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College of Management and Technology

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Kar-tina Doretha Jackson Roberts

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Afterschool Program Directors' Leadership Challenges in Developing Community Partnerships for Program Sustainability

by

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MPhil, Walden University, 2019

MA, University of Phoenix, 2002

MED, Southern University A & M College, 1997

BS, Southern University A & M College, 1994

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Management

Walden University

February 2020

Abstract

In 2019, researchers reported that 80% of afterschool program directors serving marginalized populations in high poverty neighborhoods felt insecure about program sustainability, building collaborative community partnerships, and offsetting restricted funding due to inadequate professional training. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' daily experiences with leadership challenges building community partnerships and program sustainability in low-resource communities. This study was framed by 3 concepts focused on afterschool leaders building school–community partnerships: Bourdieu's concept of *social capital*, Nocon's concept of *afterschool program sustainability*, and Valli, Stefanski, and Jacobson's concept of *leadership for school-community partnerships.* A narrative inquiry method using interview data from 12 afterschool program directors across the United States addressed the problem and answered the research question. A two-step process was used in data analysis for thematic coding and comparative purposes. Five conceptual categories were revealed in answering the research question: (a) social capital, (b) afterschool program sustainability, (c) leadership for school–community partnerships, (d) interagency collaboration, and (e) professional development. The findings of the research reveal leadership challenges faced by afterschool program directors and their staff in building community partnerships and receiving professional development training to support program sustainability. The narratives of afterschool program directors' leadership challenges may drive positive social change by centering their program sustainability challenges at the nexus of collaborative community efforts.

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Dedication

To God Be the Glory for the Things He Has Done - This study is dedicated to every afterschool program entrepreneur, leader, manager, director, site coordinator, stakeholder, collaborative partner, principal, teachers, parents, and students. Collectively each of you advocate for a business industry like no other. Afterschool leaders regardless of challenges continue diligently in thought, words, actions, prayers, blood, sweat, tears, and joy creating lived experiences which transcends all understanding, guarding hearts and mind, staying on the focused course creating levels of excellence no matter the circumstances as servant leaders to diverse communities. My fervent desire is that the results of this study provide details that benefit you and your community afterschool program propelling each to the next level of excellence, higher grounds, and plethora of successful outcomes and sustainable resources for years to come.

I dedicate this study to my family and friends for their constant love, understanding, and support. To my heartbeats, daughter, Kayla R'chelle and granddaughter Ny'Lah Angelina. I thank God every day and am so grateful that He allows me opportunities to experience successes, joy, and laughter with you. To my heartbeats and angels in Heaven, Reginald Paul Roberts, Kirklin Paul Roberts, Emmitt Keller Sr., Doretha Keller, Mitchell Keller Sr., Michael Keller, Khamille Jackson, Shelia Guidry, and Pastor Ronald T. Williams. Each time I wondered if I could carry on, I was reminded of my journeys and experiences with each of you that helped me along the way to *Never, Never, Never Give Up* remembering *With God All Things Are Possible*.

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To all of the faculty, friends, and family members that have helped me to reach this point in my academic career, thank you for all you have done for me. To my Ph.D. *Divas* sisters and Ph.D. *Gents* that encouraged, listened, wiped tears, and told me to stay the course, I am forever humbled and love each of you.

Last, but certainly not least to my committee. Dr. Daphne Halkias, Committee Chairperson, Management Faculty, Dr. Labrina Jones, Committee Member, Management Faculty, and Dr. Nikunja Swain, University Reviewer, Management Faculty – "σας ευχαριστώ"- thank you - for believing in *"My Why"* providing direction, guidance, understanding, motivation, and 'teamwork making the dreamwork' to birth Dr. Kartina Doretha Jackson-Roberts. It is because of each of you that my dream (which began in 2003) to successfully complete this dissertation came true.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Afterschool program directors in low-income urban neighborhoods often lack the leadership training to build social capital and interagency collaboration between their programs and community partners, which is essential to afterschool program sustainability (Carter & Roucher, 2019; Lin, 2017; Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2018). Afterschool program directors across the nation find themselves in a never-ending search for funding due to shrinking government funds and increased competition to raise funds from pools of dwindling resources (Harding et al., 2019; Neild, Wilson, & McClanahan, 2019a). Despite evidence that afterschool program directors operate programs in impoverished neighborhoods; provide a safe alternative for children and youth to streets, gangs, and jail; and raise academic performance, little attention has been paid to understanding afterschool program directors' professional development needs to build the resources necessary for program sustainability (Farrell, Collier-Meek, & Furman, 2019; McNamara et al., 2018).

Another organizational challenge for afterschool program directors in low-resource contexts is failing to connect and collaborate with community members with access to funding sources, which can result in community mistrust of afterschool programs as valued partners in a shared mission and in premature program closure (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Roche & Strobach, 2019; Valli et al, 2018). Because afterschool programs in historically disenfranchised communities are underfunded, afterschool program directors tend to be transient, underpaid, and undertrained (St. Clair & Stone, 2016; Tebes, 2019). Without adequate professional development, afterschool

program directors are often marginally equipped with the leadership skills needed to develop school–community partnerships for program sustainability (Akiva, Li, Martin, Horner, & McNamara, 2017; Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Brasili & Allen, 2019).

In this chapter, I provide insight into afterschool program directors' narratives through the lens of their daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. I first present the background information and the study problem, which includes a description of the gap in the scholarly literature. Additionally, I present a logical alignment between problem, purpose, and central research question, and the conceptual framework of the study. Finally, I present the significance, assumptions, and limitations of the study, along with the definition of key terms used throughout.

Background of the Study

Sustaining afterschool programs operating in the United States with all the monies set aside to fund them has become a problem within the afterschool program discipline (Farrell et al., 2019; Kuperminc et al., 2019). Sustainable professional development for afterschool staff has included fragmentation of the field and aspects of the state of the workforce (Malone & Donahue, 2017). Researchers have reported that teachers or leaders in the United States afterschool workforce have also been labeled program directors or site coordinators in afterschool programs (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Collectively the afterschool workforce has served approximately 10.2 million stakeholders in various communities (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Large-scale afterschool workforce studies

have not been conducted since 2005, but smaller studies in 2013 showed some progress toward professionalization (Malone & Donahue, 2017).

Relevant statistics of recent national reports highlighted a negative financial impact of afterschool programs, with a 48% loss and $1.3 billion in reductions in funding over 11 years. Funding started with a margin of $2.5 billion in 2007, then $1.2 billion in 2017; with annual policy recommendations for afterschool funding elimination, afterschool program directors and stakeholders have raised concerns for future funding and sustainability challenges (Douglass et al., 2017).

A context-specific example reflecting financial statewide afterschool sustainability challenges across the United States is the case of Louisiana. There are 1.5 million African-Americans in Louisiana who live in high poverty areas (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Since 1998, Louisiana has received $20 million to start afterschool programs statewide (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). The state ended a 3-year grant program in which 38 grantees received $22 million. Afterschool programs operated from August 2016–September 2019 with one funded federal source contingent upon reimbursement of allowable expenses paid from the availability of the state receiving the federal funding source proposed for annual elimination (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016).

In 2018, there were 200,000 students in Louisiana on a waiting list for afterschool admission (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). As of October 2019, the number had increased to 256,040 students in Louisiana on a waiting list to access an afterschool program (Afterschool Alliance, 2019b). A new competition for funding opened April 2019, and

afterschool providers awarded would begin operation September 2019 through August 2022 (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c). As of October 2019, various vendors were recommended and approved, but a list of approved vendors was not available on the department's website (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019a). According to the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019a), in addition to qualified applicants meeting new proposal requirements to receive federal funds, Section 1.34.3 under Termination for Non-Appropriation of Funds requires the state must receive federal appropriation and continuation of funds for contractual obligations. Additionally, the state must end contracts if legislation fails to appropriate funds (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c). Also if the governor vetoes funds or if there is insufficient funding causing the state agency to implement a reduction or elimination of monies, afterschool program directors would have to continue contracts (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c). This causes anxiety about the uncertainty of the afterschool professional workforce and the high-risk populations they serve.

The funding dilemma for afterschool programs in Louisiana is a situation reflected across the country in states where low-resource, marginalized communities have the greatest need for such programs to remain sustainable (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). According to the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019c), “The 21st CCLC grant is a reimbursable grant; applicants must have the capacity to

sustain their operations for a minimum of three months" (Section 1.9.8 Project Cost, p. 14).

In urban neighborhoods, at-risk afterschool programs often have high turnover and are staffed with underpaid, inadequately trained employees (Toledo, 2018). Education reformers have advocated for program directors to foster collaborations between afterschool programs and the community to strengthen program sustainability by building social capital (Farrell et al., 2019; Lin, 2017).

Afterschool program directors' work on sustainability beyond government funding resources is a theme rarely found in the social capital, interagency collaboration, or school directorship literature, with little information in the professional development literature to mentor afterschool program directors in such practices—or even to propose its social and economic significance (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018; Van Reijsen, Helms, Batenburg, & Foorthuis, 2015).

Traditional, evidence-based interventions designed for and tested in schools have been the historical foundation of afterschool research with a recently renewed focus on social-emotional learning and behavior management (Carter & Roucher, 2019). However, the long-term sustainability of afterschool programs is interrupted by limited resources and a lack of critical leadership professional development focused on afterschool program directors (Frazier et al., 2019). Education reformers have pointed to the potential of afterschool program directors who operate successful high-quality afterschool programs to increasingly improve community outcomes among marginalized populations (Wellesley Centers for Women, 2019). With continuous cuts in government funding,

afterschool program directors have reported concerns that they must seek other sources of financial and program sustainability through collaborative partnerships in their communities (Maier, Daniel, & Oaks, 2017; Medina, Cosby, & Grim, 2019). Afterschool program directors will not, however, be able to develop successful community partnerships for program sustainability without a highly trained afterschool workforce that receives individualized, program-specific professional development and ongoing follow up in collaborative shared leadership processes (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Tebes, 2019).

Problem Statement

Afterschool program directors in low-resource, marginalized communities face barriers in delivering sustainable programs due to two interrelated issues: limited funding and inadequately trained afterschool program staff (Toledo, 2018; Warner, Ham, & Fenton, 2017). Researchers have reported that only 20% of afterschool program directors in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty and street violence felt secure about their funding and sustainability for the next 3–5 years (Frazier et al., 2019). Concurrently, inadequately trained afterschool program staff in low-income, urban neighborhoods may jeopardize afterschool program sustainability in failing to form much-needed community partnerships to offset restricted financial resources (Afterschool Alliance, 2014; Valli et al., 2018). The general problem is the sustainability of afterschool programs in low-resource, marginalized communities beset by inadequate training of afterschool program directors in the professional skills needed to build essential community partnerships (Bouffard & Little, 2004; Frazier et al., 2019; Medina et al., 2019).

Researchers have noted that afterschool program directors in low-income, urban neighborhoods are deficient in the leadership skills to build social capital and interagency collaboration between their programs and community partners, which is essential for program sustainability (Carter & Roucher, 2019; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool program directors have reported that there is little to guide them in building social capital and interagency collaboration with community partners (Frazier et al., 2019; Lin, 2017). Even though professional development on sustainability is an obvious need for these afterschool program directors, gaps exist in the social capital, interagency collaboration, and afterschool program director leadership literature (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Valli et al., 2018). The specific problem is that the connection between the professional development needs of afterschool program directors in low-resource communities and the leadership skills needed to build community partnerships aimed at program sustainability remains poorly understood (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. To address this gap and meet the purpose of the study, I collected data through the narrative method of storytelling from afterschool program directors on their daily experiences with challenges in building school–community partnerships in urban, marginalized communities characterized by restricted funding sources. The narrative approach originated from the works of constructivists, such as Gergen (1998)

and Polkinghorne (1988, 1995), who wrote that narrative stories are founded on the contextual construction of social relations and daily life experiences (Slembrouck, 2015). I used a narrative analysis of critical events to assure openness and transparency in gathering and highlighting the full description of events within the story to ensure the trustworthiness of data (Clandinin, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Research Question

RQ: How do afterschool program directors narrate their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities?

Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by three key concepts that focused on the implications for leaders in building school–community partnerships aimed at afterschool program sustainability: Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability, and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school-community partnerships. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. The findings of this empirical investigation aimed at advancing knowledge on the interface between social capital, interagency collaboration, and the leadership skills needed to build afterschool program–community

partnerships and contributing original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defined the concept of social capital as shared ideas conveyed by an individual in a common group of participants who come together, agree to join resources, combine funding, and reproduce invested capital to use economically, culturally, and socially to ensure the reproduction of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), "social capital is an exchange, under certain conditions, into economic capital and may even be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (p. 281). Bourdieu proposed that the amount of social capital attained depends on the size of the network and individual effectively organizing the volume of the capital. Social capital also has been mentioned frequently in the literature, which focuses primarily on the social capital of relationships, which can promote human capital and economic value through social networking (Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1973, 1983).

Bourdieu's concept of social capital is an extension of Granovetter's theory of strong and weak ties, which grew out of the classical social capital theory (Granovetter 1973, 1983, 2005). Granovetter (1973, 1983, 2005) theorized how strong and weak ties between people offer individuals access to various forms of social capital (Melamed & Simpson, 2016). Granovetter (1983) and Bourdieu (1986, 2018) pointed out that it is important to research further the development and origins of the ties that bring groups together in a cultural context and those that do not. The social capital theorists often have not adequately considered issues of power and the existence of unequal power structures

in community relationships marked by poor resources (Jackson & Marques, 2019; Lin, 2017). There is a need for an in-depth investigation through the lens of qualitative research of the sources of these unequal relationships to build trust between community members and school leaders supporting their meaningful collaboration (Charmaz, 2016; Lincoln & Cannella, 2017).

Afterschool Program Sustainability

Nocon (2004) identified the concept of afterschool program sustainability as productive management processes through which afterschool program directors planned, collaborated, communicated, evaluated, and refined programs toward ongoing continuous improvement. According to Nocon, afterschool program directors have used a shared communicative process allowing participants that shared concerns, needs, and suggestions to improve program efforts through long-term sustained commitment. Nocon's concept developed on the foundation of Cuban's (2001) framework of sustainability and cultural-historical activity theory through an analyzed process of communication, collaboration, and creativity needed to drive sustainability, expansion, and development of new programs. Reforms with the least potential for sustainability were those that were put forward by officials and policymakers with little knowledge of the daily operations of the afterschool program workplaces (Cuban, 2001; Cuban & Tyack, 2018). There is a need for collaborative partnerships and shared leadership to realize what it takes to maintain sustainable afterschool programs and ensure all voices in a community are heard to guard against short-lived relationships (Edens, Shirley, & Toner, 2001; McDermott, Colbert, & Kurucz, 2019).

Nocon (2004) called for program sustainability and ongoing dialogue among social actors and responsive leadership that achieved program sustainability. Stakeholders supported the assumption that sustainable innovations "enabled people to adapt and prosper in their increasingly complex environment" while "building long term capacity for improvement" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003, p. 694). There must be explicit agreement on what change means for all participants to realize sustainable change (Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Luchian, & Luchian, 2018). Achieving program sustainability in education requires commitment and ongoing attention to change factors within the organization and the external sociopolitical environment, ongoing evaluation, and a deeper understanding of the continuously changing and complex contexts of afterschool program sustainability (Cuban, 2001; Nocon, 2004; Simonova, Cincera, Kroufek, Krepelkova, & Hadjichambis, 2019). For educators and policymakers to understand the meaning, as opposed to the measure, of afterschool program sustainability, there is a need to hear directly from the afterschool program directors on their thoughts about afterschool program sustainability (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004). Additionally, more research is needed from a cultural-historical viewpoint of the processes by which afterschool program directors work in collaboration with shared community–school leaders for long-term program sustainability (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004).

Leadership for School–Community Partnerships

Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of school–community partnerships includes comprehensive models of cross-boundary leadership at several levels across different organizations. According to Valli et al. (2014, 2018), afterschool program directors' roles

and implementation of strategic plans are vital to building collaborative school–community partnerships aimed at program sustainability. Effective afterschool program directors exhibit organizational leadership driven by not only their agencies' goals, but also school leadership goals, community leadership partnerships, and individual parties' responsibilities and boundaries toward desirable outcomes (Frazier et al., 2019). Afterschool program directors serve as leaders, develop systems thinking, and bridge gaps between afterschool, school, and community leaders (Frazier et al., 2019). Additionally, afterschool program directors serve as conduits between shared leadership, parents, students, and community members toward meeting collective goals around the community, school, economic improvement, and program sustainability (Valli et al., 2018).

The theoretical foundation for Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships is grounded in the broader literature on interagency collaboration developed through empirical investigations with samples from marginalized populations (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Douglass et al., 2017; Shaver, Golan, & Wagner, 1996). Critical perspectives also expect partnerships to eschew narrow school-centric goals and look to leadership goals that focus outward and assumptions that expect school leadership to actively engage in social justice agendas and community-building activities (Auerbach, 2012; Riehl, 2000; Valli et al., 2014). These ambitious partnership goals have implications for school leaders in their challenges, which surround their traditional notions of school missions (Valli et al., 2018).

Valli et al. (2014) looked beyond a general theory of action to a social theory of action (Bourdieu, 1986). They explained how students' educational prospects improve if community members are more involved in the life of the school and meeting student and family needs. In general, such an approach to reform calls for partnering with both social service and community organizations, which is supported by both developmental and sociological research (Epstein, 2018; Valli et al., 2014). This social theory of action, however, does not explain the leadership skills required to make such collaborative school–community partnerships work (Maier et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2014). Descriptions and nascent theories on school leadership exist, yet there is a gap in the literature regarding this critical issue in the interagency collaboration body of knowledge (Valli et al., 2018).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative in contrast to quantitative, which is outcome-based with a tendency to overlook the nuances of human experiences and the significant characteristics of themes and occurrences in daily life (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In my review of the literature, I found that researchers recommended using qualitative approaches when investigating afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019). Such a research method would allow afterschool program directors the opportunities to use their voices through storytelling, which allowed me to hear from each individual about their daily life experiences operating afterschool programs

(Clandinin, 2016). Afterschool program directors provided experiences that included descriptions from them in their voices from the field (Clandinin, 2016). Hearing the afterschool program directors' perspectives on afterschool program leadership, management, and organizational development allowed me to collect research data of thick, rich descriptions rather than focusing on testing a priori hypotheses (Clandinin, 2016). Social constructivists wrote that narrative emphasizes the context in social relations (Gergen, 1998; Slembrouck, 2015). The narrative inquiry research design allowed me to hear from afterschool program directors, as each presented rich participant descriptions through storytelling for a deeper understanding of human experiences (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Historically, communities of people primarily communicate among themselves via storytelling, and it is the oldest form of social influence (Polkinghorne, 1988). The narrative-research approach was a preferred choice for this study, as it extended the potential of management research beyond the traditional options and brought together knowledge across social sciences disciplines, including leadership (Klenke, 2016). In the narrative inquiry tradition, I expected participants' stories would be detailed, engaging, relevant to the purpose of my study and would provide management, social, and personal context to frame the results of my study and to answer the research question.

This study was grounded in a hermeneutic approach that focused on the afterschool program directors' narrative of their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities (Clandinin et al., 2015; Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Hermeneutics

is grounded in coding, understanding, and explaining study participants' way of thinking through narrative inquiry (Clandinin et al., 2015; Clandinin & Huber, 2010). I explored the thematic expression and lived experiences from the afterschool program directors' voices in the field, working in afterschool programs, to understand their view posed by the central research question and from their perspective (Clandinin et al., 2015; Clandinin & Huber, 2010). By reading and reviewing the data collected from the many voices in the field, I moved back and forth between participant perspectives to real inherent meanings using the hermeneutic circle approach (Freeman, 2016). Using this approach increased the likelihood that I would obtain findings that emerged as essential research material (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Using the narrative inquiry research design, I inquired into the what, how, and why of human relationships. Although other qualitative methods exist—such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study—to gather data through a qualitative interview process, these qualitative designs omit the important fundamental stages of analyzing critical events (Lune & Berg, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). I was able to use a narrative inquiry approach. Through restorying in this study, I presented a general picture of the participants' daily experiences and events in relation to the study purpose and examining complex data of critical events that influenced the daily decision-making and reactions to such events (Webster & Mertova, 2007). According to Wimberly (2011), instead of using phenomenology, case studies, and ethnography methods to gather qualitative data, a narrative approach provides the opportunity to establish trusting relationships. Participants may express feelings of discomfort when revealing critical

events in their organizational setting. Additionally, by conducting a narrative inquiry, I created a space that allowed the participants to narrate their daily experiences within their social context while gathering valuable facts and story configurations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Using narrative inquiry, I collected critical facts and positions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) through the process of retelling each participant's perspective as described through their personal and social experiences dealing with others. To provide for an accurate and data-rich narrative study, I conducted interviews and audio recordings on the life experiences from a purposeful sample of 12 participants, and I maintained a written journal of field notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The sample population met the following inclusion criteria: (a) adult over the age of 18, (b) employed for a minimum of 3 years as an afterschool program director located in a low-income urban neighborhood, and (c) able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from other similar studies of afterschool program directors funded under one federal funding source in the United States (Akiva et al., 2017; Larson, 2018).

The first step of the data analysis was the process of restorying using a narrative data analysis method to gather data to analyze the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrite the data (Clandinin, 2016). The second step of the data analysis was to utilize the critical events approach by providing details on place, time, characters, and significant events essential to the study. A critical event narrative analysis reflected

the events in narratives to conduct an in-depth investigation of participants' human stories and strengthened the trustworthiness of data in this study. This approach enhanced the illustration of detailed and significant human experiences while incorporating holistic characteristics of the critical event elements through personal experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This approach took place in two stages: (a) interpreting each story through restorying to provide a description or categories for each event or single case and (b) cross-checking each case with the event categories themes for comparative purposes. The goal of this two-stage process was for the participants and the interviewer to construct meanings, themes, and images and to develop a participant-guided transcript (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Traditionally, triangulation is used in qualitative research for determining themes. Webster and Mertova (2007) have suggested that triangulation is not feasible for critical event narrative inquiry story-based studies, stating that it is "almost impossible to achieve" (p. 91).

Definitions

In order to ensure clarity and precision, definitions of key terms not commonly used provide comprehensiveness and consistency throughout this research. Definitions are grounded based on peer-reviewed literature related to the current design and methodology.

Afterschool program: A school or out of school time location providing services and cultural assimilation to positively impact low-resource communities' social and psychological well-being through funding and supported legislation (Halpern, 2002).

Afterschool program director: A dedicated full-time leader qualified to manage day-to-day operations, compliance, continuous improvement, supervision, and partnerships related to afterschool programming (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019c).

Afterschool program out of school leaders: Volunteer/paid, part-time, or full-time staff tasked with diverse, overlapping roles in day-to-day operations at schools and afterschool programs (Blattner & Franklin, 2017).

Collaborative community partnership: A shared experience led by afterschool program directors to build social capital needed to support students, families, and neighborhood development (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018).

Interagency collaboration: Afterschool program advocates working between agencies, expanding the traditional academic mission of the afterschool site to include social services benefiting participants (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Toledo, 2018).

Low-resource community: Eligibility criteria to provide afterschool services based on poor socioeconomics, limited household income, free/reduced lunch status, race, ethnicity, language, minority status, and failing student academic performance (Farrell et al., 2019).

Program sustainability: Process afterschool program directors implement to identify and build social capital and resources supporting the mission for stakeholders to reduce program closures (Douglass et al., 2017).

School–community partnership: Afterschool program, school, and community leadership, which includes higher education and businesses, working together toward program objectives for stakeholders (Medina et al., 2019).

Social capital: Human capital stakeholders, social obligations, networks, relationships, interactions, and decision-making guiding economic capital to achieve program success (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018).

Assumptions

Methodologies supporting qualitative research approaches include both defined and undefined types of assumptions related to gathering and analyzing the collection of qualitative data from participants. Individual descriptions and accounts of personal stories consist of establishing strong ties of familiarity, honesty, and trust between the participant and the researcher. Both the participant and the researcher will be guided by certain assumptions aligned with the narrative inquiry approach regarding processes, structure, context, setting, time, place, and events in this study (Webster & Mertova, 2007; Wimberly, 2011).

The first assumption was the purposeful sampling of research participants would be active and truthful in illustrating their human experiences while sharing rich, thick descriptions of their daily experiences. Participants stated they felt comfortable during the interview and revealed critical factual events within their afterschool program and community setting.

In the second assumption, I envisioned that for each afterschool program director, the level of educational attainment, varied experiences, and backgrounds would support

the assumption that each person was knowledgeable enough to highlight the daily human experience within their professional practice. I assumed that each participant would answer interview questions about the exploration of their leadership challenges and events over time as afterschool program directors in low-resource communities, with time and experiences being critical elements to the narrative inquiry method.

The third assumption was that the afterschool program directors in the purposeful sampling would reply to the narrative inquiry interview questions honestly and genuinely. As the researcher, I assumed that participants would share critical events such as place, time, characters, and events. As a narrative researcher, I assumed that each participant would conceptualize and narrate their process and provide a holistic view of daily experiences that enables the recognition of occurrences often disregarded through traditional research methods.

The fourth assumption was that I would accurately and adequately record, journal, and transcribe the data collected, obtained from semistructured interviews and audio recordings of participants. Accurate transcription of data obtained in recorded interviews and a journal of written field notes strengthened the trustworthiness of the study results. The fifth assumption was that the researcher would use qualitative data analysis techniques recommended by seminal narrative inquiry methodologies, effectively determining themes and critical events to address the purpose of this study and yielding the most accurate results (Clandinin, 2016; Lune & Berg, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Scope and Delimitations

This research used participants' daily experiences, collected through a qualitative narrative approach. It provided a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Valli et al., 2018). The scope of the study included 12 participants working in low-resource communities in the United States, who shared their experiences about the phenomenon under study. The inclusion criteria of the study population were as follows: (a) adult over the age of 18, (b) employed for a minimum of 3 years as an afterschool program director located in a low-income urban neighborhood, and (c) able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study. The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from other similar studies of afterschool program directors funded under one federal funding source in the United States (Akiva et al., 2017; Larson, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The scope of the study excluded the use of classical management theory when developing the conceptual framework, literature review, and the interview protocol because those theories were developed from research primarily conducted with samples of White men. The conceptual framework of this study and the study's research design were grounded in Valli et al.'s (2018) theoretical implications for school leaders who wish to expand their traditional educational mission and to involve the broader community in collaborative partnerships (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Maier et al., 2017). I chose this theoretical foundation because Valli et al.'s theories for school

leadership are grounded in the broader literature on interagency collaboration and developed through empirical investigations with samples from marginalized populations. These theoretical implications were aimed toward improving opportunities for students and their families in low-resource communities (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Shaver et al., 1996).

When formulating conceptual categories and themes from the data, I carefully considered the scope of the sample population used. To develop and define the three key concepts that framed this study, I used Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability, and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships. My consideration to draw implications from the study results that remained within the scope of the sample population and context strengthened the transferability of my findings to other similar populations (Stake, 2010). Further extending the broader interagency collaboration literature with empirical evidence from this study on afterschool program sustainability may contribute to a renewed theoretical understanding of afterschool program sustainability in low-resource communities (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019).

Limitations

Limitations are defined as potential unpredicted problems in the study distinguished by the researcher (Flick, 2018). Limitations of this and any narrative inquiry method using semistructured interviews could include misrepresentation of critical events by participants, as there is no way to confirm that the data provided by the

research participants are true. A limitation of any qualitative study is that participants may have recall bias. To improve trustworthiness and credibility during the research study, I selected a comfortable online platform setting, such as Rev, Zoom, or Skype. Participants were inspired to share critical events during their narrative inquiry and remained open, honest, and empowered to share answers as they deemed suitable (Hanna, 2012).

My interpretation of Clandinin's (2016) narrative inquiry approach is that interviewing 12 afterschool program directors' in executive management positions and operating afterschool programs in low-resource communities was adequate to illuminate their stories. Additionally, as the researcher, I understood that the qualitative research method's limitation could produce inaccuracies in the data collection of afterschool program directors' individual stories. I understood that the afterschool program directors' facts might not exemplify a consistent narrative of leadership development operating in all afterschool programs in low-resource communities. I also understood the limitations of facts the afterschool program directors' may share around daily experiences with sustainability and the effect of these experiences on their engagement within the organization and their leadership development. The successful outcome of this research depended on the personal experiences of the study participants providing thick, rich descriptions of their daily experiences for data analysis while following narrative methodologists' guidelines for the reliable establishment of credibility of the coded narrative data (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

This study is important because it addresses a gap in the literature on the professional development needs of afterschool program directors seeking collaborative community internships, collaborative leadership, and reflective practitioners aimed at program sustainability (Maier et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2018). According to Francois (2014), nonprofit organizations and nonprofit afterschool program directors are the second-largest working population in the afterschool industry. Afterschool programs are not profitable; they are, however, mission-driven, leading to afterschool program directors who manage resources, daily operations, respond to organizational threats, and address risks with potential adverse economic events, often lacking appropriate school leadership training (Farrell et al., 2019; Lyon, Frazier, Mehta, Atkins, & Weisbach, 2011).

This study was significant in practice for community stakeholders, school leadership trainers, and policymakers by actually hearing from afterschool program directors in their voice and restorying each narrative in a report for stakeholder review. In each interview, I gained afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. This deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' leadership challenges may offer practical data for designing effective and appropriate professional development activities for these educational leaders, a neglected area of existing school leadership training curricula.

Significance to Theory

Professional practice is always informed by theory (Darder, 2015). The findings of this empirical investigation were aimed at advancing knowledge of afterschool program directors' daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities and contributing original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework. Classical social capital and school leadership theories were applied to improve knowledge on the afterschool program directors' experiences (Frazier et al., 2019; Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018) using a context-rich interpretive approach that met the purpose of this study and offered distinct extensions to these theories (Darder, 2015). Extension studies, such as this study, not only provide replicable evidence but extend prior study results in new and significant theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012).

The research work involved in developing a study's narratives can extend theory from previous and current research and theoretical work, most of which originates in different research domains (Pollock & Bono, 2013). Stories and narratives are built through complex research procedures and involve interactivity, character representations, narrative dynamics, user experiences, decision-making processes, participative narrative forms, and practical social behaviors (Pollock & Bono, 2013). In this study, I used narrative inquiry research results that were multidimensional, considering several essential parameters such as space, time, narrative surface, user role, and the nature of narrative required to offer a set of trustworthy data in extending classical theories (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017).

Significance to Social Change

The process of thinking with and sitting with each other's stories is part of the start of change (Moore, 2013; Morris, 2001; Seiki, Caine, & Huber, 2018). Narrative inquiry is a methodology for understanding experience as a practice of social justice to support and sustain a genuine process of social change, in both theory and practice (Darder, 2015; Seiki et al., 2018). I used narrative inquiry as a tool. I investigated social justice issues that support reframing and reimagining a social problem, with attention to consequent action that can bring about positive social change (Clandinin et al., 2015). A narrative inquiry into issues about leadership and education allows for movement away from dominant narratives and toward openings to imagine new possibilities for marginalized populations in dynamic and interactive ways (Caine et al., 2017).

Studying the narratives of afterschool program directors' daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships may drive positive social change for marginalized populations by centering the sustainability challenges of these programs at the nexus of collaborative community efforts. Scholars recommending research into the professional development needs of afterschool program directors also reinforce the social change implications of such investigations. Research is needed given that a professionally skilled afterschool workforce is critical in low-resource contexts where structural inequities due to social class and race can limit human potential (Bond, Serrano-García, Keys, & Shinn, 2017; Liu, Kia-Keating, & Nylund-Gibson, 2019).

Summary and Transition

In this chapter, I presented the rationale for investigating afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. Next, I presented the underlying conceptual framework that guided this study, grounded in the concept of social capital, the concept of afterschool program sustainability, and the concept of leadership for school–community partnerships. I further outlined the assumptions, scope, and delimitations, and the limitations of the study. I identified the significance of the study to theory, practice, and positive social change.

In Chapter 2, I synthesize and present the literature review on the conceptual framework used in this study. I also synthesize and present the literature review on afterschool program directors who serve marginalized populations, school leadership in out of school programs, and perspectives on building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. I also review the extant literature on leadership challenges and program sustainability faced by afterschool program directors in low-resource communities and use conceptual literature on the professional needs of afterschool program directors to support program sustainability and school–community partnership building in marginalized, urban neighborhoods.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have noted that afterschool program directors in low-resource, marginalized communities often lack the leadership skills to build the social capital and interagency collaboration between their programs and community partners that is essential to afterschool program sustainability (Carter & Roucher, 2019; Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool program directors have reported that there is little to guide them in building social capital and interagency collaboration with community partners (Frazier et al., 2019; Lin, 2017). Gaps exist in the relevant literature to inform professional development practitioners on leadership skills training specific to afterschool program directors' needs (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Lyon et al., 2011; Valli et al., 2018).

The specific problem is that the connection between the professional development needs of afterschool program directors in low-resource communities and the leadership skills needed to build community partnerships aimed at program sustainability remains poorly understood (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019). The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities.

In Chapter 2, I provide the literature search strategy and the conceptual framework for the research. I present a synthesis of knowledge on the scholarly literature regarding the unique challenges faced by afterschool program directors in low-resource, marginalized communities. Finally, I offer a critical analysis of the literature this study is grounded in.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review plan is constructive to the researcher's contributions in tandem with developing the research questions and uncovering discrepancies in the literature (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). According to Cronin et al. (2008), the researcher's review of the literature should continuously be aligned and analyzed with the central topic. Additionally, a qualitative investigation's literature search should consist of methodologies across studies elaborating on elements of the conceptual framework (Cronin et al., 2008). In this literature review, I present an overview of topics relevant to afterschool program directors' daily experiences, leadership challenges, building community partnerships, and program sustainability in low-resource communities aligned to the central research question. This review consisted of several peer-reviewed journal articles in addition to research from the following databases: Walden University Library database, Google Scholar, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and Business Source Complete.

The keywords used in the searches of updated, peer-reviewed papers (from 2015 onward) in these areas included *after school program directors* (space between *after* and *school*; 17,000 results), *afterschool program directors* (no space between *afterschool*; 12,100 results), *after school program directors leadership challenges* (17,000 results), *afterschool program leadership challenges* (17,100 results)*, afterschool program directors daily experiences* (17,100 results), *afterschool program building community partnerships* (17,000 results), *afterschool program sustainability* (13,400 results) in *afterschool program low-resource communities* (576 results), and *afterschool program directors sustainability professional development needs* (16,600 results). Also,

combinations of terms were used to yield better results, such as *afterschool program directors' experience in management*, *afterschool program directors challenges into management*, *invisible barriers for afterschool program directors, leadership challenges for afterschool program directors in management*, and *program sustainability effects of afterschool program directors*. For this conceptual framework, *narrative inquiry, social capital, afterschool program sustainability*, and *leadership for school-community partnerships* were the key search words used.

The Journal of Values-Based Leadership, Social Psychology of Education, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *International Journal of Social Sciences*, *American Psychologist*, and *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* are a small number of the scholarly, peer-reviewed publications used throughout this study.

In planning for this literature review, I provide a synopsis of limited previous literature review examinations concerning the conceptual framework on afterschool program directors’ experiences with program sustainability in low-resource communities and the implications of this for their leadership aspirations. I also look at a compilation of updated, peer-reviewed studies on afterschool program directors’ experiences associated with program sustainability in low-resource communities that include behavioral and psychological effects and the gap in afterschool leadership program sustainability and professional development needs.

Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by three key concepts that focused on the implications for leaders in building school–community partnerships aimed at afterschool program sustainability. I used Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability, and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships. The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. The findings of this empirical investigation were aimed at advancing knowledge on the interface between social capital, interagency collaboration, and the leadership skills needed to build an afterschool program–community partnership toward program sustainability. They also contributed original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework.

Social Capital

Bourdieu (1986) defined the concept of social capital as shared ideas conveyed by an individual in a common group of participants who come together, agree to join resources, combine funding, and reproduce invested capital to use economically, culturally, and socially to ensure the reproduction of capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), "social capital is an exchange, under certain conditions, into economic capital and may even be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (p. 281). Bourdieu proposed that the amount of social capital attained depends on the size of the network and individual effectively organizing the volume of the capital. Social capital also has been

mentioned frequently in the literature, which focuses primarily on the social capital of relationships, which can promote human capital and economic value through social networking (Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1973, 1983).

Bourdieu (1986) wrote extensively on group-level–related social capital. Discussions focused on how particular groups build and sustain degrees of social capital as a collective asset, as well as ways in which such an asset enriches the life chances of group members. Although the interactions and networking of individuals are acknowledged in this perspective as being important to realize the benefits of this collective asset, the primary focus in this study was to investigate the processes and factors involved in developing and maintaining social capital (Lin, 2017). Regardless of the societal-group or relational level on which the definition of social capital is based, scholars are steadfast in their belief that interacting members render it possible to sustain and reproduce such a collective asset through the generation of trust between social actors (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Bourdieu, 1986; Lin, 2017).

Bourdieu's concept of social capital is an extension of Granovetter's theory of strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973, 1983, 2005). Granovetter (1973, 1983, 2005; Melamed & Simpson, 2016) theorized how strong and weak ties between people offer individuals access to various forms of social capital. Granovetter (1973) theorized that people tend to acquire more new knowledge from their weak ties than their strong ties because most of an individual's close friends and family tend to have contact with each another. Therefore, much of the information that people acquire from their friends is more likely to be the same information already known to them (Granovetter, 1973).

However, acquaintances, who are defined as weak ties, may know of information that may lead to job opportunities or services not known to strong ties. People with only a few weak ties will have much less access to new information and knowledge of the latest news, job opportunities, and other services (Bourdieu, 1986; Granovetter, 1983).

Even though, for some people, it may be more beneficial to use weak ties, it may be necessary for them to use strong ties and leverage social relationships within their cultural setting (Bourdieu, 2018). The necessity of using strong ties by poor, marginalized populations may be due to several factors, such as economic stress, insecurity, or believing there are no alternatives. Granovetter (2005) suggested that using the strategy of bridging weak ties in a school setting may not only be a means to connecting culturally diverse groups, but also may decrease the marginalization of students and increase social unity. When there is an abundance of weak ties among many in a group, and they overlap each other, this collection of weak ties pooled together may provide a bridge between groups. Granovetter (1983) and Bourdieu (1986, 2018) pointed out that it was important to research further the development and origins of the ties that bring groups together within a cultural context and those that do not. Trusting relations are essential given that social capital is developed within social networks and interactions (Epstein, 2018; Lin, 2017). Relational trust, at the level of the organization, can lead to improved decision-making and heightened social support for innovative initiatives, as well as a more comprehensive moral authority to the benefit of children (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Scholars focused on collaborations between school and community often use the social capital concept in their analyses of partnership support networks (Lin, 2017; Sanders, Galindo, & DeTablan, 2019). For example, Epstein and Sanders (2002) used the concept in their theory of overlapping spheres of influence. They supported that the most successful contexts for the development and learning of children are having a common mission and shared goals in relation to home, school, and community (Epstein & Sanders, 2002, p. 287). Critical scholars deem it essential to build social capital, but also acknowledge the difficulties in doing so in urban neighborhoods burdened by poverty (Galindo, Sanders, & Abel, 2017; Pierce, Klemme, Tate, & Studley, 2019). I found a synthesis of social capital theory studies that inadequately considered issues of power and the existence of unequal power structures in community relationships marked by poor resources (Jackson & Marques, 2019; Lin, 2017). There is a need for in-depth investigation through the lens of qualitative research of the sources of these unequal relationships to build trust between community members and school leaders and also support meaningful collaboration (Charmaz, 2016; Lincoln & Cannella, 2017).

Afterschool Program Sustainability

Nocon (2004) identified the concept of afterschool program sustainability as productive management processes afterschool program directors planned, collaborated, implemented, communicated, evaluated, and refined in afterschool programs toward ongoing continuous improvement. According to Nocon, afterschool program directors use a shared communicative process that allows participants to share concerns, needs, and suggestions to improve program efforts through long-term sustained commitment.

Afterschool program directors implement sustainability efforts with "creativity to respond to ever-changing context, develop continuing communication, collaborate with community leaders, and organize tasks by transient, emergent objects, or motives that are not linear, straightforward, and always moving forward" (Nocon, 2004, p. 729).

Nocon's (2004) concept was developed by extending Cuban's (2001) sustainability framework and theory about analyzing cultural-historical activity. Additionally, Nocon (2004) described a process of communication, collaboration, and creativity needed to drive sustaining program sustainability as well as the expansion and development of new programs. Reforms with the least potential for sustainability are those that have been put forward by officials and policymakers who have little knowledge of the daily operations of the workplaces these changes are aimed at (Cuban, 2001, Cuban & Tyack, 2018). To guard against a short-lived relationship, there is a need for collaborative partnerships to be consistent in building productive dialogue while paying careful attention to differences, issues, and conflicts to realize sustainable programs—all the while ensuring all voices are heard (Edens et al., 2001; McDermott et al., 2019).

Nocon's (2004) call for program sustainability and ongoing dialogue among social actors and responsive leadership to achieve program sustainability supported Hargreaves and Fink's (2003) assumption that sustainable innovations are those that enable people to prosper and adapt in an increasingly complex environment while "building long term capacity for improvement" (p. 694). There must be clear agreement on what change means on the part of all participants to realize sustainable change

(Ceptureanu et al., 2018). Achieving program sustainability in education means commitment and ongoing attention to changed factors within the organization, the external sociopolitical environment, ongoing evaluation, and a deeper understanding of the continuously changing and complex contexts in which sustainability is sought (Cuban, 2001; Nocon, 2004; Simonova et al., 2019).

For Cuban (2001), time is a critical factor in the evaluation of program sustainability (Coburn, Russell, Kaufman, & Stein, 2012). Nocon (2004) reminded readers in her writings that the development of universal access to kindergarten in the United States took almost a century of time. Distributed investments in energy and time are needed over the long term to sustain educational programs marked by innovation (Cole, 2011; Cuban, 2001). Beyond efforts aimed at sustainability, other factors play a significant role in achieving this, such as economic changes and shifts in policy (Frazier et al., 2019). For educators and policymakers to understand the meaning, as opposed to the measure of the sustainability of educational innovations, more research is needed into a cultural-historical viewpoint of the process by which education programs become sustainable (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004).

Leadership for School–Community Partnerships

Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of school–community partnerships included comprehensive models of cross-boundary leadership at several levels within different organizations. According to Valli et al. (2018), afterschool program directors' roles and implementation of strategic plans are vital to building collaborative school–community partnerships aimed at program sustainability. Effective afterschool program leadership

drives school leadership goals, community leadership partnerships, and individual parties' responsibilities and boundaries, toward desirable outcomes (Frazier et al., 2019). Afterschool program directors serve as leaders to develop systems thinking and bridge the gaps between school leaders, parents, students, and community members toward a collective goal (Maier et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2018).

The theoretical foundation for Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships is grounded in the broader literature on interagency collaboration and developed through empirical investigations with samples from marginalized populations (Croninger & Malen, 2002; Douglass et al., 2017; Shaver et al., 1996). These collaborative partnerships have the ultimate goal of building the social capital necessary for supporting student development, and potentially also that of family and the neighborhood (Lin, 2017; Maier et al., 2017). From a critical perspective, partnerships are expected to promote asset over deficit views related to parents and members of the community, as well as value the contributions of these individuals' unique expertise (Johnson, Dempster, & Wheeley, 2016). Critical perspectives also expect partnerships to eschew narrow 'school-centric' goals and look to establish goals that focus outward and that expect the school leadership to be actively engaged in social justice agendas and community building activities (Driscoll & Goldring, 2005; Riehl, 2000; Valli et al., 2014). These ambitious partnership goals have implications for school leaders and challenge their traditional notions and assumptions of community leaders to only meet the school missions (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Valli et al., 2018).

Valli et al. (2014) looked beyond a general theory of action to a social theory of action (Bourdieu, 1986). They explained how students' educational prospects improve if community members are more involved in the life of the school and can meet student and family needs. In general, such an unorthodox approach calls for afterschool-school-community leader partnerships with both social service and community organizations; this is supported by research in the developmental and sociological domains (Epstein, 2018; Valli et al., 2014). Seminal developmental theorists, such as Bronfenbrenner (1979), argue for an ecological perspective and an environment that supports healthy development and learning. This theoretical assumption overlaps with sociological perspectives that point to the impact of social and cultural capital on student achievement (Bourdieu, 1986). Both perspectives lead to the notion that schools should not be isolated from the community context, which is currently the norm in United States public school systems, especially those situated in poverty-stricken neighborhoods (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Medina et al., 2019).

This social theory of action, however, does not explain the leadership skills required to make such collaborative school–community partnerships work (Valli et al., 2014). In school leadership, literature emphasis focuses on how important it is for school leaders to cultivate shared commitments, establish trust, promote collective decision-making, manage crises, and negotiate consensus, as well as advocate for organizational change (Valli et al., 2018). However, scholars recognize that it is difficult to find and retain school leaders with such capacities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). An entirely new set of afterschool leadership skills is needed to lead the afterschool's mission and, at the

same time, have school–community leaders that share each other's missions partner across organizations and with various kinds of agencies. Descriptions and nascent theories on school leadership exist, yet there is a gap in the literature addressing this critical issue within the interagency collaboration body of knowledge (Valli et al., 2018).

Literature Review

Afterschool Programs for Low-Income Children in the United States

Some 1,726,722 children of 21 million eligible school-aged kids attended afterschool programs nationwide as of June 2019 due to funding limitation and program availability (Afterschool Alliance, 2019b). Approximately 88% of families asked Congress to increase resources for more centers offering these programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2019b). Several years of research revealed findings from various studies on sustainability challenges and social enterprise with concerns to further build the capacity of afterschool leadership and support efforts toward organizational sustainability due to lack of adequate resources and facilities (Ab Samad, Arshad, Asat, & Kasim, 2017; Sontag-Padilla, Staplefoote, & Morganti, 2012). Historical research outcomes from 2012–2017 consistently identified concerns about the maximum challenges for nonprofit afterschool program directors working toward fiscal sustainability still due to resource dependency on competitive funding that sustained operations (Ab Samad et al., 2017; Sontag-Padilla et al., 2012). Considerable attention to afterschool programs historically, socially, and politically implicated little to no mandatory responsibility of afterschool leaders in the profession to sustain programs outside of government funding (Brown, 2018; Lu, 2015). Examination of the afterschool industry from the 1800s to the present

day revealed an era of ongoing dependency on government funding among nonprofit organizations, compounding sustainability efforts (Chase, 2017).

Afterschool programs were first launched during the late 1800s, along with the first aftercare centers called boys clubs (Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2009). These after school “centers” were established to support families, groom children’s social skills, and support academic competency. The first half of the 20th century saw a rise in the numbers of working mothers and childcare needs due to changes in labor laws. Policymakers directed support to low-income, resource-dependent areas (Mahoney et al., 2009). In the decade from 1960 to 1970, nonprofit organizations faced challenges such as increased importance of nonprofit services, economic crisis, heightened competition, and government cutbacks (Smith, 2013). President Lyndon Johnson authored the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 through the United States Department of Education, Office of State Support (Johnson, 2016). A federally funded formula grant of $1 billion was issued annually to schools serving low-income children. During that time, there was a widely divergent need for afterschool services. These programs had different titles and included daycare and school-aged daycare, as services focused on elementary students in kindergarten through sixth grade (Scofield, 2004).

On October 13, 1964, the 1964–1965 ACT Afterschool Program was launched in a low-performing, disadvantaged area in Harlem, New York (Petersen, 1965). The federal Department of Education worked with local community leaders and addressed challenges toward the improvement of afterschool implementation, but not sustainability (Petersen, 1965). Plans were put in place for the professional development of teachers,

partnerships with schools were established, and guidance counselors provided support for behavioral concerns of students (Petersen, 1965).

Nonprofit organization directors knew little of the costs or sustainability needs for centers in the 1960s and 1970s (Halpern, Deich, & Cohen, 2000). Funders gave targeted resources to local educational agencies and schools with high numbers of children from low-income families to make a difference. They ensured that they met challenging state academic standards (Johnson, 2016). President Nixon's administration's educational issues focused on the social function of schools toward meeting disadvantaged groups' needs. However, changes in the administration brought uncertainty to state and local control of resources in education (Haskins, 2016).

In the 1980s, President Reagan called for the voluntary efforts of individuals, businesses, parents, and civic groups to cooperate in strengthening educational programs and reform of the educational system in the United States to address its low academic rating compared to international peers (Gardner, 1983). Resources were deficient as families needed more time at work and money to survive which promoted growth in demand for full-day and year-round childcare (Coleman, 1987). At that time, there was an upsurge in the number of afterschool options, and public school leaders took the leading role and developed such programs. In 1988, approximately 22% of K–8 principals reported that their schools offered afterschool programs (Coleman, 1987).

Findings of a significant study that surveyed parents, daycare center directors, and family providers revealed results that showed 65% of the aftercare centers served on average 62 children per preschool nonprofit organization; more than 61% of these

organizations were sponsored by another organization (Willer, 1991). Further investigation pointed to three times as many centers that operated from 1970 to 1990 and had a 39% increase in preschool enrollment. Average staff numbers were not enough to maintain the proper child/staff ratios. The increased supply and demand for childcare was also evident in program fees and expenditures: supplemental care expenses rose above 180% from 1975 to 1990 (Willer, 1991).

Funding for afterschool programs in 1992 was short term and issued at the regional or local levels (Farrow & Joe, 1992; Zhang & Byrd, 2006). Services were offered to 30 to 60 children per site, at six centers in K through sixth grade, and 60% of students were African American. Staff included a full-time manager and program director in leadership positions (Austin, Regan, Gothhard, & Carnochan, 2013). By 1994 policymakers wanted afterschool programs that demonstrated positive effects on academic and social problems in order to receive funding (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). There was, however, still no focus on sustainability. That year, Congress authorized $750,000 for the afterschool pilot and introduced the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative (Gayl, 2004). Over 2,300 applicants competed for federal government-granted money, but only 310 applicable participants were funded (Zhang & Byrd, 2006). Approximately $1.34 billion in funds was requested, but just $185.7 million was available, and an additional $267 million was needed to continue programs previously awarded grants (de Kanter, Williams, Cohen, & Stonehill, 2000). The initiative provided competitive grants to low-performing schools and supported academic improvement, but, again, without a focus on sustainability (Holstead & King, 2011).

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 passed through the federal government to initiate welfare reform in the afterschool industry (Pederson, de Kanter, Bobo, Weinig, & Noeth, 1998). Attorney General Janet Reno and United States Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley focused efforts on community improvement through the afterschool profession (Pederson et al., 1998). They underlined a need for communities to work in partnership with schools, local government, law enforcement, and youth and community-based organizations and to increase the accessibility of afterschool programs (Pederson et al., 1998). Efforts to establish such partnerships (Blank & Langford, 2000), and social and health services, as well as businesses that partnered with afterschool programs resulted in several high-quality afterschool programs (Smith, Akiva, McGovern, & Peck, 2014).

Afterschool program centers were also established and funded by the Clinton–Gore 2000 administration (de Kanter et al., 2000). Afterschool programs were viewed as effective ways to keep children supervised and safe. Experts promoted them as opportunities that further engaged students in academic, social, and physical activities after school (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Policymakers' funding priorities created a domino effect as the federal government declared increased demand for afterschool programs and community support, which led to significant new community-based organizations and collaborative partnerships. However, little support focused on sustainability implementation (Holstead & King, 2011).

The first study on the financial costs and sustainability of the 21st CCLC afterschool programs showed little was known about actual startup costs. Funding was

provided expressly to launch new programs (Halpern et al., 2000). Costs varied based on organization and activities; however, staff compensation was the most significant element. Federal, state, and local government were primary revenues of afterschool programs, and in 2000, over 100 federal programs were reported as available to fund afterschool programs exclusively (Halpern et al., 2000). School leaders received 3-year 21st CCLC grants directly subcontracting nonprofit organizations with expectations towards sustained program activities. Resources were fragmented and funding unpredictable, and revenues fell short of costs by up to $2,000 per child per year (Halpern et al., 2000).

Policymakers prioritized additional federal funding for school-based, after-school programs (Grossman, Walker, & Raley, 2001). Nationwide, agencies at all levels of government received increases thanks to the federal budget's increased allocation from $40 million in 1997 to a proposed $850 million in 2001 (Silloway, 2010). Visionary partnerships between public and private leaders were seen as the answer to finding sustainable funding, and meeting supply and demand issues as well as supporting sustainability in high-poverty communities for student needs (Silloway, 2010). The afterschool industry was now one of the fastest-growing businesses in America (Francois, 2014; Silloway, 2010); however, long-term sustainability was an imminent threat.

Nonprofit afterschool program directors' reliance on contracts and the elimination of government funding led to the closure of afterschool centers (Akingbola, 2004; MacIndoe, 2013). The expansion of nonprofits created an increasingly competitive environment for funding (Pettijohn, De Vita, & Fyffe, 2013), and there were limited

resources to maintain costly school facilities, staffing, and expensive transportation (Grossman et al., 2001). Valuations of 20 community school initiatives showed improvement in student academic achievement (Joyce, Wade-Mdivanian, Anderson-Butcher, & Gibson, 2014; Phillips, 2010). The federally commissioned evaluation had already influenced the Bush administration's views on afterschool programming, resulting in a proposed $400 million budget cut for the program for fiscal 2004 (United States Department of Education, 2003). For the first time, nonprofit fiscal sustainability was identified as a need with collaborative partnerships as the answer (Raley, Grossman, & Walker, 2005).

The first national afterschool evaluation showed that 8,448 21st CCLC afterschool programs were operating nationwide by the end of 2004 (Naftzger, Kaufman, Margolin, & Ali, 2006). These programs served some of the more economically needy families in the country, with 62% of students participating in the program during the 2003–2004 school year eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program (Naftzger et al., 2006). The field expanded rapidly, and various supporting organizations and researchers initiated afterschool partnerships to enhance theoretical frameworks, better information sharing, technical assistance, and stronger advocacy (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2003). These organizations investigated, documented, linked, and strengthened programs, laying solid groundwork for sustainability (Devine, 2016; Sandel & Bhat, 2007).

Twenty-first CCLC afterschool programs, however, needed to develop diversified funding bases to continue funding streams (Naftzger et al., 2006). A guide was developed

to help afterschool directors and stakeholders establish successful public–private partnerships to assist with sustainability efforts (Relave & Deich, 2007). Nonprofit community center leaders established themselves as valuable players in the afterschool industry (Weiss & Little, 2008). There was a need for them to look beyond individual programs and collaborate more with those they competed with for resources in environments with limited funding.

While 75% of nonprofit organization afterschool directors believed in sustainability in 2010, only 30–40% took severe steps to embed sustainability into their daily management practices (Mirvis, Googins, & Kinnicutt, 2010). There was a gap between the sustainability plans written by afterschool directors and actual implementation due to no alignment across business industry leaders in identifying who was responsible for sustainability implementation or how to implement a successful process. A study of 53 afterschool programs and 104 sites, both 21st CCLC and noncommunity centers, resulted in recommended outcomes that clarified full-time project directors as key to development, implementation, and sustainability of programs overall (Jordan, Parker, Donnelly, & Rudo, 2009).

A fourth national report, for the period 2010–2011, showed 4,100 grantees representing 10,188 centers serving a total of 1,873,290 students (Naftzger, 2010). Community-based organizations known as nonprofit afterschool programs, were the second-largest grantee organization group, accounting for 20%. For the period 2012–2013, there were 4,077 grantees representing 9,989 centers serving 1,732,567 students (Naftzger, 2013). Community-based organizations were again the second-largest

organization group, this time accounting for 18%. Community-based organizations then numbered 1,761 (18.4%) nationwide (Naftzger, 2013). Afterschool program leaders had to conduct internal sustainability reporting of afterschool programs due to concerns of external pressures and depleted resources (Herremans & Nazari, 2016); this prompted recommendations for future research to explore managers' attitudes toward sustainability and to understand how their perceptions influenced sustainability. Another recommendation was to require managers to submit detailed sustainability reporting to reduce the uncertainty of resource dependency (Hammer & Whisman, 2017). In 2017, President Obama's administration updated the statutes to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; McGuinn, 2016).

Faced with partisan gridlock, Congress was not able to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) until 2016 (McGuinn, 2016). The national discourse politically surrounding state policy changes, charter schools, common core standards, assessment, and teacher evaluation changed the dynamics of the Obama Administration (McGuinn, 2016). ESEA reauthorization resulted in the education administration's aggressive efforts on school reform, and a political backlash against federal involvement in education (ESSA, 2015) that rolled back the federal role in K-12 schooling in essential ways (McGuinn, 2016). One legacy of the Obama presidency was the expansion of each state's role in education (McGuinn, 2016).

According to Farmer (2019), under the Trump Administration, The United States Government Accountability Office examined (a) how afterschool funds were awarded and used and (b) effectiveness of the programs. Additionally, they also examined (c)

leaders' management use of program data to inform decision-making and (d) the federal Education Department staff provision of technical assistance to state- and local-level directors on evaluating and sustaining programs (Farmer, 2019). Beginning with grants initially funded in the 2017–2018 school year, 21st CCLC federally funded programs must comply with the provisions outlined, which did not include performance measures on sustainability efforts (McGuinn, 2016; Nowelski, 2017). Congress reviewed the fiscal budget in 2017 and 2018, setting fiscal spending priorities for 2019 through 2028 (Lou, Isaacs, & Hong, 2018; Pynes & Rissler, 2017). In March 2019, the Trump administration released its fiscal year 2020 full budget proposal, and for the third year in a row, proposed to eliminate the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, which funds local afterschool and summer learning programs in all 50 states and the United States territories. Elimination of funding for local programs would impact the 1.7 million children and their families who may lose access to afterschool as a result of this Department of Education afterschool funding proposal (Peterson, 2019).

Workforce Profile of Urban Afterschool Programs

It is important to understand the professional who works in afterschool programs to consider the professional development needs of the afterschool workforce (Affrunti, Mehta, Rusch, & Frazier, 2018; Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, pp. 87–92). Workforce Development in the afterschool community was defined as the coordination of policies and funding to attain a sustainable organizational goal and solve a community-based problem (Simonova et al., 2019; Tebes, 2019). Researchers have reported as of 2009 that there were over 850,000 people in the United States afterschool workforce as

teachers or leaders labeled program directors or site coordinators in afterschool programs (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Collectively the afterschool workforce has served approximately 10.2 million stakeholders in various communities (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Large-scale afterschool workforce studies have not been conducted since 2005; however, smaller studies in 2013 show some progress toward professionalization (Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, pp. 87–92).

The rift of afterschool workforce issues still plagued the field 25 years later, according to the National Child Care Staff Study and outcomes revealed knowledge is not reflected in practice, policy, or procedures (Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, p. 90). According to Weiss and Little (2008), "professional development for those who work with children and youth is fraught with challenges and ripe with opportunity." More specifically, "...The opportunity to increase staff quality, which experts agree is critical to positive experiences for children and youth" (Peter, 2009, p. 43). Scholars have documented in various studies that the afterschool workforce is integral to working families, schools, and community stakeholders (Garst, Weston, Bowers, & Quinn, 2019; Simonova et al., 2019). The afterschool workforce provided academic enrichment and supported recreational activities three or more hours before or after school daily at community and school-based sites in low-resource communities (Affrunti et al., 2018; Cappella & Godfrey, 2019). The afterschool workforce supported between 1.7 and 6.7 million children with individual sites serving up to 100 or more students from elementary, middle, and high school sites daily in groups of one teacher per 20 students (Affrunti et al., 2018; Garst et al., 2019; Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016).

Given the comprehensive representation of the afterschool workforce, it is crucial to better understand how afterschool program leadership addressed a system framework to tackle internal and external obstacles in a different setting, using various processes toward sustainability efforts (Kuperminc et al., 2019; Malone & Donahue, 2017). Scholarly research reported the importance of afterschool program leaders creating focused professional development opportunities for inadequately trained staff and building school–community partnerships toward sustaining afterschool workforce in low-resource communities (Frazier et al., 2019; Tebes, 2019). A common thread in the scholarly literature about the afterschool workforce was job stress, limited funding, and extreme daily operational demands. However, there is a gap in the literature of comprehensive reports that described the specific personal and professional experiences of the afterschool workforce in their voices (Affrunti et al., 2018; Cappella & Godfrey, 2019).

The afterschool workforce personnel demands included a range of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations to develop the necessary readiness and provide sustainable programming (Garst et al., 2019). Unfortunately, there are numerous accounts in the literature alluding to afterschool workforce personnel which received little to zero professional development, limited to no opportunities for career advancement, and low investments in fiscal, material, and human resources toward sustainability of services that would continue to enhance the afterschool program and the community served (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019).

Given the limited availability of comprehensive literature on afterschool staff, scarce research available described the many complex practices in the afterschool workforce (Simonova et al., 2019; Tebes, 2019). There were many job titles or labels given to compare afterschool workforce staff such as youth mentors, volunteers, or school-based teachers given multiple duties but ill-equipped and overloaded in low-resource communities (Affrunti et al., 2018). Many employees in the afterschool workforce are young, with less than two years' experience, and 30% of the afterschool instructors considered highly qualified as most entered the field to contribute, mentor, and serve their community (Affrunti et al., 2018; Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016; St. Clair & Stone, 2016). According to the National Afterschool Association (2011), research revealed that the average director was 35 years of age.

Scholars have also documented the importance of having a skilled afterschool workforce beyond the context of the United States. In Australia, the afterschool workforce has the highest rate of underqualified staff (Cartmel & Brannelly, 2016). There is a need for training to equip afterschool staff to sustain the programs and meet national quality standards (Cartmel & Brannelly, 2016). Since 1993, less than 160 afterschool program leaders provided services across Scotland and created new services while working to support the sustainability of existing services for disadvantaged children served (Audain, 2016).

Scottish stakeholders advocated an international need to promote the afterschool field as a professional and recognized adequate qualified afterschool personnel (Audain, 2016). Recent survey data in 2013 revealed that many of the Scottish afterschool

workforces considered themselves as qualified professionals despite low recognition and pay (Audain, 2016). Ongoing conversations with afterschool stakeholders at various consultation events held in 2015 across Scotland, revealed staff felt that they are not treated as fellow professionals by teachers, social work, or health professionals (Audain, 2016). The research reported in the literature review demonstrated academic improvement, and social benefits of more disadvantaged children served through the international afterschool programs, including those located in The Netherlands, Japan, and Korea. Stakeholders felt that community leaders and staff in the education community observed afterschool personnel as babysitters. Services rendered were perceived by some as being modeled after providing childcare for working parents, and not as meeting perceptions of being high quality academic and social services providers. Scottish stakeholders believed that all relevant parties in the afterschool field were willing to take part in international co-operation and coordinated professional development opportunities to meet such demands (Audain, 2016).

Since the termination of the only group of stakeholders in Europe focused on the afterschool industry, afterschool leaders and stakeholders reported a desire to learn more about new outcomes of evidence-based research in the field through professional development on sustainability efforts (Audain, 2016). Additionally, afterschool workforce personnel reported there was a necessity to develop evidence-based policy on afterschool leadership, program development, and sustainability implementation. There is a plea for more robust, recent research in this field internationally among colleagues in

the afterschool field from among other countries, such as Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States (Audain, 2016).

A recent study reported in Afterschool Matters revealed that out of a group of 14 directors half in their mid-20s, the youngest director was 23 years old (Asher, 2012). The other half of the study group showed directors between 47 years old to 62 years old with an average age, also of 35 years old (Asher, 2012). In the latest study, all 14 directors had some college education, most at least a bachelor’s degree, and reported they were working toward advanced credentials. Collectively the 14 directors had a total of 96 years in leadership within the afterschool workforce averaging 2–3 years of service with the organization being researched (Asher, 2012). Many cited challenges with limited funding, undeveloped staffing, demands for professional development, building school leader and teacher relationship, and afterschool personnel limited work experience (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016).

In the afterschool workforce, there were many college students, some with prior experience working with children or adolescents as youth coaches, summer camp leaders, and volunteers in community-based organizations (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Volunteers or staff often viewed their jobs as passageways to other careers (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016; Toledo, 2018). Some leaders and teachers in the afterschool workforce may have limited formal training in the principles underlying extended education (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016; Therien & Jeffrey, 2016). As a result of a shortage of tracking and documentation of professional development in low-resource communities and urban neighborhoods, numerous at-risk afterschool programs usually

have high turnover and are staffed with underpaid, inadequately trained employees (Toledo, 2018).

Veteran afterschool leaders with the experience to potentially strengthen program sustainability are familiar with how to develop relationships, hire staff, identify partners, build social capital, and advocate for program directors to foster collaborations between afterschool programs and the community (Farrell et al., 2019; Malone & Donahue, 2017). However, novice afterschool leaders and workers often receive little training and report a lack of formal education in relevant content areas (Garst et al., 2019). To address this gap, scholars and leaders in the afterschool field have called for a more formal level of systems framework, higher-quality programming, and competencies of professionalism that requires some educational qualifications (Kuperminc et al., 2019; Malone & Donahue, 2017).

A set of core knowledge and competencies developed for afterschool and youth development professionals shared nationwide in the afterschool field began the systems thinking process across the afterschool professional workforce (Kuperminc et al., 2019; National Afterschool Association, 2011). The competencies outline knowledge and skills afterschool workforce need to provide and sustain high-quality afterschool programming (Malone & Donahue, 2017). Core competencies will support the afterschool workforce to identify personal, professional development goal setting, planning, training, documentation, and self-evaluation (National Afterschool Association, 2011). Afterschool program directors can use the competencies to hire, train, evaluate staff, and establish salary scales (Hill, Connolly, Akiva, & McNamara, 2017; Toledo, 2018).

Community stakeholders will understand the conventional expectations of the afterschool workforce (Hill et al., 2017). Program development focused on leadership best practices and continuous learning sustains the afterschool workforce (Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, pp. 87–92).

Sustainability Challenges of Afterschool Programs in Low-Resource Communities

Families, children, and youth from low-income communities have access to vastly different resources and opportunities than children from higher-income families as neighborhoods and schools become more highly segregated by income (Medina et al., 2019; Odgers & Adler, 2018). Researchers have noted that residential segregation along economic and racial lines was accompanied by dwindling sustainable resources for children in urban, high-poverty neighborhoods (Bullock, Griffin, Kent, & Toolis, 2018; Trude et al., 2018). Researchers also noted that most afterschool leaders worked in marginalized populations and served children within low-resource communities (Bullock et al., 2018; Hazelbaker & Mistry, 2018). Services received were quite different in physical and social settings than those from middle income and affluent communities with robust access to afterschool resources (Bullock et al., 2018; Hazelbaker & Mistry, 2018). Such economic and racial disparities have contributed to the sustainability challenges of afterschool programs in low-resource communities (Farrell et al., 2019; Tebes, 2019).

Program sustainability in the context of this literature review is defined as the processes afterschool program directors implement to identify and build social capital and resources supporting the mission for stakeholders to reduce program closures

(Douglass et al., 2017; Farmer, 2019; Lin, 2017). Broad interests in the demonstration of sustainability of afterschool educational programs in low-resource communities evolved through hot educational topics, policy and leadership conversations, and researchers that examined community-based programs in a variety of settings (Cuban, 2001; Trude et al., 2018). Sustainability challenges occur when afterschool program leadership experiences uncertainty and inability to cultivate, promote, and recreate a school–community-based system that stimulated ongoing improvement comprehensively (Ceptureanu et al., 2018; Nocon, 2004). Afterschool leaders who worked in low-income communities that implemented community-based programs frequently described sustainability as a project goal, yet the ongoing application of professional development needs connected to support afterschool stakeholder needs toward program sustainability is a challenge (Nocon, 2004; Trude et al., 2018).

African American children often are provided with inequitable educational experiences within communities where low access to resources drives the proliferation of underfunded schools (The National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance, 2014). Educational programs in low-income communities consisted of multiple impoverished families that lived in marginalized communities with limited accessibility to much-needed resources (The National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance, 2014). Afterschool-school-community leaders have more challenges maintaining developed programs in those areas which complicated program sustainability (The National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

According to a 15-year review of literature conducted from 1996–2011 on community-based afterschool programs of 88 empirical articles, only 10 met criteria for researchers to review and synthesize key factors toward sustainability in serving a marginalized African American population with services varying 10–12 months in duration (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016). Research methodology of the 10 research studies included the following: three qualitative, five quantitative, and two mixed methods studies met the criteria of the community-based program and afterschool sustainability (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016). Measures included interviews, peer interviews, member checks, questionnaires, teacher rating scales, observation, focus groups, relationship inventories, demographic data, parent, mentor, reports, and student outcomes (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016). Eight features emerged in the research results for future research and practices, of which areas specific to afterschool leadership and workforce development included a need for workforce training to improve deficient areas and a minimum of a one-year commitment from personnel (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016).

The most significant sustainability challenges included several factors, such as afterschool advocates fighting for funding (Hall & Gannett, 2018), and identified differences such as program size, location, implementation, programmatic effects (Ceptureanu et al. 2018; Chase, 2017). Additional sustainability challenges included demonstrated academic and attendance outcomes and history effective and successful collaboration to build community partners, which shaped each afterschool leaders' program sustainability efforts (Ceptureanu et al., 2018; Chase, 2017). Henceforth, there is

a need to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019).

An example of funding issues within a state with several cities encapsulating low-resource communities, where much data collection was tracked on afterschool program implementation, but scare sustainability reported was in Louisiana. Louisiana is among states graduating less than 70% of African American, economically disadvantaged students. Approximately 80% of students attending afterschool programs are identified in the low-income bracket at present; the most critical issue is funding (Afterschool Alliance, 2019b). Without stable funding for both early care and education slots and the infrastructure to support the system, it will be difficult for Louisiana to move forward and not move backward in supporting children at this critical time of life when there is the highest return on our public investment in youth development. Before 2010, local communities in Louisiana were able to leverage resources from the state by way of several state and federally funded afterschool programs, including the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Afterschool for All (TANF) programs (Ganucheau, 2017). Despite substantial gains in academic and behavioral outcomes for youth in afterschool programs, funding for three of Louisiana's afterschool programs was eliminated to fill budget shortfalls. The Community Based Tutorial Program (CBTP), grew to an average of over $2 million per year from 1985, served 115 sites and 3,000 students for 23 years before being eliminated (Louisiana Department of Education, 2008). Additionally, the

Supplemental Educational Services (SES), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Afterschool for All (TANF) was eliminated to fill budget shortfalls (Louisiana Department of Education, 2013). The final number of SES or TANF programs that operated prior to funding elimination is unknown during this study. Ironically, afterschool programs offered cost-effective solutions to many of the adolescent problems that plagued the state's budget, which included grade retention and juvenile detention costs (Smith et al., 2014). According to Smith et al., (2014), afterschool programs addressed the root of these state's problems at the cost of $1,500 per student per year.

Reckhow and Snyder (2014) reported results from a broad-based longitudinal investigation of a decade of philanthropic funding in the United States on 15 of the largest K-12 grantmakers from 2000–2010. Results of a recent literature review that I conducted indicated community directors organize themselves, make their views heard and work to transform their ideas into reality (Winchester et al., 2018). In Louisiana, the number of afterschool programs operated since May 2007 versus sustained ones still in operation today remains unknown.

There are no data available on the number of sustained programs still operating post-funding in the state of Louisiana (Afterschool Alliance, 2019b). However, private funding of the afterschool program is exceedingly rare. During the 2017–2018 fiscal year of 40 projects funded by the Louisiana Children's Trust Fund from a total of $847,300, only half a grant was given toward afterschool programs (Winchester et al., 2018). That is, a full grant awarded to the Boys and Girls Club of America was split in two between the agency's annual Prevention Conference and its afterschool program (Winchester et

al., 2018). The 21st Century Community Learning Center program is the only federal funding source dedicated solely to afterschool programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). Pynes and Rissler (2017) stated that federal and state budget cuts would have significant impacts on Louisiana since other afterschool funding was eliminated in 2010.

Leaders at the Louisiana Department of Education completed the Cohort 10 Request For Proposal (RFP) 21st Century Community Learning Centers competition process in August (2019c). State leaders awarded approximately $20M of federally funded Grant Award Notifications (GANs) to afterschool programs leaders that met criteria and would begin afterschool programs September 2019 through August 2022 (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019b). An approved Grant Award Notification by the Louisiana Department of Education Board of Elementary and Secondary Education only stated various vendors globally. There was no public list in the Board documents or the Louisiana Department of Education website at www.louisianabelieves.com of currently funded afterschool programs operating (Louisiana Department of Education, 2019b).

According to the National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance (2014), sustainability challenges involved afterschool stakeholders that understood the critical components. Core competencies included the construction of a sustainability plan, a vision, and building a broad base of collaborative partners that supported the mission to ensure the program continued on a long term basis. Additionally, sustainability challenges included ensuring the afterschool program directors understood what it took to work with school–community leaders. The goal is

that they build their capacity of various community partners through identified assessment of social capital and necessary collaborative resources (Lin, 2017; The National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

There are three elements identified in supported research outcomes as sustainability challenges critical to a community working to develop sustainable assets for the afterschool program. Elements include afterschool leaders (a) strategically identifying appropriate outreach efforts, (b) utilizing sustainable resources needed for the program, (c) advocating for their afterschool program with businesses and community leaders to use their power of influence and generate program support. Also, (d) afterschool leadership determining a process systematically to develop various fiscal strategies and sources for resource diversification over time (The National Center for Community Education with the Afterschool Alliance, 2014).

Researchers revealed three broad themes that emerged using an inductive approach. The themes include (a) stakeholders that understand the needs toward the sustainability challenges connected to afterschool workforce leaders' professional development and (b) consequences of limited funding. Additionally, (c) barriers that surround the leadership skills needed to build school-school community partnerships toward sustainability (Medina et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2018). One challenge included a need for afterschool program leaders to establish partnerships that ensured the community-based programs served families as a stabilized force in marginalized communities (Frazier et al., 2019; Toledo, 2018).

Additional challenges to afterschool programs included the connection of afterschool school–community leadership professional development skills to sustainable programs and partnerships (Medina et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool program leaders should receive training to build their capacity to ask continuous improvement questions (Farrell et al., 2019). For example, some questions asked to assess sustainability include (a) Why should stakeholders sustain the program? (b) What are the costs and benefits to stakeholders? Moreover, (c) Do afterschool program leaders have school–community leader partners with qualities contributing directly to sustainability that varies from community to community? (Cuban, 2001; Medina et al., 2019; Toledo, 2018).

A second challenge was afterschool leaders that understand their project vision and goals ensuring stakeholders possess the expertise and political connections to shape priorities benefiting the program and community (Cuban, 2001; Cuban & Tyack, 2018). In 2018, researchers reported a third challenge still existed toward afterschool leaders, ensuring diversification of funding strategies toward program sustainability after the start-up phase of a program with no more than a quarter to a third of the program funding from one funding source (Cuban & Tyack, 2018). A fourth challenge was ensuring afterschool leaders build knowledge, skills, and abilities effectively, meeting core competencies and performance measures toward the shared organizational mission (Medina et al., 2019). In summary, the sustainability challenges of afterschool programs in low-resource communities included a need for strong afterschool leadership and management experience that influences day to day operations toward building a

comprehensive sustainable school–community leader partnership (Toledo, 2018). A lack of strong afterschool leadership has led to continued challenges of logistical problems, poorly designed partnerships, insufficient professional development, and continuous and comprehensive sustainability challenge (Schwartz et al., 2018; Toledo, 2018).

Building School–Community Partnerships for Sustainability and Resource Development

Finkelstein first wrote in 1992 that the contemporary literature on family–school relations in the United States reveals recurring themes of conflict and disagreement. One might think that parents and teachers would be natural allies in child and youth development. Nevertheless, ideas differ and have changed over time about how families and schools should fulfill these responsibilities, given the uncertainties generated by changing social and economic conditions (Epstein & Sanders, 2002; Finkelstein, 1992). Conflicts and concerns also have resulted from parents' and teachers' unfamiliarity with each other's goals and efforts, and with parents reporting they need more in-depth information from educators on how both parties can collaborate through community partnerships for children's benefit (Epstein, 2018). Themes of dissonance between families on the issue of forming school–community partnerships remain as fresh as ever, and specifically in today's low-resource communities across the United States (Galindo et al., 2017).

Equal and equitable access to education is essential to ensuring a student's success. Various policies, such as the Compulsory School Attendance and Admission Attendance mandatory – Age – Exceptions legislation in the United States require

children to attend school (e.g., RCW 28A.225.010). Educational resources outside of school are not always equally distributed across communities of different races and socioeconomic statuses (Roche & Strobach, 2019). Resources such as the Internet, health services, and extracurricular activities are external factors that contribute to the success of a child in school. Low-resource communities often have less access to these resources due to the continued impact of past policies that require racial segregation. Such policies lead to the inequality of education received by youth population groups. Afterschool program directors often support youth groups influenced by societal perceptions of parents in impoverished, marginalized communities level of education, as well as race and socioeconomic status (Engel, Claessens, Watts, & Stone, 2016; Wei, Xiao, Simon, Liu, & Ni, 2018).

The differences mentioned above create additional societal perceptions about the issue of equitable funding and afterschool program sustainability activities in education. Policymakers have thought low-income community families who have a lower property tax base and received targeted services received free support from educational institutions (Owens, 2018). However, students living in these low-income neighborhoods have less access to educational support services and remain in an under-resourced educational system. Scholars have long written that community-based educational spaces such as afterschool programs have a long history of interrupting patterns of educational inequity (Baldridge, Beck, Medina, & Reeves, 2017). It is these very communities with a lack of access to resource allocations where collaborative community relationships are much needed to support afterschool program sustainability (Jackson, & Marques, 2019).

Collaborative partnerships are not just about establishing positive personal connections, in which mobility can change over time (Medina et al., 2019). More so, scholars underline, it was imperative to build productive, synergistic, and sustainable working relationships. Unambiguous afterschool-school-community leaders do not have a clear understanding of their collaborative partnership roles and responsibilities. The afterschool-school-community leaders need to understand institutionalized infrastructure, well-designed workflows, and response mechanisms paramount to afterschool program sustainability achievement (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Financial support, such as direct funding and in-kind contributions, is also critical. Separately or in combination, schools and community agencies can provide the space needed for afterschool program implementation in low-resource communities. Sometimes partners can join funding streams where specific functions and initiatives are needed to address overlapping areas of concern in professional development towards afterschool program sustainability (Jackson, & Marques, 2019; Peter, 2009).

Seminal literature reviewed by education historians asked such questions when looking at issues related to building afterschool program school–leader partnerships such as what was schooling like for communities of color in different parts of the nation (Finkelstein, 1992). Researchers supported building school–leader community partnerships with both social service and community organizations, but there are conflicts and concerns (Epstein, 2018; Valli et al., 2014). Trusting relations are essential, given that social capital develops within community-based activities through social networks and interactions (Epstein, 2018; Lin, 2017). Afterschool program stakeholders have

worked together using interagency collaboration between agencies, expanding the traditional academic mission of the afterschool site to include social services benefiting participants (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Toledo, 2018).

Researched outcomes of interagency collaboration included state government leaders in a southern state in the United States. The funders collaborated with afterschool partners through interagency collaborative agreements (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Toledo, 2018). A state collaborative partnership funded an afterschool program initiative through various afterschool program leaders and stakeholders. Performance measurements included academic outcomes and surveys of community stakeholders' cross-collaborative partnerships based upon agreements between the two-state agencies evaluated (Louisiana Department of Education After-School Programs, 2013; Valli et al., 2018).

Thousands of children received afterschool program services through building cross-collaborative partnerships of school-community-based leaders. One federally funded afterschool program operated collaborative partnerships statewide between the two-state agencies using a memorandum of understanding (Louisiana Department of Education After-School Programs, 2013; Valli et al., 2018). Funding flowed from the federal government through one agency that then held competitive processes and awarded funding through the secondary agency (Louisiana Department of Education After-School Programs, 2013). The various afterschool program directors that met criteria implemented the afterschool program, documented attendance, reimbursed vendors per child in attendance, and tracked performance outcomes based on state-

mandated performance indicators for the afterschool programs statewide (Louisiana Department of Education After-School Programs, 2013). The program funding is still working in partnership between the two state agencies, but no longer funded or sustained the partnerships to continue the afterschool programs statewide (Louisiana Department of Education After-School Programs, 2013).

Since 2018, researchers continued to identify several specific challenges in the connection between sustainability and afterschool program leaders in low-resource communities (Valli et al., 2014; 2018). School–community leadership sustainability continues to be a constant challenge, as existing research on sustainability is limited (Coburn et al., 2012; Rinehart, 2016). Federal government officials now required each state under the ESSA, Title IV, Part B, 21st CCLC, to provide a list of prescreened external organizations (Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019b). Although the ESSA regulations required this mandate, it is unclear if the approved list of external organizations posted by the particular state was vetted for the agencies to build school-community partnerships. It is also unclear if the vetted list allows afterschool program leaders' opportunities to build collaborative community partnerships of shared experience led by afterschool program directors or build social capital needed to support students, families, and neighborhood development (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018).

Cross-Boundary and Relational Leadership Skills for Building Collaborative School–Community Partnerships

The application of social capital theories and evidence-based research has shown necessary leadership practices that support sustainability school–community partnership success (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). Researchers reported the importance of building school–community cross-boundary and relational leadership capacity as school–community partnerships are in the foreground of supporting low-resource community reform efforts (Galindo et al., 2017). In recent years, especially in marginalized communities, reformed efforts have focused on including afterschool sites with a core group of school–community leadership training in building cross-boundary and relational leadership skills (Blank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006; Sanders et al., 2019). Cross-boundary leaders are those with the capacity to develop trusting relationships with individuals and groups across diverse identities and professional boundaries (Blank et al., 2006). Cross-boundary leadership, closely aligned with relational leadership, is defined as a social process through which individuals accomplish mutually valued organizational goals (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998). At the core of both types of leadership is the effective management of complex human interaction; however, cross-boundary leadership emphasizes the importance of managing these interactions among individuals inside and outside the organization (Blank & Villarreal, 2015; Uhl-Bien, 2011).

I reviewed seminal research on school leadership, which stressed that successful afterschool program directors need to build collaborative community partnerships as reflexive practitioners—conscious of their own role, position, and identity within an

organization (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; De Cremer & Van Vugt, 2002). They also need to encourage open dialogue and establish organizational processes that acknowledge and respect different perspectives (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; De Cremer & Van Vugt, 2002). Through such practices, cross-boundary and relational leaders may build trusting relationships with and among diverse intra and external organizational actors critical to the realization of collaborative partnership goals (Medina et al., 2019; Peter, 2009). An increasing number of studies have explored the role of school principals as relational leaders (Diedrich, McElvain, & Kaufman, 2005; Jean-Marie, Ruffin, Burr, & Horsford, 2010; Sanders, 2018). However, researchers have rarely examined the relational practices of afterschool leaders in building collaborative school–community partnerships (Diedrich et al., 2005; Sanders et al., 2019).

The term *school–community* collaborative refers in this study to any entity designed to join a school, families, and neighborhood groups (Blank & Villarreal, 2015; Medina et al., 2019). Such groups can comprise a broad spectrum of stakeholders and varied sources of social and financial capital (Sanders et al., 2019; Medina et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2014). Operationally, a collaborative is defined by its functions, a variety of which may be pursued through established school, family, and community connections (Sanders et al., 2019). Functions include a spectrum of activities, resources. They support building professional development toward sustainability, a sense of community, enhanced communication, planning and coordination, networking, mutual support, and improving utilization of existing resources as well as generating new resources (Peter, 2009; Raelin, 2016).

Afterschool leaders may achieve sustainability, building a shared understanding of perceptions of what constitutes school–community partnerships (Valli et al., 2014; 2018). There is a need for afterschool leadership to maintain an ongoing unified understanding of school–community partnerships (Blank & Villarreal, 2015). In Sanders et al.'s (2019) study, school–community leaders emphasized that meeting aligned school-community–and-afterschool program goals must work daily to achieve ongoing sustainability. Cross-boundary leaders may utilize cumulative evidence to understand program sustainability better and report performance factors that hindered or facilitated the success and survival of the afterschool program (Valli et al., 2014).

School–community leaders conveyed the significance of having aligned collaboration and professional development toward afterschool program sustainability (Gannett, Mello, & Starr, 2009; Malone & Donahue, 2017). Each leader identified and implemented significant roles. Agreed upon roles for each school–community leader collectively strengthened cross-boundary and relational leadership skills together (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). Researchers' results indicated that school–community cross-boundary and relational leaders successfully managed interactions among individuals inside and outside the organization (Sanders et al., 2019).

School–community cross-boundary and relational leadership representatives need to learn what it takes to build collaborative school–community partnerships. Examples include (a) onsite-afterschool based leadership teams which worked together, (b) alignment of school–afterschool activities, and (c) relied on numerous types of partners to support their efforts (Sanders et al., 2019). Cross-boundary and relational leadership

skills to build collaborative school–community partnerships also included school–community leaders' agreements to shared data collection and collectively review outcome data results (Sanders et al., 2019). School–community leaders need to apply practical ongoing communication skills in the following areas: (a) ongoing continuous improvement sustainability efforts, (b) review-renewal-termination of effective or ineffective partnerships, (c) active pursuance of diversified funding, in-kind donations, and (d) maintenance of ongoing internal–external sustainable partnership activities (Gannett, Mello, & Starr, 2009; Sanders et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2014;). Building capacity of cross-boundary relational school–community leadership skills and collaborative school–community partnerships worked when school leaders met the educational goal, and afterschool leaders provided needed assistance in marginalized low-resource communities (Galindo, & Sanders, 2019; Sanders et al., 2019).

Professional Development Needs of Afterschool Program Leaders

Existing researches suggested the importance of professional development in the afterschool workforce for sustainability due to the challenge of staff having a limited background and education (Farrell et al., 2019; Toledo, 2018; Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016). However, there is limited information about the aspects of professional development and implementation of specific components toward the successful sustainability of nonprofit education units, like afterschool programs, in low-resource communities (Coburn et al., 2012; Cuban, 2001; Farrell et al., 2019). Scholars who recommended research into the professional development needs of afterschool program directors also implied that a professionally skilled afterschool workforce is especially

critical in low-resource contexts where structural inequities due to social class and race can limit human potential (Bond et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019; Peter, 2009).

Afterschool–school community leadership internationally and nationally is working toward building their capacity, and staff capacity to deliver higher quality sustained afterschool programs (Audain, 2016; Cuban, 2001; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool leaders have become experts through professional development on core knowledge and competencies due to lack of adequate training (Ceptureanu et al., 2018; Cuban, 2001; Afterschool Alliance, 2014). Afterschool leadership must build afterschool staff capacity through focused professional development, which includes (a) development of guidance about career mobility, credentials, and qualifications (Gannett et al., 2009; Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, pp. 87–92; Therien & Jeffrey, 2016); (b) based upon common language for professionals working in a variety of afterschool settings and positions (Devaney & Moroney, 2017). Afterschool leaders also (c) include workers that served afterschool students ages 5–18; (d) current ongoing research reflective of the afterschool field, primarily serving marginalized communities (Afterschool Alliance, 2014; St. Clair & Stone, 2016); and (e) other methods of assessing practitioner skill and knowledge (Cuban, 2001; Afterschool Alliance, 2014; Neild et al., 2019b).

Several articles examined training and its impact including the sustainability value of staff trained to ensure professional development provided by afterschool leaders addressed afterschool workforce job satisfaction, enhanced performance, and reduced turnover among staff (Affrunti et al., 2018; Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019). Researchers examined afterschool leaders' professional development focused on

technical assistance, on the job coaching, training, and use of afterschool networks, providing professional development toward sustainability efforts (Gannett et al., 2009; Malone & Donahue, 2017; Schwartz et al., 2018). Professional development also included various factors related to individual afterschool sites such as poverty, staff certification, education, and past training (Affrunti et al., 2018; Schwartz et al., 2018). Findings revealed further afterschool workforce challenges and no easy fixes to address through professional development by afterschool leaders (Peter, 2009; Tebes, 2019). Harding et al. (2019) reported on the relationship of professional development among Head Start teachers and the stress of the afterschool workforce in lower-income countries. Reported outcomes demonstrated the challenges encountered to ensure that afterschool leaders attend joint professional development with school–community partners and train their afterschool workforce (Gannett et al., 2009; Tebes, 2019).

Afterschool advocates have provided core competency frameworks and quality professional development training as well as descriptions of professional development and evaluation of statewide training certification program for afterschool workers in high-poverty urban communities (Affrunti et al., 2018; Malone & Donahue, 2017). Afterschool workers have attended bi-weekly professional development, project-based summer institutes, and intensive professional development on mentoring (Carter & Roucher, 2019). Researchers reported that afterschool leaders who allowed workers to identify individual performance goals reported greater success toward sustainability efforts (Cole, 2011; Cuban, 2001). Additionally, successful sustainability outcomes were

linked to afterschool workers that continued professional development application (Smith & Bradshaw, 2017; Toledo, 2018).

Some afterschool workforce continued professional development workshops during the school year (Smith & Bradshaw, 2017; Peter, 2009). Challenges included a need for leadership support to connect professional development intention with actual implementation through modeling, reinforcement, and evaluation of program practices (Cuban, 2001; Smith & Bradshaw, 2017; Toledo, 2018). Building the capacity of the afterschool workforce leadership and staff organizational development toward sustainability has appeared to be one of the hardest challenges (Cuban, 2001; Medina et al., 2019). However, school–community partnership leadership that attended professional development saw greater success (Cuban, 2001; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool leaders that built their staff capacities to lead professional development efforts and collaborated with school–community staff on aligned initiatives reported outcomes of improved sustainability efforts (Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Cuban, 2001). Researchers have reported outcomes proving that afterschool and school leaders must work together to replicate sustainability development across the afterschool programs (Cuban, 2001; Peter, 2009; Toledo, 2018).

Afterschool and school–community cross-collaborative leaders with a shared vision of unique culture, expectations, agreements, positions, and procedures portray the school–afterschool community as one entity (Cuban, 2001; Sanders et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2018). Due to the diverse nature of afterschool programs, leaders need a wide variety of partners to develop an afterschool professional development system (Tebes, 2019).

These include practitioners, intermediaries, state agencies (labor, justice, education, childcare, youth development, etc.), resource and referral agencies, and higher education and community college systems (Tebes, 2019).

Afterschool Leaders Professional Development Decision-Making Under ESSA

The recent growing base of research in the afterschool field has shown the benefits of afterschool programs with professional development focused on improving the high quality of the afterschool workforce (Cuban, 2001; Toledo, 2018). For two decades, afterschool program leaders supported school leaders in high poverty low-performance schools. Most directors worked with school leaders solely to meet their academic performance using limited professional development of afterschool staff through induction training, national-state level one- and two-day conferences and school–community led staff meetings (Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016).

Recent changes of federal guidance of ESSA in the United States required school–community and afterschool leadership to use professional development from the ESSA's framework for evidence of program effectiveness (Neild et al., 2019a). The evidence guide released provided detailed research summaries on the effectiveness of specific afterschool programs for improving outcomes for students in grades K-12 (Neild et al., 2019a). Afterschool leaders who implemented programs beginning 2019 budgeted with federal funds were required to utilize the companion guide Afterschool Programs: A Review of Evidence Under the ESSA (Neild et al., 2019a). The afterschool leaders have to share the information with school–community leaders, partners, and stakeholders and use the guides in the decision-making about afterschool programming, implementation,

and professional development (Neild et al., 2019a). The review of the evidence presented was based on a 17-year comprehensive, systematic literature search for professional development afterschool implementation studies published between 2000 and 2017 to report the outcome effectiveness of afterschool programs (Neild et al., 2019a).

Rigorous studies in this guide were reported to demonstrate the effectiveness of afterschool programs since 2000 (Neild et al., 2019a). It is essential to note that the authors reported programs using rigorous research designs (Neild et al., 2019a). Results reported included those with no effect, mixed-effects, or negative effects to contribute meaningful learning to the field about what works, what does not, where, and for whom (Neild et al., 2019a). Guidance from the United States Department of Education on applying ESSA’s framework by afterschool leaders included several recommendations.

The recommendations included that afterschool leaders (a) use the guide in decision-making about afterschool programming; (b) use the evidence wisely and well (Neild et al., 2019a). Also, (c) afterschool program leaders should consider whether a program has evidence of effectiveness, (d) consider other characteristics that would make it a good fit for individual afterschool programs based upon various individual factors (Neild et al., 2019a). Finally, afterschool leaders should (e) select appropriate professional development approaches based on their evidence of effectiveness, and (f) a thorough assessment of community needs, resources, and priorities (Neild et al., 2019a). Afterschool program leaders should provide appropriate professional development for their particular afterschool workforce and work to fill evidence gaps by carrying out well-designed studies of afterschool programs (Neild et al., 2019a).

Afterschool program leaders must also decide from the four levels of ESSA's evidence framework, or tiers, ranging from the most rigorous evidence of effectiveness Tier I, or Strong to the least rigorous Tier IV, or Demonstrates a Rationale (Neild et al., 2019b). Afterschool leaders must ensure that the afterschool workforce understood through professional development that each tier had research design requirements which established a cause-and-effect relationship between the program and student outcomes that aligned with school–community goals (Neild et al., 2019b). It is important to note that studies with a rigorous research design did not necessarily show that a program outcome improved (Neild et al., 2019b). Additionally, it is significant to note that afterschool program leaders must determine appropriate professional development for their afterschool program and afterschool workforce development using research quality standards under ESSA. However, the guide does not provide specific information as to developing professional development and afterschool program sustainability implementation (Neild et al., 2019b).

Afterschool advocates, stakeholders, leaders, and workers in the afterschool field internationally, nationally, statewide, regionally, and locally have continuously researched evidence-based professional development practices (Audain, 2016). Afterschool school–community leaders must consider professional development that is comprehensive and that adequately trained afterschool staff in their craft (Neild et al., 2019b). Additionally, leaders must build staff capacity of identified afterschool core competencies that establish workers that meet the criteria as highly qualified experts and offer various supported professional development through ongoing training and coaching

to ensure high-quality afterschool program alignment (Neild et al., 2019b). Afterschool leaders must ensure staff accessibility of professional development aligned to afterschool standards and current school-based standards for sustainable outcomes of social capital resources (Lin, 2017; Neild et al., 2019b).

Identifying Gaps in the School–Community Literature and Its Implications for Afterschool Leaders

Scholars reported scarce research and continued challenges in building afterschool program leaders-school leaders—cross-collaborative community partnership (Coburn et al., 2012; Valli et al., 2018). Unfortunately, researched outcomes relied on general retrospective, self-reported data to understand sustainability challenges after program implementation, which limited leadership insight into what happens during implementation that fosters sustainability (McDaniel & Yarbrough, 2016; Valli et al., 2018). There is a need to examine more about the relationship between the afterschool program leadership–school-community leadership collaborative partnerships, creating productive afterschool workforce professional development and afterschool program organizational development (Brasili & Allen, 2019). In this study, hearing from the voices in the field allowed a better understanding of how afterschool program directors connect afterschool program day-to-day operations. Examples include the creation of competent afterschool workforce professional development and building afterschool-school–community leaders' relationships which build partnerships that sustain programs in low-resource communities (Valli et al., 2018).

Investigating afterschool program directors' perceptions also included examining how market conditions may impact sustainability issues in low-resource communities (Johnson et al., 2016). Reported outcomes of afterschool program directors' narratives further substantiated identified leadership gap in afterschool program organizational development, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Garst, 2019). Research outcomes were compared with the school educational leadership and administration literature (Vrentas, Freiwirth, Benatti, Hill, & Yurasek, 2018). Finding reported will add to current scholarly research to close the gap on the need for afterschool program leadership management literature (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019).

Despite widespread support for afterschool programs, there is little systematic and comprehensive data to guide policy and practitioner decisions about afterschool programs (Lu, 2015). Devine (2016) reported the most effective way to understand better economic sustainability opportunities provided by nonprofit organization afterschool directors was to hear their voices directly, learning from the afterschool program directors' perspective on what they did to sustain afterschool programs which are not yet well understood (Lu, 2015). Recommended future research suggested hearing directly from stakeholders to learn what worked for whom, when, where, and why (Weiss & Little, 2008). Afterschool Alliance (2018) stated that to ensure afterschool programs available and accessible to all children and families, regardless of income level or location, a concerted effort is needed by federal, state, and local policymakers, the philanthropic community, educators, and advocates. Lu (2015) reported research studied on this topic provided outcomes of significant change theory, practice, implementation, and positive social changes toward

afterschool program leaders, developing professional development, collaborative partnerships, afterschool program sustainability implementation, and reduction in resource dependency.

According to The National Conference of State Legislatures (2019), 24% of children in afterschool centers are from communities with concentrated poverty. However, federal funds only cover 11% of program costs in high poverty areas and the burden to fund and sustain afterschool programs falls to communities, parents, and state funders (The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Additionally, reported research from The National Conference of State Legislatures (2019) included outcomes that, without adequately trained staff, the positive outcomes of afterschool programming may not be fully realized. The 21st Century Community Learning Center program initiative is the only one dedicated federally funding stream that has served more than 1.7 million school-age children nationwide in 2016-2017 (The National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). However, more funding and centers are needed to meet supply and demand. Bennett (2016) reported key suggestions included that a proposed study was needed to find new ideas helping afterschool directors to incorporate program planning, implementation, and improvement of sustainability. Hearing the lived experiences of a current group of afterschool directors on leadership challenges to establish collaborative relationships, would allow opportunity to examine any research learned, describe how they applied research results, and share information with their community in connection to resource dependency and managerial decisions to sustain or not sustain their community-based organizations (Ceptureanu et al., 2018).

There is a need to explore why 40% of afterschool directors are experiencing fiscal challenges in the present day to sustain afterschool programs (Smith, Barrows, Do, & Fosheim, 2018). There is also a need to hear from the afterschool program directors working to sustain programs within high-poverty areas on their actual experiences of programmatic and fiscal sustainability planning, implementation, and sustainability management (Nowelski, 2017; Smith et al., 2018). Findings from such proposed studies may identify the connection between the professional development needs of afterschool program directors in low-resource communities and the leadership skills needed to build community partnerships aimed at program sustainability, which remains poorly understood (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Frazier et al., 2019).

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter, I reviewed and critically analyzed the literature surrounding the leadership challenges of afterschool program directors in low-income urban neighborhoods, and the social capital and interagency collaboration needed between their programs and community essential to afterschool program sustainability. Research indicated that despite the evidence, afterschool programs directors operated programs in impoverished neighborhoods and provided a safe alternative for children and youth to streets, gangs, and jail. Additionally, the program leaders also worked with school leaders and raised academic performance. Despite these successes, little attention had been paid to understand the needs of afterschool program directors', afterschool workforce professional development needed, and afterschool-school-community leaders' collaborative partnerships used to build the resources necessary for program

sustainability. There is a gap in the literature on the experiences of this group of individuals, which needs to be filled. A deeper understanding is needed on afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in developing professional development and building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities. The narrative literature reviewed embodied a conceptual framework built on the topics of social capital, afterschool program sustainability, and leadership for school–community partnerships supported by the theoretical foundations utilized by seminal authors that constructed and defined these three concepts. The issues presented within the conceptual framework and updated, empirical studies aligned with the study's identified problem critically reviewed in this chapter and supported by the extant literature.

In Chapter 3, the research method for this qualitative, narrative study is discussed. The procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection are presented. The data analysis plan is addressed, and issues of trustworthiness in the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. To address this gap aligned with the qualitative paradigm, I collected data through the narrative method of storytelling from afterschool program directors on their daily experiences with challenges in building school–community partnerships in urban, marginalized communities characterized by restricted funding sources. Narrative inquiry allowed me to analyze rich participant descriptions through storytelling. Using this qualitative method, I was able to conduct interviews that allowed construction of a deeper understanding of participants' voices as they narrated stories related to their daily experiences and challenges as leaders in the afterschool workforce in marginalized, high-poverty communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In this chapter, I provide detailed information on the research method and rationale for using the narrative inquiry approach that met the purpose of the study and provided data to answer the central research question. I develop the study's methodology and present a scholarly rationale for the participant selection strategy, data collection strategies, data analysis, the role of the researcher, evaluation methods for the trustworthiness of data, ethical considerations, and a chapter summary.

Research Design and Rationale

Narrative inquiry was the qualitative research design I chose that captured the stories of participants to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007). This research method aims to connect and understand participants' voiced experiences through the storytelling of their daily life over time, settings, sequences, shared interactions, and situations that make up their actions individually and socially (Clandinin, 2016). Researchers have noted that some afterschool program directors in low-income urban neighborhoods were deficient in their leadership skills. Many were unable to build the social capital and interagency collaboration needed between their programs and community partners essential to afterschool program sustainability (Carter & Roucher, 2019; Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). Afterschool program directors reported that there is little resources in professional and scholarly literature to guide them in building social capital and interagency collaboration with community partners (Frazier et al., 2019; Lin, 2017). Before any such guidance could be synthesized into leadership skills training for afterschool program directors, professional development educators and policymakers must know the problems and challenges faced by afterschool program directors in building community partnerships (Brasili & Allen, 2019; Valli et al., 2018).

To align with the purpose of this study, the research question was framed so that participants' narrative experiences would provide needed information on the leadership skills gap challenging afterschool program directors in building community partnerships

aimed at program sustainability. To meet this goal, the central research question of my study was as follows:

RQ: How do afterschool program directors narrate their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities?

I considered other narrative inquiry research methods, such as case study, phenomenology, and even grounded theory. Phenomenology was not chosen because the concentration of this study was not to expand a phenomenon. The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of those whose phenomenological viewpoint is already established (Freeman, 2016). A case study was the second choice but was not selected because the examination of already established cases was not pertinent to the exploration of these exact daily lived experiences (Nelson, 2013).

In grounded theory, the disclosure of significant events is excluded in order to generate an overall understanding of a specific topic (Lal, Suto, & Ungar, 2012). On the contrary, a narrative approach is a direct thought of a particular method for reporting critical events that are gathered during the data collection method (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry was consequently the closest methodological complement in terms of collecting data through storytelling. The use of this data collection method in this qualitative research approach assisted in a substantial collection of data by permitting me to relate and cultivate a trusting rapport with participants, enabling the discovery of important critical life events (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narrative inquiry was beneficial to comprehend and ask about the lived experiences of research participants. Participants' questions included temporality, sociality, and places that served as explicit procedures in developing the conceptual framework (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Qualitative analysis of the experiences of afterschool program directors was necessary to shift themes and expose the gap in leadership skills. Also necessary was the alignment of their professional development needs with achieving program sustainability in low-resource communities (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019). Through afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities, this study may expand knowledge of this group's professional development needs for community stakeholders, school leadership trainers, and policymakers. More in-depth understanding of afterschool program directors' leadership challenges offers practical data in designing effective and appropriate professional development activities for this group—now a neglected area of school leadership training curricula (Frazier et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2018).

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was to interview afterschool program directors about their leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities and to document these participants' experiences as they related to the central research question. I explored only the replies to the study questions; I did not embellish or serve in any other role during this research. Participants did not have personal dealings with me, and I did not influence or dominate

any form of authority and management over the participants. To ensure trustworthiness and diminish the possibility of research biases, I maintained written recorded journal notes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). If any personal biases were detected, they were openly stated when responses were being transcribed and analyzed but did not affect the focus of the stories (Wilkins-Yel, Hyman, & Zounlome, 2018). Semistructured interviews were used to collect the stories of afterschool directors' leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities.

The process of conducting interviews and relating with participants required widespread collaboration but, under no circumstances, presented ethical issues (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To develop understanding and trust, to assist the participants in being sufficiently relaxed enough to share their complete and authentic experiences, ethical issues were shared. Trust is fundamental to qualitative research interviews to obtain the utmost accurate data (Wilkins-Yel et al., 2018). Shared trust between interviewer and participant is significant to the complete attainment of any narrative research study, as the researcher anticipates that participants share deeply personal experiences to help fulfill the purposes of the research. The unveiling of these experiences may expose an adverse light on many individuals, organizations, and groups, which is why participant confidentiality and trust must be kept in the utmost respect throughout the interview and writing process (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

I did not use incentives to recruit candidates for the study sample. There were minimal impediments between the participants and me, neither of whom recognized one

another before the study. If requested, participants were allowed to exit the study, even if the information resulted in undeveloped research objectives.

Methodology

A narrative inquiry study permitted me to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' daily experiences through the storytelling of their detailed accounts of experiences in low-resource communities (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry was appropriate for this study because through the storytelling of afterschool program directors' daily experiences (Terrell, 2017), I was able to gain a significant understanding of the leadership challenges they face in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Meier & Stremmel, 2010).

The narrative inquiry approach was the groundwork of this study because it was a subsection of the epistemological premise, wherein human story compositions are developed with the goal of an appreciation of participants' lived experiences (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Duff & Bell, 2002). Stories are shaped ultimately by individual and collective personal and community narratives, and as the researcher, I collected data in this study to shed light on critical events that existed in the stories of the research participants (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The narrative inquiry permitted me to illustrate the stories of afterschool program directors' daily experiences in all their complexity and richness (Nolan, Hendricks, Williamson, & Ferguson, 2018). Communicated experiences were not recreated, but in addition to audio recordings, stories were transcribed verbatim, providing critical events and rich details of research participants' restorying to better

understand how the afterschool leaders perceived their daily experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Scholars across multiple disciplines have accepted influential critical event methods to implement narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Collecting evidenced-based data through storytelling inquiries raises awareness of its essential contributions in practice-based disciplines (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Conducting this exploratory study allowed me to hear directly from individuals on their human-centered issues, reporting participants' observations, challenges, successes, and potential benefits as specialists in their field of practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). In this study, the data analysis focused on participants' authentic verbatim descriptions and accounts aligned to the research question (Toledo, 2018).

The narrative design method includes exploring the complexity of human experience factors, looking at key critical elements to illustrate the backdrop of the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Figure 1 includes a narrative data analysis illustration (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Setting the stage included hearing participants' circumstances, venues, situations, plans, strategies, and characteristics (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Data analysis includes stories answering the critical research question, hearing both individually and collective ideas guiding decisions throughout various stages, and focusing on the human-centeredness of the design process (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000;

Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Participants' lived experiences served as the blueprint of this study (see Figure 1).

The narrative inquiry methodology encompasses four central components: (a) research processes; (b) occurrences of negotiations; (c) appearances of internal-external potential risks, strategic preparations, and audit appraisals; and (d) outcome results (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

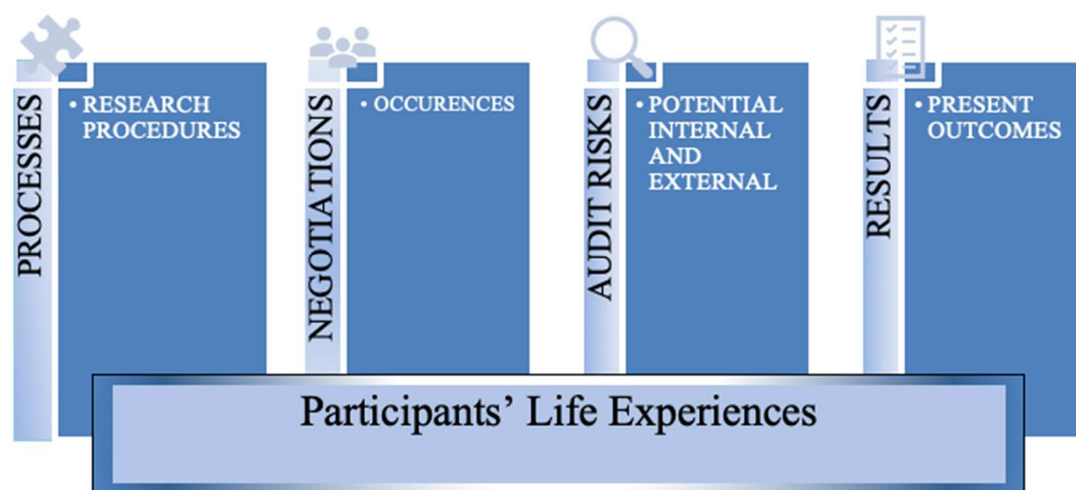

Figure 1. Central components of narrative inquiry methodology.

Narrative-inquiry research studies explore how individuals experience the world around them by recollecting life experiences that offer insight into the understanding of human experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). When sharing experiences, human-centric issues of complexity are mostly evoked in the form of critical events, which serve as an instrument to communicate the critical occurrences of daily experiences of the study participants to listeners (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In this research study, the narrative-inquiry approach was used to examine afterschool program directors' stories

within their particular social contexts and to corroborate individuals' daily experiences in the context of their collective life environment (Clandinin, 2016).

This study was grounded in a hermeneutic approach, which focuses on how the human experience is mediated through stories and understood through pragmatic language (Clandinin et al., 2015; Clandinin & Huber, 2010). In its modern form, hermeneutics is based on the deciphering, interpreting, and translating of ideas by examining language as a text in any form and considers multiple meanings that include my own perspective. The moving back and forth between perspectives in order to uncover inherent meanings is termed the "hermeneutic circle" (Freeman, 2016).

Using this approach increased the likelihood of obtaining findings that can likely become significant research material. It provided the researcher with a better understanding of how the afterschool leaders perceived their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Polkinghorne (1988) recognized that human beings primarily communicate amongst themselves via storytelling, and it is the oldest form of influence. The narrative-research approach was ideal for this study, as it extended the potential of organizational research beyond the traditional options of research within the school leadership and interagency collaboration field (Terrell, 2017). The basic human activities of narrative knowing and storytelling form the basis for narrative research (Moen, 2006). In the narrative inquiry tradition, I expected stories of afterschool program directors serving low-resource

communities would be compelling, rich in information and provide a social context to the researcher (Terrell, 2017).

I analyzed the participants' storytelling by understanding the meaning and content of the narrative to answer the study's central research question. Polkinghorne (1988) contended that reliability is not a stable measurement technique, as compared to the dependability of narrative data collected. This called for me as the narrative researcher to readjust validation and reliability measures used for narrative instead of applying the prior criteria of more traditional approaches (Terrell, 2017). Reframing validity and reliability for narrative studies means redefining and formulating measures to establish the trustworthiness of data. This includes access, honesty, verisimilitude, authenticity, familiarity, transferability, and economy (Huberman, 1995). Qualitative data collection or any other part of the study began after approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The primary data regarding afterschool leader participants' stories of experiences were collected via open-ended interview questions (Terrell, 2017). Underlying novel patterns across the collected data of afterschool leader participants' stories were examined and recorded by 'thematic analysis' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 1990), a frequently used method for organizing and processing data in narrative studies (Clandinin, 2016). A theme is identified as an idea, direction, notion, or characteristic that surfaces from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Thematic analysis in narrative research has two meanings: the analysis of narratives and narrative analysis (for non-narrative texts used as data) (Clandinin, 2016). For the analysis of narratives, I engaged the

afterschool leader participants in storytelling and used specific methods to analyze and find patterns of themes to build one or more narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995).

My research strategy was to conduct face-to-face, recorded, in-depth interviews with 10–12 afterschool program directors. During each interview, I listened and recorded their challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities while maintaining reflexive journal notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 1990; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Conducting open-ended interviews gave me as the researcher a detailed understanding of participant experiences while allowing them to pursue avenues for further investigation (Brinkmann, 2015; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Data collection through a narrative open-ended interviewing approach allowed the researcher to capture reflexive journal notes and subjective observations about afterschool program directors' leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In this narrative analysis, I explored the participants' experiences from a first-person approach to listen to individual persons' accounts or stories about a series of connected events (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Moen, 2006). As the researcher, I utilized the narrative analysis process to learn about the participants' personal lived experiences and collected data based on participants' specific episodes or critical events (Terrell, 2017; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Data collection primarily through semistructured interviews allowed the researcher to hear about critical events from the participants and obtain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study (Terrell, 2017; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In this study, a significant emphasis was placed on the *doxa*, or the participants' ways of doing things, in order to better understand the leadership challenges of professional development toward sustainability in an afterschool program in a low-resource community (Bourdieu, 2018). The specific exploration of participants' ways of understanding creates a set of practices and conceptual perceptions in the narrative study situated within the interpretive–constructivist paradigm and may be queried regularly for rigor and quality (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As the narrative researcher conducting a critical events analysis, it was vital that I continually ask questions regarding the validity of (a) the narrative approach and (b) the data analysis (Moen, 2006). It was imperative to explore questions about (c) the collection of these "stories" and (d) the truthfulness of participants' telling of their "storied experiences" (Webster & Mertova, 2007). As the narrative researcher, it was also critical I questioned if participants made up a story or embellished it in the retelling and if so, question whether the research is still valid (Moen, 2006).

Conducting the narrative study via hermeneutic methods allows the researcher to observe participants' critical events and transversely commonalities (Polkinghorne, 1988). Investigation of restorytelling occurs through participants' story illustrations of lived experiences (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177). Hermeneutics is ongoing and interpretive during the entire research study (Moen, 2006). Participants' restorying and truths told in each narrative may differ depending on who is telling the story, which may raise questions regarding whether the story told is true or not (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177). In each narrative as the researcher, I captured critical events through the individual

participants' leadership challenges, as seen through three essential claims of narrative inquiry—the lenses of their social, cultural, location, and narrative context (Moen, 2006; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

I explored the participants' lived experiences as human beings organized within the three essential narrative inquiry claims (Moen, 2006). As a narrative researcher, I preserved the participants' stories about their past and present experiences as well as their values through audio recordings and field notes (Moen, 2006). Next, the data collection and transcription processes consisted of participants illustrating and retelling their experiences in terms of setting, time, and locality (Wang, 2017; Wang & Geale, 2015). Finally, listening to participants' successes and concerns in the narratives during the data collection process provided numerous, rich, detailed accounts of the multiple lived voices from the field (Wang, 2017; Wang & Geale, 2015).

To ensure robust results, I did not disregard any details, significant influences, or lived experiences shared during data collection (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Participants' knowledge, skills, and attitude development occur formally, informally, individually, communally, socially, pragmatically, and culturally (Moen, 2006; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative research, past conditions continuously change and a participant's chronological results may change based upon social contexts and opportunities (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Participants' development and growth are additionally dependent on lived experiences and social circumstances (Webster & Mertova, 2007). At any point in time, I conducted a narrative analysis of critical events from the semistructured interview data and ensured that all variables were reported (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Critical events included specifics such as details, themes linked to the participants' work environment, decisions, actions, personal experiences, leadership challenges, program sustainability, and outcomes in afterschool programs in low-resource communities within United States community-based organizations (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Data collection and reporting on the phenomenon central to the study provided added illumination and authenticity to the lived experiences (Wang, 2017; Wang & Geale, 2015). To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher actively listened as participants told their stories, and as the researcher, I safeguarded the data collection through secured audio recording (Wang, 2017; Wang & Geale, 2015). The researcher's goal is to provide accurate field notes while still being cognizant of their own subjectivity, ensuring that the narrative research is trustworthy and reliable during the extensive data collection (Goodell, Stage, & Cooke, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Participant Selection Logic

Population. In this qualitative study, applying a narrative inquiry, as the researcher I intended to generate a deeper understanding of the total afterschool leaders' population and their perceptions of their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities in the United States (Tebes, 2019). The sample population met the following inclusion criteria: adult over the age of 18; employed for a minimum of 3 years as an afterschool program director located in a low-income urban neighborhood; and able and willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study (Asher, 2012; Patton, 2015). The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from

other similar studies of afterschool program directors funded under one federal funding source in the United States (Akiva et al., 2017; Asher, 2012; Larson, 2018).

Nationwide 11,512 (Afterschool Alliance, 2018) afterschool leaders operate 21st Century Community Learning Centers (federally funded afterschool programs) and serve 1.7 million participants in high poverty community-based organizations in the afterschool professional field (Smith & Bradshaw, 2017). Over 10,700 school–community afterschool programs are managed by school designated afterschool leaderships as program directors and site leaders (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). Approximately three in five afterschool programs in community-based organizations are in school districts (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). Afterschool program directors collaborated with an average of nine school–community partner organizations (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). The remaining 850 afterschool program leaders operated 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool programs through nonprofit, for-profit, faith-based community-based organizations on and off school sites (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). Among the afterschool director population, two in five are nonprofit, faith-based organizations, private schools, and charter schools afterschool program community-based organizations (Afterschool Alliance, 2018).

Criterion and snowball sampling. Participants for this study were selected using criterion sampling to assist the researcher in understanding these information-rich cases (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Patton, 2015). Criterion sampling is a process of using participants with the same inclusion criteria to aid in the collection of a target sample within a given population group (Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Patton, 2015). In order to

elicit the views of qualified participants only, a purposeful sample based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria described above was used to launch a snowball sample if needed. In snowball sampling, individuals who meet the established criteria are requested to propose additional individuals with relevant and respected views to enlarge the sample (Noy, 2008; Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2020).

The goal of qualitative research is to collect and record data from participants until theoretical, categorical, inductive, thematic, or data saturation is reached, thus scientifically attaining the most significant conceivable sample size in the context of narrative inquiry research (Robinson, 2013). The purposeful sample of participants for this narrative inquiry study was 12 afterschool program directors that led or were currently leading programs in low-resource communities (Asher, 2012; Patton, 2015). Participants included those who shared lived experiences in the phenomena within this study (Moen, 2006). Reporting did not consist of analysis or interpretation of the participants' lived shared experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

A sample size of 12 participants was used in this narrative inquiry (Hickson, 2016; Kuzel, 1999). Hearing the voices of multiple people's lived experiences directly from the field allows for a better understanding of the universal group's lived, shared experiences of the phenomena of the narrative inquiry (Hickson, 2016; Kuzel, 1999). Researchers recommend that a narrative inquiry should tell a story; therefore, I planned to tell a story about the objectives and expectations of the participants (Terrell, 2017). The aim was to consistently focus on the goal of the study while providing methods to interpret participants' stories and narratives (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Guetterman,

2015). Including voices directly from the field that are not commonly heard is critical in analyzing narratives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The unit of analysis for this study was the afterschool program director. Purposeful selection allows for the use of established criteria related to the research topic; it provides sufficient research data principally through the network and snowball sampling (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The inclusion criteria of the study's sample replicated sample criteria from other similar studies of afterschool program directors in the United States (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Although afterschool program directors were not explicitly listed, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) reported that the general category of afterschool directors is expected to see a 7% growth by 2024. Inclusion criteria necessitated participants were a minimum age of 18 years old based on IRB approval and confirmation of scholarly literature because it was assumed this age bracket and older would have had work experience that allowed adequate time for each participant to have established maturity and career experience (Asher, 2012). The researcher assumed that the criteria for participant selection were that the afterschool leader was a program director in a United States community-based learning center. Additionally, they operated or were operating an afterschool program with day-to-day responsibilities within their organization for a minimum of 3 years and would provide in-depth information on the phenomena under study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Prospective candidates were pre-screened according to the participant criteria by the researcher to ensure that participants possessed the knowledge and experience needed to support the research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In addition to knowledge and

expertise, the researcher ensured that participants had the ability and willingly articulated their daily experiences within United States afterschool community-based learning organizations (Asher, 2012). The inclusion criterion is defined as the target population that a researcher uses to answer the narrative research inquiry (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria for study participants by the researcher is a standard, required practice when designing high-quality research protocols (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

In this narrative inquiry, I first looked for ways to identify participants' opportunities within the narratives, including key critical events and individual and shared perspectives (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Methods include exploration of participants' dominant acceptance, attitudes, and conversations (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Exploration also includes the revelation of the universal ways in which participants describe the thick, rich details of actions, perceptions, and observations of noticeable and undetected data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Participants conveyed their perspectives on the internal and external factors of leadership challenges through dominant discourses, practical decisions, and lived shared experiences (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Before beginning the research, agreement from six to eight participants was obtained, and due to the needed aid in reaching saturation, others were solicited for participation through snowball sampling. Stories are expounded upon and elaborated to ensure topics are appropriately articulated by using participant experiences through the qualitative narrative research method (Trahar, 2009). Scholars recommend using

practicality when determining qualitative sample sizes in order to ensure rigor in qualitative research (Guetterman, 2015).

In this narrative inquiry, recruitment efforts included the use of snowball sampling in order to obtain a purposeful sample of six to eight participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Schram, 2006). Snowball sampling is employed in order to access hard-to-reach individuals, increase reliability, validity, clarity, and vital knowledge of the subject under study (Heckathorn & Cameron, 2017). The researcher also used nonrandom snowball sampling of additional recommended potential participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). Narrative inquiry allows for the chance to hear more than one extensive narrative and revolutionize the storytelling process by listening to voices in the field until data saturation is reached (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Data saturation also identifies the total number of utilized participants in the narrative inquiry (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Depending on the number of study participants and units of analysis, a minimum of six semistructured interviews may be obtained (Guest et al., 2006). Data saturation takes place at the point when the repetition of the data occurs, and the researcher no longer detects any new key factors or critical events from the participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The principal concern of this qualitative process is to understand the phenomenon of interest in the narrative inquiry from the participants' perspective (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to collect data that convey the details of thick, rich, contextual descriptions in

order to learn about the phenomenon from the study population of participants, a factor which is of the utmost importance (Mason, 2010).

The interview process allows the participant and researcher to have a conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participants provide rich, thick details about unobservable data such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, behaviors, situations, and the meanings which people attach to decisions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this study, interviewing was necessary in order to hear directly from people in the field regarding their interpretation of the world around them, and all participants answered the same questions in order (Bernard & Bernard, 2013; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

The researcher ensured that participants did not act as co-researchers in similar studies (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This was to ensure that participants did not alter the data collection of the study phenomena, which would have resulted in unreliable information and a shaman effect (Bernard & Bernard, 2013). Any issues supporting or threatening the trustworthiness of data were noted by the researcher (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher kept detailed, written field notes and noted any observations of unreliable data not utilized in the narrative inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The results of the data collection were communicated to the study participants and thus allowed the researcher to strengthen the reliability and validity of the authentic lived experiences that were shared, recorded, transcribed, and reported (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Instrumentation

I considered the use of one-on-one interviews in this study as the core methodological tool to collect useful information as a qualitative researcher (Merriam &

Grenier, 2019). In this research study, I utilized an interview script (see Appendix C) which assisted me in organizing the interview process. Qualitative researchers often rely on themselves as the instrument for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In narrative inquiry research, the researcher and the participant play an essential role in the story retelling process. The participant provides the facts, and the researcher collects the facts in a story-telling form using semistructured interview protocols (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The use of a semistructured interview is supported by seminal narrative methodologists so as to reduce the influence of the researcher and enable the participant's intentions and meaning-making to surface (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Therefore, the story is co-constructed by the storyteller and the researcher, while being conducted in a conversational style with great flexibility and mutual trust through the questions used in the interview instrument (Atkinson & Sampson, 2019).

The instrument used was a series of semistructured interview questions developed, piloted, and validated by three researchers in separate empirical investigations. All questions were on the topic of afterschool program directors' leadership issues around building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities (Hogue, 2012; Larson, 2018; Marino, 2014). The purpose of Hogue's (2012) study was to describe and explain selected participants' perspectives on how a school leader built partnerships within a community located in Florida. Marino's (2014) investigation was a single-case study of an Oregon-based afterschool director's educational leadership strategies. Finally, Larson's (2018) study designed a statewide system of support in Nebraska for personally meaningful,

ongoing, and relevant professional development experiences leading to high-quality afterschool programs. Larson particularly specified that varied individual situations and local program improvement goals must utilize professional development activities that address the varied needs of afterschool program leaders with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The interview protocol can be viewed in Appendix C. The purpose of developing the instrument was so that qualitative researchers could explore afterschool program directors' stories of leadership challenges around building community partnerships (Bennett, 2016; Maier et al., 2017). The previous studies conducted on the topic each used a demographically skewed sample of participants from one specific location (Hogue, 2012; Larson, 2018; Marino, 2014). All three previous studies recommended that further qualitative studies were needed to address the challenges faced by afterschool program directors in establishing community partnerships beyond their specific population groups to strengthen the transferability of results to groups beyond their samples (Hogue, 2012; Larson, 2018; Marino, 2014). I used criterion-based sampling to gather a heterogeneous group of participants from a national population sample in order to support maximum variation sampling (Benoot, Hannes, & Bilsen, 2016) and select participants with diverse characteristics. Ensuring maximum variability to the story-based responses to the interview protocol further supported the goal of theory extension within my conceptual framework (Palinkas et al., 2015). Extension studies, such as this proposed study, provide replicable evidence and extend prior study results of new and significant theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012).

I also kept a reflective journal and recorded all pertinent information, observations, and situations within individuals' storytelling of their leadership challenges around building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities (Clandinin, 2016). I reflected on my understanding of what participants said to ensure accuracy and clarity. This process minimized potential interviewer-induced bias and provided participants with opportunities to correct any inaccuracies through the process of transcript review. Given the development and previous usage of the interview questions listed in my protocol, a pilot test was deemed unnecessary (Clandinin, 2016).

The interview questions were followed by probing questions developed in Marino's (2014) study designed to elicit participants' closely held details. The interview was in the conversational style of the narrative inquiry tradition rather than what would be a question and answer session. As a narrative researcher, I worked to maintain transparency and actively listened to the participant, interjecting questions and nonverbal language (Clandinin, 2016). To add a validity check to the analysis and confidence in the results, I negotiated the meaning of the narratives with the participants (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Because there were no predefined measures or hypotheses in narrative inquiry studies, I used verification strategies of the qualitative data within the narrative inquiry analysis paradigm to construct meaning through narrative storytelling. I maintained the consistency and trustworthiness of data (Clandinin, 2016). The authenticity of stories was maintained through the narrative data analysis techniques utilized (Webster & Mertova,

2007) to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

In this study, procedures included conducting a narrative inquiry collecting data on six to 12 afterschool directors that operated or were currently operating afterschool programs in low-resource communities within United States community-based organizations (Mertova & Webster, 2012). The criterion sampling included participants recruited from the professional network website LinkedIn. Data collection included recording the open-ended question through face-to-face interviews and written field notes (Mertova & Webster, 2012). Participants unable to conduct face-to-face interviews requested phone conferencing through Rev or Temis, an application utilized from an iPad (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I began with six participants, and if data saturation was attained, I would cease data collection (Mertova & Webster, 2012). Data saturation occurred after I interviewed 12 research participants that presented no new evidence during the retelling of stories, and repetitive critical events were established through active listening to detailed narratives (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

If saturation was not attained between six to eight research participants, I would continue to collect further data using the snowball effect with no less than six and no more than 12 as the maximum number participating in the process (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher used specific, open-ended questions with probing as applicable relative to the group of participants defined throughout the narrative inquiry (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I

provided the participants with opportunities where they (a) addressed critical events and alternative events in the narratives, (b) actively engaged in the retelling of individual stories, (c) absorbed probing questions, (d) responded as storytellers, and (e) maintained narrative integrity as participants and did not act as co-researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019).

I asked the participants to follow up questions as applicable in which they elaborated on any further clarification needed throughout the interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I actively listened to participants' audio-recorded narratives during data collection (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Written notations in field notes included observation and monitoring of open-ended questions, responses, and biases to ensure validity, consistency, and no influences on data collected during the study (Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). It is customary to use open-ended interviews during narrative inquiry studies (Clandinin, 2016). I scheduled enough interview time to allow participants to authentically retell individual stories requesting additional time as needed (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

I anticipated scheduling approximately 30 to 90 minutes of data collection time for each participant. The expectancy was that each digitally audio-recorded interview would last the allotted time of at least 30 minutes minimum, including manual transcription (Fusch & Ness, 2015). First, I connected individual interview audio recordings, manual transcriptions, and written field notes through journaling, which validated and solidified the authenticity of data collection. Second, I conducted member checking, which ensured participants' stories illuminated their direct thoughts from data

collection illustrated in each individual story (Morse, 2015; Thomas, 2016). Participants received a window of time and opportunity to review the noted transcriptions from their individual interviews after data collection (Loh, 2013). Participants' options during member checking included the opportunity to check for accuracy, revise ideas, and ensure clarity (Loh, 2013). To ensure the validity of audio recorded data collection during the initial interview, significant critical events, or changes noted by participants during member checking deemed necessary in the restorying of the narrative inquiry would require an additional interview as applicable (Loh, 2013).

Disengagement in the narrative inquiry is a potential negative feature (Webster & Mertova, 2007). In narrative inquiry studies, a systematic method implemented to offset disengagement includes the use of critical events, exploring and extending through alternative relevant research interests (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Narrative inquiry research is often abundant during qualitative data collection (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Stake, 2010). I anticipated that the prolific, exhaustive, thick, rich details of critical events and a substantial volume of data produced within the focused group of the interviewer would result in effectively meeting the aim in the qualitative study (Layne & Lipponen, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2012). Critical events procedures methods are comprehensively, distinctively, and more substantially outlined than collected face-to-face or through video conferencing (Layne & Lipponen, 2016; Mertova & Webster, 2012; Nehls, Smith, & Schneider, 2015).

Collecting narratives includes the research process procedure to see beyond collective confines, identify the individual human purpose, employ their thoughts in their

world, relative structure, tools, and criteria (Clandinin, 2016). The restory research process gathers and analyzes participants' human characteristics, perceived transformation, creation, or combination of the study subject matter (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). I presented the rewrite of participants' stories directly from the data collection. I had a direct open window to hear directly from voices in the field about their life experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Participants comfortably shared more in-depth details that produced more significant volumes of data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Results produced the collection of critical events and participants' perceptions differentiated as critical, like, or other, and only identified after the event, indefinite, unpredictable, and spontaneously (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Critical events include time, place, plot, and scene and intricate effects on participants' stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Verbatim inquiries also portray personal, specific, critical events, distinctive characters with descriptive labels, such as favorable, positive, or unfavorable conflict (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The researcher begins to comprehend developing themes from within the data, which emerge through critical events from narrative inquiries depicted as like, other, and critical (Mertova & Webster, 2012). At the conclusion of each interview, I (a) completed data collection; (b) informed participants of next steps within the process; (c) transcribed interviews; (d) organized setting, plot, characters, and critical events; and (e) conducted member checks ensuring participants report revisions, clarifications, and confirmation of

accurate, critical events notated. At the end of the interview, I assured participants that the information was only for research. Additionally, I assured them that their responses and identities were confidential and that the materials collected would be destroyed after 7 years.

Data Analysis Plan

The themes of human-centeredness and the complexity of human experience are the two main factors that drive data collection in the narrative inquiry methodology. The methodology comprises four essential parts: research processes, negotiation occurrences, potential risks, and preparation, and auditing of results (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The intent of this rigorous data collection method in this study was to gain a true-to-life insight into participants' stories. In this study, the use of narrative inquiry was aimed to collect data systematically, obtaining factual-accurate-realistic participants' perceptiveness systematically, shared lived experiences, and stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). After the data were collected, I analyzed the data and created a written detailed narrative of participants' stories and narratives. I wrote down and studied the digitally audio-recorded participants' stories and journal field notes to create transcribed, detailed, authentic, rich, thick, explicit reports (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007).

The first step of the data analysis was the process of restorying. This narrative data analysis method was used by the researcher to gather data, analyze the story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrite the data (Clandinin, 2016). Throughout a three-dimensional narrative inquiry, the researcher aims to examine certain key events

that have induced changes in an individual's life; the narrative inquiry researcher is given a window into the "critical moments" of a participant's life via narrative analysis (Webster, & Mertova, 2007). The rich details of the setting and the theme were included in the researcher's re-telling of the participant's story in order to share the context of the interview about the participant's personal experiences (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007).

I used the critical events approach which was key to the recognition of critical events and descriptions of those experiences. I was able to obtain provided details on place, time, characters, and significant events essential to the study (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The second step of the data analysis used a critical event narrative analysis to model the events in narratives distinguished as critical, like, or other. A critical event has a major impact on people involved and is characterized as an event that has a unique illustrative and confirmatory nature. Critical events can only be identified after the event and happen in an unplanned and unstructured manner (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A like event is equivalent, related, and associated as a critical event, but it is not unconnected, not exceptional, inimitable and is incomparable to the same exclusive effect as the critical event (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Like events are diverse and unusual, atypical, uncommon, and not as reflective or insightful as critical events (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Any other knowledge such as upbringing, not related to critical or like events, is deemed other events in critical event analysis and regarded as descriptive of the critical or like event (Clandinin, & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007).

This two-step approach to narrative analysis provides an all-inclusive view of the research examination and allows the research to be categorized and cataloged into incidences of critical events that are essential to the significance of the research. This hermeneutic narrative approach was used to explicate meaning within stories even when these stories were not sequential or when the data were incapable of being removed from a context to become ordered and measurable as a singular piece of information in its own right (Polkinghorne, 1988). The *hermeneutic circle*, of moving between the parts and the whole, provided a deeper understanding of the participants (Freeman, 2016). When the narratives are well crafted, it permits insights, deepens empathy and sympathy, and aids in the understanding of the subjective world of the participants (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In traditional pragmatic methods, critical and supporting events may never be synchronized, risking the loss of significant findings. Applying the critical events data analysis method to the primary data allowed an inquiry to better understand the challenges of leadership challenges, community partnerships, and afterschool program sustainability within low-resource communities to emerge in the study results (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Narratives created from meaningful, replicable inquiries provide readers more comprehension, develop better awareness, accrue compassion, intensify consideration, heighten sympathy, and facilitate more significant support of the subjective domain of the study participants (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Conventional practical approaches, and failure to review important sustainable events, endanger the success of uncovering significant findings (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Data

analysis and thorough application of narrative outcome reporting through critical events method to the primary data allowed the ability to better understand afterschool program directors' leadership challenges in developing community partnerships for program sustainability within low-resource communities in United States community-based organizations revealed in the study results (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Issues of Trustworthiness

In narrative inquiry, the trustworthiness of the collected data relies on four factors: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Terrell, 2017). It is vital that the collected data demonstrate trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Narrative inquiry uses direct voices from the field, thus establishing verisimilitude (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Face-to-face, audio-recorded semistructured interviews and written field notes reinforce verifications, outcome reporting, validity, and wakefulness (Billups, 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Morse, 2015). The researcher's use of this fluid inquiry necessitates ongoing reflection or wakefulness to ensure that participants' retellings are accurate or real (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Credibility

When confidence is placed in the findings of qualitative research, credibility is established (Anney, 2014). To determine credibility, the researcher must show that the findings represent believable and trustful information of the correct interpretations of the participants' views drawn from the original data (Locke, 2019). By adopting credibility

strategies based on extended and varied field experience, spending time on sampling, reflexing, triangulation, member checking, peer examination, interview techniques, and establishing the authority of research and structural coherence, the qualitative researcher establishes rigor of the study (Anney, 2014).

I carefully listened to authentic, shared, lived experiences and restorying, paying close attention to the interwoven processes of memory, imagination, and engagement in listening to participant's stories (Clandinin, 2016). Credibility on the participants' data collected includes a review of biases and data saturation to the point that no new information or themes are observed in the data (Guest et al., 2006; Sutton & Austin, 2015). A comprehensive examination of collective and individual chronological restorying of narrative inquiries is imperative (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An examination of critical events using set qualitative guidelines is vital to assess trustworthiness and solidify the storylines of the semistructured interviews, including characters, plot, setting, and climax (Billups, 2014).

Naturalistic inquiry trustworthiness guidelines include credible techniques such as (a) prolonged engagement and (b) persistent observation (Sutton & Austin, 2015). These are in addition to (c) peer debriefing to avoid bias, and (d) awareness of data saturation, in which redundancy occurs in restorying and thus signals to the researcher to cease the data collection (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Further techniques include (e) transcribed audio-recorded data, (f) reviewed written field notes, (g) participant review of transcribed results, and (h) checking for clarification and alternative explanations (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Finally, (i) reviewing findings and (j) member checking further establish the

trustworthiness of the research findings (Clandinin, 2016). In narrative inquiry, the researcher's focus is on efficacy and the corroboration of participants' truth (Clandinin, 2016).

I ensured a complete review of potential threats to establish criteria (Clandinin, 2016). I asked participants indirect questions, acknowledged that participants' answers might be inaccurate, used open-ended questions, maintained neutral stances, and avoided the implication of right answers before the conclusion of the narrative inquiries through semistructured interviews (Clandinin, 2016). I illuminated the setting, surroundings, period, circumstance, and occurrences across participants' stories (Clandinin, 2016). Recognizing different and universal storying across narratives revealed shared, contextual lived experiences of the study phenomena (Clandinin, 2016). Exploration encompassed the rigor of empirical studies using widely and established quality criteria recognized and acknowledged in the expansive arena of qualitative research (Clandinin, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability is equivalent to external validity or conveying generalization in quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Transferability refers to the evidence and significant components that allow replication of the research with different study subjects in other settings, conditions, and epochs (Foster & Urquhart, 2012). The findings of my study may not be generalized as the primary aim of qualitative research is not a generalization of the research finding but the depth of information (Stake, 2010).

I described the original context of my study in detail to include context accounts, research methods, findings, and samples of data so that readers could determine the

transferability of its results to their specific context (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). As such, I provided a thick description of my participants, their context, and the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Generating thick, rich, detailed stories from afterschool program directors' leadership challenges in developing community partnerships for program sustainability within low-resource communities could provide results that will be applicable in future research (Toledo, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability refers to establishing study findings as reliable, consistent, and replicable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Comparison and verification of secure data, after-effects, remaining constant, and sufficient enough to support future, appropriate data collection support dependability of the data (Billups, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Establishment of transparency throughout the data collection process via an audit trail provides other scholars with the means to examine and replicate the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The narrative inquisitor must ensure optimum transparency of interviews, audio recordings, journaling, transcriptions, and outcome reporting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Confirmability

The last criterion regarding issues of trustworthiness is confirmability. I ensured that all study outcomes were based solely on the participants' narratives and restorying without any potential researcher biases (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). The narrative inquiry findings were shaped by participants' retelling their stories in their own voices, without interpretation on the part of the researcher (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Techniques to establish confirmability included the use of (a) an audit trail detailing the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Further techniques included (b) written recordings, unique topics, thoughts, coding, rationale, biases if applicable, and thematic meanings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Finally, (c) ongoing reflections and (d) journaling of any influences of preconceived thoughts or value in the research process reaffirmed the confirmability of the study results (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Once data saturation was achieved, the semistructured interviews ceased; participants then received transcriptions of restorying for member checking (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Ethical Procedures

The researcher followed the ethical guidelines established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (1978), National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavior Research as outlined in *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.*

The principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice are highlighted and serve to undergird ethical behavior. The first principle, respect for persons, adheres to two fundamental assertions: that the individuality and competence of the participant must always be revered and that not all individuals can deliberately apply (Gostin, 1995; United States Department of Health and Human Services, p. 25, 1978). The second ethical principle of beneficence was developed to ensure the well-being of the participant and society at large because of the research study (Bowie, 2017; United States

Department of Health and Human Services, p. 27, 1978). Finally, the third principle of justice requires fair and equitable treatment of all participants as well as a requirement that any study involving participants offers potential benefit to them (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018; United States Department of Health and Human Services, p. 29, 1978).

The core of ethical qualitative research relies upon the safety and confidentiality of participants, in accord with the sensitivity of the topic and group; non-malfeasance relies upon honesty and discretion (Flick, 2018) and reasonable care must be exercised to maintain ethical standards. Researchers must consider efficacy, predisposition, and issues reflexivity when determining whether research is ethical (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because the general nature of the qualitative methods in business research involves the testimony of participants based on direct interaction or from observations, the responses often cannot be predicted or screened by the interviewer. Participants may share information in confidence, revealing very personal details of their life. Therefore, it is extremely important to explain to the participant the terms of research including the purpose, terms of reciprocity, risk assessment analysis, terms of agreement, and data access between the participant and the researcher, as well as any data collection sources used in the study, along with confidentiality, informed consent, as the ethical versus legal responsibilities which govern the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

When studies involve human participants, Walden University policies require that researchers receive documented permission from the Walden University IRB before research can begin. The IRB protects participants' legal rights within human subject research during or after the study (Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). Gaining prior IRB approval

aids in the validity and trustworthiness of the study results (Madichie & Gbadamosi, 2017). Ethical procedures continue to exist as the researcher and the participants are physically involved for the actual procedure of the research work to manifest, bound together through common agreement and mutual contributions in which the aim of accomplishing the purpose of the research work takes priority, as both parties go through stages of the research development together (Stake, 2010). No access to participants, data collection, or ethical procedures was conducted before IRB approval to reduce bias and produce an accurate research outcome, with participants' rights safeguarded by the laws of ethical research procedures. To maintain standards of ethical research, human relationships, and interactions outside of the research study context were avoided with prospective participants (Schram, 2006).

As a researcher, I recorded, documented, and safeguarded all the available and all the ongoing research materials; plus, I will protect all given information at all times, including all issues of privacy and confidentiality accordingly. Researchers always face ethical challenges in all stages of a research study, from the stage of designing the processes to the stage of reporting/interpreting the research result (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). I guaranteed all volunteers or participants freedom of speech, free of involvement in this research study because it posed no threat, no risk for participating, and no harm for refusal to participate, given that it had free entry and free exit, all at the participant's will.

The issue of honoring the interview invitation was agreed between the interviewees (the participants) and me (the researcher). Also, the participants

demonstrated acceptance of the invitation to participate unconditionally in the interview as scheduled and agreed to abide by all the governing rules of the interview protocols, before I (the researcher) commenced the research process. The contents of the IRB-approved Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) also reflected the rules and the requirements of the IRB's specifications.

In practice, the primary rule of the IRB demands that researchers handle the data collection issues very diligently and without error, ensuring privacy control, safety, and the confidentiality of both delivered information from participating individuals as well as participants' overall involvements in activities (Jacob & Ferguson, 2012). This strategic approach to ensuring ethical procedures was in the interest and benefit of all afterschool program directors working in low-resource communities and all the research participants at large. The results of the combined actions ensured the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis methods used in this narrative inquiry study (Clandinin, 2016). Also, the data collection and analysis strategy carefully followed all levels of accuracy and protective measures, as outlined in this narrative inquiry study design.

Under no circumstance were any individuals persuaded or offered compensation in exchange for participating in my research work. There was no compensation/reward for participating or penalty for not completing participation, or early withdrawal. The invitation for interview participation was designed and was clearly stated to have no condition for commitment, with free entry and free exit, all at the participant's will. In the case of early withdrawal of any recruited participant, I would search for a replacement by adopting the same recruitment protocol as stated in this dissertation in Chapter 3, and

with the same inclusion criteria for a participant who would fit the nature and the purpose of this research study. It is noted clearly in the participant recruitment letter that every participant would be assigned a unique number for identification. I was meticulous in recording every activity of the interview protocol, as well as all observational perspectives (Jacob & Ferguson, 2012).

All participants and their assigned identification numbers will be kept confidential during and after the interview protocols, and they will be strictly protected at their storage locations. Protective measures such as the use of a username and password will be implemented to lock in all data information in a special computer system, as well as in other computer devices to ensure adequate storage and protection mechanisms. This strategy is to make sure that all the associated electronic files and storage folders are equally locked in with respective usernames and passwords. All available hard copies containing related information will also be locked inside a safety box for security purposes and storage. Access to the storage of this vital information will only be granted to those individuals or committee members who are directly connected to my research study for review purposes. Such individuals may include my Dissertation Chairperson, my Committee Member, the University Research Reviewer, or any other authorized faculty member/body who has the right to review my research documentation, and lastly, myself. At the end of all protocols, the data will remain in storage as a secured vital document for an approximate period of seven years, after which the collected data will be deleted or destroyed.

Summary

Chapter 3 presented an elaborated overview of the research design and justification, the researcher position, and methodology. The rationale for the participant selection, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, and data collection procedures was also reviewed. In order to address the possible trustworthiness of the research, issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures were additionally described. The results of the research will be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. The central research question guiding this study was as follows:

RQ: How do afterschool program directors narrate their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities?

I designed this question after an exhaustive review of the extant literature to identify literature gaps associated with afterschool program directors' leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability. To address this gap, I used a narrative inquiry design to collect data from the personal narratives of 12 afterschool program directors in low-resource communities in the United States.

By sharing their stories, these 12 participants allowed me to gain valuable insight into their leadership experiences and the challenges facing their entire professional sector in terms of program sustainability. The first step in my two-step data analysis was restorying, a narrative data analysis method I used to gather data, analyze each story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene), and then rewrite the data (Clandinin, 2016). The second step was to identify participants' critical experiences from their daily lives as afterschool program directors and chronicle those experiences by providing details on place, time,

characters, and significant events essential to answering the study's central research question (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). This two-step approach to narrative analysis allowed me to categorize the incidences of critical events that were important in reporting the study outcomes of the research. I employed the hermeneutic narrative approach to capture the meaning in participants' stories (see Polkinghorne, 1988). Applying the critical events data analysis method to the stories representing my entire data set allowed the daily work experiences of afterschool program directors depending on privately funded community partnerships for program survival to emerge in the study results (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

The study results presented in this chapter reveal the personal and workplace experiences of afterschool program directors and their leadership challenges with program sustainability in low-resource communities. In this chapter, I present significant details of the research setting, demographic data, data collection and analysis procedures, evidence of the trustworthiness of the qualitative data, and finally, a composite of the study results.

Research Setting

In this narrative inquiry research study, semistructured interviews were conducted by audio-recorded telephone calls to gather data on 12 afterschool program directors in low-resource communities. The LinkedIn online professional platform was utilized to send out the initial letters of introduction and recruitment invitation requests for research participants. The request for research participants included the purpose of the study, participant criteria, and next steps for interested participants. A total of five LinkedIn

responses were received from interested participants at the onset of the initial letter of introduction and recruitment invitation request for research participants. Each interested participant responded, identifying that they met participant criterion and their individual interests in the research study. An additional seven LinkedIn network responses were also received from interested recruitment participants using a snowball sampling technique through the social media platform (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

I requested an e-mail address from each interested research participant response that also met the research criteria. Upon receipt of the interested participant's e-mail address, I sent them the IRB consent e-mail. I requested each participant that received the IRB consent e-mail to review the consent agreement. Interested research participants still willing to participate after completing their review of the IRB written consent agreement were instructed to reply to me with their electronically signed consent that they agreed to all written requirements.

Upon my receipt of each identified research participants' electronically signed consent, I then replied to each individual acknowledging receipt of their consent agreement. I worked with each research participant to schedule interviews at mutually agreed upon times. Once agreed upon times were set for the individual interviews, I asked the research participant to e-mail me the telephone number to use for the interview. I then scheduled a calendar appointment for each semistructured interview where each party received a confirmation receipt of the scheduled interview time. I ensured there were no personal or organizational conditions that would influence participants or their experiences at the time of the study that could influence interpretations of the study

results (e.g., changes in personnel, budget cuts, or other traumatic events that could affect the narrative inquiry or restorying of data collection).

Demographics

This narrative inquiry research study included 12 afterschool program director participants who nationally represent the voice of afterschool program directors from the northern, southern, eastern, and western sector of the United States. I ensured all interested participants recruited not only met the participant criteria in this narrative inquiry study but also would be able to share individual and collective experiences in their own voice as afterschool program directors. Each research participant specifically related their interview responses to the research question and provided in-depth research data in their voice from the field based on their perceptions, involvement, skills, familiarities, capabilities, and occurrences. The afterschool program directors each operated afterschool programs at school-based, nonprofit-based, or community-based organizations in low-income communities with years of experience ranging from a minimum of 3 to 47 plus in the afterschool industry; all participants were at least 18 years of age.

It is possible that a few participants knew one another through the snowball sampling technique. Participants were a mixture of afterschool program directors completing their last year of undergraduate school, obtaining a minimum of a bachelor's degree to postgraduates with master's degrees and several years of experience as well as completion of higher education institutions with doctorate degrees. Participants' data included their age; position; ethnicity; workplace setting; years as an afterschool program

director (past or present); nonprofit, school-based, or community-based organization; and education. The operation of the afterschool program within a low-income resource community was given as a part of the criteria for participation. However, the locale within the northern, southern, eastern, or western sector of the United States was also provided.

The given pseudonyms were in an XY format, such that X was the generic letter P standing for the participant, and Y was the numerical identifier assigned to each participant. The full demographics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics and Characteristics

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Gender	Years at position	Position/areas served in marginalized communities	U.S. sector	Avg. # of children served daily	Education level	Area of degree concentration
P1	50s	African American	Female	20	Former afterschool director/ community based	NE urban	30–65	Doctor of philosophy	Management
P2	30s	Caucasian	Male	10	Current executive director/nonprofit school & community based	SE urban	850–900	Juris doctorate/master's degree	Business administration
P3	20s	Native American	Female	7	Current afterschool director/nonprofit school, & community based	MW rural	250–300	Bachelor's degree/ master's degree in progress	Social work
P4	70s	Caucasian	Female	20	Former afterschool director/nonprofit school & community based	MW rural	75–100	Master's degree	Organizational management
P5	30s	Latino	Female	5	Current afterschool director/program liaison/ education support agency	SE urban	200–300	Bachelor's degree	Social sciences
P6	40s	Caucasian	Male	20	Current associate director/nonprofit, school, & community based	SW urban	350–400	Bachelor's degree	English & French
P7	60s	African American	Male	47	Current executive director/nonprofit, faith-based, school, & community based	NE urban	450–500	Master's degree	Administration & supervision
P8	20s	African American	Female	3	Current assistant manager/nonprofit, school & community based	NW rural	50–60	Bachelor's degree	Pre-law
P9	50s	African American	Female	27	Current assistant superintendent of federal programs nonprofit, school & community based	SE rural	275–300	Master's degree + 30 hours	Administration & supervision
P10	40s	African American	Female	23	Current afterschool supervisor/nonprofit, school & community based	SE rural	275–340	Master's degree	Administration & supervision
P11	40s	Caucasian	Female	20	Current sr. ed partnership manager/nonprofit, school, & community based	NW rural	140–150	Two bachelor's degrees	Elementary education
P12	40s	African American	Male	15	Current afterschool youth manager/school-based	NE urban	240–250	Bachelor's degree in progress	Youth, leadership & program management

Data Collection

I received IRB approval for this study (Walden IRB approval number 10-08-19-0016333) prior to beginning data collection. After inviting participants, confirmation of meeting requirements, and receipt of electronically signed consent forms, data collection began. I continued data collection until data saturation was achieved. Data saturation occurs when similar themes emerged from the similar stories told by participants in the semistructured interviews and the researcher finds participants no longer present new data (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). The semistructured interview questions (see Appendix C) used from prior research studies allowed me to ask each participant the same questions. Using the previously designed interview questions, each participant was allowed the same opportunity to share their stories in their voice. Doing this process in the narrative inquiry allowed me the ability to ensure alignment of the interview protocol and to guide the conversation ensuring participants stayed within the topic of the research study.

During the interviews, I was able to confirm that participants did not have specialized experience in the research area and had not participated in any research similar to the research study topic (see Bernard & Bernard, 2013). Conversational dialogues were held with each individual research participant. Data saturation was successfully attained with 12 participants (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data collection was obtained through each audio-recorded interview. Upon concluding each interview, transcriptions were disseminated to each participant.

Emergent themes from the interviews included such data as the participant's concerns with financial challenges and hiring professional staff to mitigate continuous staff turnover further provided evidence of data saturation. In these narratives of afterschool program directors, 22 various themes surfaced. Participants reflected on how afterschool program directors experienced leadership challenges while working to develop their afterschool program workforce professional development opportunities and afterschool-school-community leaders' collaborative partnerships toward program sustainability. Further details describing the data saturation process and outcome findings revealed during participant interviews are disclosed in the Study Results section.

I allocated enough time every day for two consecutive weeks to complete the data collection process (Fusch & Ness, 2015). During those two weeks, I implemented the recruitment of participants, confirmed participant eligibility, received individual electronically signed consent forms, scheduled and conducted audio-recorded participant interviews. After the interview process, I submitted recordings for immediate transcriptions, received and reviewed transcriptions for accuracy, and disbursed transcribed interviews to participants to conduct a member check of their individual transcription and interview summary. No additional information was taken or added to the interviews. Each participant agreed with their transcriptions and summaries. The data collection process included 12 audio-recorded telephone interviews with a follow-up email exchange of information provided. The semistructured interview data collection process was conducted over approximately a two-week period beginning October 9, 2019, through October 22, 2019.

The researcher maintained a journal of field notes taken during each semistructured audio-recorded interview. Included in the field notes were my questions, thoughts, and reflections about each participant interview. Two mobile applications on my iPad called *Rev* and *Temi* were used during the audio-recorded interviews. After each interview, participants were asked for feedback on how they felt regarding their responses. All participants stated they felt comfortable sharing their voices from the field on the research topic and revealed critical factual events within their afterschool program and community setting. No participants declined participation in this study.

Participants described their experiences, which included any leadership challenges as afterschool program directors developing community partnerships for program sustainability operating programs within high poverty, marginalized communities. Participants fully understood the questions asked and eagerly contributed their individually shared perspectives in their voices from the field based upon their education and experiences. The questions explored their experiences through a purposeful sampling of research participants that actively illustrated their human experiences while sharing rich, thick descriptions of their daily experiences. Each afterschool program director, through their level of educational attainment, varied experiences, and backgrounds of research, was knowledgeable enough to highlight their daily human experience within their professional practice. Each participant answered the interview questions about the exploration of their leadership challenges and events over time as afterschool program directors in low-resource communities, with the place, time, characters, events, and experiences being critical elements to the narrative inquiry

method. Each participant conceptualized and narrated their process and provided a holistic view of daily experiences that enabled recognition of occurrences often disregarded through traditional research methods.

Initial Contact

Participant recruitment was done by publishing a request on LinkedIn. A Letter of Introduction and Recruitment (see Appendix A) was posted on the approved social network web platforms and emailed to interested participants. Participants recruited met the following eligibility criteria for this study: (a) adult over the age of 18; (b) employed for a minimum of 3 years as an afterschool program director located in a low-income urban neighborhood. Additionally, participants had to be (c) willing to provide in-depth information on the phenomena of the study to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities. Participants recruited replied via the social platforms, conveyed an interest in the research study, and provided their email addresses. Upon my confirmation, participants that replied stating an interest and met research criteria for participation received an email that included the Letter of Introduction and Recruitment and the IRB approved Letter of Consent (see Appendix B). Participants were required to review the Letter of Consent and submitted their electronic signature consenting to research study requirements if still interested. Upon receipt of their signed electronic Letter of Consent, participant research interviews were scheduled.

Interviews

Research participants interested in participating in the study were identified from their responses on LinkedIn and other social media platforms. After confirmation of meeting eligibility and criteria, participants received and reviewed the Letter of Introduction and Recruitment invitation and signed the IRB approved Letter of Consent electronic consent. Participants emailed their address, telephone number, and available dates to schedule mutually agreed upon appointments for the semistructured interviews. Participants confirmed an outlook calendar appointment and received with the agreed-upon scheduled interview date for confirmation. Individually audio-recorded interviews were conducted with data collected during the scheduled telephone calls using the Rev or Temi applications on my iPad.

Participants and I attended the online interviews at our jobs or homes. We both ensured that we were in a secluded location allowing for a relaxing, peaceful, and serene atmosphere. As the researcher conducting the audio-recorded calls, I had a printed copy of the interview questions from Appendix C at each interview. I made sure to ask all questions in the order presented and to write any responses and journal any notes in addition to the audio recording. I used the back of each page to add any additional questions with responses and journal any prominent information. I noted if there were moments in which a response from the participant warranted me asking follow-up questions and noted any difficulties presented by additional questions asked of which none existed.

Reflective Field Notes and Journaling

To ensure validation of data collected during the semistructured interviews, I used reflective journaling and recorded all relevant situations, observations, and information safeguarding the trustworthiness of the information collected and lessening the likelihood of research biases (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Conducting investigations using narrative inquiry and personal interface allowed me to hear from each afterschool program directors' own voice from the field. I used the interview questions to guide the discussion, took time to listen to participants' responses, and with additional questions as needed to ensure clarification. Participants contributed to individual conversations of their experiences, attitudes, desires, and beliefs, allowing me to obtain a deeper understanding of their leadership challenges.

Individual open-ended interviews lasted 30 minutes to an hour. I wrote descriptions of participants' thoughtful, personal observations and responses ensuring that I did not add information that could affect the data analysis (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). I maintained nonanalytical notes journaling of immediate thoughts and feelings experienced about responses while listening to participants' stories during data collection. Participants shared their experiences on the entire narrative inquiry process from initial recruitment, selection, interviewing, data collection, and I included notes in reflective journaling that revealed critical events significant to participants.

Data Analysis

Critical moments of participants' life events are a central component of the narrative data analysis of participants' stories, and when developed into a three-

dimensional narrative inquiry (Hunter, 2010; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Stories collected through a three-dimensional narrative inquiry method can highlight potential life-altering events as shared by each participant and gathered through semistructured interviews (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To achieve accuracy in data analysis, Boyatzis (1998) recommended using varied or flexible approaches. Careful precision in data collected provided a range of themes that emerged from data analysis. Inductive, theory-driven data collected was analyzed using other aforementioned research-driven codes. Theory-driven codes were attained from existing theories in previous scholarly research. Inductive codes were gathered from the bottom to the top through the researcher's interpretation of the data, to include prior research-driven codes. The thematic approach is one of the more convenient methodologies of qualitative research because it allows an exclusion from the theoretical structure (Clandinin, 2016). Uncovering of themes and processes of analysis were used to expand and align results with the purpose of the study (Boyatzis, 1998; Hunter, 2010).

Concluding data collection and member checking, I began data analysis creating a detailed written chronicle describing participants' stories and narratives. In this study, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) thematic analysis and restorying method was the first step used in the data analysis after data collection. Next, I took data collected for restorying applying thematic coding. According to Clandinin (2016), a two-step process is used for thematic coding of restorying data: production and description, cross-referencing, categorizing, and thematic linking for comparative purposes. Participants shared their vulnerabilities and uncertainties through data collection, which the researcher

identified in the process of retelling. The researcher identified a total of five conceptual categories in participants' responses providing answers to the central research question.

Data analysis of interview transcripts revealed an emergence of several themes for analysis and combined patterns. Saleh, Menon, and Clandinin (2014) stated the structural analysis of the data collection from the narrative inquiry data enables the researcher to review focused material identifying the emergence of data revealed from the stories in the written transcriptions. Through this approach, I affirmed subthemes and five conceptual categories. The five conceptual categories were grounded in the conceptual framework and 22 reformulated themes and lay the groundwork for investigating, explaining, and understanding participants' responses.

Conceptual Categories and Emergent Themes

1. Conceptual category: Challenges of program sustainability in low-resource communities

   Themes: (a) building financial capital, (b) engaging students from marginalized populations, (c) hiring professional staff to mitigate continuous staff turnover (d) building community pride, and (e) building family engagement

2. Conceptual category: Challenges of building collective goals with community partners.

   Themes: (a) communication issues, (b) building social capital with community partners, (c) social inequality in community power structures, and (d) school leadership skills.

3. Conceptual category: Gaps in leadership skills of afterschool program directors
   Theme: (a) diversity in afterschool program directors' professional background, (b) long-range planning skills, (c) community leadership skills to build social capital, and (d) collaborating with professional afterschool associations.
4. Conceptual category: Professional development needs of afterschool program directors
   Themes: (a) training in leadership styles, (b) training in finance and budgeting, (c) training on sustaining school–community partnerships external partners, (d) training in staff development, and (e) supporting creative and critical thinking.
5. Conceptual category: Interagency collaboration between afterschool programs and community partners
   Themes: (a) afterschool programs as part of a broader social system, (b) afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress, (c) securing consistent professional development opportunities for all staff, and (d) collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners.

Through a three-dimensional narrative inquiry, I examined certain key events that have induced changes in an individual's life; the narrative inquiry researcher is given a window into the "critical moments" of a participant's life via narrative analysis (Webster, & Mertova, 2007). The rich details of the setting and the theme were included in my re-telling of the participant's story in order to share the context of the interview about the

participant's personal experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007).

The second step of the data analysis used a critical event narrative analysis to model the events in narratives distinguished as critical, like, or other. A critical event has a major impact on people involved and is characterized as an event that has a unique illustrative and confirmatory nature. Critical events can only be identified after the event and happen in an unplanned and unstructured manner (Webster & Mertova, 2007). A like event is equivalent, related, and associated as a critical event, but it is not unconnected, not exceptional, inimitable, and is incomparable to the same exclusive effect as the critical event (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Like events are diverse and unusual, atypical, uncommon, and not as reflective or insightful as critical events (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007). Any other knowledge such as upbringing, not related to critical or like events, is deemed other events in critical event analysis and regarded as descriptive of the critical or like event (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster, & Mertova, 2007).

This two-step approach to the narrative analysis provided an all-inclusive view of the research data, which was categorized and cataloged into incidences of critical events that were essential to the significance of the research. This hermeneutic narrative approach was used to explicate meaning within stories even when these stories were not sequential or when the data were incapable of being removed from a context to become ordered and measurable as a singular piece of information in its own right (Polkinghorne,

1988). The *hermeneutic circle*, of moving between the parts and the whole, provided a deeper understanding of the participants' narratives (Freeman, 2016).

When the narratives are well crafted, it permits insights, deepens empathy and sympathy, and aids in the understanding of the subjective world of the participants (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007). In traditional pragmatic methods, critical and supporting events may never be synchronized, risking the loss of significant findings. Applying the critical events data analysis method to the primary data allowed an inquiry to understand the challenges of leadership challenges better, community partnerships, professional development needs of afterschool program directors and afterschool program sustainability within low-resource communities (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In the restorying process, I did not illuminate connotations and denotations of unsequential inquiries, remove insufficient inquiries from a context, rearrange inquiries to meet study requirements, or assemble a single fragment of definite evidence in the hermeneutic narrative approach (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narratives created from meaningful, replicable inquiries provide readers more comprehension, develop better awareness, accrue compassion, intensify consideration, heighten sympathy, and facilitate more significant support of the subjective domain of the study participants (Freeman, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Table 2 shows how the themes that shared similar characteristics were combined into a single coding/conceptual category. The interpretations and themes were verified continually during data collection, and the five conceptual categories are grounded in the

conceptual framework: Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital; Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability; and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships. The critical event approach for data analysis supports the trustworthiness of data for a narrative inquiry study because of its components of openness and transparency in emphasizing, capturing, and describing events contained in stories of experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Through the initial interview process and the subsequent member checking, I developed a co-construction of meanings, themes, and images (with participants), which eventually guided the interpretations of texts.

Table 2 is a visual representation of the coding and theme examples taken from the 22 reformulated themes gleaned from the critical events data analysis and categorized by the conceptual category to answer the study's central research question. These reformulated themes are supported by interview excerpts from participants' narratives.

Table 2

Coding and Theme Examples

Participant	Interview excerpt from participant narratives	Conceptual category	Reformulated theme
P5	Sustainability is difficult. We are in multiple locations right now. I would say all of our sites are at over 80%, which is pretty common across the United States is right. But most of them are at over 92% poverty. We are talking about 90% of the schools struggling with the entire program. A couple of years ago, when funding came, there were considerations to hire outside agencies to keep two locations. However, some changes in the budget made that not feasible. We do have community partners. For instance, for one site that is a learning center, we are partnering with a church. We tell our partners that are nonprofit to have their own funding, which is difficult.	Challenges of program sustainability in low-resource communities	1) building financial capital; 2) engaging students from marginalized populations; 3) hiring professional staff to mitigate continuous staff turnover; 4) building community pride; 5) building family engagement
P3	Unfortunately, I hate to say it, but without receiving funding federally, we would not have a program in this area. We are such a rural population with the majority of kids on free and reduced lunch. There is no way we can add additional charges to families to pay to provide an extra service.		
P2	Most of the people working in those programs are underemployed, it is part-time work and I do not know of many organizations that provide benefits for the people working in those programs. So I would say that I would like to see more resources for health and financial wellness for afterschool time workers.		
P9	Currently, in our system, we are in a budget crunch. So sustainability would be a significant challenge… We have to work with the total child, educate the whole child and their family. It is not just about the child anymore. We do support not just the students but the family as a whole.		
P5	Stakeholders and leaders in the community and school have to also understand that we (as staff) are helping economically. As an assistant, my experience was very unique, so the main thing that I learned was that I like kids. So it was a safe place for me to start that interaction with the staff as a coordinator. It gave me a lot of on the ground tools that to this day, I can share and train other coordinators about if they are struggling through something. Because I can empathize with what they are going through based on my experience and training, I can usually tell them the story of something that been said and help them work through it.	Challenges of building collective goals with community partners.	1) communication issues; 2) building social capital with community partners; 3) social inequality in community power structures; 4) school leadership skills
P8	We will also invite them out to any talent shows that we are doing when it comes to some of the fifth-grade graduations to show that we work together and allow the community and school to see our faces from the program calling partners by names and asking how the leaders are doing as well as the children. You know, just having those interactions as well makes a difference. Also, we have a lot of home AAU students. Those are our autistic students we serve. We communicate with parents and partners by phone and face to face onsite with teachers before any meetings to discuss any of the student's triggers? We ask for suggestions to work with the students and work to always build that report on how the students and staff are doing.		

Participant	Interview excerpt from participant narratives	Conceptual category	Reformulated theme
P9	The professional development carries over to the afterschool program and staff. One thing we have recently done is to hire a project manager that will be there to attend professional learning community meetings at each school. It makes sure that there is a connection between the core curriculum and what the kids are receiving in afterschool to make sure that connection is being made, that that communication is there between the classroom teacher and the afterschool teacher because they may be two different teachers teaching the same child, but we want to get the same message, the same skills. It has to be the same.		
P1	I have about 20 years' experience operating and hiring individuals in the childcare education field working pre-K and up…. I start gravitating towards bringing more students to my home or at the school and getting work for them which was a lot easier to work with. When I opened up my facilities, the afterschool programs were the first leg that I started. We maxed out at one location and served about 20 afterschool students on a daily basis and 15 – 30 students at the other location. Both locations served approximately 50 – 65 kids. I implemented the in-home program for almost 10 years and then moved into an actual facility...The schools are responsible for that. My position is a contract position. We are doing professional development. I think twice a year here. The district is really geared toward focusing on racial equity right now. We are definitely doing a lot now on diversity training communicating with teachers and communicating with people outside of their ethnicity or environment.	Gaps in leadership skills of afterschool program directors	1) diversity in afterschool program directors' professional background; 2) long-range planning skills; 3) community leadership skills to build social capital; 4) collaborating with professional afterschool associations
P2	CXXW provides services to students in elementary, middle, and high school. Well, mostly elementary and middle. It was a little bit of a growing experience for me, and a lot of the learning experiences were by trial by error. I actually started the organization as more of a staffing agency with a focus to provide staffing enrichment instructors in another schools, organizations, or other organizations afterschool programs. So for example, if this school or an afterschool program needed a dance instructor, we would outsource that positions to help provide that teacher, or we would also work with the various organizations to provide substitute afterschool teachers while the organization may have provided their staff with professional development		
P3	I was asked to help coordinate an after-school program on the reservation, in a tribal school, and I did that for three years. After three years, there was another school not too far away, that received a federally funded grant called the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant. I am not sure if you are familiar with it. Summit was awarded the 21st Century grant four years ago and they were in search of a director. The business manager actually reached out to me to see if I would be interested in starting the program here. I was more than happy to do so which is how I got started as the program director four years ago.		
P4	I have an undergraduate, a Bachelor's in psychology from Cal State Northridge in California, and a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Management… So we ended up getting a pretty substantial portion of that money because we are the second-largest school district in the County. And we went ahead and implemented an after school program. So, yes, not really having a lot of experience in that area - we had some basic training.		

Participant	Interview excerpt from participant narratives	Conceptual category	Reformulated theme
P10	I think this is like my 24th year in education. I started off as a classroom teacher, taught seven years, transferred over into the administrative assistant principal at a school back and forth, you know, with different positions in the district. I would think that I will consider myself to have been an experienced site coordinator. I had a lot of knowledge about the actual afterschool program. There were a few things that I had to learn in our district, being that we are smaller, and there are different roles that different people play. I had to learn about not only just running the program but the actual process of filing claims and keeping up with the budget and all of that. So those are a few things that I had to get as I went along.		
P1	We developed and expanded community partnerships in Pennsylvania, where I had my three main facilities. It was very collaborative. We had what was called C-T-R-I. And they would actually come out and provide support for students as well as the staff…I was told by the North Carolina C-T-R-I, which was the state organization, that professional development training to staff was not available. They were not accessible. I then asked where they do all the training and licensing for childcare providers that are actually taken on after school programs as well as on your normal day to day child care facility as well. Also activities that took place where, this was a second grader would come back with wet clothing, and it was because he had an accident on himself. I noticed a pattern with that…Come to find out he didn't have his clothing, and we didn't have clothing, you know that fit that age group. I would have to contact his foster parent, and let her know, okay, I need you to bring something for him to put on. He cannot sit here in urinated clothing. It's not the healthiest. It's not safe. She refused to bring anything. So as the mandated reporter, I have to report that information. The childcare facility after school program received a citation, because we did not have clothing in place for a second grader after the foster parent refused to bring clothing for him from our state partners.	Professional development needs of afterschool program directors	1) training in leadership styles; 2) training in finance and budgeting; 3) training on sustaining school-community partnerships, external partners; 4) training in staff development; 5) supporting creative and critical thinking skills
P7	I have been able to attend professional development conferences, working on hard and soft skills for the positions such as analytical data entry with Microsoft office particularly Excel, or how to buy the evacuate desolation plan. Also I learned about making sure that we're meeting state requirements with the program because we do have a licensed program. We also learned how to support other departments with soft skills, learning, better customer service, interpersonal skills, and being able to relate to the parents. We also learned about conflict resolution and solving problems. This role has stretched me a lot to be a better professional, where I can take learned skills with me and serve at a higher level for our children. We do our own separate professional development at the school that is called community education. It is an umbrella of the afterschool programs and ensures we meet requirements. We have professional development on playground supervision and emergency plans afterschool which may be different from the regular school lockdown drills during afterschool hours. We have professional development on how to properly interact with a child. And since for the most part we are dealing with the parents because they are picking up the students, we have professional development with staff on being able to have really great interpersonal skills because sometimes teachers may not even be able to see the parents on the day to day basis.		
P8	That was really hard for me. Because my personality is, I'll tell you how it is and how to get there. I really struggle with confrontation, so that was really hard for me. And, I mean, just smaller partners have like, I mean, all, all the people that worked for me were partners, right. It's not as if I didn't have to have some conversations and some moments to let people go.		

Participant	Interview excerpt from participant narratives	Conceptual category	Reformulated theme
P12	Professional development wise I did a lot of training of my staff, in terms of, learning about our kids, and learning and training in the sense of this is how it goes and this is where you're going to be at this time and this is where you're going to be at this time. There wasn't a lot of support. I honestly say with the overall professional development of my staff, it was kind of me providing training. I couldn't send my staff to an equity training. I mean, I literally had to say, here's the kids that make up the population of this school and here's who's going to be an after school program. And obviously didn't say names, but we had to do some implied training and did you know, when we did some implicit bias training like that was all me.		
P4	Never stop doing professional development. There is always something to learn. I would also suggest not to get disappointed and not to feel let down because afterschool program development takes time. It takes time to build relationships. You cannot do it in a day. The afterschool program director has to be able and be willing to put out everything in terms of implementation, building relationships, getting students etc. before you get back a return on your investment. The afterschool program director must be willing to offer to do things for and with the school leadership and community leadership to gain that trust and that feeling of being genuine and not to say, oh well, they did not respond to the first time I am done with them. No. The afterschool program director must understand that it could take years. I mean, it literally can. If it is an important partnership, you have to stick with it. That means you would have to, number one, go out and meet them.	Interagency collaboration between afterschool programs and community partners	1) afterschool programs as part of a broader social system ; 2) afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress; 3) securing consistent professional development opportunities for all staff ; 4) collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners
P5	Community partnerships are a requirement in the 21st century community learning center grant. Before, it was a requirement in the sense that it was informal partnerships that you named. Now they have to be major. Okay. We have local nonprofit organization partners that provide the equivalent of social workers at schools. We reached out to them before submitting the last grant in May. In our first conversations, we discussed the needs of the community and what other partners could bring in resources that we do not currently have. With all partners, we initially met via emails then twice face to face. Our goal is to make sure the partnerships are effective and truthful, as we mainly rely on them for the parent engagement element, connecting our families with resources. We also partner with our schools, which is helpful for me to get different notifications on what is going on and have access to their parents' groups as well as provide the school with support during events. Additionally the school leaders share data with us, allow our staff to participate in conferences, and provide snacks for the kids. We had a program on the west side of Seattle that collaborated really well together. The partners understood that we are all trying to serve the same kids locally, but it depends on what partners do as some have more money than others.		
P12	There are a few vendors that I've been dealing with for a while that are serious about collaborating and being partners in this business. Some adults have difficulties working with students all the time. When I come across a situation, I have a direct conversation with that director. We may discuss things that may be beneficial that we do not need them to spend money with a vendor unless it will be beneficial to the brand and supporting youth development. You'll see the ones that comes to the door. They do have the experience. Sometimes it is a little difficult when they hire a younger youth worker. You sometimes have to use a lot of energy with developing the workers, especially working in a summer program with other youth close to their age.		

Member Checking

The member checking process ensured the data collected only relayed individual participants' trustworthy illustrations of their stories, in their own voices from the field (see Morse, 2015; Thomas, 2016). After each interview, audio-recorded data collected were transcribed and reviewed by both the participant and me. Each participant received an emailed copy of the written transcription from the phone interview with a request to review the transcription and summary at least five days after the conclusion of their interview (see Billups, 2014). Participants were asked to inform me of any changes or additions based on their review. All participants agreed with the written transcriptions as no changes were made. Collectively participants stated the entire interview process was conducted professionally and conveyed enthusiasm to see reported outcomes of other afterschool program directors' narratives on the study topic and from across the nation. Usually, qualitative researchers draw on triangulation to complete the transcript review and member checking process. Webster and Mertova (2007), however, indicate that triangulation is not feasible in story-based studies.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

To determine credibility, as the researcher, I worked to ensure that the findings represented believable and trustful information of the correct interpretations of the participants' views drawn from the original data (Locke, 2019). Strategies were based on varied field experience, member checking, interview techniques, and establishing the authority of research and structural coherence, which established the rigor of the study

(Anney, 2014). Additionally, during the interviews, I made sure to stay on task using the interview guide and identified questions and not offer personal assumptions to maintain data collection credibility (see Billups, 2014). I carefully listened to authentic, shared, lived experiences and restorying, paying close attention to the interwoven processes of memory, imagination, and engagement in listening to participant's stories (Clandinin, 2016). Credibility on the participants' data collected included a review of biases and data saturation to the point that no new information or themes were observed in the data (Guest et al., 2006; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Each audio-recorded phone interview between myself and the participant was free from obstructions or distractions and lasted 30 to 60 minutes. A comprehensive examination of collective and individual chronological restorying of narrative inquiries was imperative (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). An examination of critical events using set qualitative guidelines was vital to assess trustworthiness and solidify the storylines of the semistructured interviews, including characters, plot, setting, and climax (Billups, 2014).

Credibility strategies included the use of (a) peer debriefing to avoid bias and (b) awareness of data saturation, in which redundancy occurred in restorying and thus signaled to the researcher to cease the data collection (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Saturation was determined using a complete examination of data collection, analyzing the credibility of the data (see Billups, 2014). Further techniques included (c) transcribed audio-recorded data, (d) reviewed written field notes, (e) participant review of transcribed results, and (f) checking for clarification and alternative explanations (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Finally, I established (g) credibility of research conducted, allowing participants

availability to (h) review findings and (i) conduct member checking to validate testimonials providing supported data trails further establishing the trustworthiness of the research findings (Clandinin, 2016). In narrative inquiry, the researcher's focus is on efficacy and the corroboration of participants' truth (Clandinin, 2016). The research study ended when no new data emerged and participants' responses obtained reached data saturation providing validation of data collected (see Sutton & Austin, 2015).

I ensured a complete review of potential threats to establish criteria (Clandinin, 2016). I asked participants indirect questions, acknowledged that participants' answers might be inaccurate, used open-ended questions, maintained neutral stances, and avoided the implication of right answers before the conclusion of the narrative inquiries through semistructured interviews (Clandinin, 2016). The setting, surroundings, period, circumstance, and occurrences across participants' stories were illuminated (Clandinin, 2016). Recognizing different and universal storying across narratives revealed shared, contextual lived experiences of the study phenomena (Clandinin, 2016). Exploration encompassed the rigor of empirical studies using widely and established quality criteria recognized and acknowledged in the expansive arena of qualitative research (Clandinin, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability is equivalent to external validity or conveying generalization in quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Transferability refers to the evidence and significant components that allow replication of the research with different study subjects in other settings, conditions, and epochs (Foster & Urquhart, 2012). I was

cautious to (a) document each research step used throughout this study, and (b) use the proper progression of the qualitative process to obtain the data collection. I also ensured (c) that I used only the restorying of the participants' stories and (d) provided research findings that could be used in future research studies. The findings of my study may not be generalized as the primary aim of qualitative research is not a generalization of the research finding but the depth of information (Stake, 2010).

Open-ended questions were used to allow research participants the opportunity to provide original context in the study in detail to include context accounts, research methods, findings, and samples of data so that readers could determine the transferability of its results to their specific context (Houghton et al., 2013). Participants provided a thick description of stories in their voices from the field in context during the research process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Generating thick, rich, detailed stories from afterschool program directors' leadership challenges in developing community partnerships for program sustainability within low-resource communities could provide results that will be applicable in future research (Toledo, 2018).

Dependability

Dependability refers to establishing study findings as reliable, consistent, and replicable (Billups, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; & Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Comparison and verification of secure data collected, provided an audit trail and after-effects displaying transparent research, remaining constant, and sufficient enough to support future research findings, and appropriate data collection that supported dependability of the data in various developmental phases of the current and future

potential process (see Houghton et al., 2013; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Establishment of transparency throughout the data collection process by way of an audit trail also provides other scholars with the means to examine and replicate the study (Houghton et al., 2013; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the study, I ensured the optimum transparency of interviews, audio recordings, journaling, transcriptions, and outcome reporting of the data collection process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Confirmability

The last criterion regarding issues of trustworthiness is confirmability. I ensured a positive rapport was developed. All participants stated they were comfortable providing valuable feedback and responses based solely on the participants' shared narratives and restorying without any potential researcher biases, use of monetary offerings, or bribery (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). I examined transcribed data collected ensuring the narrative inquiry findings were shaped by participants' retelling their stories in their own voices, without any explicit and implicit assumptions, preconceived notions, or interpretation on the part of the researcher identifying themes emerging within the theoretical foundations of my conceptual framework (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

Techniques to establish confirmability included the use of (a) an audit trail detailing the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Further techniques included (b) written recordings, unique topics, thoughts, coding, rationale, biases if applicable, and thematic meanings (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Finally, (c) ongoing reflections and (d) journaling of any influences of preconceived thoughts or value in the research process reaffirmed the confirmability of

the study results (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Once data saturation was achieved, the semistructured interviews ceased; participants then received transcriptions of restorying for member checking (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). After each interview, audio-recorded participant responses were transcribed and emailed to participants for their review of responses and verification of the transcription and summary during the member check procedure (see Kornbluh, 2015).

Study Results

The central research question was developed to provide in-depth qualitative data and propose extending theory through this narrative inquiry study design. Extension studies like this one provide support of previous studies and recommendations for advancing research in new theoretical directions (see Bonett, 2012). The narrative inquiry method was used to meet the purpose of the study and by collecting data through the narratives of afterschool program directors' daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, I utilized the critical event approach for data analysis because of its inherent characteristics of openness and transparency in distinctly capturing and describing daily life experiences emerging from participants' stories (Clandinin, 2016). The critical events approach in data analysis resulted in revealing: (a) challenges of program sustainability in low-resource communities; (b) challenges of building collective goals with community partners; (c) gaps in leadership skills of afterschool program directors; (d) professional development needs of afterschool

program directors; and (e) interagency collaboration between afterschool programs and community partners. Processing and analyzing the data took place by utilizing a multistep, systematic process, each item of information being examined, with the researcher building on insights obtained while collecting the data to develop a deeper understanding of the participants' stories (Clandinin, 2016). To accomplish this, I retold the stories the participants shared as accurately as possible, presenting the themes that emerged from analyzing the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Webster & Mertova, 2007). By so doing, the told stories of the participants merged with the researcher's stories thereby forming new collaborative stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Detailed narratives were developed to aid in the analysis of participant responses, using scene, plot, character, and events (see Webster & Mertova, 2007). The written narrative contained a scene and a plot, which included sub-sketches describing the key characters, plot lines, spaces, and major events (see Clandinin, 2016; Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 2000). Researchers also refer to the scene and plot as place and event, positing that these terms convey a more general meaning. Restorying was used to analyze the time, place, plot, and scene of the narratives, in addition to collecting and amending the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, 1990). Next, the critical events narrative analysis was used to aid in the analysis of the data (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Themes began to emerge as critical events narratives producing specific information within the setting and configuration of participants' experiences (see Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Through the recorded narratives of these afterschool program directors, a better understanding to fill the literature gap identified in the problem statement has emerged.

Reinforced by critical knowledge from the in-depth interviews, the following themes are presented, along with representative participant voices in the form of direct quotes, as responses to the central research question.

Building financial capital. Narratives from every participant revealed that limited financial resources, brought on by new government funding rules to limit afterschool programs, diminished the financial capital that afterschool program directors had long depended on and needed to sustain long-term program sustainability. Participants seemed resigned that their only choice to keep their programs open was scaling back services to students and their families.

> Program sustainability and developing successful community partnerships in our areas is difficult. Our person of power decided that afterschool is not important and there is not any research to back up the efficiency of the afterschool programs for children. We are solely funded by the 21st CCLC grant for the next five years and then we have to reapply. (P3)
>
> Give us the financial stability to continue and saying, okay, this is what we are providing to students. I would love to see that instead of letting our kids go home at 3:20 and that all teachers stay until 5:30 - so that our afterschool program is a part of our school day. Okay. That would be so amazing. Feed our babies' dinner before you send them home. And then have parents support with being received while they were at school. We need to be fiscally responsible enough to understand that we have to do whatever it takes to get the financial piece in the school. It does take money. And I also would like for board meeting time to share

> outcomes and look at the instructional pieces. Not just the financial pieces only. Let them, as board members live the school, expound on what is going on, what is working, what is not working here from us that are in the trenches with the teachers, and the principals about what the critical needs are. (P9)

Engaging students from marginalized populations. Participants conveyed that it is important to reduce inequitable educational experiences within communities where low access to resources drives the proliferation of underfunded afterschool programs for students attending them in low impoverished communities. Participants shared in their voices the importance of providing not only a safe environment but additional opportunities for students in their afterschool programs to receive academically enriched activities aligned to the school day from mentors that care about their social and emotional learning.

> I also got to experience the different levels of poverty that, at times, can be hard to conceptualize because communities and cultures can be quite different in a variance of a 15-minute drive zone or location from each other. I experienced what families go through without having any public transportation, not having a local grocery or sidewalks. That was extremely hard for me coming into the directors' position and not knowing their community. I had to learn about them the community by driving around and seeing the area. I had to realize that many in the community lived in trailer park communities. I had to learn that people living in the trailer park in low poverty parents may work crazy hours. Also,

having those experiences allowed me to help the person underneath me. (Participant #5)

At least 70% - 95% of our afterschool and summer programs, are in low poverty areas and qualified for different federal funds. Our organization does large scale professional development at multiple schools in various state locations in other school districts through cooperative grants from the US department of education. In some areas, we do comprehensive professional development and teaching through the arts. For example, there are about eight schools. We work with all the teachers in the school, and then three of them we work with K – 1st grade. In years past, we worked with 2nd – 4th grade. We mobilize teaching art through techniques while making learning fun and effective. If something happens to federal funding, there will definitely be some concerns around program sustainability, especially for programs that rely just on that funding. (Participant # 6)

The area where our elementary school is located is very isolated. There is no grocery stores, just a dollar general, the school, or churches, so it is a very isolated community. Therefore our kids are limited in their exposure and we have to provide them with experiences to build that background knowledge. So when they take these tests and they ask them questions, they do not know what it is. We are talking about your experiences. I would say the population is 90 to 95% free and reduced lunch. We participate in the community eligibility program which is a program with the state and federal government, where food and snack through the

> state Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are taken into consideration. And then if a district reaches a certain criteria level, all students will be eligible for free breakfast and lunch and we need that because our poverty rate is very high where all of our students receive free breakfast which has helped us tremendously. (Participant #9)

Hiring professional staff to mitigate continuous staff turnover. Participants revealed the need to reduce stakeholders personas of afterschool programs having inadequately-trained afterschool program staff. To disrupt turnover participants augmented they (a) identified staff qualifications, interests, and motivation to work short- and long-term in the afterschool field. Second, participants (b) hired staff purposefully, and used knowledge of staff formal and informal on-the-job experiences. Third, participants (c) provided professional development training to novice and veteran staff, acknowledged individuals strengths, areas for improvement, and successful mastery of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Fourth, participants (d) empowered staff to own their craft, develop, and complete objectives successfully aligned to the afterschool program organizational goal.

Participants narratives included alternative career tracks to allow staff in the afterschool workforce opportunity for upward mobility and career advancement (Garst, 2019). Higher investments in the management of human resources of the afterschool workforce include creating better compensation packages motivating hired professionals to stay in the afterschool workforce.

It is important element in this position as the director to plan activities that focus on serving all of the different demographic population needs as we serve 11 sites, and there is also a need to serve all grade levels as well grades K – 12. It is hard having to run the program by yourself. We may have what looks like a lot of money with $15 - $16 million, but people run programs. It is all in how we are serving our kids. You have to hire the right staff. A lot of our staff were grandfathered in and we do not pay a lot. Our site coordinators received 32 hours a week. However, they get paid like currently $20 an hour. A lot of times our applicants are recent graduates from college, so it is important to understand that you have a mix of young new staff and veteran staff. We hire the best that we can from our school, but the job is overwhelming in a matter of what goes into it. The director must understand always that there are just so many variables. (Participant #5)

Several of us, including myself have worked together to grow throughout the program. We learned a lot on our own such as human resources, hiring staff, which is hard when you have veterans, but you want to bring new blood in with new ideas, which sometimes is the last thing to think about in afterschool programming. We have seen people come in from other grants are programs and learned from them. Somethings they did we really liked, such as how they documented and trained staff on paperwork. They also trained us on their understanding of smart goals. We learned about how to do data entry at the ground level. That is important because sometimes stakeholders don’t understand

> the strength of the connections that we need to have with students, engagement of relationships that we need to have with schools, teachers, and administrators, and how to share flexibility of communication going back and forth to reach a common understanding. (Participant #6)

Building community pride. Several participants expressed ensuring that the afterschool workforce, stakeholders, and school–community leaders established themselves as valuable players along with the afterschool program director efforts side-by-side within the afterschool program. The participants felt that afterschool programs with stakeholders that buy-in building community pride were one of the essential keys to the development, implementation, outcome reporting, and sustainability of the overall afterschool programs. Participants shared examples that revealed the need for buy-in reducing misconceived notions by both external and internal stakeholders unfamiliar with the benefits necessitating the sustainability of afterschool programs.

> Because a lot of these students, even though they are doing well, may not go to college, we wanted to introduce them and expose them to different career options, and the community received it quite well. We had vendors that did not participate in calling and asking to do so in the next vendor fair. I am telling you those young people were extremely excited. So that is your voice. That is your pulse being in the community that makes you proud. (Participant #7)

> We had some students from a prominent university come in and instruct the kids about nutrition also. All we had a garden club with some teachers from the community. We loved the garden, wanting to help the kids learn how to garden

> because they do have a school garden. At another school site that was an elementary school, one of our parents was a nurse, so she did a whole presentation about being healthy and being safe with the students. Also, we are working on collaborating with a parent that is a police officers, to do a presentation and have a conversation with the kids about being safe. I have another part-time job as well as working at a trampoline park. So I talked to them about having someone come in and talk about exercise, jumping on trampolines, science, and kinetic energy for that type of source. So yes, we get a lot of people involved into our program. (Participant 8)

> A lot of young black boys are growing up without fathers. I was one of them. So to me there was a need for someone to focus on this and show them they can still make it and not get drawn into unfortunate situations because they did not have a father in their life. I played sports. I did all a lot of things but without a male figure that was available or willing to talk about things that could have helped me with the stuff I was going through. I learned a lot through street culture, and, but when I started to see my influence with folks around me, I decided I wanted to be one of the guys who made a different and not have other repeat mistakes because of a lack of information. The only protection I got was from the streets and then I got it from a playground. (Participant #12)

Building family engagement. Participants shared approaches and concerns about the need for afterschool program directors to collaborate with school–community leaders on the improvement of educational prospects. Participants stated school leadership

affirmed that there was a need to involve the afterschool program director and community members in school activities to meet student and family needs building family engagement. Participants' strategies and activities implemented on-site within the afterschool program influence aligning the school day and afterschool programming, allowing staff within the afterschool workforce to validate and support skill reinforcement advocating benefits of families as partners which they feel are critical toward sustainability efforts.

> We do family classes training the parents on how to use word families so they can help their children. A lot of our kids do not have parents. They have foster parents, other individuals, or grandparents. So we train them to have a regimen activity which the kids enjoy because it is much more fun. We are really pushed staff training to have the kids work with drones and coding in our middle schools. We provided professional development or training in Minecraft, theater, cooking, sewing, arts, and craft. Some sites may have an artist that lives in the area and they come in and provide support to staff and classes to the kids, which they really enjoy. By doing this, not only are the kids feeling connected to the local artists in the centers but everyone is really learning different skills. (Participant #2)

> Our middle schools are about 40%, mainly white. All of the low income. We have to two school sites in an area that is a unique site along with them at the elementary site. There is a strong Latino population, but they are very rural, with approximately 80% trailer homes. Many of that community do not feel welcomed

into schools. So when you go to school events, you do not see Latino families or any minority families because they do not feel welcome too. Sometimes that is because there are no translators. Sometimes it is because just the culture of the community or the culture school. (Participant #4)

I feel like the elementary school has a more distant culture. They are not as interested in reaching out. Parents are able to reach out to them, and then they transfer to the middle school, which is much more welcoming…. We have a location that we would normally have a position that is called the family engagement specialist but we have not hired them at one location. Instead our coordinator is part of the community outreach team and their trainings. They are doing a sampling of how this might work and hoping it is successful. We do family classes training the parents on how to use word families so they can help their children. A lot of our kids do not have parents. They have foster parents, other individuals, or grandparents. So we train them to have a regimen activity which the kids enjoy because it is much more fun. (Participant #5)

Communication issues. Participants shared narratives on working in afterschool programs as directors interacting with many internal and external stakeholders, school-day staff, afterschool staff, parents, and students working to improve communication across the board. Participants stated that it is important to clarify expectations. They reported that it was vital that school–community leaders applied practical ongoing communication skills. Stakeholders need updated information about ongoing continuous improvement sustainability efforts, like: monthly, quarterly, and annual reviews-

renewals-terminations of effective or ineffective partnerships; active pursuance of diversified funding, in-kind donations; and maintenance of ongoing internal–external sustainable partnership activities.

> Sometimes stakeholders do not understand the strength of the connections that we need to have with students, engagement of relationships that we need to have with schools, teachers, and administrators, and how to share flexibility of communication going back and forth to reach a common understanding. But stakeholders and leaders in the community and school have to also understand that we are helping economically. (Participant #5)

> Well, it is helpful to have some extrovert qualities. You have to be able to sit at your desk, apply yourself, motivate yourself to write letters and whatever you have to write or complete whatever task is at hand, or talk to whomever to get results. You have to be able to look at other studies of what works, be an effective communicator, and answer any questions necessary. If you have someone who can help that is great, but you have to be a people person as well as an ethical people person. You have to be able to read written and unspoken signs. And communicate with the school principal every day. But also need to know when the principal does not have a lot of time, so be flexible. Build relationships. Ultimately care about people. Keep the kids at the forefront, Maintain ongoing communication with all stakeholders, including the community and public at large about the good, productive things that the afterschool program is doing. (Participant #6)

> We have to work to keep an open communication with the principal on…need for our program... Some of the things that we do is we come to open house meetings. If there's any staff meetings, we'll come to those to maintain relationships and open communication about the children we serve. (Participant #8)

Building social capital with community partners. Participants mutually pointed to identifying activities and strategies to develop social capital program participation, and the social networks focused on sustainability outcomes. Participants advised purposefully designing ongoing, adept afterschool program opportunities for stakeholders. Working alongside other stakeholders could better build diverse conjoining relationships, essentially shaping community partners' perspectives and lived experiences about the present and future management of professional, social, and academic afterschool program sustainability aspirations. Participants relayed regardless of the societal-group or relational level on which the definition of social capital is based, a steadfast belief that having interactive members rendered it possible to reproduce and sustain stronger collective assets of social networks generating more trust between social actors.

> We have access to certain rooms at the school, so we work to keep an open communication with the principal with certain rooms that we might need for our program. We try to make it a point to this to where we do not try to make it seem separate from the regular school, but like this is a part of the school cause. We still serve the same students at different times. Some of the things that we do are we come to open house meetings. If there's any staff meetings we'll come to those

> to maintain relationships and open communication about the children we serve. (Participant #8)

> Our collaborative partnerships have been like a joint venture, all funded under the families and education levy here in Seattle which was a long-time contract between Seattle pxxx and public schools. In a sense, when I started the program eight years ago as a new program my role was to really build those relationships with not only my own staff but the staff at the school as I wanted to also use day time teachers or staff during the afterschool program. Other partnerships included community partnerships in the sense of like. We partnered with a rock climbing organization to get students rock climbing after school. We also partnered with an organization that provided a snack. Sometimes we also had money to get, you know, the Costco orders where we mostly got snacks. We had a big partnership with another organization that worked with us from the community college for homework support for college students to make some money doing tutoring. We also had a big culinary cooking school … which partnered with us instructing the kids in cooking classes. So there was a ton of small partnerships and huge ones as well. (Participant #11)

Social inequality in community power structures. Participants reported that co-leading created issues of unbalanced power and the existence of unequal power structures in community relationships marked by inadequate resources. Research participants reported the uncertainty of why there was a lack of trust. However, there was a need for a delicate balance of community power structures and a more in-depth understanding to

recognize the sources of these unequal relationships. Additionally, there was a need to reduce social inequality, to build stronger trust, supporting more meaningful collaborations to reduce unaddressed issues of power and unequal structures in afterschool programs working toward program sustainability in low-resource communities.

> We had just one main partnership. When you have a for-profit facility it is quite different. They said, "oh, but not through this county." I was like, "what do you mean?" The response was, "You are you know state people?" To which I replied like, what do you mean? This is a facility that's licensed by the state, not by the county. And I asked, “So what does that have to do with anything?” (Participant #1)
>
> Sustaining collaborative partnerships are based on the boundaries of leadership and staff teams to school and whether the program moved to the school. Because I am not operating at the school where the program currently is, I do not know what it looks like day to day. I have no idea what the program looks like now. Also ensuring partners did what they agreed to in the Memorandums of Understanding or MOUs signed. (Participant #10)

School leadership skills. Participants anticipated belief was that school leadership utilize their skills to work on activities toward program sustainability. Many participants shared critical perspectives about their lived experiences and expectations of school leadership skills disruption of narrow ‘school-centric’ goals. Participants looked to school leadership skills and abilities to have an outward focus. Participants expected

school leadership skills would be utilized to work with the afterschool program director actively engaged in social justice agendas and community building activities toward afterschool program sustainability.

> As you build up, it is important to step into those leadership roles... It is important to understand what is being done but also to understand how important it is in your reporting" (Participant #3).

> I wish I had somebody else helping me to implement operational tasks at the afterschool leadership level instead of pretty much doing it all myself. I wish I was a little more assertive on the state level. That was a little intimidating for me. I felt like I was out of my comfort zone in that area… I am taking a class to help me with that. The afterschool program director must be willing to do things for and with the school leadership and community leadership to gain that trust and that feeling of being genuine. (Participant #4)

> We have a cohort of parish afterschool leaders that meet together... It is really nice and they get together once every couple of months to discuss some grants... what they are doing, exchange ideas…that collaboration is...very important. (Participant #9)

Diversity in afterschool program directors' professional background. Participants reported different levels of education and experience and that an effective factor appeared to be the need to have an afterschool program director with the foundational components needed toward successful afterschool program sustainability. Participants constructed wish lists of professional skill and expertise in business

management and understanding the elements that strengthen administration and program implementation such as management, supervision, and operations, multilevel relationships of social-emotional learning building relationships with students, afterschool workforce, collaborative partners, peers, and community stakeholders involved in afterschool programming sustainability success.

> Yes, so I went to Bowdoin College for my undergrad. I worked in Boston for a year in TV production. I then came back to New Orleans, Louisiana, and attended graduate school at Tulane University, receiving a JD and an MBA. (P2).
>
> I have an undergraduate, a Bachelor's in psychology from Cal State Northridge in California and a Master of Arts degree in Organizational Management from the University of Phoenix (P4).
>
> I wanted to be a songwriter. I was thinking about going to school locally where I live in the south but decided I needed a broader base experience. So I went to NYU and ended up being an English and French major with a minor in recording techniques. (P6)

Long-range planning skills. Participants shared about the many moving parts coordinated while managing complex long-range planning of afterschool programs with similar needs but unique circumstances. They mindfully and strategically identified intentional services because of a need or gap, focused on uncertainty, limited resources, and external environmental challenges. Participants emphatically stated that it took much work planning the programs. There was a need to focus more on long-range planning

understanding before the program begins, the end goal of where community leaders and members want the program to go in the future toward effective program sustainability.

> We potentially lose whatever we do not spend of the $150,000. We can apply for the carryover to the two 21st CCLC State Department that funds the grants. However, we have to recall and retell why we should be allowed to implement something that we were planning to do and did not and how we will ensure that we will follow through on spending funding 100% if allowed to expend the carryover funding remaining. (Participant #3)

> We have plans for short term and long term sustainability. I had to learn that sustainability and resources are more than just about fiscal sustainability. When you have this type of backing you say hey yes, we can sustain and do this. We have plans for sustainability in terms of finances, as we have developed a line of credit with our local financial institution now that that line of credit will sustain us for about two months half. But after that, we have to go to get volunteers to raise funding. (Participant #7)

Community leadership skills to build social capital. Participants shared elements needed to build the social capital of program sustainability, supporting the schools, students, families, and low-resource community neighborhood groups. Participants conveyed shared beliefs of all parties working together for a common purpose. Examples included (a) identified roles of afterschool-school-community leadership building social capital, (b) supported school improvement efforts, student and family engagement, community pride, and afterschool program sustainability, and (c)

diversified community leadership groups comprised of business sponsors and community investors committing social and financial capital in low-resource communities.

> The leadership partnerships connected directly to our school locations works with us to provide in-kind rent at the community centers directly connected to our location. I can say our lowest-achieving site, in the community, have had partners and families that have struggled to understand our program. They think we are childcare, and we are trying to educate them to understand that we have other aspects as trying to convince them to work with us. (Participant #5)

> Our board of directors really supports leadership development and collaborative partnerships between community agencies and the afterschool program. So they come from a diverse background. They also support our professional development plans and how we conduct professional development during the summer to introduce to teachers ways that they can tie in their careers with the afterschool program. In fact, our new board of directors helped me to see a lot of things differently. (Participant #7)

Collaborating with professional afterschool associations. Participants shared the need to explore more ways to collaborate with state and national professional afterschool associations leveraging resources, enabling opportunities to network with peers, and gain greater understanding toward lived experience surrounding afterschool program sustainability inclusive of academic and organizational development success. Participants conveyed that having the ability to collaborate with the afterschool associations allows an increase in people's power through integrated, well-coordinated,

sustainable afterschool programs aligned to each other, sharing common vocabulary and vision to be successful.

> Building those things take a while. I would say our successes have been that I've been fortunate to be involved with the Afterschool Alliance, the National Afterschool Association, and our state affiliate network …. They are our state affiliate that works with the Afterschool Alliance and I am one of the representatives in the state, which is exceptionally large but also desolate because it is huge. (Participant #3)

> In 2007, I founded the … afterschool alliance through the CS Mott Foundation, which is a statewide afterschool network. So until 2014, I was actually operating both the local afterschool program and managing the network. And then, in 2014, I retired from the program because the work and the network were becoming, more intense and it took more time and I felt like I needed to provide it, I mean, I needed to focus on statewide policies. (Participant #4)

Training in leadership styles. Participants validated understanding their leadership style creates the afterschool workforce climate influencing employees' performance and motivation of team members. Participants revealed behaviors and traits each afterschool program director displayed as leaders and how they used their preferred leadership style managing different situations. However, participants expressed at times different demands called for different styles of leadership and the need to better understand how to be more effective as afterschool program directors, leaders, and

managers adapting their leadership style in response to internal and external environmental circumstances.

> I would say that you need to start off as a group leader to understand what your group leaders are going to be doing to help them go through different challenges and experiences. When I was a coordinator, I was doing half group leader tasks and half coordinator positions. By doing this, I was on the ground floor planning things and doing things with the kids as well as lesson planning. This allowed me to know how it felt … and support the afterschool workforce when they came to me sharing these kinds of concerns. (Participant #3)

> Advisory council…meet three times a year, but those three times are very meaningful…I am also learning different learning styles of communication with different leadership styles...One board, we just report updates to, while the other may listen and provide recommendations. Each has a different style. So I am learning the difference between the two which is beneficial and interesting. (Participant #7)

Training in finance and budgeting. Participants needed to identify more stable streams of funding from numerous sources, including the national, state, district, and county levels, looking at innovative means to strategically plan and finance ongoing afterschool program sustainability. Participants stated that allowing them to plan, conduct ongoing monitoring initially, and annual reporting of funding and budget efforts was critical. Participants wanted to create options of dedicated streams of funding at the local level, braiding existing funding. However, they experienced challenges to maximize state

and federal funding sources. As such, participants required partners to buy into the systematically thinking of the afterschool organization programmatically providing social and fiscal capital while strengthening collaborative efforts. Additionally, participants wanted to promote afterschool program sustainability by creating a diversified web of financial support.

> Basically the afterschool program director is building everything from nothing. It is interesting because I am currently collaborating and writing a chapter on data collection with a partner that I will make sure to give you a copy of once completed. We developed a 10 year partnership with the National Institute of Out of School Time at Wellesley University. The chapter will describe my experience as an afterschool program provider on the local level and describe how my experience paid off on what I did not know, and what we had to literally figure out in terms of what kind of professional development we needed for our afterschool programs. There was hardly anything out there for rural, afterschool program leadership and staff to attend. Much of the research described professional development that had been done in city partnerships and private partnerships with large organizations in big cities like Detroit, Kansas, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, with funding resources available. The difference is that we have nothing here like they did to begin with. We started literally with a blank slate. I did a lot of work on the afterschool system here. I contacted the lead consultant at Wellesley to do some work on professional development for rural afterschool programs. The research with Wellesley will be about the afterschool

> program professional development system building and that 10 year journey taken to develop a system of afterschool program continuous quality improvement, teaching, and training afterschool workforce staff here in our state on the tools and initially funded through our afterschool alliance. (Participant #4)

> We recently opened a charter school, which as an afterschool program director, has given me a different perspective of what school principals go through also operating in school leadership. Examples of some of the same challenges include funding, building maintenance and facilities. There are big variables in your budget as a school leader. Afterschool program directors needed to have an understanding of both sides. Stakeholders can learn how to collaborate and synchronize, to work together and not let either sink you if you do not pay attention to it every day. (Participant #6)

Training on sustaining school–community partnerships external partners. Participants stated that many partners want only to provide in-kind services, which are vital supports. However, there is also a need to build relationships and train on marketing afterschool program collaborative partnerships toward receiving money, adding significant value toward program sustainability efforts (Johnson et al., 2016). Participants felt that afterschool directors obtaining training on developing and cultivating such relationships would make for more effective sustainable school–community partnerships maximizing necessary resources.

> We rotated several schools that we had been in for a number of years, partly because there has was a need, but other things or reasons as well. The other part

was because of the relationship we have built up within those communities, people are very territorial and would rather work with someone that is sort of familiar with them too. Our goal is to be a collaborative partner and develop partnerships that work for them and worked for us. So now we have church-based afterschool program sites during the school year and during the summer through supportive efforts of our wonderful board of directors. (Participant #7)

My position is a contract position. We are doing professional development. I think twice a year here. The district is really geared toward focusing on racial equity right now. We are definitely doing a lot now on diversity training communicating with teachers and communicating with people outside of their ethnicity or environment. Currently, we are doing community partnership activities and collaborative efforts geared toward working with young black boys and developing a sense of entrepreneurship. I come from an era where you look good, you feel good, you can say yes, I want to, I can do such and such. So right now, we are focusing on an initiative for boys in sixth grade to eighth grade. They would see a celebrity here at times. So I gathered a group and this black tech guy and we developed an app that teaches them about savings and financial literacy. (Participant #12)

Training in staff development. Participants reported they are responsible for the overall direction of the program, which included receiving training and attending ongoing internal and external professional development activities supporting their own growth; while working with program staff to maintain current knowledge of the field. Participants

also conveyed the need to have additional training in staff development to meet core competencies such as training in mentoring, child and youth development working with diverse populations, diversity and inclusion, planning activities, community outreach, afterschool workforce staff group guidance, building community pride, and working with families.

> Somethings that are being done are helping afterschool staff in their work development area. Helping staff to understand that maybe you come out, see there are some things that you do because it is employment only is beneficial to both of us. It is a job, but there are other things that you do simply because of the fact that you understand the deed and there is a need, that does not mean that you don't want to get compensated for your work. Do not be foolish; yet on another side of the coin, that cannot be your only reason there. So you have to look at the people you surround yourself with and they have to be on the same page as you are. You have to respect their opinion. (Participant #8)
>
> We wanted to make sure that as we started to actually see the student on the day to day basis, we were also serving our parents at the highest level. Additionally, because I am still learning a lot about the licensure process, in the professional development, we learned certain requirements for school-aged care. For example, we attended basically eight days where we went through a protocol on what specifically should be in a foster program for afterschool programs … Well, maybe if someone would have taught us more about establishing collaborative partnerships with the school, we would understand. (Participant #10)

> So my personal development is actually, voluntarily. I do get to go to out of town conferences. I am going to one in December and next month in San Diego. I am doing professional development right now on racial diversity and communication… I saw the importance of having a bachelor's degree. So I went to school here to do so and I am currently about to graduate. I also see the importance of having licensures and certifications so I guess that is what my master's program will focus on. (Participant #12)

Supporting creative and critical thinking skills. Participants believed that in addition to interests to continue learning opportunities for themselves and their staff, there was also a need to develop the culture of the organization. Stakeholders needed support thinking creatively and critically about not only the importance of achievement but setting both personal and professional organizational goals toward meeting high expectations. Participants also felt it was important that afterschool leadership created an organizational culture purposely toward program sustainability where everyone's contributions mattered.

> You want to have the skills and be prepared to run a business. You want to have a background in finance for budgeting, payroll. You want to have development experience so that you can do fundraising for the organization through donations and grants. You want to have marketing experience so you can build the brand of the organization. And then, you want to have program experience so that you can help to plan and implement the programs. (Participant #2)

> So let us just say, okay, we will take this incrementally, match the funds or even pay certain parts of the program…Typically what the districts are doing is they are providing space afterschool. And then there is a challenge with teachers and using those classrooms. If a teacher goes, they can't use my classroom…my argument has been... You don't own that classroom...the program shows respect...bring their own resources... and don’t get involved in any of the classroom stuff, they really should not have a right to say no. (Participant #4)

Afterschool programs as part of a broader social system. Participants shared that the demand for afterschool programs continues to grow nationwide. Working parents want children to be kept safe and supervised while they are away from home. School leaders and funding agencies are demanding implementation of higher quality afterschool programs working in collaboration with school leaders to improve student academic achievement. Participants demonstrated an implementation of plans to develop stronger afterschool or out-of-school time systems collaborating with community leaders ensuring community support and equipping students with skills to be successful in the 21st-century labor market (Johnson et al., 2016).

> Currently, we operate a program five days a week after school and sometimes on the weekends when we do field trips every now and then. When we do the weekends, we partner with one of the churches for that. It is a balance and at times, a little bit hard to know why one partner, such as a church, will choose to take care of things like that. The other interesting thing in terms of the culture of the partnerships and the afterschool programs is the gap of parents with GEDs, so

we have the GED English Language Learning classes. I would love to see more site-specific tailoring based on each site, which is unique to their population. There is still a need to do a lot of volunteer integration. (Participant #5)

We partnered with the school district and used schools within the district during the school year, but when it comes to summer programming, and I hope I am saying this right when it comes to a weekend and summer activities, schools are not open after 12 noon or one o'clock. We have been blessed to be able to partner with several faith-based entities during the summer and on certain weekend activities, whereby we can open up programming that students normally would not get during the week, like doing this school year. So we have a dual based partnership with a strong community church outreach program…We just completed a professional development segment. We contracted them out. We have three professional development sessions a year and one during the summer. They normally last about 90 minutes and teachers are required to come. We deal with several things that are included in the RFP. We deal with how to address, students who are experiencing emotional trauma. We deal with how to incorporate certain activities, especially the STEM activities, into the afterschool programming? In the first workshop, we dealt with students, emotional and trouble issues. The second workshop is on dealing with gifted students this December. The third workshop is scheduled to be a career type of workshop. We were one of the first programs in a parish to do an afterschool career fair. Our after school programming brought in about 2000 vendors that set up their displays

so students could get to see the different types of partnerships within the community. (Participant #7)

Basically, continuing the program without federal funding or state funding is a challenge. We prepare for sustainability but we may not be able to provide the same scope of services to students in our four elementary schools. They may have to scale back services to those schools that are in most need in our schools. I would love to see funding to be able to sustain a full-fledged afterschool program. If they would back some type of technology. (Participant #9)

Afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress. Participants indicated that when afterschool program leaders, school leaders, and community leaders continually worked together, everyone benefited from the progress through the social network. A general emerging theme in the narratives was that participants believed there was a need to conduct continuous work toward sustaining school–community partnerships. More specifically, ways in which to transform, strengthen, and support the individual and collective partnerships would result in better alignment of short-term and long-term goals aligning resources toward afterschool program sustainability.

I think it is very important for us as a field to continue to advocate for those funds because honestly, without those funds, I don't see how I mean, you might be able to run a very basic program, but if you're looking at things that are going to improve a program, you're looking at the cost of professional development, you're looking at the cost for providing a decent salary for accreditation, for parents to

> not have to pay a fortune for their children to attend because you're looking at low-income socioeconomic students served in these programs for the most part. (Participant #4)

> We identified different schools that were mostly in need as they were in school corrective action, and our schools were in need of intervention now. We used other available federal funds to supplement to continue to serve a portion of our other students. (Participant #9)

Securing consistent professional development opportunities for all staff. Participants stated location, time, and variances in the afterschool workforce experiences necessitated securing ongoing professional development with variances customizing for ultimate success. Participants conveyed awareness of professional development challenges. Examples included lack of time, effort, and gap in experiences between afterschool staff implementation. Participants worked with the intent to secure access current resources, customized professional development to fit program needs, and obtained additional resources from a reputable organization to provide valuable, broad-based, and specific knowledge adaptable for each location.

> We are heavy into professional development. Last year was the year that we did a lower amount. So our professionals received basic training in a meeting. Site coordinators receive a two-hour training for all staff, which includes all coordinators, facilitators, and community including our partners. The training was based on youth program quality by an outside vendor. We have two in house trainers. Previously we had four. A new site coordinator might receive

professional development at the beginning of the year. We also do about three days of intensive training, one specific to just new coordinators right before the summer program started. Then we might do a one-day training summit for all facilitators and coordinators. Some years past, we brought in four to five trainers on different curriculums, different social, emotional learning aspects, adverse childhood experiences, trauma. We have a location that we would normally have a position that is called the family engagement specialist but we have not hired them at one location. Instead, our coordinator is part of the community outreach team and training. They are doing a sampling of how this might work and hoping it is successful. (Participant #5)

The grant application requires we provide professional development to our teachers from the vendors that are providing us the tier one curriculum. It is expensive but you are required to do it. So what we do basically is use braid funds and pay for it. Our ELA and our math professional development in our teachers over the year did not get, and then you go continue professional development that we provided to our teacher that started in the summer and continues throughout the year. We have in-classroom coaching, and, the vendors, they provide coaching for us. They come back and they provide review data to see what works, what does not work, how it should look, show me how a particular lesson needs to be taught to students. So it is meaningful. Purposeful. It is a very hands-on come into your classroom, with a level of accountability that I think makes it powerful. Here we use a core curriculum for reading and the intervention piece that goes along

with it. The teachers have to periodically test the students to determine where they are as far as reading level. We have had great success with our core reading Teachers get at least 20 days of PD throughout the year. (Participant #7)

Collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners. Partners reported building and implementing new partnerships takes dedication through enhanced opportunities, making commitments and sharing resources, toward desired results. Partners must commit to a shared vision and shared goals to maintain consistent and cohesive connections as well as open lines of communication, always articulating expectations toward obtaining multiple resources toward the agreed upon shared vision in which everyone collectively benefits from the expertise and resources within the community.

I call the SPED director, and... we partnered with them on those [individualized education programs]. ...We were able to access certain parts of the [individualized education program] that had to do with what strategies...the caseworker or the case manager had put on the [individualized education program] for special services, be it, you know, behavior management or they need to study... or whatever it was… And we as an afterschool program, were able to provide...communication with them when we provided those service. (Participant #4)

Community partners, as well as supervisors from the district, collaborate. When we meet, we talk about the importance of the 21st century afterschool program and how we are actually collaborating with different areas from the district, such

> as family engagement and Title I. We are both required to have focus groups…and going to do it together. We will talk about our programs and…do a round table discussion… trying to find ways to improve our program. (Participant #10)

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the overall study and data analysis results with a total of 12 participants. The results of the narrative inquiries from this qualitative study provided answers for the central research question:

How do afterschool program directors narrate their daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities?

In this study, a total of five conceptual categories were used for coding and grounded the conceptual framework. Additionally, 22 reformulated themes gleaned from the critical events data analysis were identified, leading to in-depth, rich stories used as data to answer the central research question. The conceptual categories were as follows: (a) challenges of program sustainability in low-resource communities, (b) challenges of building collective goals with community partners, (c) gaps in leadership skills of afterschool program directors, (d) professional development needs of afterschool program directors, and (e) interagency collaboration between afterschool programs and community partners.

The 22 themes were as follows: The 22 themes were as follows: building financial capital; engaging students from marginalized populations; hiring professional staff to

mitigate continuous staff turnover; building community pride; building family engagement; communication issues; building social capital with community partners; social inequality in community power structures; school leadership skills; diversity in afterschool program directors' professional background; long-range planning skills; community leadership skills to build social capital; collaborating with professional afterschool associations; training in leadership styles; training in finance and budgeting; training on sustaining school–community partnerships external partners; training in staff development; supporting creative and critical thinking skills; afterschool programs as part of a broader social system; afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress; securing consistent professional development opportunities for all staff; and collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners

The issue of trustworthiness in narrative research is based on having reliable access to the participants' stories by adhering to a seminal methodologist's recommendation for data collection. I used the critical event approach for data analysis to support the trustworthiness of data for this narrative inquiry study because of its components of openness and transparency in emphasizing, capturing, and describing events contained in stories of experience. The issue of trustworthiness in my qualitative study was examined through the criteria of confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability.

In Chapter 5, I further interpret the study findings in terms of how they compare and contrast to the literature presented in Chapter 2. I also describe how future scholarly research can examine afterschool program directors' daily experiences with leadership

challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability in low-resource communities. Communities of people primarily communicate among themselves by way of storytelling, and it is the oldest form of social influence (Polkinghorne, 1988). The narrative-research approach was my preferred research design for this study, as it extended the potential of management research beyond the traditional options and brought together knowledge across social sciences disciplines, including leadership (Klenke, 2016). This narrative inquiry research study documented through storytelling the daily experiences of afterschool program directors in building community partnerships. The narrative inquiry research method allowed me to collect data from in-depth conversations with 12 participants regarding their daily challenges, the complexity of human understanding, and their experiences with guiding afterschool program sustainability (see Clandinin, 2016; Webster & Mertova, 2007).

This study was framed by three key concepts that focused on the implications for leaders in building school–community partnerships aimed at afterschool program sustainability: Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital, Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability, and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships. A critical events analysis of 12 participants' narratives revealed the following 22 prominent themes: (a) building financial capital, (b) engaging students from marginalized populations, (c) hiring professional staff to mitigate

continuous staff turnover, (d) building community pride, (e) building family engagement, (f) communication issues, (g) building social capital with community partners, (h) social inequality in community power structures, (i) school leadership skills, (j) diversity in afterschool program directors' professional background, (k) long-range planning skills, (l) community leadership skills to build social capital, (m) collaborating with professional afterschool associations, (n) training in leadership styles, (o) training in finance and budgeting, (p) training on sustaining school–community partnerships external partners, (q) training in staff development, (r) supporting creative and critical thinking skills, (s) afterschool programs as part of a broader social system, (t) afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress, (u) securing consistent professional development opportunities for all staff, and (v) collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners.

Interpretation of Findings

Most findings in this narrative inquiry study confirm or extend existing knowledge, and each narrative presents issues confirming findings in the literature review presented in Chapter 2. During the critical events data analysis process, I observed no discrepant data contradicting the themes and theoretical suppositions presented within the conceptual framework or the extant scholarly literature. In this section, I present and review the findings by the five finalized conceptual categories emerging from the data analysis of my study. In each subsection below, I compare my findings with seminal authors' concepts defined within the conceptual framework and critically analyzed within my review of the extant scholarly literature (Bourdieu, 1986; Nocon, 2004; Valli et al.,

2014). I provide evidence of how the study findings confirm and extend such existing knowledge from the study areas of (a) social capital, (b) afterschool program sustainability, (c) leadership for school–community partnerships, (d) interagency collaboration, and (e) professional development (Lin, 2017). Extension studies such as my empirical investigation provide replication evidence and extend the results of previous studies in new theoretical directions (see Bonett, 2012).

Challenges of Program Sustainability in Low-Resource Communities

Participants' narratives affirmed constraints to fight for funding and build financial capital with school–community partners. A common problem experienced by participants was not receiving all their reimbursed grant funding (Hall & Gannett, 2018). Participants amplified challenges toward program sustainability as approved funding was only received after prepaid program services rendered were deemed compliant. Participants further expressed that after the approval process, funding received must be used immediately upon receipt and left no opportunities to profit or extend money to the next year (Medina et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2019; Valli et al., 2014). Narrative inquiries also aligned leadership challenges to activities that engaged students from low marginalized populations. Participants substantiated the necessity of teaching students academic and enrichment skills not taught in the school day (National Afterschool Association, 2011; St. Clair & Stone, 2016).

Data collected extended scholarly research on challenges in hiring professional staff to mitigate continuous staff turnover. Hired retired teachers were perceived by stakeholders as the most highly qualified academically to contribute in the field, serve the

community, and achieve program sustainability (Affrunti et al., 2018; Lowe Vandell & Lao, 2016; St. Clair & Stone, 2016). Participants confirmed they needed to advocate more to constituents on the remarkable impact afterschool programs have on children, schools, families, and communities. Participants worked consistently to gain family engagement, even during times of personal stress in the children's lives (Valli et al., 2018). Social media marketing, attending school meetings, and hosting family engagement nights further built family engagement and stakeholder support of buy-in to afterschool program sustainability (Johnson et al., 2016).

Challenges of Building Collective Goals With Community Partners

Participants demonstrated that they proactively addressed communication issues through flexible, open lines of communication (Valli et al., 2018). Participants attested to the benefits of written, spoken, and unspoken communication with all stakeholders and promoted successful, positive steps were taken toward afterschool programs' sustainability (Cuban, 2001; Cuban & Tyack, 2018). Participants confirmed building social capital and transforming school–community leaders' perceptions inclusive of in-kind and monetary support. Participants attested to the valuable benefits of these relationships with collaborative goals and confirmed having ambitious community partners that supported students in low marginalized communities and worked toward sustained afterschool programs without federal funding (Charmaz, 2016; Lincoln & Cannella, 2017).

Participants also reaffirmed unfortunate experiences of social inequality in community power structures and shared that outside circumstances or leadership

decisions caused uncertainty in collective partnership goals for afterschool program sustainability (Jackson & Marques, 2019). Participants corroborated they formed a stronger positive perception of school leadership skills and experienced a sense of balance and better understanding when they worked side-by-side to meet school leaders' goals for afterschool program sustainability (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004). Participants expanded on successful shared leadership that did not micromanage the afterschool workforce or collaborative partner relationships (Charmaz, 2016; Lincoln & Cannella, 2017). Participants aspired to learn more about collaborative core competency goals while helping community partners understand their goodwill to work together toward successful afterschool program sustainability (Frazier et al., 2019).

Gaps in Leadership Skills of Afterschool Program Directors

Participants possessed diverse undergraduate and graduate degrees in management, business, English, French, music, physical education, social science, law, history, psychology, education administration and supervision, social work, financial services, and community engagement (Garst et al., 2019). Some participants conveyed that they became afterschool directors without formal leadership skills in afterschool programming (Kuperminc et al., 2019). Other participants illustrated how they became afterschool program directors through outside leadership perceptions of previous duties as mentors or site coordinators with an uncertainty of their future job, roles, or responsibilities (Brasili & Allen, 2019). One participant in a temporary position needed leadership skills training after branching out from their previous career.

Eleven of 12 participants confirmed uncertainty about sustaining afterschool programs due to gaps in leadership skills in long-range planning and longevity of federal funding. Participants exclaimed afterschool program sustainability is a constant struggle in low resource communities without government funding to support programs (Farrell et al., 2019; Tebes, 2019). One participant affirmed strong community leadership skills to build social capital (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). The participant substantiated confident program plans using highly independent resources from collaborative partners and program leaders outside of federal funding for staffing and program sustainability (Farrell et al., 2019). Additionally, some participants articulated positive experiences collaborating with professional afterschool associations included leveraging professional development and advocating for program sustainability (Kuperminc et al., 2019). However, a few participants expressed negative experiences and lack of leadership skills using the afterschool association or national websites due to being exceptionally large or inability to attend meeting locations too far in isolated rural locations (Bullock et al., 2018).

Professional Development Needs of Afterschool Program Directors

Participants proposed professional development needed on different management and leadership styles (Carter & Roucher, 2019; Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2018), promotion of afterschool program success, and publicizing sustainability needs to all stakeholders (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004). Participants also substantiated that professional development is needed in finance and budgeting procedures for annual reporting. They confirmed receiving professional development in finance and budgeting

would reduce numerous corrections of paperwork (Cuban, 2001; Medina et al., 2019). Some participants' narratives included professional development conversations needed among stakeholders to streamline state-level contract negotiations and reimbursement processing (Toledo, 2018). According to participants, training reduced very tedious processes that took up half of the time doing their job duties.

Participants expounded on professional development needed where school–community partnerships included a reflection on continuous improvement questions. During reflection, they asked questions such as why stakeholders should sustain the program, or what are the costs and benefits to the stakeholders (Frazier et al., 2019; Medina et al., 2019). Last but not least, participants established professional development needed for creative and critical thinking skills. Many participants conveyed discouragement not knowing more about school leaders general funding perspectives of what they can and cannot assist with, how to adjust programs when there is a reduction in funds, or how to interweave funds to cover expenses toward afterschool programs sustainability (Cappella & Godfrey, 2019; Nocon, 2004).

Interagency Collaboration Between Afterschool Programs and Community Partners

Participants validated the importance of cross-collaborative community partnerships and afterschool programs as part of a broader social system (Frazier et al., 2019). Participants confirmed responsibilities of school superintendents, school principals, and community leaders (Valli et al., 2018) to help stakeholders see the benefits of afterschool programs as part of the local community, school system, and state

efforts to support kids in low resource communities (Valli et al., 2014). Participants also favored afterschool programs and community partners as a continuous work in progress (Cuban & Tyack, 2018). More than half the participants reported the most successes happened when all leaders worked side by side using data-driven plans, ongoing reflection of reported efforts, and due diligence of afterschool efforts toward program sustainability (Epstein, 2018; Valli et al., 2014). Participants preferred secure, consistent professional development opportunities for all staff (Farrell et al.,2019; McNamara et al., 2018). About a third of the study participants held at least two training courses for site coordinators, monthly and quarterly training for staff, and attended annual national training themselves (Starr & Gannett, 2018 cited in Malone & Donahue, 2017, Chapter 8, pp. 87–92). Finally, participants substantiated the significance of collaborative innovation between afterschool programs and community partners (Akiva et al., 2017; Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Brasili & Allen, 2019). Stronger collaborative efforts included leadership with common goals focused on the social and emotional support for students and families in low marginalized communities (Edens et al.,2001; McDermott et al., 2019).

Limitations of the Study

In this study, certain factors mentioned in Chapter 1 posed limitations. The main limitations of this research are as follows:

Sampling

As is recommended in narrative inquiry studies (Clandinin, 2016), the small size sample may limit conclusions only to the sample of 12 afterschool program directors recruited for participation in this study. Twelve participants were selected through

purposeful sampling, so there was a possibility that the study results might not represent the whole of the population from which the sample was drawn through the study recruitment strategy. This limitation was partially mitigated by using criterion-based sampling to gather a heterogeneous group of participants with diverse characteristics from a national population sample in order to support maximum variation sampling (Benoot et al., 2016). Ensuring maximum variability to the story-based responses to the interview protocol further addressed the limitation of theory extension within my conceptual framework (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The Coding Process

The researcher was the only one who conducted the coding in this study. Although this introduced the researcher's own subjectivity and biases into the process of coding, access to other coders would have required more time and funding, which would have delayed the completion of the study. Working closely with the Chairperson of my Dissertation Committee aided me in addressing this limitation since my Chairperson guided my use of the narrative inquiry design and served as my Committee's methodology expert.

Transferability

The concept of transferability is the degree to which findings from a situation can be transferred to another particular situation and as a methodological concept compares to context (Houghton et al., 2013). As a narrative inquiry study, the findings cannot be generalized to the broader population group from which the sample was recruited as the methodological goal of narrative inquiry is to gain in-depth information gleaned from the

participants' storytelling (Webster & Mertova, 2007). To enhance transferability sufficiently in a qualitative study, the researcher must meticulously describe the audit trail of the study, leaving the decision of transferability of results to the reader (Loh, 2013). To ensure the issue of dependability, I was careful to maintain consistency in the collection, analysis, and reporting of the research data (Billups, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Context and Generalizability

This research was conducted in the United States, with a purposeful sample of 12 afterschool program directors. As presented in the extant literature and the literature supporting the conceptual framework, afterschool program sustainability is impacted by collaborative community partnerships, social and financial capital built by afterschool program directors from low-resource communities with community partnerships, and the need for targeted professional development opportunities for afterschool program directors and their staff (Bourdieu, 1986; Nocon, 2004; Valli et al., 2014). As a country, the United States possesses its own cultural specificity and socioeconomic issues about services for marginalized populations in low-resource communities. Therefore, some of the findings of the research may not hold true in other countries or regions due to socioeconomic and cultural differences.

Recommendations

This research has offered insight into the daily experience of afterschool program directors with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities. Findings from this research

showed that afterschool program directors face the various challenge and threats to program sustainability internally within their organizations and externally within their low-resource communities. Future research should encourage further study of the traits and challenges to program sustainability in low-resource communities within the United States serving marginalized populations. This investigative study and the findings provide opportunities for both qualitative duplication and quantitative justification for future research.

Methodological Recommendation 1: Qualitative Duplication

My research data were gathered from several participants located across the United States, yet there is a need to replicate this study in other geographical locations. Circumstances influence afterschool program directors' management and leadership decisions differently. Experiences of afterschool program directors' building community partnerships toward program sustainability are sure to be diverse. Replication of this study allows further illumination, directly hearing other afterschool leaderships' perspectives toward program sustainability in low-resource communities (Cuban & Tyack, 2018).

Further research allows extension of current research findings, thus enhancing stronger generalizability (Anthony & Morra, 2016; Medina et al., 2019). This recommendation is supported by participants' narrative inquiry of specific situations. Participants recounted narrative inquiry through critical events of lived experiences in four areas: (a) afterschool program sustainability and (b) collaborative community partnerships. Additionally, participants recounted narratives on (c) social and financial

capital and (d) targeted professional development opportunities for them and their staff while doing the same jobs in various low marginalized urban and rural areas nationwide.

Methodological Recommendation 2: Quantitative Validation Through Mixed Methods

A quantitative research method such as a survey may provide additional insight into afterschool program directors' experiences with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities. My study provided highly detailed results that support the views of all participants, yet, the strength of their voices may change based on resources available and locations. Sufficient professional development opportunities are critical for afterschool program directors and staff as collaborative, reflective practitioners, and collaborative innovators (Torfing, 2019). A review of scholarly research revealed that little attention was paid to understanding afterschool program directors' professional development needs of building resources and tracking implementation outcomes toward program sustainability (Farrell et al., 2019). A quantitative study may reveal inconsistencies and similarities not displayed through qualitative research and may generate further recommendations for studies with more generalizable results.

Certainly, there is more than one approach to doing research, and although qualitative research dominates this field of study, quantitatively measurements can further extend these results and add value and validity to the exploration of the professional development needs of afterschool program staff. I would recommend that a quantitative methodology be part of a mixed methods study to offer an aspect of

generalizability to results not attained with qualitative research designs currently used to study afterschool program sustainability in low-resource communities. Pairing a constructivist/interpretive paradigm with any quantitative components from the positivist approach may shed further light on the challenges and reactions of professional staff serving marginalized populations (McNamara et al., 2018).

Recommendations for Future Research

Collaborative community partnerships. Recommendations for future research encompass further exploration into processes and mechanisms for afterschool program directors building collaborative community partnerships. Afterschool program directors in low-resource communities face extraordinary challenges for program sustainability. The ESSA implemented December 2015 warrants afterschool program directors with an active involvement as diverse community education experts equipped to facilitate productive round-table conversations (Cuban, 2001; Cuban & Tyack, 2018; Krumm & Curry, 2017). Weekly inquiries also motivate afterschool-school staff on focused intentions such as program sustainability efforts (Valli et al., 2018). Community engagement is central to strengthening the educational system. Thus afterschool program directors hosting monthly meetings with school–community-business partners develops continuing communication and shared collaboration (Krumm & Curry, 2017). P3 described the importance of afterschool program directors marketing themselves to patrons by hosting family engagement nights and mailing information to stakeholders. Additional examples included providing advertising updates by way of social media to

engage sponsors, investors, participants, and interested parties making the benefits of afterschool program sustainability more attractive.

Professional development issues. Constructing collaborative, authentic family and community engagement provides afterschool program learning opportunities inside and outside the afterschool program, supports meeting school leadership goals teaching core curriculum, and enriches students' learning experiences through community partners efforts essential to afterschool program sustainability (Blank & Villarreal, 2016; Carter & Roucher, 2019; Valli et al., 2018). However, in this study at least 90% of the findings revealed that afterschool program directors needed professional development training in business management and leadership skills. Garst et al. (2019) reported positive perceptions of afterschool program directors' achievement of an online Master's degree in youth development leadership. Afterschool program directors and leaders with a post-graduate degree in youth development leadership substantiated their expertise through education and credentialing resulted in leaders' credibility to (a) connect theory to practice and (b) gain self-confidence (Garst et al., 2019).

Additionally, credentials strengthened the afterschool program directors' capacity to (c) enhance unfinished learning of business leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities, (d) improve organizational practices in the areas of staff training, staff management, and program quality, (e) increase community engagement, and (f) build community collaboration toward program sustainability (Garst et al., 2019). Participant #4 conveyed recommendations that business experience not teaching experiences were necessary as an afterschool program director. Participant #4 also stated a need to "...understand building

relationships through work experiences in another nonprofit or…some exposure to a level of.…business related experience and public relations." Specifically, enhancing afterschool program directors' leadership development and organizational practices augments creating in-depth, respectful, and purposeful relationships among educators, families, and community partners (Blank & Villarreal, 2016).

I believe it is significant for future research to investigate the positive and negative outcomes associated with internal sustainability reporting of afterschool programs by afterschool program directors due to concerns of external pressures and depleted resources (Herremans & Nazari, 2016). Participant #1 shared on facing exceeding difficulties to sustain programs that do not have a functioning budget, and only actually rely on state vouchers paying portions of financial resources in low resource communities where parents cannot afford to pay based on their income. "The centers are losing money… because the parents are not able to pay additional funding…with the increased costs and minimal funding…leaders find it challenging to sustain because you still have to struggle and fight the fight of not being paid."

Future research should also investigate why afterschool program directors and collaborative community partnerships do not report monitoring efforts toward sustainability. Critical conversations among successful efforts include ongoing reviews to meet short-term and long-range goals inclusive of positive and negative benefits toward afterschool program sustainability efforts. Participant #4, stated, "It is in the best interest of the school district to be financially supportive of the afterschool program…Afterschool programs provide a nurturing environment where they could be

more successful…have become very dependent on federal funding, and they have not spent much time thinking about even matching those funds toward program sustainability."

Future qualitative researchers can delve into the experiences of afterschool program directors on the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and threats of an afterschool implementation supporting the school and community. P7 shared,

> In our organization, we have the advisory board that meets three times a year. And we have a board of directors that meets quarterly. There is a time that we meet to discuss referrals and emergency items and that is basically what we do meet to address them. I am on the executive board, but I do not come there to give a report. Staff and I come to the advisory board meeting to ask them what they see? What are they hearing? What do they recommend? The executive board reports to the advisory committee, in terms of, 'here is where we are or what we were doing, et cetera. The advisory board also recommends adjustments. For example, a member of the advisory council informed me that they noticed that the career fair has so and so, you know, and because of that principle, I think even though you did a good job, next year you might want to do fourth grade in fifth grade and not just fifth grade. They have their hands on the pulse of the community. The board of directors meets quarterly. I think it was four-five times a year approximately based upon if there was a need for an emergency meeting. Ten years ago, we met every month. But it was hard on members. The board members were volunteers and business people. So an agreement was made by the

> board of directors to meet quarterly. At first, I did not see anything wrong with this. However, as time passed, it became a concern. We could not meet quarterly. So we went to monthly because it was much easier. With these type programs, especially the funding process, and different seasons such as the beginning of the year, testing time, and the middle of the semester, at certain times is when you can really have something to say ok let us see how things are going and how we are doing.

Implications

Positive Social Change

The process of thinking with and sitting with each other's stories is part of the start of change (Moore, 2013; Morris, 2001; Seiki et al., 2018). Narrative inquiry is a methodology for understanding experience as a practice of social justice to support and sustain a genuine process of social change (Seiki et al., 2018). Studying the narratives of afterschool program directors' daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships may drive positive social change by centering the sustainability challenges of these programs at the center of collaborative community efforts. Scholars recommending research into afterschool program directors' experiences also reinforced the social change implications of such investigations to support social justice issues.

Investigations such as my study reframe the problem of program sustainability in relation to professional development needs, with attention to consequent action, to bring about positive social change (Clandinin et al., 2015). A narrative inquiry into issues about leadership and education allows for movement away from narratives about low-resource

communities from dominant culture narratives to imagine new possibilities for marginalized populations in dynamic and interactive ways (Caine et al., 2017). Social change can be driven when a professionally skilled afterschool workforce can effectively support families in low-resource contexts where structural inequities due to social class and race limit human potential, and particularly that of youth and the next generation of citizens and leaders (Liu et al., 2019).

Policy Implications

This study has critical implications for policymakers involved in funding afterschool programs in the United States by addressing the issues of government policy regarding support for afterschool programs in low-resource communities. During the Trump administration, The United States Government Accountability Office examined (a) how afterschool funds were awarded and used and the (b) effectiveness of the programs (Farmer, 2019). Additionally, they looked at (c) leaders' management use of program data to inform decision-making and (d) the federal Education Department staff provision of technical assistance to state- and local- level directors on evaluating and sustaining programs (Affrunti, Bowers, Quinn, & Gagnon, 2016; Farmer, 2019). P3 expressed that program sustainability and developing successful community partnerships are confusing as one person has the power to decide whether afterschool is vital without any research reported to back up the efficiency of sustaining afterschool programs. As of 2018 school year, there is not a requirement to include performance measures on sustainability efforts (McGuinn, 2016; Nowelski, 2017).

The recommendation for policymakers to challenge transformative system thinking is inclusive of afterschool program directors exhibiting practical leadership skills, supporting everyone's shared roles and responsibilities. Successful afterschool program directors maintained constant awareness of different leadership styles, spoken and unspoken rules of engagement, and worked hand in hand to accomplish all organizational goals, including increasing efforts toward program sustainability (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; De Cremer & Van Vugt, 2002). Seventy percent of participants' recommendations included having engaged, ongoing, flexible dialogues updating partners on afterschool program efforts, which promoted all stakeholders to speak the same language, support family engagement, and buy-in to build collaborative community partnerships toward afterschool program sustainability. P7 expressed having great results and dialogue with internal partners. However, noted that although it does not take long for the word to get around and parents to start asking about open availability in the program, they are not able to expand or serve additional numbers due to not having enough funding. Even looking at federal funding, there is a need for research to address policymakers' concerns on afterschool sustainability.

Institutional Implications

One innovative recommendation for afterschool programs is for program directors to be trained in developing design-thinking, accelerated leadership skills, coleadership engagement needed in surrounding supporting community efforts in relation to program sustainability (Affrunti et al., 2016; Lake, Ricco, & Whipps, 2018). P6 reported that sustainability goals changed year to year for the organization. P7 stated because

sustainability goals always changed, leadership had to keep basic premise in mind but look at what could be done to sustain the program through budget cuts. P8 stated that partners and different program funding helped them to survive at various levels. Incorporation of innovative, high-impact practices focused on developing skills of leaders and employees allows leaders to wrestle with the complex issues of social and financial capital (Lake et al., 2018).

Afterschool program directors need to be motivated to advocate why everyone (school–community leaders and business leaders) value the benefits of the afterschool program. Evidence from this study revealed that afterschool program directors' connection and collaboration with community members should be built into school policy. By building institutional policies on the issues of sustainability, community partners can actively support the shared organizational mission. More institutionally-based research is needed to encourage community partners providing in-kind and monetary support and exhibiting community pride in afterschool programs as valued partners working toward program sustainability to fund staff and activities (Chechetto-Salles & Geyer, 2006; Roche & Strobach, 2019; Valli et al., 2018).

Theoretical Implications

Professional practice is always informed by theory (Darder, 2015). The findings of this empirical investigation were aimed at advancing knowledge of afterschool program directors' daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities, and also contributing original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework. Social capital

and school leadership theories were applied to support a study design to improve scholarly knowledge on the afterschool program directors' experience (Bourdieu, 1986; Nocon, 2004; Valli et al., 2018), through using a context-rich interpretive approach that met the purpose of this study and offered distinct extensions to these theories (Darder, 2015). Extension studies, such as this proposed study, not only provide replicable evidence but extend prior study results in new and significant theoretical directions (Bonett, 2012).

Applying classical social capital and school leadership theories to an afterschool context with program directors servicing marginalized groups provided a theoretical understanding of the communication, collaboration, and creativity needed to drive program sustainability in low-resource communities (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). In this narrative research study as the researcher, I brought to the foreground the professional development needs of afterschool program directors, an area that has been ignored in the school leadership literature, youth development literature, and community collaborative partnership literature (Lin, 2017; Valli et al., 2018). The results of this theoretical extension study proved to be a significant contribution to the interagency collaboration body of knowledge, given that social capital theory many times had not addressed issues of power and unequal power structures in low-resource communities (Jackson & Marques, 2019; Lin, 2017). There was a need for in-depth theoretical investigation of the sources of these unequal relationships, through the lens of qualitative research, to build trust between community members and school leaders and support their meaningful

collaboration aimed at afterschool program sustainability (Charmaz, 2016; Lincoln & Cannella, 2017).

Emerged themes extended the conceptual framework and included new insights into future research and practices. Recommendations included interagency collaboration between afterschool programs and community partners supporting program sustainability (Maier et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2018). First, afterschool program directors' systemic, effective facilitation as cross-boundary leaders suggests an opportunity to create a foundation in which there are a shared vision and better understanding between afterschool program directors' efforts and district-level leaders' actions (Krumm & Curry, 2017). Shared influence of action-oriented goals both motivates and transforms community leaders' attitudes to more intentional, meaningful, and sustainable partnerships between the afterschool program, school, families, and community fostering community pride and program sustainability (Krumm & Curry, 2017).

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for practice involve afterschool program directors' stimulating mindful thinking, shared understanding, shared leadership, equality in power structures, publicized ongoing outcomes to stakeholders, promotion of afterschool programs sustainability, and building community pride (Cuban & Tyack, 2018; Maier et al., 2017;). P1 described how external decisions prohibited their afterschool program from collaborative professional development building social and financial capital due to external leadership power struggles related to licensure issues at the state level. Afterschool program directors that exercise leadership and management overcoming such

barriers could spur ingenuity in the afterschool program arena creating a multi-actor collaboration of leadership governance teams building collective trust, leadership, and reflective practices through social and financial capital (Krumm & Curry, 2017; Maier, et al., 2017;). Stakeholders must continue to be informed of the importance of their support to provide resources and why afterschool program sustainability is critical. Transformation of stakeholders understanding that afterschool is a part of the broader social system could result in reducing the never-ending search for funding due to shrinking government funds and reduce competition to raise funds from pools of dwindling resources (Harding et al., 2019; Neild et al., 2019a).

Allowability to continuously identify and review clear agreements of all participants is critical to program sustainability (Ceptureanu et al., 2018). Afterschool program directors can track long-term developmental goals, short-term organized tasks, and newly emergent matters, or motives that are not linear, straightforward, and always moving forward creatively responding to ever-changing circumstances (Cuban, 2001; Cuban & Tyack, 2018; Nocon, 2004). Sharing the quarterly outcome of successes and challenges reported to families and policymakers, and annual performance reporting of program sustainability efforts to all local, state, and federal partners is critical (Akiva et al., 2017; Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Brasili & Allen, 2019).

This study was important because it addressed a gap in the literature on the professional development needs of afterschool program directors' seeking collaborative community internships focused on having sufficient resources aimed at program sustainability (Maier et al., 2017; Valli et al., 2018). Within nonprofit organizations,

afterschool program directors are the second-largest working population in the afterschool industry (Francois, 2014). Afterschool programs are not profitable. However, to build program sustainability in low-resource communities serving marginalized populations, afterschool program directors need to remain mission-driven and consistent in their dealings with managed resources, daily operations, respond to organizational threats, and address risks with potential adverse economic events (Maier et al., 2017). With such immense job responsibilities, expanding professional development opportunities for both afterschool program directors and their staff remains a critical priority in driving effective professional practice (Farrell et al., 2019; Garst et al., 2019).

Research expansion might include enhancement of statewide collaborative social capital networks, including higher education, studying how state education leaders approach grant funding, business leaders, community leaders, policymakers, and afterschool leadership. Stakeholders may further align current national afterschool core competencies and promote an online master's degree program in youth development leadership with a concentration in business management and supervision. Stakeholders and policymakers would hear directly from afterschool directors on relative predegree education, lived experiences, and post-implementation needs. Afterschool program directors' contributions would establish the benefits of building social capital and field experts with incentives. An associate degree in youth leadership development, identification of undergraduate/graduate coursework supporting the afterschool field, and certifications from on-the-job-experiences strengthen credibility. Research opportunities through federal initiatives could fund afterschool staff professional career development

and industry advancement, contributing to staff retention while building social capital. Piloting implementation of afterschool directors and site coordinators receiving targeted professional development to close this gap may illuminate positive impacts meeting program sustainability.

Conclusions

Afterschool program directors in low-resource, marginalized communities, face barriers in delivering sustainable programs due to two interrelated issues: limited funding and inadequately-trained afterschool program staff (Toledo, 2018; Warner et al., 2017). In early 2019, researchers reported that only 20% of afterschool program directors in neighborhoods characterized by high poverty and street violence felt secure about their funding and sustainability for the next 3–5 years (Frazier et al., 2019). Afterschool program staff report that there is little to guide them in building social capital and interagency collaboration with community partners (Frazier et al., 2019; Lin, 2017). Researchers continue to note that afterschool programs in historically disenfranchised communities are underfunded, and there is high turnover among afterschool program directors and staff, groups that are both underpaid and undertrained (St. Clair & Stone, 2016; Tebes, 2019).

More often than not, afterschool program directors possess limited capabilities and resources to train stakeholders in the leadership skills needed to develop school–community partnerships for afterschool program sustainability (Akiva et al., 2017; Blattner & Franklin, 2017; Brasili & Allen, 2019). The findings of this empirical investigation aimed at advancing knowledge on the interface between social capital,

interagency collaboration, and the leadership skills needed to build afterschool program–community partnership and contributing original qualitative data to the study's conceptual framework. The interpretations and themes were verified continually during data collection, and the five conceptual categories were grounded in the conceptual framework: Bourdieu's (1986) concept of social capital; Nocon's (2004) concept of afterschool program sustainability; and Valli et al.'s (2014) concept of leadership for school–community partnerships.

The critical event approach for data analysis supports the trustworthiness of data for a narrative inquiry study because of its components of openness and transparency in emphasizing, capturing, and describing events contained in stories of experience (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The participants' narratives, based on their personal storytelling, bring reality and truth to their concerns, and advanced awareness of the challenges faced in fighting for afterschool program sustainability, elements that drive the need for social change (Darder, 2015). Through this in-depth narrative inquiry of afterschool program directors across the nation, policymakers, scholars, community partners and professional development educators and trainers can access in-depth knowledge to support sustainability initiatives for afterschool programs, an educational sector serving over 10 million children and their families on a daily basis within the United States.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Recruitment

Good day, I am a doctoral student at Walden University inviting your voluntary participation in my research about the professional development needs of afterschool program directors in low-resource communities and the leadership skills needed to build community partnerships aimed at program sustainability. The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of afterschool program directors' narratives of daily experience with leadership challenges in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities.

Participant's eligibility for this study includes the following criteria: (a) adult over the age of 18; (b) employed for a minimum of 3 years as an afterschool program director located in a low-income urban neighborhood. I am positive that your experience grounded in the study phenomenon would contribute greatly to the study. Hence, I am extending this invitation to perceive your interest in participating in the research.

The importance of this study to the field of management is such that the findings may advance professional development needs of afterschool program directors seeking collaborative community internships aimed at program sustainability. Studying afterschool program directors' daily experience with leadership challenges may drive positive social change for marginalized populations by centering the sustainability challenges of these programs at the center of collaborative community efforts.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, kindly confirm your interest by responding to this email confirming your interest. Should you require

additional information or have questions regarding this study or your intended interest, you may reply to this email. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration.

Respectfully,

Kartina D. Jackson-Roberts

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Researcher to Participants Prologue:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I am going to be asking you questions regarding your experiences in your professional role as an afterschool program director. We are going to be focusing specifically on your daily experience in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities. Periodically I may ask clarifying questions or encourage you to describe in more detail. You are invited to elaborate where you feel comfortable and decline from doing so when you do not have information to add. If you need clarification from me, please ask. I am interested in knowing your story and experiences and want you to feel comfortable during this process.

Demographic Questions:
Participant Identifier Number:_______
Gender: ________
Ethnicity: _______
Years' experience in the afterschool field: ________
Years' experience as an afterschool program director: ________
Location of your afterschool program: (city, state) _________
Average number of children served each day: ________
Outlook for 3-year sustainability of your afterschool program (good; fair; poor)

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about yourself, your education, and experiences that led you to the afterschool field.
2. Tell me about your experiences as an afterschool program director. How did you enter into your current position? What kinds of experiences have shaped you as a program leader?
3. How were you orientated or prepared for your current job duties?
4. Can you share with me what you feel are some of the important elements of your position as an afterschool program director?
5. Tell me about your afterschool program and its long-term sustainability needs.
6. Can you describe how the location of your program impacts its long-term sustainability?
7. What is the culture of your afterschool program when it comes to partnerships in the community?
8. What challenges have you personally faced as an afterschool director with establishing collaborative community partnerships?
9. What are some challenges you experienced as an afterschool director in sustaining successful community partnerships?

10. What have been your experiences with community partnerships that you feel have been extremely successful?
11. What have been your experiences with community partnerships that you feel have not been successful?
12. What are you currently doing related to your own personal professional growth as an afterschool director?
13. What are the elements of the current state-wide professional development system currently in place in your location that you utilize?
14. Based on the issues you have identified and faced, what specific kind of leadership professional development do you believe would further support your role in establishing and sustaining collaborative partnerships between community agencies and your afterschool program?
15. What are the issues that may keep you from participating in professional development?
16. Are there any final thoughts or experiences you wish to share with me regarding your daily experience in building community partnerships aimed at program sustainability within low-resource communities?
17. Do you have any questions for me?

Optional Probes, Detail, and Closing Questions

1. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
2. Can you explain that answer?
3. How did you pull from your previous knowledge to implement that strategy?
4. What makes implementing that strategy difficult or rewarding?
5. That sounds difficult, how have you worked through that?
6. What makes that a successful strategy?
7. I am afraid I am not understanding. Can you repeat that please?
8. That sounds complicated…
9. What, if anything, would you change?
10. Do you have anything further you wish to add?
11. How did the interview feel to you?