4

Major Themes Identified

# Major themes	Participant responses	Participant responses (%)
1 Leader focus on employee development	37	9
2 Leader focus on employee engagement and empowerment	39	10
3 Leader focus on employees' positive work experience	84	21
4 Leader personal philosophy and leadership style	78	19
5 Organization's level of commitment to retention	27	7
6 Causes of turnover	55	14
7 Leaders' retention strategy implementation challenges	85	21

As discussed in the Sample Size component (within Population and Sampling), the minimum sample was four. The minimum sample provided insufficient data to justify the preliminary themes; achieving data saturation is essential in qualitative studies (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Palinkas et al., 2013; Wengraf, 2001). Therefore, three additional interviews were necessary to obtain a robust and comprehensive list of themes,

bringing the total number of participants to seven. To demonstrate the value saturation provided, even-numbered tables from Table 6 through Table 18 exhibit data from each interview participant (Participant 1 displays as P1, etc.). The second column displays a sample supporting response of the participant, while the third column displays the implied meaning behind the response. As part of the member checking process, each participant had the opportunity to evaluate and adjust the implied meaning to ensure the interpretation was accurate. In the following subsections, I validate the thematic findings as follows: (a) synthesize, compare, and contrast the theme with findings from the literature, and (b) evaluate how the theme relates to the established conceptual framework.

Throughout the presentation of findings, any instances of redacted text appears as “[omitted]” to protect the identity of participants. The main section concludes with a brief overview of the triangulated findings using alternate sources.

Theme 1: Leader Focus on Employee Development

Each of the seven participants discussed employee development as a retention strategy. A significant challenge the leaders identified in implementing this strategy was the notion that focusing too greatly on employee development may have the long-term consequence of the employee becoming overqualified for the job and thus becoming disinterested in the work. Essentially, the employee would no longer feel challenged and may wish to pursue opportunities commensurate with the new skillset developed. Despite these challenges, some leaders stated affirmatively their dedication to promote employee development regardless of the likelihood of employees’ future departure. Effectively,

Theme 1 relates closely to the cost-benefit theory conceptual framework. Leaders must evaluate the value of training and development over a period of time to be able to ascertain the effectiveness of the programs installed (Getha-Taylor, Fowles, Silvia, & Merritt, 2015). Dalton and Todor (1979) highlighted the positive aspects of turnover. Participant 2, for example, viewed turnover positively when employees leave for promotions and other career advancement opportunities:

So people leave because they're leaving for something better. That's great. You know, I don't chain people down here with the hope I'm going to keep them forever. I wouldn't want to be chained down that way. So I'm not going to do that to people in the department. So people leave for better opportunities, that's a great thing. (Participant 2)

The concept of employee development features in Young's (2015) qualitative study involving mentoring programs for business leaders. Young conducted interviews, and from the data nine experienced business leaders provided, concluded mentoring programs (a type of employee development strategy) contributed to retention. Alternatively, George (2015) provided quantitative evidence suggesting that developmental opportunities for employees were essential for retention. Beynon et al. (2015) also discovered that employees are loyal to an organization when training and development opportunities are available. Offering continuous access to training opportunities allows organizations to promote from within; as a result, institutional knowledge is not lost (Cascio, 2014). Maintaining institutional knowledge is a primary

concept in human capital theory (Shaw et al., 2013) and is a veritable concern for public leaders. Participant 7 stated:

Our agency, just like all the other federal agencies has the Baby Boomer exit going on, or started to have the Baby Boomer exit going on until 2008 hit. I don't remember the, the statistics. I apologize but I'm sure you can look them up online, but at one point it looked like we could lose up to 85% of our institutional knowledge. (Participant 7)

Table 5 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 1. Table 6 features leader responses for which employee development strategies were a focal point of discussion with respect to retention.

Table 5

Theme 1: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	13	37
P2	6	16
P3	4	11
P4	1	3
P5	3	3
P6	5	14
P7	5	14

Table 6

Theme 1: Leader Focus on Employee Development

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	So my plans have always focused on trying to cultivate opportunities for growth with the individuals who--who I, with the idea that the more they're actualizing their interests and their potential and the more they're growing, the more they're going to be able to contribute, within their roles, so that's been my primary pathway of doing it so I try to learn more about them, I try to nurture opportunities for professional development I try to really adapt those opportunities to the individual.	Tailor developmental needs specific to the individual employee.
P2	I always hate to lose a really good employee but if I'm losing a good employee because they're going to something that aligns better with their career development and provides them greater opportunity, well, at the moment they tell me they're leaving I'm disappointed, I immediately turn the switch to I'm really happy for you because they're moving on to something that opens up new avenues for them that I perhaps at this moment can't.	Retention prevention does not trump dedication to employee development.
P3	I think it's because of how we treat them, you know, we don't treat them like in our department I say we as in my department because I actually adjuncted in other departments as well, within [omitted] as well and we treat them like they're regular faculty members and we want them you know we want them to feel you know feel like they can have an investment in the students because we have an investment in them.	Provide necessary resources to ensure employees feel valued, have support, and have growth potential in the organization.
P4	I always, it connected with me and it resonated with me because that's just how I think I am to begin with, you know. I'm, I'm having a conversation with someone, yes I'll probably ask the surface stuff but I also want to connect about something, right? You don't see the person and so and so, you kind of come out of a management course, management program that is saying hey, this is this new way of approaching business and new way of managing, developing leaders, and helping, they weren't saying it was new, but it was new to me.	There are new ways to approach employee development; don't settle for only what was done in the past.
P5	Showing that we genuinely care and want the [omitted] to succeed and providing them the training, the attention, the leadership, and the mentorship they need to continue to be competitive is what I think that keeps those [omitted] who are maybe having difficulty at some point in time in their career wanting to stay a [omitted], wanting to continue to be competitive, wanting to better themselves. And then using an award, that's reinforced through an award system.	Help develop employees' skills to help keep them competitive for future promotion and overall career success.
P6	You want to develop people, develop their skills and I wouldn't, I wouldn't keep somebody back from an opportunity so if somebody came to me that they got a great teacher and they wanted to be an administrator and they're going on for administration I would support them, I would help them grow and develop because that's what they want to do and that's what they want to be. So I wouldn't ever try to discourage that.	Don't hold employees back by discouraging them from applying for other positions and pursuing other job prospects. (table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P7	In every office I go to I set up what's called a 3D bench where every person, every task has at least three people who can do the job. And so, that way it helps the office, but it also helps people to understand more than just their little swim lane of work. That allows them to have some glimpses of some other things as well...so, we offer rotation, we offer the 3D bench and we offer people the opportunity to be as engaged as possible and developed as possible. It's up to them whether they take it or not.	Provide means for employees to experience other job duties in case those duties may be more appealing to them or fitting to their skill set.

A significant observation from the development of Theme 1 is that leaders may need to distinguish between interdepartmental employee turnover and organizational turnover to evaluate if a true problem exists. With respect to human capital theory, the extent to which leaders invested resources in the exiting employee determines the significance of the human capital loss (Shaw et al., 2013). An organization's top leaders, therefore, could start evaluating their midlevel managers on how well the midlevel managers advance subordinates' skills and promotion worthiness. As Participant 2 alluded to, leaders should know if employees are leaving for positive reasons such as new skill development and promotion or if they are leaving for negative reasons such as employee-supervisor personality conflict or inadequate work-life balance.

Theme 2: Leader Focus on Employee Engagement and Empowerment

The literature is replete with studies on employee engagement, and therefore witnessing the topic emerge in each interview was not particularly surprising. For example, Vizzuso (2015) conducted a qualitative study involving employee engagement in the health care industry. The leaders Vizzuso interviewed described engagement strategies they implemented and provided insight regarding employee empowerment.

Vogelgesang et al. (2013) examined employee engagement and empowerment by surveying military employees in a longitudinal study. The main take-away from the Vogelgesang et al. study was that perceived leader integrity and openness of communication has some influence on the extent to which employees engage in work or feel empowered. Effectiveness of leader communication to staff may influence employee morale and desire to remain in the organization (Balcanoff, 2013). The notion of engaging staff in collaborative, social situations ties firmly with the fundamental tenets of social capital theory (Leana & Van Buren, 1999; Mohr et al., 2012). Ellinger et al. (2013) noted the importance of leader commitment to encouraging employees' social connections. Organizational cultures boasting a team-oriented environment encourage employee empowerment to flourish (Appelbaum, Karasek, Lapointe, & Quelch, 2015). Participant 4 indicated how to involve staff in decision-making:

That's just an example of making them feel engaged and I don't know what is it called, giving them autonomy a little bit, making them feel like okay, they're part of the process, their opinion counts and they have some influence as to what happens even in the bigger picture, you know? (Participant 4)

The engagement and empowerment topics raised in the interviews overlapped extensively. Workplace programs featuring employee empowerment became prolific in the 1990s, and empowerment referred to employees developing a sense of self-efficacy in the workplace (Kim & Fernandez, 2015). Table 7 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 2. Table 8 features leaders' verbal responses involving employee engagement and empowerment.

Table 7

Theme 2: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	1	3
P2	2	6
P3	4	12
P4	11	32
P5	2	6
P6	4	12
P7	10	30

Table 8

Theme 2: Leader Focus on Employee Engagement and Empowerment

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	Well, there are a lot of challenges being in a public institution that gives permanent appointment so, I mean there this I could go on and on and on [omitted] so for example, people who do have permanent appointment often feel that they need to stay but aren't necessarily engaged or aren't as willing to sort of get engaged, they sometimes get a little bit cynical and curmudgeonly and prickly and all sorts of things and so sometimes the issue isn't retaining them but sometimes people want them to go, so it's sort of a flip situation.	Disengaged employees who remain in the organization may harm the workplace climate for other employees.
P2	And so, in some cases, we have actually reached out to people who we think could provide value to the committee and encourage them to volunteer and when I say encourage them to volunteer I mean not strong-arming, like I need you to volunteer but really talking to them about what they could contribute and why their contribution would be important to the work of the committee and by and large those people come on to the committee and they've had great experience and they've added great value and I think they've walked away thinking that was worth it.	Help employees understand the value they add to the organization.
P3	We have so many intelligent people who are who want to be part of the process if I were just to take a carte blanche approach and say okay this is what we're doing, I would not win a lot of friends. So involving some of the key people who are in the department [omitted] into the process...you make a lot more friends. You make a lot more friends that way and you got a lot less pushback so, whatever I do, I try, I just try, I don't want to say try to keep them happy but I do, I try to keep them happy because, you know, making \$[omitted] sucks. You have to really like the process or else people will leave.	Engaging staff and empowering them contributes to relationship building and by extension contributes to retention. (table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P4	It's an informal strategy that I have and I feel that's, if you make an employee feel engaged, if they feel like they're part of the process like they have some influence in what happens, then I, I think it gives them a sense of purpose and why they're coming into work every day and, and they'll stay.	Engaging employees and giving them a sense of empowerment contributes to retention.
P5	We're here to accomplish a mission that serves a greater need, a greater purpose, so if we can tie those efforts into something that connects to them on an intangible level, I think it makes, it reminds them why they became [omitted] in the first place.	Find ways to tie the organization's mission to employees' intrinsic needs.
P6	They were great and they grew and developed and they were very strong and connected, they were very much behind me. One of the things I also did was, I would survey my staff every month at the faculty meetings and I would say to them, I had, I had four directors under me so it was a group, an anonymous survey of the administration as a whole and I started at my first faculty meeting just to kinda get a feel for where they're at. So I surveyed everybody and I said thumbs up or thumbs down for the [omit] administration?	Regularly soliciting employee feedback encourages engagement and empowers employees to help shape the future of the organization.
P7	So, I'm gonna use some terms, not just about employee retention but employee engagement because I believe they tend to go together, our agency just like all the other Federal agencies has the Baby Boomer exit going on, or started to have the Baby Boomer exit going on until 2008 hit. I don't remember the, the statistics. I apologize but I'm sure you can look them up online, but, at one point it looked like we could lose up to 85% of our institutional knowledge. Sorry, 85% of our institutional knowledge could be out the door within 10 to 15 years.	Strong relationships exist between employee engagement and retention.

The message behind Theme 2 appears to reflect the need for leaders to invest in social capital. Participant 4 mentioned employees' intrinsic needs would dictate some aspects of employee job satisfaction. Participant 5 discussed tailoring rewards to the individual's interests. To engage an employee at work, leaders would therefore need to know what the employee values. The leader must build a relationship in which employees can see how their values align with the values of the organization (Barrick, Thurgood, and Courtright, 2015). As Participant 2 observed, outwardly valuing employee contributions will empower employees to affect positive changes within the organization.

Theme 3: Leader Focus on Employees' Positive Work Experience

Theme 2 and Theme 3 are not entirely mutually exclusive; some overlap is evident. For example, giving employees some autonomy may contribute to a positive work experience (George, 2015). However, Theme 3 focuses on overall job satisfaction and how leaders work to ensure employee experiences are positive and strong organizational commitment is the outcome. Not surprisingly, therefore, Theme 3 evokes social capital theory principles similar to Theme 2. Tang et al. (2014) identified three socialization strategies newcomers into an organization may use to engage in and commit to an organization, but the perspective was from employees, not leaders; the strategies were *observation*, *inquiry*, and *networking*. Nonetheless, leaders may help employees harness the socialization strategies Tang et al. identified to encourage social interaction and thus promote organizational commitment. Social interaction is not the only contributing factor to job satisfaction, however. Yeh (2014) identified multiple factors employees take into consideration when evaluating how satisfied they are including rewards received, sense of fulfillment, job duties, workplace climate, among others. Work-life balance in particular has become a major factor determining employee satisfaction levels (Todd & Binns, 2013). The literature is reflective of this heightened focus, with evidence from studies on work-life balance (Deery & Jago, 2015; Friedman & Westring, 2015).

Each of the seven leaders specifically talked about creating a positive work experience for their staff, even though none of the interview questions specifically solicited such information. For example, Participant 1 stated:

As a supervisor I always try to, I want people to be as happy and satisfied in their positions as possible, for multiple reasons right, number one just because I care about them and I want them to have a positive experience. (Participant 1)

Other participants also used the term *happy* when describing how they would like employees to feel while at work; Participant 3 stated “Happy people like going to work”, while Participant 4 stated “They’ll stay around, you know? If you have a happy and content employee, I think they will stay”. The second section of the literature review entitled Commitment, Work Climate, and Job Satisfaction provides extensive support for Theme 3. Table 9 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 3. Table 10 contains seven of the strongest responses representing Theme 3.

Table 9

Theme 3: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	20	24
P2	14	16
P3	6	7
P4	8	9
P5	14	16
P6	6	7
P7	17	20

Table 10

Theme 3: Leader Focus on Employees' Positive Work Experiences

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	As a supervisor I always try to, I want people to be as happy and satisfied in their positions as possible, for multiple reasons right, number one just because I care about them and I want them to have a positive experience.	Some supervisors feel compelled to create a positive workplace in which employees are happy and satisfied.
P2	I also created a committee, which was a voluntary membership committee, in the department where I said to people I'd like to create a committee called the workplace environment committee and the workplace environment committee is intended to look at the data from the culture survey and also work continuously on improving the experience of our employees.	Engaging employees must be a continuous and dedicated effort; multiple strategies are available.
P3	I would say I'd say, definitely for me it's a personal notion, happy people like going to work, happy people are good to their students, you know, how they say, there's a, I shouldn't say they, there is a saying that says a happy wife a happy life. You could say happy husband, a happy life, you can say a happy employee a happy life as well. I mean anybody who's happy is going to be productive; they're going to be nicer to their students; they're going to have more investment and they're going to go the extra mile, they just are.	Focusing on keeping employees happy contributes to improved productivity and stronger engagement.
P4	They'll stay around, you know? If you have a happy and content employee, I think they will stay. I think, I've realized that, I've found that most people, it's more than, you know, monetary compensation that drives them, you know, there's the need to just feel they're part of the process.	Happy employees tend to stay; some employees value being part of the process more than monetary rewards.
P5	So, we try to the degree that we can try to involve the spouses in quarterly events. We maintain a [omitted] Facebook page so that we can post pictures of [omitted] and their accomplishments. We share that on social media platforms. And then we provide also other services that are family and marriage counseling services, whether that be services offered by our [omitted] or by other non-profit organizations for [omitted]. And then I'd say on the other way the, the retention, all this focuses on meeting the physical, spiritual, mental needs of the [omitted] so that they want to stay, they want to stay on [omitted].	Take a holistic approach to promote a positive experience at work and even at home.
P6	So, I would say having strong relationships with people is critical so and, and really thinking about taking care of them in terms of, if I asked them to work a late night, in schools we often have parent-teacher conferences, if I do that I guess I've learned over the years, you know, you have to provide them with dinner, as a teacher I never had dinner provided for me you know we were just it was just there what you want to it should be like a warm dinner like if it's a cold January night you don't want to have pizza you got to take care of your teachers and value them and then their workspace needs to be valued.	Demonstrate with actions that you value your employees and try to understand their needs in a given situation.

(table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P7	I think that employees, my takeaway, and again, this is going away from retention a little bit, if you treat your people like adults, if you show them the dignity and the respect I think it goes a long way. If you share what you can share and you don't have the closed door conversations that causes the suspicions and the rumors, I think again, going back to treating them as a team and letting them know you are their champion, that doesn't mean they get to get away with everything, but you are their champion with upper management, I think that that goes a long way.	Trust your employees and they in turn will trust you. Outwardly show them you support them and will champion for them when necessary.

The findings constituting Theme 3 suggest the notion of a positive work experience is multifaceted because employees may base satisfaction levels on relationships with coworkers or leaders, or the extent a strong work-life balance exists. Cost-benefit theory is relevant in Theme 3 because leaders evaluate how flexible they are willing to be. Participant 4 remarked that employees were beginning to take advantage of the flexibility permitted for their work schedules. If the balance of work-life policy weighs too heavily on the life side or vice-versa, leaders may adjust policy. Dalton and Todor (1979) asserted turnover may have positive consequences for some organizations; for work-life balance, some turnover may help level the scale as leaders make necessary adjustments.

Theme 4: Leader Personal Philosophy and Leadership Style

Learning about each participant's personal philosophies and leadership styles was useful for understanding how much employee retention was a concern for the leaders and what they were willing to do to achieve appropriate retention levels. The leadership style leaders utilize may influence employee retention (Caillier, 2014). Social exchange theorists Tse et al. (2013) found evidence to support that while leaders exhibiting

transformational leadership styles showed higher retention rates in their organizations, the social exchanges employees had with other employees was a stronger factor in retention; thus, the social capital conceptual framework resurfaced in the development of Theme 4 as it had in Theme 3. Participant 6 explained her perspective on what makes a leader as follows:

A true leader is somebody who inspires people and you do that by having a shared vision and you give them, again, you grow and develop them, you invest in them, but you, they become engaged in their work and so that they really own their work and they care what they're doing. (Participant 6)

A leader's leadership style may affect employees' attitudes and behaviors (Mulki, Caemmerer, & Heggde, 2015), and the extent to which employees engage in everyday work activities (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). According to Appelbaum, Degbe, MacDonald, and Nguyen-Quang (2015), four distinct leadership styles prevail in organizations: (a) laissez-faire leadership, (b) transactional leadership, (c), transformational leadership, and (d) change-oriented leadership. While mentions of leadership attributes or preferences were evident in each interview, only Participant 7 self-identified a specific leadership style, servant leadership, during the interview. Servant leadership is a relatively new theoretical concept (Yang, Zhang, Kwan, & Chen, 2015). The main premise of servant leadership theory is leaders are in place to develop employees and get them what they need for the individuals and the organization to succeed (Yang et al., 2015). Participant 7 exemplifies the theory in her response:

Sure, and I don't think about it so much as employee retention as I think about it as getting my employees where they need to go. I firmly believe in being a servant leader, I always have been, always will be. And my point is how do I best develop you? (Participant 7)

The fourth section of the literature review entitled Leadership Style and Leader Employee Relationship provides substantial academic support for Theme 4. Table 11 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 4. Table 12 contains a sample of supporting interview responses for Theme 4.

Table 11

Theme 4: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	20	26
P2	14	18
P3	9	12
P4	7	9
P5	9	12
P6	6	8
P7	13	17

Table 12

Theme 4: Leader Personal Philosophy and Leadership Style

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	I try to be very transparent in my leadership so that people understand that I'm an advocate where I can advocate but there are certain limitations and one of the things that I always say to my employees, which seems to work really well is, you know, I'm here to advocate for you and to make sure you get what you need to be effective in your job; that's my primary role, and I take that very seriously. Any time you think you could do better going above me, go for it, but I have to tell you that there are risks, and if you go for it and it doesn't go well, there isn't necessarily something that I can do.	Being transparent allows employees to know where you stand and what you are willing to do for them.
P2	So I've tried to become a champion for it with others, other leaders here at saying you know, if you're leading a team, if you're leading a team, a division, you're leading a department, isn't it better to know, to have some data about where people are at so that you can work to improve it? I, you know, sometimes people are so afraid to ask, because you know, it's going to come back that not everyone trusts you. Okay, so not everybody trusts you.	Be willing to take constructive criticism as it can help you to become a better leader.
P3	I'm a huge unionist so I'm, I'm very pro-union but more importantly I'm pro-people I'm pro-people getting what they deserve and not having it be about people or students or participants not being about the corporate clock I mean and that's what it is if you work for corporate you are a corporate slave I mean there are very few corporations that do right by their employees and, and help out with things like that.	Be fair and equitable with all employees. Work with unions to obtain the best results for your employees.
P4	You could say transparency, you know, try to tell them as much as possible probably, I tell my staff probably more than other directors and managers in this building do.	Share with your employees what is going on in the organization.
P5	Occasionally we get, sometimes like we'll chip in money as a, as a [omitted] group, I'll even, the leadership will go the extra mile and help pay for you know, some other incentive item on an occasional basis. Like we'll have a, a, three-month competition, whoever wins the competition's going to get a pair of Buffalo Bills tickets. I don't use U.S. taxpayer dollars for that. That has to come out of my pocket but I think particularly as an [omitted] there's a, there's a responsibility to assume a certain level of commitment and self-sacrifice and inspire others to perform	Find alternative incentives and rewards for your employees even if resources are scarce; this may come out of the leader's pocket.
P6	Being a leader is not just managing people, it's not just sending out a bunch of directives. A true leader is somebody who inspires people and you do that by having a shared vision and you give them, again, you grow and develop them, you invest in them but you, they become engaged in their work and so that they really own their work and they care what they're doing. So, excuse me, so understanding that leads to the fact that you know, you build those relationships, you build the connections that you truly care, you build trusting relationships.	Be a genuine, charismatic, and inspirational leader. Build relationships with trust as the foundation.

(table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P7	Sure, and I don't think about it so much as employee retention as I think about it as getting my employees where they need to go. I firmly believe in being a servant leader, I always have been, always will be. And, my point is how do I best develop you? If I develop you or we offer opportunities where you can develop should you choose to, then you're going to stay with the agency because you're happy. Sometimes the development happens outside the office. So sometimes you may have to go to another office for a couple years and then come back here for that. So, personally that's what we do.	Be a servant leader and focus on how to best develop employees and encourage retention.

Theme 4 reflects the participants' willingness to be introspective about how they make decisions as leaders, what they believe leaders should do, and how they perceive the behaviors of leaders around them. From a social capital theory perspective, leaders may find difficulties making meaningful relationships with employees if their leadership style is an impediment. Participant 7 asserted that leaders must build trusting relationships. In the workplace, interpersonal trust directly influences how employees feel satisfied with their job (Guinot et al., 2014).

Theme 5: Organization's Level of Commitment to Retention

Each of the previous themes reflected leaders' strategies to retain employees. The focus of Theme 5 is how organizations support retention strategies via procedure, policy, or culture. Participants 1, 5, and 7 mentioned their organization's use of a climate survey to evaluate the employee work experience. Participant 4 conducted an informal climate survey, as the organization did not provide a survey. For Participant 2, the organization offered leaders the survey tool on a voluntary basis. In contrast, Participants 5 and 7's organizations required the survey annually.

Sometimes, employee development is a function of the organization's policies as

well. “We have a huge commitment at the [omitted] to professional development; there is a wonderful support through organizational development for dealing with virtually any issue” (Participant 1). In effect, the Theme 1 leader responses are congruent with established organizational development programs captured in Theme 5.

Consistent with all participants was a discussion of how unions influence policy and procedures and in some regard, the certain restrictions leaders have for recognizing staff. The topic of unions typically arose when leaders were discussing salaries and performance rewards. “If money’s their only motivator then, I can’t do anything about how much they get paid, that’s the budget, that’s union negotiations; that has nothing to do with me” (Participant 4). However, even employee benefits may reflect union deals. Participant 3 explained the organization’s union negotiates for what medical, dental, and vision benefits employees (full-time or part-time) are eligible for.

For some public organizations, legal contracts prevent easy turnover, as employees must comply with laws requiring fulfillment of the contract to the particular government organization employing them. Participant 5 described an employment scenario in which leaving the organization before a contract was up was very difficult to do. The cost-benefit theory conceptual framework is evident in Participant 5’s description of the difficulties reduced retention might pose:

I can tell you that losing a [omitted] for whatever reason, is no longer capable of performing their duties creates a significant burden because the mission doesn’t change, it just makes the burden displaced on the remaining [omitted]. They’re still capable of performing their duties. So the cost to us is high. (Participant 5)

A final indication of how committed some organizations are to retention is evident in promotion practices. Participant 7's organization prefers to promote within so at least when someone leaves a position, they are not leaving the organization; institutional knowledge is not lost in those cases (human capital theory). Table 13 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 5. Table 14 contains a sample of verbal responses the leaders provided relating to Theme 5.

Table 13

Theme 5: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	10	37
P2	3	11
P3	2	7
P4	1	4
P5	4	15
P6	2	7
P7	5	19

Table 14

Theme 5: Organization's Level of Commitment to Retention

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	We have a huge commitment at the [omitted] to professional development, there is a wonderful support through organizational development for dealing with virtually any issue. We have great performance programs in place...so there's actually a lot of opportunities for people to be successful here and really only if it's like so bad that--and you're an easy at will employee to get rid of, are those changes made.	The organization uses employee development programs as a retention strategy.
P2	So one of the, one of the strategies that we've employed is the, we have participated pretty systematically in a climate survey that is basically taken from the best place, best places to work research that's been done nationally. And this is in collaboration with one of the units in human resources here at [omitted].	Organization-wide climate surveys (table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
	They will assist you in surveying your employees on the climate in your organization and then they will systematically come back and measure again so you can see what kinds of improvement you've been making in the culture in your organization. That strategy, I think is really, the cornerstone of our retention and engagement strategy because the data from that culture survey tells us what we're doing right, and what we could be doing better.	administered to employees provide valuable feedback to leaders.
P3	Another unique thing at [omitted] and [omitted] is if you have two classes, if you have one class you get no health insurance, two classes you get health, I shouldn't say health insurance, you get full benefits. Two classes you get full benefits, three classes you get full benefits, but you can't teach more than three classes, so where we might lose people is to finding a full-time job so there's not really any strategies that have, there's never been, I think the question was hurdles that I've had to overcome.	Organizations use benefits programs to entice employees to stay.
P4	Yeah, and the, the, the thing is again, because it's civil service, they're looking at how many years they have left and so this project is kind of tough. I know from where I sit as far as retention, it's not a situation where it's a private firm. Like I worked for [omitted] bank years ago and that was a high turnover. I think the banking industry, overall retail banking, there's high turnover there. Like every six months there was a new, you know, the entire branch staff would change, you know? You're not going to find that so much in government, you find, people just not staying past their retirement time. And so I guess it just depends on which stage in someone's life cycle that they come into, to work for the government if you're a civil service employee you decide okay, I'm, I, I want out. You don't see too many people leaving government and going to another government agency because it's so bad at the end, you know.	Employees stay often because of the sense of permanence and stability typical of civil service positions.
P5	You know, I, I, it's just, it's hard to tell that the reason that it's hard, the reason that it's hard to tell for me like to have anything concrete is because a [omitted] doesn't have the ability to just quit. They are on contract with the U.S. government for a period of [omitted]. So they can't just quit. If they do, and there has been one [omitted] that straight up quit, they got to [omitted] or he's pending [omitted]. But there are legal consequences to that. So the system is designed to create a pretty significant disincentive for quitting. If I were in charge of a [omitted] labor force, I would say that probably retention in and of itself, who decides to stay to sign a new contract to stay employed, who decides to seek a new job and what the turnover rate is, that would probably be a better indicator.	Some government employees are not able to leave their organizations easily because of contractual agreements they have with their employer.
P6	Interesting here, is that because the union they are, they are also in the same situation, that the school could close, could very well close down, but they are all still guaranteed a position so it means they would be transferred or they would just place somebody else...so there's still that possibility and still a concern, and I'm sure there's no one who wants to see the school close but it's not to the level it was before about being employed, I won't have a job, it's hard to get a teaching job in Buffalo, and even harder when you're in a school that's getting shut down.	Some employees are in contractual arrangements that guarantee them positions even if their current organization shuts down.
P7	Absolutely. Absolutely, and that's a good point, that is, I'm glad you brought that up. That's one of the things we haven't touched on. We are huge on promoting from within whenever it makes sense and most of the time we have the talent pool but sometimes you bring in an outsider and yes, it's going to cause a problem.	Some organizations use promotion of internal candidates as a means to retain employees.

The overarching message of Theme 5 is employee retention levels reflect, to some extent, the leaders' commitment to retention by way of institutionalized measures. Participant 5 noted, for example, that offering a climate survey annually was a requirement. Participant 6 mentioned a report card the state compiles on school performance and employee retention. Midlevel and lower-level leaders may not have unilateral decision-making power with respect to policy and therefore may not be able to provide certain benefits to employees to encourage them to stay. A lack of investment in human resource management may impede organizational performance (Park et al., 2013). Therefore, valuing human capital must be an organizational norm for strong retention.

Theme 6: Turnover Causes

The topic of the study highlights retention strategies public leaders implement but turnover and retention frequently appear together in the literature. Based on the literature published in the past five years, the preference of scholars appears to be turnover vice retention. Robinson et al. (2014) examined the philosophical underpinnings of the terminology preference and proposed investigating job embeddedness (what makes employees choose to stay). Interestingly, while the participants presented negative reasons employees might turnover, only three of the seven acknowledged positive reasons employees might turnover. For example, Participant 2 stated:

I always hate to lose a really good employee but if I'm losing a good employee because they're going to something that aligns better with their career development and provides them greater opportunity, well, at the moment they tell me they're leaving I'm disappointed, I immediately turn the switch to I'm really

happy for you because they're moving on to something that opens up new avenues for them that I perhaps at this moment can't. (Participant 2)

The extent to which employees believe they have supervisory support may dictate likelihood to turnover (Ryan et al., 2012; Tuzun & Kalemci, 2012). Participant 7 characterized supervisor-employee relationships as critical for retention. "Right, there is a, a saying and I believe it's backed up by studies, you'll have to do your research on that, people don't leave jobs they leave bosses" (Participant 7). Participant 5 discovered employees only had the gumption to complain about their leadership in a survey. "On an anonymous survey probably just like any other employee, they can say some mean stuff and it gets you really questioning man, am I doing everything right" (Participant 5)?

Two participants cited organizational constraints as causes of turnover. Participant 6 indicated location closures may force employees to seek employment elsewhere; just the rumor of a possible closure is enough to cause some employees to leave, simply out of fear of losing their job. Participant 3 noted that a common driver in turnover is the organization's lack of full-time positions. "When part-time staff are unable to sustain their households with a part-time salary, as soon as a full-time position opens and they receive an offer, they take it" (Participant 3). The constraints of potential closure and insufficient full-time positions are not issues the leaders are able to remedy on their own; therefore, workable retention strategies are scarce for such scenarios.

Attrition is yet another cause of turnover for some public sector organizations. Participant 7 cited the age of the so-called Baby Boomers as a primary reason for attrition in federal organizations. Some strategies are to allow employees to retire and re-hire them

as contractors; those individuals will receive both a retirement annuity and salary when working (Participant 7). Participant 3 mentioned attrition of retirement-age employees as well. The union negotiated a special pay increase for longevity whereby if someone stays past 30 years, they receive additional pay (Participant 3). Both the program to rehire annuitants and the program to offer longevity pay are retention strategies the organizations or unions promote; the leaders do not implement them (Participant 3).

A final cause of turnover leaders raised in discussion was the notion of employees not feeling valued. Hamstra, Sassenberg, Van Yperen, and Wisse (2014) discovered that the leadership style a leader exhibits may influence how valued an employee feels; one employee may appreciate a transformational leadership style, while another prefers a transactional leadership style, for example. Deichmann and Stam (2015) examined how either leadership style (transactional or transformational) influenced employees' commitment to innovation. Barrick et al. (2015) showed connections between employees feeling valued and their level of engagement with the organization. Participant 1 described how the organization does not provide a conducive environment for employees to feel valued. Participant 3 stated part-time employees were not treated well because the organization was unable to provide them with sufficient resources and support. Table 15 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 6. Table 16 displays the sample supporting responses for Theme 6.

Table 15

Theme 6: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	20	36
P2	9	16
P3	4	7
P4	5	9
P5	5	9
P6	6	11
P7	6	11

Table 16

Theme 6: Causes of Turnover

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P1	Retention is important from the standpoint of, you know, I'm sure you can make an argument, you know, from a labor market standpoint, from a financial, from an investment standpoint. But from the actual valuing of people, we're not necessarily in a climate that really values people. It's just the way it is.	Employees turnover because they do not feel valued.
P2	I want to say we've probably had 45 percent of our staff turnover...but most of those people, literally every one of them have gone to something much better and amazing...and so, hmm, I'm sad because they were all great people, some of whom, some of whom I actually hired during my tenure here in the department so they were people who I hired, who we cultivated, and then they moved on.	Not all employees leave their jobs for bad reasons. They may leave for new developmental opportunities or to accept a promotion.
P3	Anybody who has any say with adjuncts because adjuncts are I think 51% of the teaching faculty, not just at [omitted], everywhere. I mean I just looked up the statistic this morning, most colleges it's at least 50% if not more, more so if that's the bulk of our workforce, then we need to treat them well. We can't treat them like garbage but unfortunately we do treat them like garbage because there's no pathway to a full-time position, it's just not there, the State won't give us any money for full-time positions, we have to like fight for anything we can.	Employees may turnover because their position is not full-time or permanent due to the limited resources the funding body provides.

(table continues)

P#	Sample supporting response	Implied meaning
P4	So people kind of murmur in the halls and say like how's that going to impact them, you know, who wins, how many years do I have left to retirement, should I leave now because this person comes in, so those types of things maybe.	Employees may leave because they are reluctant to work under new leadership taking over.
P5	Conduct. We hold the highest standards of conduct and the penalty for violating those standards of conduct are pretty significant. If a [omitted] out on [omitted] duty compromises integrity by falsifying an [omitted] or an [omitted] document, and that could be as simple as a [omitted] that's been working 12 to 14 hours a day, six days a week puts themselves in a position where they feel they are one day away from missing their monthly mission and it's just a matter of pretending like maybe this applicant didn't have [omitted] you know, and kind of coaches him along to not disclose that he has [omitted]. And I'm using this as an example. You know, that [omitted] will submit the complicit in violating the [omitted] of the United States code. And if I find out, I have a moral obligation to enforce the [omitted] and hold them accountable, which could very well mean they get kicked off of [omitted], they get a bad [omitted] report for their performance evaluation, and it would pretty much significantly jeopardize their ability to pursue a career in the [omitted] after their [omitted].	Some leaders dismiss employees because the employees violated strict standards of conduct; the leader is bound to uphold the standard of conduct and must dismiss the employee if the violation is significant enough.
P6	Retention is going to be a factor of your leadership, if you got a bad leader in, you're going to see teachers moving out, or are transferring out, or you know unhappy, and you'll see a lot of grievances and so if you, in terms of strong leadership would understand, clearly understands that you can't get anything done without the people with you and so I'm limited, I'm not working with the kids day to day, I'm not, so if I don't get them behind me and I don't get them to buy into a shared vision together, we're not going to move this building, and so I would say that retention is more of a by-product of strong leadership, of, the way, you know, the philosophy behind your leadership style.	Leaders and their leadership styles may help determine if an employee stays or leaves the organization.
P7	So, I'm gonna use some terms, not just about employee retention but employee engagement because I believe they tend to go together, our agency just like all the other Federal agencies has the baby boomer, exit going on, or started to have the baby boomer exit going on until 2008 hit. I don't remember the, the statistics. I apologize but I'm sure you can look them up online, but, at one point it looked like we could lose up to 85% of our institutional knowledge.	Some public organizations are facing rapid attrition because of so many employees being of near-retirement age.

The turnover causes identified in Theme 6 are not exhaustive. A noteworthy observation is that while I worded the interview questions from a retention perspective, the participants invariably took the contrasting turnover perspective at certain points during the interviews. Interestingly, while Pourshaban, Basurto-Dávila, and Shih (2015) found a relationship between pay and employee turnover, none of the participants indicated pay was the main factor causing retention issues. Based on the participant responses in general, some turnover is unavoidable because there exists external forces over which the leaders have no control such as pay, organizational closure, or retirement age of staff, for example.

Theme 7: Leaders' Retention Strategy Implementation Challenges

The final theme is critical for the overall understanding of leadership retention strategy implementation. Leaders may desire to implement certain strategies that have particularly difficult challenges. In some circumstances, a leader may not be able to implement a particular strategy at all. As mentioned in Theme 1, developing employees may pose some long-term unintended consequences. Participant 1 shared how employees would leave the department after receiving so much training they outgrew their job. Participant 2 acknowledged the challenge as well, but did not view the situation negatively. Participant 3 explained the organization stifled retention at times because of its inability to offer full-time positions; even if leaders complained to their higher management, New York State made the decision, ultimately. Participant 5 characterized government bureaucracy as a significant challenge to rewarding staff. Participants 4, 5, 6,

and 7 mentioned the inability to reward staff properly was a challenge, as budgetary constraints prevented overspending.

Theme 7 does not tie exclusively to just one of the three conceptual framework theories presented. However, cost-benefit theory relates closely to Theme 7. Participant 5 described the high costs of turnover but also mentioned a lack of monetary resources for employee rewards. Likewise, participants 2, 6, and 7 each raised the topic of employees' salaries and how each had no power to adjust salaries based on employee performance. In a 2015 study on public health agencies, Pourshaban et al. concluded job satisfaction and pay had a strong relationship with turnover intentions. Park and Berry (2014) provided evidence of the continuing debate over how to compensate public sector employees. The message of Theme 7 is clear; leaders encounter difficulties implementing certain retention strategies and must find strategies they do have some control over. Table 17 displays the frequency of responses for Theme 7. Table 18 contains the leaders' sample supporting responses for Theme 7.

Table 17

Theme 7: Frequency of Responses

P#	Participant responses (N=7)	Participant responses (%)
P1	21	25
P2	6	7
P3	8	9
P4	20	24
P5	16	19
P6	8	9
P7	6	7

Table 18

Theme 7: Leaders' Retention Strategy Implementation Challenges

P#	Sample supporting responses	Implied meaning
P1	The danger of me being so nurturing to people is that sometimes you know they do grow and when-when you help people grow sometimes they've outgrown the job; they don't want to do the job anymore, which is kind of a funny thing. Another time when it sort of backfires to show the limitation [laughter] of my approach is that it only works if the work is getting done, so what I say to people is I'm committed to your growth but the caveat is you have to do a good job because you're getting paid and I'm supervising you in this work and if this work doesn't get done, there can be no growth. I can't—you know all of this other stuff is extra.	Developing employees (a positive retention strategy) can have the deleterious effect of having them outgrow the job, causing them to leave anyway.
P2	Okay, so specifically retention, as distinguished from engagement, so the challenges I've found in retention here have a lot to do with the fact that this is a very, very large institution and the beautiful thing is in a large institution there are a lot of opportunities for people to make lateral or progressive moves in terms of their career development. The challenge for any department head in that is how do you keep enhancing an employee's job duties and responsibilities within the boundaries so that you don't lose really good people to other departments who can offer them just a little bit more money or perhaps a different pay grade or more exciting content in their job and so I think one of the biggest challenges is in being in a big organization you've got to be really creative and you've got to be always be on your toes in terms of retention because the opportunities are out there, literally for every person in my department. They could go out tomorrow and find opportunities that would be of interest to them.	Developing employees (a positive retention strategy) can have the deleterious effect of having them outgrow the job, causing them to leave anyway.
P3	Yeah, yeah, I mean, if we can't, if you're not available during the times we can, we can have you we'll say we'll keep you, your resume on file you know we'd love to have you at another time but we can't because this is when we have to have 'em and there isn't you know like, like people will say, like people will, like people will say, well don't professors get to choose when they're gonna work?, well no. We don't, we kind of do we kind of don't but there is prescribed, prescribed times that the college offers classes and if we have too many things in the day or too many things at night we're not going to be serving the students. It's all student driven.	When the specific needs of the organization do not coincide with an employee's availability, the organization may dictate the possibility of retaining the employee.
P4	Now I know that I can't control that on you know, someone—just wants, just applied for this job, whatever job title they're in, because there was room for advancement as far as more pay versus this is a career path I want to take, I already know I'm starting at a disadvantage with that individual, right? If money's their only motivator then, I can't do anything about how much they get paid, that's the budget, that's union negotiations that has nothing to do with me. So I can't control that. I can't impact that so I know I'm starting at a disadvantage there.	Leaders are not always able to provide monetary compensation employees desire; budgets and union agreements may dictate such compensation.

(table continues)

P#	Sample supporting responses	Implied meaning
P5	But there are so many layers of bureaucracy that are required to get that award approved and it has to be submitted, the expectation is that it gets submitted so far in advance that if you miss that timeline, now there's a disincentive to submit it because the [omitted] in charge is, I mean I'll get, I get lit up, you know it's like, I'm trying to do right, you want this thing 90 days in advance, things came up, I lost track of it, this [omitted] deserves recognition, but now that there's, now there's actually a disincentive because if I don't submit it they'll never know about it, but if I do submit it, they'll know about it, I'm going to get in trouble and they're not going to care about whether I had a reason for not breaking the timeline.	Government bureaucracy can make providing monetary rewards a daunting process.
P6	Well I can't give incentives. We have collective negotiations so, I can't do anything that's outside the contract. I can't say "hey, I'm going to give you an extra \$2000 if you get every child to pass their state test"; that has to be collectively negotiated. So private, same thing with hiring too. I can't give them different incentives.	Monetary incentives are not always viable options for leaders to reward employees.
P7	So, sequestration's been very, very hard. I used to be able, in the early days, I sound like an old person, in the early days I used to be able to keep things in my desk drawer. Someone did an amazing job, here, here's two movie tickets. Here's a \$25 gift certificate to Starbucks, here's a—that, all of that is gone. We used to have stuff where you know, you'd give people what are they called, the token coins and the coffee cups, or the backpacks or the all this stuff, or they going to training and they get all this stuff so they felt like oh I'm an [omitted] now, no, now you get a plain folder, even though the plain folder costs more than the branded one, the implication is if it's branded you've spent more money for it and so there's all this crazy kinda stuff going on.	Limited government resources and strict spending restrictions hamper the ability of leaders to provide worthwhile incentives to employees.

Strategy implementation in the public sector workplace is challenging, as the participants made clear. Among the most notable impediments to strategy implementation were bureaucratic processes, a lack of financial resources, and conflicting ideologies regarding the outcomes of employee development. Cost-benefit considerations were evident as leaders expressed how they must evaluate the effectiveness of particular strategies. Participant 7 stated, for example, that employees were happy receiving pizza as a form of recognition; the cost of a few party pizzas may be low compared to a \$10

gift card to each employee. In summary, the challenges leaders face implementing retention strategies are sometimes outside their scope of influence.

Thematic Methodological Triangulation

Triangulation is a method of providing additional credibility to a qualitative study (Yin, 2014). Varying triangulation methods may yield inconsistent results (Patton, 2015). Each of the seven themes identified from the interview data garnered generous support in the literature; methodological triangulation, however, involves using multiple sources (Denzin, 1978). To validate the findings further, viewing public sector websites for supporting webpages and documents relating to the themes was part of the data analysis process. Table 19 displays a sample of the sources reviewed. The sample sources were from federal, state, and local government websites.

Table 19

Theme 7: Thematic Methodological Triangulation Sample Content

Theme #	Government organization Name of document or website	Summary of source content
1	New York State "Statewide Learning and Development"	Provides a number of links to courses for employees to use for personal training and development.
	City of Buffalo "Employment and Training"	Describes the workforce development training available and mentions retention as one of the reasons for offering the training.
2	U.S. Office of Personnel Management "Maximizing Employee Engagement Job Aid"	A job aid to assist supervisors and managers with engaging staff and helping them feel autonomous in their jobs.
	New York State "The Basics of Leadership and Empowerment"	Describes a full-day course supervisors and managers can take to learn how to lead and empower staff.
3	U.S. Office of Personnel Management "Data, Analysis, & Documentation"	Provides annual federal survey data including FEVS as well as links to the laws requiring the surveys.

(table continues)

Theme #	Government organization Name of document or website	Summary of source content
	U.S. Office of Personnel Management “Human Capital Management”	Provides policy documents and descriptions pertaining to employee such as organizational culture, talent management, and workplace environment.
4	U.S. Office of Personnel Management “Leadership Assessment Program— Level II for Supervisors and Managers”	Provides a course overview for leadership skill development. Teaches leaders how to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
5	U.S. Office of Personnel Management “Pay and Leave: Recruitment, Relocations, and Retention Incentives”	Provides information regarding what is permissible for leaders to offer staff (including retention incentives); provides links to laws and policies.
	New York State “Workforce and Succession Planning”	The page describes the costs associated with turnover and provides survey and report data regarding turnover and retention.
	City of Buffalo “Mayor Brown Praises City Employees’ Contract Agreement”	Article on City of Buffalo’s website discussing agreements made between labor union and the city.
6	U.S. Office of Personnel Management “Fact Sheet: Retention Incentives (likely to leave for a different Federal position)”	Describes the circumstances why certain employees may consider leaving a federal position and what measures are possible to retain them.
7	U.S. Office of Personnel Management “Memos and Reports”	Provides law and policy guidance on what federal offices may do with respect to employee pay and incentives.

Affirming data is consistent is possible with triangulation (Patton, 2015). Each segment of the public sector was replete with supporting evidence to justify conclusions drawn in both the new data documented in the presentation of findings and the existing literature. Indubitably, extensive proprietary documentation exists for which the public does not have access. In the same way that Yin (2015) recommended having more than one case for a study for comparative purposes, the principle is applicable to content analysis with each theme supported with more than one document.

Applications to Professional Practice

Public sector leaders may use the identified themes relating to retention strategy implementation as a means to improve business practices. The practical application of these findings is limitless as future leaders may adopt and adapt the findings to suit needs within their specific organizations. In essence, the *implied meaning* columns of each thematic table become leadership best practices, or a handbook of leaders' retention strategy maxims.

Based on participant feedback, comprehensive work-life balance policies were among the significant business practices leaders are currently implementing. From the literature, Deery and Jago (2015) asserted work-life balance was critical for addressing employee retention issues. In a mixed methods study involving 316 participants, Friedman and Westring (2015) concluded work-life balance policy implementation resulted in increased job satisfaction on behalf of the employee-participants, as well as perceived improvements in the employees' personal lives. In summary, leaders interested in retaining staff must not ignore the influence work-life balance policy may have on employee job satisfaction and by extension, retention. By integrating cost-benefit theory into policy-making, leaders may begin to see observable improvements in retention; one cost might be abdicating some control and encouraging employees to be more autonomous. Empowered employees are less likely to have turnover intentions (Kim & Fernandez, 2015).

According to the participants, developing employees is another crucial business practice contributing to retention. The lesson learned was employee development is not to

the benefit of the leader, but to the benefit of the employee and to the organization. Employees tend to remain loyal to an employer when they perceive training and development is a priority (Beynon et al., 2015). Organizations boasting high retention rates feature continuous employee development opportunities (George, 2015). Therefore, leaders seeking high retention rates must incorporate regular, meaningful development programs into employees' job functions.

A final take-away business practice to highlight is adopting a leadership style that will foster mutual trust between leaders and employees, as well as encourage employee buy-in with respect to what the organization represents. Deichmann and Stam (2015) stressed leaders need to set the precedent for making a connection with the organization. Essentially, leaders who believe in the ideals or mission of the organization will be more effective at inspiring employees to hold the same values. Barrick et al. (2015) referred to the mutual engagement of employees and leaders as collective organizational engagement, which when at its full potential may benefit organizational performance.

Observable differences exist in the types of challenges public leaders face compared to private sector leaders with strategy implementation. Nonetheless, the retention strategies identified have universal applicability regardless of sector. Public sector leaders work within government-specific constraints and must demonstrate flexibility and resourcefulness when such constraints are particularly paralyzing. Leaders must also realize their leadership style and personal philosophies may be a constraint preventing them from realizing retention objectives. Also critical is an organization's support in the retention effort. Organizations' top leaders assert the commitment to

retaining employees by providing adequate resources for strategy implementation, and hiring leaders who have employee-centered leadership styles.

Implications for Social Change

Retaining highly qualified workers in the public sector has innumerable significant and tangible benefits for a widespread audience. Employees being empowered, encouraged, engaged, valued, and rewarded appropriately may report greater job satisfaction and commitment to their organization, which may in turn reflect positively on the organization's performance. Hancock et al. (2013) asserted that an organization's performance is predicable based on turnover levels, so higher retention associates with higher performance levels. Therefore, from the improved public organizations, communities may receive prompt, efficient, and productive execution of public goods and services. The possibility exists for the public sector to set the precedent for an employee-centered workplace after which private sector organizations of all shapes and sizes may model their organizational cultures. Providing convincing and legitimate reasons for employees to stay in an organization would result in stability for the organization considering (a) institutional knowledge (see Rehman, 2012), which relates to human capital, (b), engagement and the capacity for innovation (see Deichmann, 2015), which relates to social capital, and (c) organizational performance (see Sturman et al., 2012), which relates to cost-benefit theory. Leaders, therefore, may adopt any or all of the retention strategies and thereby mobilize positive social change in both their organizations and the geographical footprint their organization reaches.

Recommendations for Action

Leaders have an arsenal of retention strategies available to them and a goal of this study was to educate leaders about what other public sector colleagues have implemented. “Being a leader is not just managing people, it’s not just sending out a bunch of directives” (Participant 6). Below, I outline five specific recommendations for action. The target audience of this study is public sector leaders, but my assessment is that retention is a byproduct of decisions made at three levels within the organization; employees, leaders, and the individuals hiring the leaders are all responsible for retention.

Hiring High Quality Leaders

Participant 6 stated that the easiest way to avoid human resource issues is to not have human resource issues. While the statement was allegorical, the message was to avoid problems in the first place. Organizations must identify what leadership style best would provide for the type of work environment encouraging individuals to commit to the organization. Those involved in the hiring process have tremendous power in helping the organization turn for the better, or for the worse. For example, if a transformational leader would transmogrify the organizational culture so drastically that turnover becomes rare, then hiring officials must be keenly aware of how to identify candidates with those desirable qualities. Leaders possessing either transformational or transactional leadership styles encourage employees to engage in improving the organization via idea generation (Deichmann, 2015). Alternatively, hiring new leaders who take a laissez-faire approach to leadership would likely maintain the status quo work environment and make little progress with retention. Another approach is developing future leaders as they move up

the ranks in the organization (Cascio, 2014). Whether hiring leaders from within or hiring from outside the organization, the leadership style remains a focus. The leader determines the direction of the organization (Participant 7).

Employees Demanding High Quality Leaders

While not all public sector employees belong to unions or even have the option to join unions, employees may still demand quality leadership in a number of ways. For example, employees may take advantage of climate surveys to let the main decision-makers know what is taking place at their level (Participant 2; Participant 5; Participant 7). Employees may also take advantage of established grievance processes (Participant 5). Last, employees who fear reprisal may report poor leadership via established whistleblower procedures when applicable or possible (Participant 5). However, having high quality leaders (in the first place) would render whistleblowing unnecessary (Liu, Liao, & Wei, 2015). Last, anonymous reporting of egregious leader activities is also an option, though anonymity prevents a two-way dialog. The demand for high quality leaders complements the notion of employee empowerment, identified in Theme 2.

Leadership Development, Counseling, and Mentoring

Considering the diversity of strategies leaders provided, further investigation should address whether certain strategies are intrinsic to the leader or if the strategies are learnable. Participant 7 stressed that leaders have to show employees respect and treat them like adults. A leader may find it challenging to suddenly appear sincere and respectful to employees having previously been indelicate, condescending, and demeaning to staff. The social capital theory concepts do not exclude leaders from the

equation. Leaders having difficulties meeting employees' needs on a basic human level may require spiritual or mental counseling of some kind; such services may be available through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) but may be sought outside of the workplace as well (Participant 5; Participant 7). Leaders need to be more introspective and understand why people do not like them. Participant 2 stated that leaders should accept criticism as a means to improve themselves. Participant 7 intimated that employees quit leaders, not their jobs. Leadership development programs may include learning modules to help leaders work through particular weaknesses (Packard & Jones, 2015); mentorship may be part of a leadership development program.

Revisiting Employee Surveys

Organizations may need to revisit whether employee surveys should be voluntary or mandated. Participant 5's organization permitted the leader to offer a climate survey on a voluntary basis. Participant 7's organization required a survey be available, but employees took it on a voluntary basis. Participant 5's employees took the survey biannually, while Participant 5 and 7's employees took it annually. Mandating consistent surveys may force the potential uncomfortable leader-employee issues to surface. Identifying the issues is critical to addressing them. Furthermore, the quality of existing surveys may need improvements. For example, Fernandez, Resh, Moldogaziev, and Oberfield (2015) made recommendations for improving the FEVS, which U.S. federal employees take annually. In addition, climate surveys should not undergo extensive analytical sanitation to the extent leaders and employees alike see an unreasonable

reflection of their true workplace experiences. Survey results should be clear, reported back timely, discussed, and then revisited later (Participant 5).

Sharing the Findings

While the majority of public sector leaders may not read doctoral dissertations, (or ever hear of this particular doctoral study), the findings of this study may appear in alternate, useful forms. For example, Getha-Taylor et al. (2015) mentioned the existence of government-run leadership development programs. I would envision workforce development program specialists creating course modules that coincide with the seven themes as a way to train future leaders. Alternatively, public sector leaders required to attend leadership conferences might benefit from a segment highlighting the findings of this study. Last, future researchers may build on this study and reference it in future academic research programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations made in this component reflect recommendations leaders made in the interviews, pertinent areas still addressed insufficiently in the literature, and my personal observations based on the overall experience conducting research featuring retention in the public sector. The identification of retention strategies in this study may be useful for leaders but of critical importance is knowing how to organize the strategies in order of effectiveness and manageability. A future study might introduce a comparative component whereby leaders evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a list of strategies. Certainly, not every strategy is applicable in every scenario and being able to ascertain which are appropriate may be somewhat subjective on behalf of the

leader and the particular circumstances. With a comprehensive study, at least future leaders may understand what tends to work the best and what they should adopt only if all else fails.

This study involved only the perspectives of public sector leaders. An alternative study might involve public employees' perspectives (as opposed to the leaders'), to gain insight regarding perceptions of leader effectiveness with respect to implementation of retention strategies; such a study may be useful for theory generation. The fact that leaders implement strategies and evaluate those strategies to be effective could reflect personal bias or a spurious correlation; evidence from employees would provide a litmus test to strengthen the leaders' claims. Essentially, a 360-degree evaluation might be useful to leaders when assessing the effectiveness of retention strategies.

As mentioned previously, the terminology researchers have used, typically turnover vice retention, bears witness to a longstanding paradigm. Retention-focused studies are growing in popularity, which is indicative of a possible paradigm shift. Likewise, studies on turnover intentions exist, but an obvious gap is evident with the alternative perspective, what I would call *retention intention*. Future researchers might pose the question to employees, "Why are you intending to stay with your organization?", or to leaders, "How do you know your employees are planning on staying with your organization?". A paradigm shift in the positive direction may provide some useful insight for future scholarship.

As noted in the Limitations sections, in addition to the study lacking any metric to evaluate effectiveness of the identified retention strategies, a study of this kind lacks

generalizability. Yin (2015) asserted case study research does not require generalizability. However, future researchers may conduct the same type of study with new participants in a different geographical area.

Reflections

As a public sector employee in a nonsupervisory role at the time of the interviews, known and unknown biases likely influenced the interviews in one way or another. Employees (myself included) are not always aware of the limitations leaders have with respect to how policy and procedure may dictate leaders' actions. Approaching the interviews with the naïveté of a nonleader employee, I first thought inaction of leaders was merely a function of leadership style and not so much a result of bureaucratic constraints. The reality is well-intentioned leaders may confront administrative obstacles preventing them from implementing retention strategies in the way they might deem effective.

Despite attempts to the contrary, I may have inadvertently asked follow-up questions regarding topics which were more interesting to me while skirting over topics for which I had marginal interest. While perhaps natural in a typical casual conversation, it would have been preferable in an interview setting to be consistent with follow-up questions (or to minimize them altogether) to avoid the suggestion one topic garnered more interest over another.

Moments arose during the interview process in which the interviewees questioned if the responses provided were reflective of what I wanted to hear. I was careful to encourage them to speak freely, assuring responses were neither right nor wrong, and no

particular response was expected or anticipated. On a personal level, I was able to sense the level of sincerity one leader had versus another, though I sought actively to minimize such subjective perceptions during the data analysis process.

A final reflection worthy of note regards linguistic observations made during the interviews and transcription process. Having transcribed the interviews personally and perhaps because of my Masters in Linguistics background, I developed a heightened consciousness of the use of filled pauses such as “uh” and “um” and discourse markers such as “you know” and “I mean”. Some speech patterns were fluid and continuous, and therefore relatively easy to transcribe. In contrast, other speech patterns reflected constant stops and starts, using extensive fillers and discourse markers, and thus proved challenging to transcribe. Despite the disparity in manner of articulation, all participants offered useful and relevant information. In reflection, it became apparent the fluidity of one’s speech did not dictate the quality of the content in the response provided, which was a rewarding observation to make.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Retaining employees in the public sector workplace is critical for maintaining institutional knowledge (George, 2015) and conserving fiscal resources and optimizing organizational performance (Hancock et al., 2013). Millions of people rely on the thousands of public organizations run in the U.S. and the majority of these organizations rely on taxpayer dollars for funding. The significance of the study, therefore, transcends the immediate needs of public sector employees and extends to widespread local, state, and federal communities in innumerable ways.

For the leaders in the public sector, self-awareness and personal accountability are vital attributes to possess for an organization to reflect high retention. Showing strong retention levels, however, is not enough. As Participant 2 stated, if people are leaving for good reasons, leaders should not hold those individuals back. In contrast, obligatory retention, either by contract with the government or desperation because of personal financial circumstances may result in low performers staying longer than they should. Dalton and Todor (1979) made the observation some turnover may benefit an organization. The culmination of this research project and the research accompanying it is reducible to one condensed strategy. To retain employees, be a trustworthy, compassionate, genuine, and socially engaging leader who prioritizes and values people over productivity, performance, and politics.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

The following constitutes the Interview Protocol. An Interview Protocol informs participants of the step-by-step order of events to take place during the interview. While every effort will be made to follow the protocol as written, unforeseen circumstances or developments during the interview may warrant altering the protocol in some manner. If all questions are not answered, the researcher may ask if you agree to a second interview to finish the questions, or to follow-up on some of the questions answered in the first interview.

Before the interview, the researcher will

- provide the participant a copy of the interview protocol, consent form, and interview questions and confirm each document was read and understood;
- schedule time, place, and date with the interviewee; and
- answer preliminary concerns and questions of the participant.

During the interview, the researcher will

- obtain a signed consent form, if not already obtained in advance;
- confirm if the participant agrees to be recorded;
- remind the participant involvement is voluntary;
- remind the participant they may back out at any time;
- advise participant the researcher will take notes in a journal;
- remind participant responses are confidential;
- address any concerns regarding the consent form; and
- ask the interview questions that were provided in advance.

After the interview, the researcher will

- thank the participant for taking part in the interview;
- transcribe the data and determine if a second interview is necessary;
- send the transcript to the participant for review;
- send summary of themes identified in analysis and make updates based on participant feedback (member checking);
- schedule a second interview for follow-up (if necessary);
- receive affirmation from participant regarding accuracy of the transcription and accuracy of data interpretation (via e-mail or telephone);
- convert all paper documents to digital format;
- save all files to a thumb drive and lock in a safe for 5 years; and

- destroy all data after 5 years.

After publication, the researcher will

- send the participant a summary of the findings and an electronic copy of the completed study if requested; and
- advise the participant of the publication.

Appendix B: Advertisement

All advertisements for newspapers, e-mail solicitations, and posts for Facebook will contain the following language:

Seeking public sector leaders who have implemented strategies to improve employee retention in their organizations. Doctoral student conducting interviews. Participation is confidential and unpaid. To participate or for more info, e-mail public.sector.retention@gmail.com, visit Public Sector Retention Study on Facebook or call 716-xxx-xxxx.

Appendix C: Flyer

Seeking Public Sector Leaders

for a Doctoral Student's Study on

Employee Retention Strategies

Eligibility Requirements:

- must be a director, manager, supervisor, or team leader in a federal, state, or local government organization in Western New York
- must have implemented a strategy to improve employee retention in your organization (regardless of its success or failure)

Interview Details:

- interviews will take place in a neutral, public setting agreed upon by both the researcher and the interviewee
- interviews will last approximately 90 minutes (extended only if necessary and with participant's agreement)
- interviews are recorded and transcribed, and then edited of any personally identifiable information

Important Notes:

- participation is completely VOLUNTARY
- you may back out of the interview at any time
- your identity and organization will remain CONFIDENTIAL
- you will receive no monetary compensation for participating but you may request a 2-4 page summary of the study findings

To Participate:

Send an e-mail of interest to public.sector.retention@gmail.com

or

Send a message of interest on Facebook to Public Sector Retention Study (<https://www.facebook.com/publicsectorretentionstudy>)

or

Call: 716-xxx-xxxx