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## Georgia Superintendents' Perceptions of the Minority Achievement Gap

Thomas Watson Usry

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GEORGIA SUPERINTENDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MINORITY  
ACHIEVEMENT GAP

by

THOMAS W. USRY II

(Under the Direction of Charles A. Reavis)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the Minority Achievement Gap (MAG). Using a survey instrument developed by the author, the perceptions of Georgia public school superintendents are explored. This study codifies this information so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG.

As chief executive officers of school districts who play crucial roles in the education of America's children, superintendents play a major role in addressing all aspects of the MAG, yet little research on their perceptions exists. Most empirical studies of the MAG do not reflect superintendents' voices. In particular, no research directly focuses on superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Superintendents are held accountable for the performance of their schools under NCLB, and they struggle to improve education and close the MAG; however, research studies addressing their perceptions that may help them achieve these goals are absent. Therefore, a need exists for a study to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Analysis of the survey responses shows that the superintendents view lack of parental

involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and low teacher expectations as possible causes of the MAG. Likewise, they view increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES as possible remedies for closing the MAG. However, the superintendents' responses do not lead to any conclusions about the extent of racial differences in their perceptions, and their responses point to no significant difference between genders on their perceptions. The significant findings from this study reveal that years of experience are associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of two possible causes of the MAG, lack of parental involvement and low SES.

**INDEX WORDS:** Minority Achievement Gap, Perceptions, Georgia, Superintendents, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Educational leadership

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ACHIEVEMENT GAP

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Dianne and Caroline, my wife and daughter. You are both my joy and inspiration. I love you.

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First of all, I want to acknowledge my wife, Dianne. Without her love, support, patience, understanding, and encouragement, this dissertation and degree would not have been possible.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Minority Achievement Gap (MAG) materialized more than 30 years ago and emerged as one of the most documented subjects in educational research. This gap in academic achievement exists between students in the United States based on race, between white students and minority (black and non-white) students (Lee, Grigg, & Dion, 2007a; Lee, Grigg, & Dion, 2007b). White students historically score as much as four grade levels higher on assessments and excel in school performance as compared to their minority peers (Farkas, 2004). The MAG has narrowed over the last 30 years that it has been formally measured, but it persists (Education Trust, 2003). Administrators and teachers, who face daily challenges to identify possible causes of and to implement proposed remedies for closing the MAG, exhibit a range of perceptions highlighting those challenges (Bol & Berry, 2005; Farkas, 2004; Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). The following chapter focuses on the existence of the MAG in addition to three aspects of the MAG: possible causes, proposed remedies, and perceptions.

#### Existence of the MAG

Since 1965, numerous national studies confirmed the existence of the MAG (Bock & Moore, 1986; Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996; Coleman et al., 1966; Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Osborne & McGurk, 1982). These studies reveal that differences in achievement are large between white and minority students (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). By the end of high school, the average 17-year-old black student may be reading on the same level as an average 13-year-old white

student (Education Trust, 2003). Nationwide, the MAG narrowed from 1970 to 1988, and the trend continued through 2007, as reported through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b).

A primary measurement of student achievement in the United States, the NAEP compiles data on the black-white and Hispanic-white achievement gaps, summarized below. From 1992 through 2007, all groups made gains on 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Whites scored 224.3 in 1992 and 230.5 in 2007. Blacks scored 192.0 in 1992 and 203.4 in 2007. Hispanics scored 196.8 in 1992 and 204.7 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG between whites and blacks was 32.3 in 1992, and it narrowed to 27.1 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 27.5 in 1992 and narrowed to 25.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

On 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, from 1992 through 2007, all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Whites scored 267 in 1992 and 272 in 2007. Blacks scored 237.4 in 1992 and 244.7 in 2007. Hispanics scored 240.8 in 1992 and 246.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG between whites and blacks was 29.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 27.3 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 26.2 in 1992 and narrowed slightly to 25.2 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

For 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, from 1990 through 2007, all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Whites scored 219.8 in 1990 and 248.1 in 2007. Blacks scored 187.5 in 1990 and 222.2 in 2007. Hispanics scored 200.3 in 1990 and 226.9 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG between whites and blacks was 32.3 in 1990, and it narrowed to 25.9 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 19.5 in 1990 and widened to 21.2 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007).

On 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, from 1990 through 2007 all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Whites scored 269.6 in 1990 and 291.3 in 2007. Blacks scored 236.8 in 1990 and 259.5 in 2007. Hispanics scored 245.9 in 1990 and 264.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG between whites and blacks was 32.9 in 1990, and it narrowed slightly to 31.7 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 23.8 in 1990 and widened to 26.5 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

Many initiatives seek to close the MAG, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which introduced, among other things, strict nationwide accountability and teaching standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The purpose of NCLB is to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers by ensuring that “all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (NCLB, 2002, § 6301). It is based on principles such as stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on effective teaching methods (NCLB, 2002). Bringing educational accountability to the forefront of the reform movement, NCLB increases expectations for states, districts, and schools to gather, review, report, and be accountable for, data on student achievement and demographics (Lafee, Dawson, Alwin, & Yeagley, 2002). Even before NCLB, accountability movements were underway in most states and districts, but NCLB shortened the timeline, requiring 100 percent academic proficiency, as defined by each state, for all students by 2014 (CEP, 2004; Farkas et al., 2003).

The NCLB requires states to begin administering annual, statewide, and national assessments in various subjects and grades starting with the 2005-06 school year. Under NCLB, states may select and design their own assessments, but the tests must align with state academic standards. By 2007-08, states had to implement science assessments once during each of the three levels of K-12 education: elementary, middle, and high school (NCLB, 2002). The law requires a sample of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in each state to participate in the NAEP in reading and math every other year to provide a point of comparison for the state's results on its own tests. In addition, NCLB further requires states to show "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) and to attain 100 percent academic proficiency, as defined by each state, for all students by 2014. Under NCLB, the government could withhold federal funding from failing states. Failing schools face interventions that range from allowing students to choose another school to state take-over of failing schools. States have to set a minimum performance threshold based on the lowest-achieving demographic subgroup, or the lowest-achieving schools in the state, whichever is higher. This complex law requires test results to include individual student scores and to report by race, income, and other categories to measure not just overall trends, but also gaps between, and the progress of, various subgroups (NCLB, 2002).

The NCLB standards place pressure on administrators and teachers by requiring them to demonstrate, with statistically valid evidence, that their efforts to improve students were working (Lafee et al., 2002). Under NCLB, states are required to issue annual Report Cards reflecting results measured by the NAEP. Since implementation of NCLB, some improvement is evident. The 2007 Report Cards in reading and

mathematics showed the MAG persists, but it is narrowing in some areas, as noted earlier (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b).

The MAG spans the academic spectrum and increases through the school years and into adulthood (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Results from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) also are used to measure the MAG (Bacharach, Baumeister, & Furr, 2003). Early evidence of the MAG arises in a focus on early school experiences beginning with kindergarten, which shows differences exist in skills and knowledge in relation to kindergarteners' characteristics, background, and experiences (West, Denton, & Germino-Hausken, 2000). The large MAG that exists before high school widens during the high school years (Bacharach et al., 2003). Greenwood's (1991) analysis of achievement test scores shows disparities in academic engagement by socioeconomic group and suggests many more years for such gaps to close.

#### The MAG in Georgia

In Georgia, the size of the MAG ranges from 16.6 to 26.5 points for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading scores (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b)). While overall minority achievement rose from 1996 to 2007, Georgia still fell behind those states making the most progress in improving minority achievement (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b). In one report, Georgia showed "limited progress" in achievement trends, received a grade of "D-" for student achievement, and earned a "C+" for education reform (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2006).

In Georgia from 1992 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on their 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Hispanics made gains from 2002 through 2007. Whites scored 222.9 in 1992 and 230 in 2007. Blacks scored 195.3 in 1992

and 205.2 in 2007. Hispanics scored 200.3 in 2002 and 212.2 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 27.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 24.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG in Georgia was 25.8 in 2002 and narrowed to 17.7 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

For 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading in Georgia, from 1998 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Hispanics made gains from 2002 through 2007. Whites scored 267.6 in 1998 and 270.1 in 2007. Blacks scored 240.9 in 1998 and 246.0 in 2007. Hispanics scored 242.3 in 2002 and 249.9 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 26.7 in 1998, and it narrowed slightly to 25.0 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 21.5 in 2002 and widened to 23 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

In 4<sup>th</sup> grade math in Georgia, from 1992 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Hispanics made gains from 1996 through 2007. Whites scored 227.9 in 1992 and 245.8 in 2007. Blacks scored 196.3 in 1992 and 221.9 in 2007. Hispanics scored 204.9 in 1996 and 229.2 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 31.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 23.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 19 in 1996 and narrowed to 16.6 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade math in Georgia, from 1990 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Hispanics made gains from 1996 through 2007. Whites scored 270.3 in 1990 and 287.6 in 2007. Blacks scored 238.7 in 1990 and 261.1 in 2007. Hispanics scored 262.4 in 2003 and 265.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 31.6 in 1990, and it narrowed to

26.5 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 21.4 in 2003 and widened slightly to 21.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

The following review of literature in Chapter II focuses on the existence of the MAG in addition to three aspects of the MAG: possible causes, proposed remedies, and perceptions.

#### Possible Causes of the MAG

Researchers cite numerous possible causes for the MAG, including but not limited to the following: segregation, including location of and lack of minority access to quality schools; stereotype threat, negative peer pressure, and student effort; socioeconomic status (SES) and family conditions, including parental involvement; and teacher expectations or behaviors. Ipka (2003), Goldsmith (2004), Orfield (1997), and Simmons & Ebbs (2001) note segregation as a factor, which includes the issues of location of and minority access to quality schools. Research shows that black and Hispanic students tend to worry about doing badly on evaluative tests because of the stereotype threat that their performance would be a measure of inherent black or Hispanic ability (Aronson, 2004). Alternatively, blacks underperform to avoid 'acting white,' succumbing to negative peer pressure (Aronson, 2004; Ferguson, 1998). Lack of student effort or motivation also harms student achievement (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Conventional measures such as SES and family conditions, including parental involvement, account for some trends (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Izzo et al., 1999). Many researchers cite teacher expectations and behaviors as contributors to the MAG (Aronson, 2004; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Ferguson, 1998).

## Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG

Many researchers, schools, districts, and states suggest remedies for closing the MAG. Proposed solutions include strict accountability and high teaching standards such as those in NCLB (Haycock, 2004). On the other hand, opponents of strict standards propose alternatives to NCLB noting that it expects too much, too fast (Brady, 2003; McMillian, 2003). Such alternatives include stereotype downplay through increased teacher sensitivity (Aronson, 2004), increased teacher expectations (Becker & Luthar, 2002), better classroom instruction (Ferguson, 1998), and extra-school solutions, such as tutoring, after-school, summer school, and community-based programs, preschool/early intervention, and increased parental involvement (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003). Additionally, Ipka (2003) proposes re-integration to adjust minority-to-majority student ratios, while Kahlenberg (2006) proposes a new integration based on SES to help close the MAG. Finally, many scholars offer more effective leadership of school officials as the key to closing the MAG and making good schools great (Albrecht & Joles, 2003; Farkas et al., 2003; Lafee et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004)

## Perceptions of the MAG

Scholars focus on educators' perceptions and their effect on the MAG. Researchers study teacher perceptions on many topics because of their direct impact on student achievement (Ferguson, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). With their critical position between the educational front lines of the classrooms and district-level leadership, principals' perceptions also are being examined (Farkas et al., 2003). Researchers seek superintendents' perceptions because they serve as chief executive officers of school districts who play crucial roles in the education of America's children

(CEP, 2004; Farkas et al., 2003). Likewise, perceptions about accountability requirements to close the MAG abound (CEP, 2004; Janufka, 2002; Sparks, 2003).

Many scholars address the perceptions of community members, students, teachers, principals, and superintendents on a wide range of educational issues. However, none directly address superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG, nor do they provide suitable survey instruments to utilize for the purposes of this study. The instruments found in research outlined in the following literature review provide insight for development of a new survey instrument but are not specific enough to superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG to utilize directly.

#### Statement of the Problem

Efforts to pinpoint and to close the MAG, such as the passage and implementation of NCLB, bring this issue to the forefront. Possible causes, proposed remedies, and perceptions abound. Scholars conduct numerous studies to determine possible causes and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Researchers examine the relationship between a myriad of factors and student achievement while neglecting to address superintendents' perceptions. Superintendents are policy makers in challenging high-stress, high-visibility positions. As chief executive officers of school districts who play crucial roles in the education of America's children, superintendents play a major role in addressing all aspects of the MAG, yet little research on their perceptions exists. Most empirical studies of the MAG do not reflect superintendents' voices. In particular, no research directly focuses on superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Superintendents are held accountable for the performance of their

schools under NCLB, and they struggle to improve education and close the MAG; however, research studies addressing their perceptions that may help them achieve these goals are absent. Therefore, a need exists for a study to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

### Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Specifically, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What do Georgia superintendents view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 2) What do Georgia superintendents view as proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 3) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 4) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 5) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 6) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?

- 7) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 8) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?

### Significance of the Study

With educational leaders across the nation examining the MAG in an effort to leave no child behind, it is critical that all stakeholders grasp the importance of the myriad of issues surrounding the MAG. Superintendents are policy makers in challenging high-stress, high-visibility positions. As primary decision makers for their school districts, Georgia superintendents are confronted by the MAG daily. It is important to explore the perceptions of the MAG held by Georgia superintendents. Their input is invaluable because the success of interventions developed to reduce the gap largely hinged on efforts of the teachers and administrators to whom they provide leadership. Participating in educational reform relies on the recognition of problems and solutions by superintendents. This study codifies this information so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. This study is vital because it provides practicing, as well as aspiring, school administrators with an understanding of Georgia superintendents' perceptions and research that they can use to help close the MAG. This and future studies will strengthen the literature on closing the MAG with the greater awareness of what individual superintendents perceive. Ultimately, many groups of educational leaders may benefit

from the issues raised by this research. School-based and division-level educators, state department of education officials, and legislators may find ways to improve their efforts to close the MAG by considering the perspectives of those directly involved in decision-making: the superintendents.

### Procedures

The design of this study is descriptive, based on the perceptions of the respondents. Survey research methodology was utilized to answer the research questions posed in this study, which are intended to gather information regarding Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the MAG. The participants in this study are the superintendents for each of the 180 public school districts in the state of Georgia during the 2007-2008 school year.

The study utilized a survey instrument with 22 closed-ended Likert-scale questions and 4 open-ended questions (See Appendix C). The open-ended questions allowed the superintendents to elaborate their answers or state alternate viewpoints. Additionally, the survey asked for demographic information including gender, race, years of experience as a school administrator, and geographic location. These surveys were sent to every current superintendent in the state of Georgia for the 2007-2008 school year, as of October 2007.

### Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the low response rate, particularly from minority superintendents. The total survey response rate was 44% (80 out of 180). Out of an overall superintendent population of 180, there were 23 minority superintendents.

Only three (13%) responded to the survey. The number of white superintendents who responded was 75 out of 157 (48%).

Another recognized limitation of this study was that the data came from self-report instruments. The Georgia superintendents completed surveys reporting their own ratings and perceptions of the possible causes of and the proposed remedies for closing the MAG, leaving validity of the self-reporting unknown.

#### Definition of Terms

Black or African American: According to the Census 2000 definition, Black or African Americans are “people having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa” (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001, p. 2). The term “black” was used unless quoting or detailing information provided by the authors dictated the use of the term African American.

Minority Achievement Gap (MAG): A gap in the academic achievement between students based on race, between black/non-white and white students.

Minority to Majority Ratio: The proportion of the minority student population to the majority student population at a given school.

Non-White: Rather than list American Indian, Asian, Hispanic etc., each time they were referenced, this term was used to encompass all ethnic minorities except blacks.

Superintendent: A Georgia Superintendent of Schools serves as the chief executive officer of the school system and is responsible to the Board of Education for ensuring compliance with all board policies, Georgia Board of Education rules and regulations and state and federal laws.

## Summary

The MAG persists even though there is some evidence of its narrowing. Efforts to pinpoint and to close the MAG, such as the passage and implementation of NCLB, bring this issue to the forefront. Potential causes, remedies, and perceptions abound. Superintendents, who face challenges to identify possible causes of and to implement proposed remedies for closing the MAG, exhibit a range of perceptions highlighting those challenges.

With educational leaders across the nation examining the MAG in an effort to leave no child behind, it is critical that all stakeholders grasp the importance of the myriad of issues surrounding the MAG. Superintendents are policy makers in challenging high-stress, high-visibility positions. As primary decision makers for their school districts, Georgia superintendents are confronted by the MAG daily. As chief executive officers of school districts who play crucial roles in the education of America's children, superintendents play a major role in addressing all aspects of the MAG, yet little research on their perceptions exists. Most empirical studies of the MAG do not reflect superintendents' voices. In particular, no research directly focuses on superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Superintendents are held accountable for the performance of their schools under NCLB, and they struggle to improve education and close the MAG; however, research studies addressing their perceptions that may help them achieve these goals are absent. Therefore, a need exists for a study to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

The purpose of this study is to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. This study codifies this information so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. This study is vital because it provides practicing, as well as aspiring, school administrators with an understanding of Georgia superintendents' perceptions and research that they can use to help close the MAG. This and future studies will strengthen the literature on closing the MAG with the greater awareness of what individual superintendents perceived. Ultimately, many groups of educational leaders may benefit from the issues raised by this research. School-based and division-level educators, state department of education officials, and legislators may find ways to improve their efforts to close the MAG by considering the perspectives of those directly involved in decision-making: the superintendents.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The Minority Achievement Gap (MAG) materialized more than 30 years ago and emerged as one of the most documented subjects in educational research. This gap in academic achievement exists between students in the United States based on race, between white students and minority (black and non-white) students (Lee, Grigg, & Dion, 2007a; Lee, Grigg, & Dion, 2007b). White students historically score as much as four grade levels higher on assessments and excel in school performance as compared to their minority peers (Farkas, 2004). The MAG has narrowed over the last 30 years that it has been formally measured, but it persists (Education Trust, 2003). Administrators and teachers, who face daily challenges to identify possible causes of and to implement proposed remedies for closing the MAG, exhibit a range of perceptions highlighting those challenges (Bol & Berry, 2005; Farkas, 2004; Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Ferguson, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). The following chapter focuses on the existence of the MAG in addition to three aspects of the MAG: possible causes, proposed remedies, and perceptions.

#### Existence of the MAG

Since 1965, numerous national studies confirmed the existence of the MAG (Bock & Moore, 1986; Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996; Coleman et al., 1966; Hedges & Nowell, 1999; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Osborne & McGurk, 1982). These studies reveal that differences in achievement are large between white and minority students (Hedges & Nowell, 1999). By the end of high school, the average 17-

year-old black student may be reading on the same level as an average 13-year-old white student (Education Trust, 2003). Nationwide, the MAG narrowed from 1970 to 1988, and the trend continued through 2007, as reported through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b).

A primary measurement of student achievement in the United States, the NAEP compiles data on the black-white and Hispanic-white achievement gaps, summarized below. From 1992 through 2007, all groups made gains on 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Whites scored 224.3 in 1992 and 230.5 in 2007. Blacks scored 192.0 in 1992 and 203.4 in 2007. Hispanics scored 196.8 in 1992 and 204.7 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG between whites and blacks was 32.3 in 1992, and it narrowed to 27.1 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 27.5 in 1992 and narrowed to 25.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

On 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, from 1992 through 2007, all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Whites scored 267 in 1992 and 272 in 2007. Blacks scored 237.4 in 1992 and 244.7 in 2007. Hispanics scored 240.8 in 1992 and 246.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG between whites and blacks was 29.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 27.3 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 26.2 in 1992 and narrowed slightly to 25.2 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

For 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, from 1990 through 2007, all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Whites scored 219.8 in 1990 and 248.1 in 2007. Blacks scored 187.5 in 1990 and 222.2 in 2007. Hispanics scored 200.3 in 1990 and 226.9 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG between whites and blacks was 32.3 in 1990, and it

narrowed to 25.9 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 19.5 in 1990 and widened to 21.2 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007).

On 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, from 1990 through 2007 all groups made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Whites scored 269.6 in 1990 and 291.3 in 2007. Blacks scored 236.8 in 1990 and 259.5 in 2007. Hispanics scored 245.9 in 1990 and 264.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG between whites and blacks was 32.9 in 1990, and it narrowed slightly to 31.7 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG was 23.8 in 1990 and widened to 26.5 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

Many initiatives seek to close the MAG, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which introduced, among other things, strict nationwide accountability and teaching standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). The purpose of NCLB is to help close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers by ensuring that “all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (NCLB, 2002, § 6301). It is based on principles such as stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on effective teaching methods (NCLB, 2002). Bringing educational accountability to the forefront of the reform movement, NCLB increases expectations for states, districts, and schools to gather, review, report, and be accountable for, data on student achievement and demographics (Lafee, Dawson, Alwin, & Yeagley, 2002). Even before NCLB, accountability movements were underway in most states and districts, but NCLB

shortened the timeline, requiring 100 percent academic proficiency, as defined by each state, for all students by 2014 (CEP, 2004; Farkas et al., 2003).

The NCLB requires states to begin administering annual, statewide, and national assessments in various subjects and grades starting with the 2005-06 school year. Under NCLB, states may select and design their own assessments, but the tests must align with state academic standards. By 2007-08, states had to implement science assessments once during each of the three levels of K-12 education: elementary, middle, and high school (NCLB, 2002). The law requires a sample of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in each state to participate in the NAEP in reading and math every other year to provide a point of comparison for the state's results on its own tests. In addition, NCLB further requires states to show "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) and to attain 100 percent academic proficiency, as defined by each state, for all students by 2014. Under NCLB, the government could withhold federal funding from failing states. Failing schools face interventions that range from allowing students to choose another school to state take-over of failing schools. States have to set a minimum performance threshold based on the lowest-achieving demographic subgroup, or the lowest-achieving schools in the state, whichever is higher. This complex law requires test results to include individual student scores and to report by race, income, and other categories to measure not just overall trends, but also gaps between, and the progress of, various subgroups (NCLB, 2002).

The NCLB standards place pressure on administrators and teachers by requiring them to demonstrate, with statistically valid evidence, that their efforts to improve students were working (Lafee et al., 2002). Under NCLB, states are required to issue annual Report Cards reflecting results measured by the NAEP. Since implementation of

NCLB, some improvement is evident. The 2007 Report Cards in reading and mathematics showed the MAG persists, but it is narrowing in some areas, as noted earlier (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b).

### *Elementary and Middle School*

The MAG spans the academic spectrum and increases through the school years and into adulthood (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Early evidence of the MAG arises in a focus on early school experiences beginning with kindergarten, which shows differences exist in skills and knowledge in relation to kindergarteners' characteristics, background, and experiences (West et al., 2000). Farkas (2004) noted that children from different social class levels developed linguistic tools at similarly different levels, entering school with very different bases on which to build achievement. Jencks and Phillips (1998) carried this vocabulary theory to racial differences and found about a one-year gap. Because much of the literature on student achievement focuses on elementary school children (e.g., 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the NAEP) and secondary school children (e.g., 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the NAEP and 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in the NELS), little information is available on middle school students (West et al., 2000).

### *Secondary School and Beyond*

Bacharach et al. (2003) considered achievement change data from longitudinal studies to determine whether secondary education was narrowing the educational achievement gap between black and white secondary-school students. A review of these published longitudinal studies exposed three problems that compromised conclusions concerning the effects of secondary education on the black-white achievement disparity. First, reported data came from studies involving non-representative samples of students

and schools. Second, other reports were based on data obtained before or shortly after federal government initiatives to fund and evaluate education programs and often did not provide information regarding changes in academic achievement during high school. Third, a number of reported longitudinal studies evaluated the effects of specific educational intervention programs on school achievement. The authors reported only three sources of nationally representative longitudinal data regarding academic achievement in secondary schools. The most recent such study they examined was the NELS, which followed the participants' academic progress through high school. Bacharach et al. (2003) utilized these data to examine change in the racial academic achievement gap in science from 8<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The NELS showed black students finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade with lower science achievement scores than white students, and the size of this gap continued to increase during secondary school (Bacharach et al., 2003). Of note was that fewer than 50% of black 12<sup>th</sup> graders were performing at a level comparable to the average test performance of 8<sup>th</sup> grade white boys. Bacharach et al. (2003) found a large academic achievement gap between black and white students and between boys and girls prior to secondary school. They observed that secondary school did not reduce or compensate for the achievement differences that developed during primary school. Rather, the opposite occurred. Bacharach et al. (2003) concluded that secondary education did not contribute to a reduction in the science achievement gaps associated with race and gender. Instead, the large MAG that existed before high school widened during the high school years (Bacharach et al., 2003). Additionally, Greenwood's (1991) analysis of achievement test

scores showed disparities in academic engagement by socioeconomic group and suggested many more years for such gaps to close.

#### The MAG in Georgia

In Georgia, the size of the MAG ranges from 16.6 to 26.5 points for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and reading scores (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b)). While overall minority achievement rose from 1996 to 2007, Georgia still fell behind those states making the most progress in improving minority achievement (Lee et al., 2007a; Lee et al., 2007b). In one report, Georgia showed “limited progress” in achievement trends, received a grade of “D-” for student achievement, and earned a “C+” for education reform (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2006).

In Georgia from 1992 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on their 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Hispanics made gains from 2002 through 2007. Whites scored 222.9 in 1992 and 230 in 2007. Blacks scored 195.3 in 1992 and 205.2 in 2007. Hispanics scored 200.3 in 2002 and 212.2 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 27.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 24.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics, that MAG in Georgia was 25.8 in 2002 and narrowed to 17.7 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

For 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading in Georgia, from 1998 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007b). Hispanics made gains from 2002 through 2007. Whites scored 267.6 in 1998 and 270.1 in 2007. Blacks scored 240.9 in 1998 and 246.0 in 2007. Hispanics scored 242.3 in 2002 and 249.9 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 26.7 in 1998, and it narrowed

slightly to 25.0 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 21.5 in 2002 and widened to 23 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007b).

In 4<sup>th</sup> grade math in Georgia, from 1992 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Hispanics made gains from 1996 through 2007. Whites scored 227.9 in 1992 and 245.8 in 2007. Blacks scored 196.3 in 1992 and 221.9 in 2007. Hispanics scored 204.9 in 1996 and 229.2 in 2007. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 31.6 in 1992, and it narrowed to 23.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 19 in 1996 and narrowed to 16.6 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade math in Georgia, from 1990 through 2007, blacks and whites made gains on average scale scores (Lee et al., 2007a). Hispanics made gains from 1996 through 2007. Whites scored 270.3 in 1990 and 287.6 in 2007. Blacks scored 238.7 in 1990 and 261.1 in 2007. Hispanics scored 262.4 in 2003 and 265.8 in 2007. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math MAG in Georgia between whites and blacks was 31.6 in 1990, and it narrowed to 26.5 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a). For whites and Hispanics in Georgia, that MAG was 21.4 in 2003 and widened slightly to 21.8 by 2007 (Lee et al., 2007a).

#### Possible Causes of the MAG

Researchers cite numerous possible causes for the MAG, including but not limited to the following: segregation, including location of and lack of minority access to quality schools; stereotype threat, negative peer pressure, and student effort; SES and family conditions, including parental involvement; and teacher expectations or behaviors. Ipka (2003), Goldsmith (2004), Orfield (1997), and Simmons & Ebbs (2001) note segregation as a factor, which includes the issues of location of and minority access to quality

schools. Research shows that black and Hispanic students tend to worry about doing badly on evaluative tests because of the stereotype threat that their performance would be a measure of inherent black or Hispanic ability (Aronson, 2004). Alternatively, blacks underperform to avoid ‘acting white,’ succumbing to negative peer pressure (Aronson, 2004; Ferguson, 1998). Lack of student effort or motivation also harms student achievement (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Conventional measures such as SES and family conditions, including parental involvement, account for some trends (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Izzo et al., 1999). Many researchers cite teacher expectations and behaviors as contributors to the MAG (Aronson, 2004; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Ferguson, 1998).

### *Segregation*

Ipka (2003), Goldsmith (2004), Orfield (1997), and Simmons & Ebbs (2001) noted segregation as a factor, which included the issues of location of and minority access to quality schools. Ipka (2003) examined trends in the achievement gap between black and white students in the Norfolk Public School System in the 1990s. After 15 years of mandated busing for integration, enrollment dropped by more than 18,000 students, prompting the district to abolish cross-town busing (Ipka, 2003). This plan created neighborhood schools, with 10 elementary schools that were more than 99 percent black. Advocates against this decision unsuccessfully challenged it in court (and not accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court), leaving many black students in what Ipka referred to as “racially isolated” schools. Ipka’s study sample consisted of standardized achievement test scores for 19,000 students in grades 1 through 11 for the years 1991 through 1996 to determine if gaps in achievement test scores existed between black and

white students and to identify trends in this gap. Composite test scores of black students in this school district continued to fall behind white students during that time. The achievement gap spread through the elementary, middle, and senior high levels. Ipka suggested the findings from this “longitudinal” analysis showed the district did not make significant progress in reducing the achievement gap. In fact, it may have increased the gap due to the resegregation of 10 elementary schools. In conclusion, Ipka suggested the quality of “racially isolated schools” fell below that of integrated schools, pointing to segregation, location of schools, and lack of minority access to quality schools as possible causes of the MAG.

Goldsmith (2004) examined how schools’ racial and ethnic mix of students and teachers influenced students’ expectations. Analyses of data from the NELS showed that black and non-white students were more optimistic when in segregated-minority schools, especially when those schools employed many minority teachers, suggesting that teachers in segregated-white schools might lower black and non-white students’ expectations (Goldsmith, 2004). Additionally, Simmons and Ebbs (2001) examined North Carolina schools and found that segregation may have had a negative influence on black student achievement. Orfield (1997) noted the low graduation rate of segregated schools as well.

### *Stereotype Threat*

Stereotype threat, negative peer pressure, and lack of effort have resulted in poor student performance (Aronson, 2004; Ferguson, 1998; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Research showed that black and Hispanic students tended to worry about doing badly on evaluative tests because of the stereotype threat that their performance would be a measure of inherent black or Hispanic ability (Aronson, 2004). Alternatively, blacks have

underperformed to avoid ‘acting white,’ succumbing to negative peer pressure (Aronson, 2004; Ferguson, 1998). Lack of student effort or motivation also harmed student achievement (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002).

Studies have shown that even when students start out matched, a gap still existed because of cultural stereotypes of intellectual inferiority (Aronson, 2004). Aronson’s research began with the idea that a stereotype threat made students anxious, which could depress performance on tests, and if stereotype apprehension subsided, then anxiety lessened and performance improved. Aronson (2004) experimented with a test of black and white students, telling the groups the test was evaluative, or just a study of the psychology of problem solving. Black students solved twice as many problems on the non-evaluative test than on the evaluative test. Aronson (2004) concluded that stereotype threat was a significant factor in the MAG. Numerous studies on stereotype threat supported this idea, also showing similar results for Hispanic and other minority student populations as well (Aronson, 2004; Massey et al., 2003).

Ferguson’s (1998) research showed that black students under-performed because of test and peer anxiety. They did not want to conform to the perception that blacks could not perform as well on tests, and they wanted to avoid ‘acting white’ (Ferguson, 1998). Racial stereotypes may also have influenced teacher perceptions, expectations, and behaviors, which as discussed below may also have contributed to the MAG (Ferguson, 1998). Ogbu and Simons (1998) also cited the fear of ‘acting white’ as a reason for poor school performance by black students. Lack of effort or motivation also influenced achievement (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002).

Similarly, black males tended to disconnect academically and disengage from school (McMillian, 2003). McMillian noted results of engagement studies where black students, and black boys in particular, were susceptible to academic disengagement. Specifically, McMillian's review of the research suggested that education professionals' "stereotypes about ability" were liable in part for the disengagement and lagging achievement of black male students (p. 25). McMillian recommended education professionals use 'wise schooling' to minimize the effects of these stereotypes on achievement, citing research showing the achievement gap persisted even when factors such as SES, preparation level, and educational aspirations appeared to be similar. For example, black students from high-income and well-educated families tended to have lower Advanced Placement scores than their white counterparts (McMillian, 2003). McMillian claimed that racial-gap framework (such as that in NCLB) disengaged and suppressed black achievement by reinforcing low expectations. McMillian cited evidence of disengagement among black male students, noting that this disengagement might explain part of the achievement and gender gap among black students. She argued that NCLB's method of accountability disengaged students because it emphasized stereotypes about ability, which research has shown is partly responsible for the achievement gap, particularly among black male students. Cited disidentification research said many black students might avoid academic challenges to protect their self-esteem from the effects of underperformance (McMillian, 2003).

#### *Socioeconomic Status and Family Conditions*

Conventional measures such as low SES and family conditions, including lack of parental involvement, accounted for some negative trends (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003;

Izzo et al., 1999). With the poverty rate a key indicator of low SES in the United States, in the 1990s the number of people living in poverty rose to its highest levels since first measured in 1959 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). It has fluctuated since then, with 36.5 million people in poverty in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau). The actual poverty rate followed a similar trend, resting at 12.3% in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau). Likewise, child poverty has remained an issue, reaching a peak in 1997 with 14.1 million children under the age of 18 living at or below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau). In 2006, the child poverty rate was 17.4%, with 12.8 million children living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau).

Herrnstein and Murray (1994) concluded that SES factors into 37% of the difference in IQ scores between black and white students. Likewise, Phillips et al. (1998) said SES could explain two-thirds of the MAG when taken into consideration with family factors. Lee (2002) also acknowledged the possible influence of other factors or unmeasured changes in SES and family conditions.

Arnold and Doctoroff (2003) linked home factors related to SES to difficulties with student achievement, noting that students with low SES had fewer books and educational toys at home and lost academic ground before entering school and during summers. Some research also suggested students with low SES had less access to quality schools, with teachers expecting less and holding more negative perceptions of them than of their peers with higher SES (Arnold & Doctoroff). Similarly, decreased parental involvement over time leads to lower student achievement (Izzo et al., 1999).

Recent studies focus on more subtle differences regarding SES. One study explored the effects of a different view of family SES, adding grandparents to the

measure, and finding that higher grandparent status positively influenced student achievement (Grant, 2005). In Indiana, researchers examining schools of similar SES found there seemed to be differences in achievement between urban and rural students receiving free or reduced lunch (O'Rourke, 2006).

### *Teacher Expectations and Behaviors*

Researchers cited teacher expectations and behaviors as contributors to the MAG (Aronson, 2004; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Ferguson, 1998; Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995). As learning expectations increased, the focus intensified on teachers' potential to influence student learning through expectations and behaviors (Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995). Research showed teachers formed expectations for student performance, students responded to behavioral cues of teachers, and expectations shaped student performance (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Teachers tended to overestimate high achievers and underestimate low achievers, and student characteristics such as attractiveness, race, and SES influenced teacher expectations as well (Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995).

Ferguson (1998) concluded that teacher expectations, perceptions, and behaviors might have sustained and expanded the MAG because they relied on racial stereotypes and differed for black and white students. Ferguson noted academic potential as perceived differently by teachers perhaps based on past performance. The problem occurred when such expectations affected student performance, which occurred for black students more often than for white students, perhaps because of the stereotype threat discussed earlier (Ferguson, 1998). Similarly, Aronson (2004) noted teachers might have had different expectations because of stereotype, which often influenced performance and resulted in differential treatment.

Becker and Luthar (2002) presented a comprehensive model showing the social-emotional factors that both hindered and promoted disadvantaged students' achievement motivation and opportunities for academic success. They noted their approach differed from existing efforts in several ways. It brought together previously separate views, and it emphasized the developmental needs of middle school students specifically. It stressed social-emotional issues rather than traditional reform factors. Finally, it pointed out the benefits of covering both social-emotional and academic needs of disadvantaged students in a single reform effort. Focusing reform efforts at the middle school level was important for two reasons, according to the researchers. First, the transitional period of early adolescence required a renegotiation of rules and roles for successful adaptation. Research showed that students who possessed resources that they could rely on during the transition to middle school better prepared themselves for a successful school transition than students lacking such resources (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Disadvantaged students in particular showed deteriorating interest in academics and escalating levels of emotional distress during the middle school years, the researchers noted. Second, the lack of fit between the middle school environment and early adolescent developmental needs caused a shift toward more negative student self-evaluations and school achievement attitudes. For example, at a time of heightened self-consciousness, middle school goals for learning emphasized competition, and during a period in which adolescents' need for adult mentors grew, teacher-student relationships weakened. Significantly, students' reports of supportive interpersonal relations with teachers declined following the transition to middle school. This appeared especially true for disadvantaged students who were more likely than their counterparts to perceive teachers as having low expectations

for their educational potential. Finally, the researchers cited a student's mental health as an important and often-neglected precursor to early adolescent achievement performance and motivation in urban school reform efforts, noting the longitudinal relation between early adolescents' school motivation, achievement, and emotional functioning. Despite outward appearances of academic adjustment, many disadvantaged students experienced considerable emotional distress; yet relatively few middle school reforms included a mental health component (Becker & Luthar, 2002).

### Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG

Many researchers, schools, districts, and states suggest remedies for closing the MAG. Proposed solutions include strict accountability and high teaching standards such as those in NCLB (Haycock, 2004). On the other hand, opponents of strict standards propose alternatives to NCLB noting that it expects too much, too fast (Brady, 2003; McMillian, 2003). Such alternatives include stereotype downplay through increased teacher sensitivity (Aronson, 2004), increased teacher expectations (Becker & Luthar, 2002), better classroom instruction (Ferguson, 1998), and extra-school solutions, such as tutoring, after-school, summer school, and community-based programs, preschool/early intervention, and increased parental involvement (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003). Additionally, Ipka (2003) proposes re-integration to adjust minority-to-majority student ratios, while Kahlenberg (2006) proposes a new integration based on SES to help close the MAG. Finally, many scholars offer more effective leadership of school officials as the key to closing the MAG and making good schools great (Albrecht & Joles, 2003; Farkas et al., 2003; Lafee et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004)

### *Strict Accountability*

Proposed strict accountability such as in NCLB has offered some reduction in the MAG (Haycock, 2001; Janufka, 2002). Reborra (2004) described the measures in NCLB as “significant changes to the educational landscape” (p. 3). The U.S. Department of Education (2006) said NCLB was working, with 2005 results showing elementary school student achievement at all-time highs and the MAG closing. For example, for nine-year-olds in reading, they made more progress in five years than in the previous 28 combined, with the best scores in reading and math in the history of the NAEP (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Haycock (2001) noted that key to student success were standards, challenging curriculum, extra help, and quality teachers. Janufka (2002) found that administrators feel school performance profiles (types of accountability reports) improved student performance.

### *Alternatives to NCLB*

On the other hand, opponents of strict standards proposed alternatives to NCLB, noting that it expected too much, too fast (McMillian, 2003; Becker & Luthar, 2002). McMillian (2003) warned educators to avoid framing black achievement within the context of the MAG. Claiming that a treatment gap existed because educational institutions did not value black students, McMillian suggested “a more accurate, non-Eurocentric perspective” in education (McMillian, 2003, p. 6). Becker and Luthar (2002) presented four components within the middle school context that were important to comprehensive school reform: academic and school attachment, teacher support, peer values, and mental health. They suggested that, although the “get tough” policies of the standards-reform movement claimed to give disadvantaged students equal educational

opportunities, they may actually “further the stigmatization” of disadvantaged students and prevent school achievement (Becker & Luthar, 2002, p. 200).

### *Stereotype Downplay*

Downplaying stereotype factors through increased teacher sensitivity has been suggested (Aronson, 2004). Aronson (2004) noted educators could minimize the stereotype threat through: (1) creating cooperative classroom structures that reduce competition, distrust, and stereotyping; (2) teaching students their abilities are expandable rather than fixed; and (3) reducing anxiety by simply teaching students about the stereotype threat. Additionally, Holloway (2004) noted increased teacher sensitivity accomplished through teachers expecting all students to achieve, regardless of background. Raising teachers’ multicultural awareness also increased teacher sensitivity. Research supporting these ideas said teacher behaviors made a difference in minority student achievement (Holloway, 2004). Furthermore, Ferguson (1998) suggested that increased teacher expectations lead to increased student performance and reduced stereotype effects, as discussed more in depth below.

Another alternative included educator focus on schooling experiences rather than the disengagement, promoted potentially through unfair assessments (McMillian, 2003). To enhance achievement among black students, McMillian suggested reframing the academic achievement gap as a treatment gap, necessitating focus on black schooling experiences and black male achievement. Additionally, McMillian recommended education professionals used ‘wise schooling’ to minimize the effects of these stereotypes on achievement.

### *Increased Teacher Expectations*

Increasing teacher expectations might help to improve student performance (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Students who felt their teachers encouraged them were more committed to learning and more successful academically (Becker & Luthar, 2002). Significantly, students' reports of supportive interpersonal relations with teachers declined following the transition to middle school. This appeared especially true for disadvantaged students who were more likely than their counterparts to perceive teachers as having low expectations for their educational potential. Becker and Luthar concluded that efforts to improve the social-emotional needs of disadvantaged students, without a comparable application of instructional and curricular methods to attain academic excellence, would be ineffective. Likewise, positive teacher perceptions of parental involvement related to improved student performance, according to Izzo et al. (1999).

Ferguson (1998) concluded that just telling teachers to expect more was not enough to help close the MAG. Better classroom instruction was needed. Teachers needed to change teaching methods while changing expectations (Ferguson, 1998). Responsive teacher methods, where teachers responded to the progress of all students and tailored responses to their individual efforts, might have reduced the effect of teacher expectations on student performance (Ferguson, 1998). To change teacher expectations, Ferguson supported the Great Expectations program, which aimed to convince teachers and students that teachers cared and would not give up on them, that they celebrated progress, and that all students were destined to be important people if they were academically prepared for the future.

While some programs to improve teachers' expectations seemed beneficial, they experience mixed results (Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995). The Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement Program (TESA) sought to reduce the negative effects of teacher low expectations by focusing on certain effective teaching practices and encouraging teachers to use them with perceived low achievers as well as high achievers (Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995). Implemented in an elementary school, it showed little positive effect, with the program least well implemented in the grade where researchers observed the only positive effects. This suggested that more than training must occur to change teacher expectations (Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995).

#### *Extra-School Solutions*

Extra-school solutions, such as tutoring, after-school, summer school, and community-based programs, preschool/early intervention, and increased parental involvement have also addressed the MAG (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003).

Arnold and Doctoroff (2003) noted that preschool and early learning interventions such as the U.S. Department of Education's Head Start program showed benefits such as better test scores, decreased needs for special education, and increased graduation rates. Another study noted ways in which parental involvement in children's education changed over time and how it related to academic and social functions in school (Izzo et al., 1999). Factors such as frequency of parent-teacher contact, quality of those interactions, and parental participation at home and at school declined over time and resulted in lower student performance (Izzo et al., 1999). The Izzo et al. (1999) results suggested that enhancing parental involvement in school related to improved school functioning. Supporting this theory was a study examining the level and impact of parent involvement

on elementary school children's academic achievement, which showed increased parental involvement directly associated with increased achievement (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Reynolds and Temple (1998) evaluated the effects of participation in community-based programs of compensatory education for low-income, inner city black students. The students in the programs showed higher achievement, lower grade retention, and lower special education placement (Reynolds & Temple, 1998). Such findings gave longitudinal evidence that a large-scale community-based extended early childhood intervention program may help reduce the MAG (Reynolds & Temple, 1998).

Additionally, Allgood (2005) found that key advantage points for closing the MAG include targeted efforts in high-poverty, urban communities to provide poor and minority families early childhood and parenting education. Likewise, Scales et al. (2006) found that students engaged in community service and service-learning experiences reported higher grades, attendance, and other academic success outcomes. Tutoring, after-school, and summer school programs have fostered academic growth (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003).

### *Re-Integration*

Ipka (2003) proposed re-integration to help close the MAG, citing several studies showing that students performed better in desegregated settings. Re-integration was adjusting the minority-majority student ration within a school to reflect the ratio in the community. Ipka advocated more integrated schools, noting: "If the district continues to incarcerate large numbers of black students in segregated schools, the achievement gap will forever exist" (Ipka, 2003, p. 45). Ipka (2003) described the trends in the MAG in

Virginia public schools between 1991 and 1996 that had a high number of majority-minority schools, finding that those ratios may have increased the MAG.

Kahlenberg (2006) proposed a new integration based on SES to help close the MAG. In response to research that indicated the SES makeup of a school, rather than racial makeup, drove student achievement, a small number of school districts were replacing long-standing racial integration plans with a goal of no more than 40 percent of its students eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, or no more than 25 percent of its students performing below grade level (Kahlenberg, 2006). Early results showed the plans might have been raising achievement and reducing the MAG (Kahlenberg, 2006).

### *Leadership*

Many scholars offered more effective leadership of school officials as the key to closing the MAG and making good schools great (Albrecht & Joles, 2003; Farkas et al., 2003; Lafee et al., 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004). Central to school improvement efforts were the leadership principals set forth by Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (2001). The following overview applied these themes to aspects of educational leadership in the age of accountability in efforts to make good schools great. It also began to address the many perceptions of the MAG held by educational leaders.

Leadership and accountability literature reflected Collins' (2001) idea that "Good is the Enemy of Great" in discussions of "goals," "expectations," "setting directions," and "mission" (Leithwood et al., 2004). The accountability movement was the ultimate example of this theory. While leaders may have thought schools in the country were good, they realized making them great required higher standards. Thus emerged the accountability movement, even before NCLB. The new federal standards of NCLB

placed great pressure on administrators and teachers by requiring them to demonstrate, with statistically valid evidence, that their efforts to improve students were working (Lafee et al., 2002). Lafee et al. noted: “The old tools of education – intuition, teaching philosophy, personal experience – do not seem to be enough anymore” (Rapid Spread section, para. 1).

#### Level 5 Leadership

The “Level 5 Leadership” theory of Collins (2001) addressed the types of leaders who successfully moved to a higher level of leadership, from good to great. While these leaders ultimately showed “personal humility and professional will” (Collins, 2001, p. 39), they subscribed to any number of leadership models. The overarching theme found in accountability leadership research was that of transformational leadership (Bass, 1997; Leithwood et al., 2004). The transformational leader exhibited bottom-up, democratic, visioning strategies, yet other factors contributed to their success (Farkas et al., 2003). Foremost was the concept of shared responsibility or distributed leadership, where successful leaders counted on others (Leithwood et al., 2004; Linn, 2003). “One of the major impediments to effective school leadership is trying to carry the burden alone” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 343).

Another concept was that of principals as instructional leaders, no longer just coaches and managers (Farkas et al., 2003). However, instructional leadership has been criticized as a sloganized, top-down or transactional approach to school reform, unlike the distributed nature of transformational leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). Nonetheless, research showed that effective leadership necessitated both transactional and transformational elements (Hallinger, 2003; Louis, 2003).

Leithwood et al. (2004, p. 6) cautioned against “leadership by adjective,” where the labels overcame the functions of leadership and where administrators were told to be a certain type of leader without clarity about what that meant. Reese (2004, p. 19) presented an appropriate quote on this issue: “... an instructional leader can have a profound impact, but it can’t just be an individual who rides in on a white horse to save the day.”

#### First Who, Then What

“Behind every school there’s a great principal” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 21) was the opinion of most superintendents in a survey by Farkas, who also noted the most important part in their evaluations of principals was how successful they were at raising student achievement. Studies showed that school leadership significantly affected student learning, and that schools used successful leaders when and where they were needed (Hull, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). Just as Collins said to get “the right people on the bus” (2001, p. 63), great administrators have placed great leaders in challenging situations for excellent outcomes. Farkas et al. found that most superintendents believed moving a talented principal to a low-performing school guaranteed success. Hallinger (2003) noted that transformational principals should invite teachers to share leadership functions, so those teachers would be helpful rather than hindrances, particularly in the context of the accountability movement.

#### Confront the Brutal Facts

Today’s accountability environment exemplified the Collins (2001) theory of confronting the brutal facts to get to greatness in leadership. Successful leaders should address the criticisms, make adjustments to overcome the challenges, and move on.

A CEP (2004) survey found many school districts were struggling with NCLB mandates, not because they were wary of accountability goals, but because the goals were “too stringent” or “not workable” in many instances. A growing number of state legislators and school administrators opposed mandates they viewed as “intrusive” and “under-funded” (Dobbs, 2004). Vermont, Utah, Arizona, Minnesota, and many other states took steps to criticize or even opt out of the law’s provisions. To comply with NCLB, at least 36 states had to develop more than 200 new tests within a few years (Gandal & McGiffert, 2003). In a February 2004 interview with Dobbs, then-U.S. Education Secretary Roderick R. Paige said many of the protests against the law were the result of a failure to understand its complex provisions: “For every person out there who is criticizing the law, there are tens out there who are supporting it.”

Indeed, the list of brutal facts surrounding NCLB and accountability seemed infinite, but successful leaders may have heeded Collins’ advice, as summarized here: “We can’t beat the accountability movement, so we had better join it and try to shape it” (Raywid, 2002, Introduction section, para. 2).

#### The Hedgehog Concept

Collins’ (2001) “Hedgehog Concept” expected leaders to focus on what they do best. Leithwood (2001, p. 229) aptly defined the educational Hedgehog Concept when he wrote: “Now the basic responsibility of school leaders, in my view, is to improve education for students in their own schools.” Many educational leadership goals stemmed from this ideal.

When the dust has settled, the values of educators have remained. As one leader noted: “No one said it was going to be easy. ... [W]e owe it to every child” (Farkas et al.,

2003, p. 42). Said one teacher about a transformational school head: “He holds traditional human values – care for people and the community and giving back to society the benefits of what you have been given at school” (Day, 2000, p. 57). Many leaders were making meaningful changes and were doing more than “paying lip service to the latest fad” (Farkas et al., p. 22).

Accountability responsibility provided opportunity. Green & Etheridge (2001) studied districts undergoing systemic changes and found that success stemmed from open-minded, innovative leadership that was “flexible, collaborative, and empowering” (Leadership section, para. 1). While the focus on data “is the inescapable future of educational administration” (Lafee et al., 2002, Slow Progress section, para. 6), leaders could develop policies that reflected a commitment to equity and acknowledged the biases that were inherent in standardized testing and grading schools (Sparks, 2003). Additionally, Leithwood (2001) examined best practices in professional approaches to accountability. As states added new large-scale tests to meet the requirements of NCLB, school districts had the chance to improve upon and /or eliminate certain tests and to invest in diagnostic tools, taking advantage of the information they provided to ensure success (Gandal & McGiffert, 2003). Albrecht and Joles (2003) noted additional research needed to determine the fairness and effectiveness of using high-stakes tests for educational accountability, particularly for students with disabilities and English learners.

Other opportunities to allow school leaders to do what they do best came in the form of additional resources. As one principal noted: “Probably one of the nicest things I had happen to me this past year was [that] my district finally gave me one position to do

nothing but deal with all the stuff that hits you all the time, [all the stuff] that bogs you down” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 19).

#### Culture of Discipline

Collins (2001) used key words such as “diligence,” “intensity,” and “highly functional” to describe leaders who lived his culture of discipline theory. Strategic thinking and multi-level accountability within districts were also key to this culture in educational leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood, 2001). Leithwood et al. listed four necessities for success in the age of accountability: (1) create and sustain a competitive school; (2) empower others to make significant decisions; (3) provide instructional guidance; and (4) develop and implement strategic school improvement plans.

Successfully implementing new accountability systems required “forward-looking” local school administrators to work with teachers and community to bring about achievement that focuses on continuous growth (Wolf, 2002). Engaging in collaborative processes and expanding leadership repertoires was required (Hallinger, 2003). Wolf pointed out that leadership in professional development for educators was key to “the most critical process in school reform: student growth rising to meet the standards” (Promoting Growth section, para. 1). Administrators became better instructional leaders by focusing professional development on instructional issues and basing evaluation on instructional improvement (Lashway, 2002). Nevi (2002) noted this required new resources, or the reallocation of existing resources: “Expecting change without resources is an abuse of the concept of accountability” (Counting Resources section, para. 1). Successful reforms showed the importance of leadership over standards (Brady, 2003).

Johnson (2002) noted a positive attitude would help administrators for the future. “Even though the demands are often overwhelming, I enjoy my job,” said one superintendent. “I know we make a difference” (Johnson, 2002, A Can-Do Spirit section, para. 2). Another said: “As long as we know the rules, we’ll figure it out” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 41).

#### Flywheel and the Doom Loop

The MAG could not close overnight, which was what Collins referred to as the “buildup and breakthrough” of a flywheel (2001, p. 186). This took patience, a virtue many administrators find hard to bear. A survey revealed overwhelming majorities of administrators wanted much more autonomy while still being held accountable for results (Johnson, 2002). Principals were more uneasy about using standardized test scores to judge their performance than were superintendents. Those administrators said their peers were leaving the profession because of unfair standards and accountability. Indeed, top-ranked reasons why educators left the profession included politics, bureaucracy, and accountability (high-stakes testing, test preparation, and standards), often above salary considerations (Tye, 2002; Farkas et al., 2003). As one administrator said, “I want my life back” (Farkas et al., p. 16).

The foremost challenge for administrators at all levels is to implement accountability standards developmentally, instead of relying on a single high-stakes test once a year (Albrecht & Joles, 2003). Scholars who address the subject believe doing so should weaken the calls of unfairness and discrimination. As one administrator noted in the CEP study: “Right now we are comparing this year’s third graders (or any grade level) to next year’s ... we should compare students to themselves over time to make sure

that each student is learning” (Broader and Deeper Effects section, para. 3). Sparks’ (2003) survey showed principals wanted an accountability system that tracked the progress of students from one year to the next, rather than a snapshot of student performances compared across the board. One principal told Johnson (2002), “Accountability is great, but schools should not be judged by what students do on one test on one day in March” (Johnson, 2002, Testing and Accountability section, para. 1). Nevi and Raywid stressed that accountability means much more than standardized tests. Wolf (2002) supported a developmental approach to accountability systems, following populations of children over time, along several dimensions (their literacy, their mathematical skill, their engagement with learning outside of school, even their health). Nevi proposed looking at ongoing classroom assessment of student progress and dropout rates rather than test scores. Lafee et al. (2002) noted that districts successful at using data stress the importance of monitoring students throughout the school year and of using data to improve learning. Gandal & McGiffert (2003) agreed that while large-scale state tests had their place in accountability, assessments that give schools and teachers immediate feedback on student performance throughout the school year must supplement them.

#### Opportunity for improvement

Administrators face great challenges as more schools in their districts inevitably became “in need of improvement” under NCLB (Dobbs, 2004). The 2004 CEP report summarizes these well:

The Act places many demands on state and local staff, such as requiring them to align curriculum and assessments, provide technical assistance to

districts or schools in need of improvement, provide extra instruction to children who are not performing well, provide high-quality professional development to teachers, expand school choice, arrange for supplemental services, implement new data systems, help teachers use test data to improve instruction, and do whatever else it takes to bring every student to proficiency by 2014.

(Lack of Capacity section, para. 2).

Educational leaders looking for guidance in the age of accountability may apply research in their field to Collins' Good to Great themes. Additionally, they might heed Brady's (2003) warning, which notes that accountability reforms must also recognize the significant limits of what reform promises, particularly through NCLB. Brady said NCLB expects too much too fast, and that some children still need more than NCLB provides.

#### Perceptions of the MAG

Scholars have begun to focus on educators' perceptions and their effect on the MAG. Researchers study teacher perceptions on many topics because of their direct impact on student achievement (Ferguson, 2003; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). With their critical position between the educational front lines of the classrooms and district-level leadership, principals' perceptions also are being examined (Farkas et al., 2003). Researchers seek superintendents' perceptions because they serve as chief executive officers of school districts who play crucial roles in the education of America's children (CEP, 2004; Farkas et al., 2003). Likewise, perceptions about accountability requirements to close the MAG abound (CEP, 2004; Janufka, 2002; Sparks, 2003).

Many scholars address the perceptions of community members, students, teachers, principals, and superintendents on a wide range of educational issues. However, none directly address superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG, nor do they provide suitable survey instruments to utilize for the purposes of this study. The instruments found in research outlined in the following literature review provide insight for development of a new survey instrument but are not specific enough to superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG to utilize directly.

#### *Perceptions of Accountability Requirements*

“Educational accountability has become like apple pie and motherhood. Everyone favors it; none dares speak against it” (Nevi, 2002, Introduction section, para. 2). The CEP study (2004) found that 42 states surveyed agreed that an accountability system based on content and performance standards would positively affect student achievement. Yet, those at the district level thought any rise in student achievement would be temporary or only on paper. Another survey said principals needed accountability as a gauge of success, but they wanted to use test data appropriately (Sparks, 2003). One opinion poll found that nearly half of school principals and superintendents viewed the federal legislation as either politically motivated or aimed at undermining public schools, yet other education leaders expressed support for the law's tough accountability mandates, which they called “vital levelers of change, inclusiveness, and transparency of results” (Rebora, 2004, Funding Changes section, para. 4). A study of Kansas curriculum leaders' perceptions of potential and actual impact of NCLB on improving student

achievement showed that more potential than actual impact was perceived, particularly in the areas of proven educational methods and stronger accountability (Manning, 2005).

Frustration is a frequent emotion exhibited by educators implementing NCLB. Superintendents and principals say keeping up with local, state, and federal mandates took up too much of their time, and schools were being micro-managed from above (Farkas et al., 2003). Implementation of NCLB is one area that triggered their frustration with the challenge of school leadership politics and bureaucracy (Farkas et al., 2003). As one principal noted: “We’re an easy target” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 15). Still, superintendents and principals embrace accountability in their high-stress, high-visibility positions, challenging how their districts work, “not just paying lip service to the latest fad” (Farkas et al., 2003, p. 22). Teachers resent the fast-paced curriculum and the perceived need to teach to prepare students for high-stakes tests, and while they express ethical concerns, they feel disempowered due to the local, state, and federal mandates (Duis, 2005). One study looked at a district receiving a warning for low middle and high school performance in the first year of NCLB implementation and found disconnected feeder elementary schools and frustrated teachers within the district’s assessment-driven accountability system (Simon, 2005). Principals at schools not making AYP perceived the factors influencing subgroup achievement were economic resources, community and parental support, and ability of students to relate to the curriculum (Lowman, 2005).

These opinions lead to a primary complaint about the law: unfairness. Opponents frequently say NCLB is an “unfunded mandate” (Rebora, 2004, *Funding Changes* section, para. 5). Many feel the AYP requirements could lead to unfair conclusions about a school’s performance, especially since schools will fail to show AYP if less than 95

percent of the student population and its subgroups did not take the test (CEP, 2004). The average daily school attendance is less than 95 percent, and even less for high schools (Young, 2003). Young told of a New Jersey high school with an average SAT score of 1174 that failed because three of its students with disabilities did not take the required test and suggested the difference in the number of schools failing to meet the federal goals was due to the different approaches states were taking. In a survey of perceptions of school performance profiles in use before NCLB implementation, Georgia principals responded that they felt profiles positively influenced student performance, while they were unsure profiles were fair accountability tools (Janufka, 2002).

Tied to unfairness is a perception that the new law might discriminate against students with disabilities and English language learners, who for the first time fell into their own accountability subgroups and had to take the same tests as the general student population (Elliott, 2003). Elliott noted administrators were shocked that they had to address these populations in the assessment and accountability environment. Officials in the CEP (2004) survey felt these were the accountability requirements that could create unexpected or negative consequences, noting that testing these students with all others gave no useful information and could even harm those students. Elliott (2003) opined: “The potential backlash of NCLB on the field of special education is ever looming” (Potential Backlash section, para. 3).

Albrecht & Joles (2003) examined the ramifications and discriminatory nature of using a single high-stakes test to assess students with disabilities: “Students with disabilities already have the stigma of a label, and to stigmatize them further ... is untenable” (Ramifications section, para. 3). States could designate alternate assessments

for these students, but practices for including or excluding them in high-stakes testing varied among the states - by design (GAO, 2004). States could hold a limited number of the most severely disabled students to a separate set of standards (“Lawmakers laud,” 2004). Albrecht & Joles noted such variations resulted in improper comparisons of student achievement: “Test scores are too limited and unstable a measure to be used as the sole source of information for any major decision about student placement or promotion. Shortcomings of the tests can be exacerbated when assessment practices fail to distinguish between students with and without disabilities” (Shortcomings of High-Stakes Tests section, para. 1).

Analyses of different state’s approaches to assessment found many tests were unbalanced, over-sampling some standards and under-sampling others (Gandal & McGiffert, 2003; Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002): “Everybody isn’t starting at the same place, or have the same tools – technology or people. You can’t just crunch some numbers and expect that this will lead to effective, real-world decisions” (Lafee et al., 2002, Slow Progress section, para. 1). Administrators agreed there is a lack of equity in the testing and grading of schools, and some strongly objected to being graded at all (Sparks, 2003, p. 333): “Holding students accountable to the same bar in the same time frame when they are not on or never have been on a level playing field is unfair.” Some principals said standardized tests are poorly used in their own district and were a “seriously flawed measure of student achievement – we use them because there’s no choice” (Johnson, 2002, Testing and Accountability section, para. 1). Linn (2003) noted that high-stakes testing lead to a narrowed instructional focus.

*Perceptions on Closing the MAG*

Superintendents surveyed in Virginia had minimal knowledge of the MAG in their districts and perceived that very little was being done about it (Sherman & Grogan, 2003). This study supported others that showed educators had low expectations for minority students and thus did not anticipate they would accomplish as much as white students (Goldsmith, 2004; Sherman & Grogan, 2003). Wenglinsky (2001) proposed that teachers directly influenced student achievement. Likewise, Ferguson (2003) found that teachers' perceptions, expectations, and behaviors interacted with students to widen the gap.

Common factors perceived by teachers to affect the MAG included school practices, parental expectations, parental education and SES, and congruence between home and school culture (Little, 2004). Another study addressed the difference between the perceived and real nature of change necessary to close the MAG and suggested that administrators and minority teachers perceived the changes necessary to close the MAG as more complex than their white, teacher counterparts (Siegfried, 2005).

Snell (2003) informally interviewed educators at a conference on closing the gap and found that they faced lack of concern for the issue and overwhelming challenges to meet established expectations. One teacher thought most teachers had low expectations and wanted to equip teachers with strategies to challenge those perceptions (Snell, 2003). A principal wanted a deeper understanding of the issue beyond the usual explanations to look for broader strategies to address the MAG (Snell, 2003). One administrator interviewed by Snell (2003) said she felt the urgency of the MAG, but that those with whom she worked showed complacency, which was something she wanted to change. Still, Snell (2003) concluded, the administrators and teachers accepted that it was their

responsibility to help close the MAG, since they felt they might have helped to perpetuate it. To do so, leaders had to: (1) engage in deep inquiry about the MAG and its root causes; (2) take deliberate action to eliminate inequitable school practices and to sustain improved instruction; and (3) model a consistent sense of urgency (Snell, 2003). Further research by Snell (2005) posited that the problem of the MAG served as the point of convergence for three school reform movements: the educational equity movement; the standards movement; and the testing movement, and that these competing agendas confounded current MAG-closing efforts.

Hannah (2004) explored leadership behaviors of principals in effective urban schools perceived by teachers and principals to influence academic outcomes and found that communicating high expectations for student performance was a demonstrated quality of effective principals. Likewise, Uhlenberg & Brown (2002) investigated black and white teachers' perceptions of possible causes and potential solutions to the achievement gap. They conducted a survey of teachers and asked them to rank by importance their perceived possible causes and potential solutions. The results suggested teachers needed to overcome perceptions that differed based on race and gender before they could truly focus on closing the gap (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Likewise, teachers from schools with a higher population of white students were more likely to attribute the MAG to student characteristics such as motivation and family support than teachers in schools with higher percentages of black and non-white students (Bol & Berry, 2005). Similarly, white middle school teachers tended to see parents and community rather than schools and teachers as factors contributing to the MAG, based on their background experiences rather than professional training (Kelly, 2006). Nonetheless, one teacher

emphasized the importance of teaching over factors such as SES: “I cannot accept that every student that enters my classroom, who happens to be poor, is somehow less capable of learning due to the fact that his family has less money than another student” (Kelly, 2006, p. 98).

### *Other Perceptions*

Kimport (2005) sought community perceptions and found that residents in two small Mississippi Delta communities viewed the educational system differently based on SES, race, and prior schooling experiences. Those with the most contact with the current school system had more positive views than outsiders (Kimport, 2005).

Researchers reviewed student perceptions in search of ways to improve their performance, since their performance was ultimately under the microscope. When black male students were asked about instructional strategies and teachers’ instructional beliefs, they responded that they preferred more stimulating and fun lessons related to real-life experiences and to their future, with family members, role models, and teachers influencing their motivation (Taylor, 2005). A review of female students’ attitudes toward mathematics and technology found that confidence level affected their achievement (Griffin, 2006). Similarly, a study of black student perceptions of teacher treatment showed that students who perceived negative treatment in the classroom typically exhibited decreased school involvement and academic achievement (Nwora, 2005). Black students were less likely to agree that teachers were interested in them, and race seemed a stronger predictor of perception than SES (Nwora, 2005).

Many scholars address the perceptions of community members, students, teachers, principals, and superintendents on a wide range of educational issues. However,

none directly addresses superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG nor do they provide suitable survey instruments to utilize for the purposes of this study. The instruments found in research outlined in this literature review provide insight for development of a new survey instrument but are not specific enough to superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG to utilize directly.

### Summary

The MAG persists even though there is some evidence of its narrowing. Efforts to pinpoint and to close the MAG, such as the passage and implementation of NCLB, bring this issue to the forefront. Potential causes, proposed remedies, and perceptions abound.

Many researchers, schools, districts, and states have suggest remedies for closing the MAG. Proposed solutions include strict accountability and high teaching standards such as those in NCLB. On the other hand, opponents of strict standards propose alternatives to NCLB noting that it expects too much, too fast. Such alternatives include stereotype downplay through increased teacher sensitivity, increased teacher expectations, and extra-school solutions, such as tutoring, after-school, summer school, and community-based programs, preschool/early intervention, and increased parental involvement. Additionally, researchers propose re-integration to adjust minority-to-majority student ratios, and a new integration based on SES to help close the MAG. Finally, many scholars offer more effective leadership of school officials as the key to closing the MAG and making good schools great.

Scholars address the perceptions of community members, students, teachers, principals, and superintendents on a wide range of educational issues. They seek

superintendents' perceptions on accountability, implementation of NCLB, and the MAG in general along with a number of topics unrelated to the MAG. However, while research exists on teachers' and principals' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG, none directly address superintendents' perceptions, nor do they provide suitable survey instruments to utilize for the purposes of this study. States hold superintendents accountable for the performance of their schools under NCLB, and they struggle to improve education and close the MAG; however, research studies addressing their perceptions that may help them achieve these goals are absent. Therefore, a need exists for a study to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This study is designed to examine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. This study codifies this information so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. This chapter provides a description of the research methodology for this study, including the research questions, research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and limitations.

#### Research Questions

Specifically, the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What do Georgia superintendents view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 2) What do Georgia superintendents view as proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 3) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 4) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 5) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?

- 6) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 7) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 8) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?

#### Research Design

This design of this study is descriptive, based on the perceptions of the respondents. Survey research methodology was utilized to answer the research questions posed in this study, which are intended to gather information regarding Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the MAG.

#### Population

The population of this study consists of the superintendents for each of the 180 public school districts in the state of Georgia during the 2007-2008 school year. Demographics analysis conducted for the Georgia superintendents indicate that, out of the 180 superintendents, 157 (87%) are white, 22 (12%) are black, and one (1%) is Hispanic. There are 138 (77%) superintendents who are male and 42 (23%) who are female.

These superintendents are policy makers in challenging high-stress, high-visibility positions. As chief executive officers of Georgia school districts, superintendents play a

major role in addressing all aspects of the MAG. The state holds Georgia superintendents accountable for the performance of their schools under NCLB, and they struggle to improve education and close the MAG. This study codifies this information so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG.

### Instrumentation

The study utilized a survey instrument developed by the author and reviewed for validity by a panel consisting of the author's dissertation committee members and two elementary school administrators. The survey contained 22 closed-ended Likert-scaled questions and 4 open-ended questions. The survey questions derived from the review of literature and addressed the research questions. While this study did not utilize a survey verbatim from similar studies researched, as discussed below, it did combine elements of some. The Likert-scaled questions asked for degree of agreement with 10 statements about possible causes of the MAG and 12 statements about proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The open-ended questions allowed the superintendents to elaborate their answers or state alternate viewpoints on their perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Additionally, the survey asked for demographic information including gender, race, years of experience as a school administrator, and geographic location. These surveys were sent to every current superintendent in the state of Georgia for the 2007-2008 school year as of October 2007.

Many scholars address the perceptions of community members, students, teachers, principals, and superintendents on a wide range of educational issues. Scholars seek superintendents' perceptions on accountability, implementation of NCLB, and the

MAG in general along with a number of topics unrelated to the MAG. However, while studies exist on teachers' and principals' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG, none directly address superintendents' perceptions, nor do they provide suitable survey instruments to utilize for the purposes of this study.

Several studies provided potential instruments considered for use in this study, but this study did not use them verbatim since they did not directly address the research questions posed in this study. The instrument, developed by the author, combines elements from these studies. Janufka's (2002) survey of administrators' perceptions of school performance profiles contained the instrument most suitable for this purpose. Principals and instructional leaders circled the response that best described their perceptions about a list of 24 statements, and they answered demographic questions regarding age, gender, and ethnicity (Janufka, 2002). The survey used in this study used a similar format, asking the superintendents to circle the response that best described their degree of agreement with a list of 22 statements. Additionally, Uhlenberg and Brown (2002) examined teachers' perceptions of the MAG with a relevant 20-item survey with this open-ended question: "Do you have any other thoughts or opinions you would like to share about the achievement gap?" The questions posed in that instrument were quite similar to the ones developed for this study; however, the questions fell into categories different from the ones in this study, so this study did not use it verbatim (Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). Another relevant instrument was a 30-question Likert-scaled survey on perceptions of variables that closed the MAG in selected North Carolina rural elementary schools (Little, 2004). School improvement team members were asked to determine their

perceptions of the extent to which certain variables that affected student achievement were in place at their schools, with one open-ended question: “What do you feel is the most important thing you do that helps close the Achievement Gap?” (Little, 2004) In an 86-item survey of 3,000 superintendents and 4,400 principals, Farkas et al. (2003) asked them what was needed to fix public schools with questions such as, “Which one of the following do you think is the most pressing issue facing your district these days?” and answer choices such as insufficient funding, lack of leadership, and NCLB implementation. While that instrument was helpful, it was too in-depth for the purposes of this study. The following studies used similar survey instruments or approaches to perceptions, but this study did not use them as a basis for the survey for the reasons noted. A Likert-scaled survey of secondary math teachers’ perceptions with three open-ended questions provided similar questions as to some aspects of the MAG, but it focused on a teacher’s perspective rather than a superintendent’s (Bol & Berry, 2005). Kimport (2005) asked for perceptions about education, but he surveyed community members, not educators, with a six-page survey regarding their own educational experiences as they related to their community. Curriculum leaders provided perceptions on a Likert-scaled survey regarding NCLB implementation, but the focus was on perceived versus actual impact on student achievement and had an opportunity for comment on every question (Manning, 2005). Finally, Kelly (2006) addressed middle school teachers’ perceptions about the factors that contributed to the MAG, but used a series of interviews and observations rather than a survey.

As shown in Appendix G, the research questions are supported both by the open-ended and close-end questions, as well as by the literature. The Likert-scaled questions

asked for degree of agreement with 10 statements about possible causes of the MAG and 12 statements about proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The responses were scaled from strongly agree to strongly disagree and were valued as 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree. Statements on possible causes of the MAG included items such as lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, and low SES. For example, survey question 5 was, “Negative peer pressure causes some groups of students to not want to do well in school.” Statements on proposed remedies included items such as increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, and more preschool. For example, survey question 16 was, “Better classroom instruction is a solution for closing the MAG.”

#### Data Collection

Before the author sent the survey forms for data collection, he obtained the necessary permission from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix A). The author sent the survey to the 180 participants via U.S. mail with an informed consent cover letter (see Appendix B) and a self-addressed and stamped return envelope, which gave the author’s information on the return of address to ensure confidentiality. The cover letter ensured all respondents of the confidentiality of the data. No individuals were identified in the study. The author requested a 14-day deadline for completion. The author indicated in the cover letter that he planned to send an abstract of the results to the superintendents via e-mail once the study was completed. To help facilitate timely responses, the author reminded participants via e-mail for receipt of completed surveys at 7 days. After approximately 45 days, the author compiled the

results from the 80 completed surveys received. The response rate was 44% (80 out of 180).

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was both quantitative (for analysis the 22 Likert-scaled items) and qualitative (for summary of the four open-ended questions). Different sets of survey items were used to answer each of the research questions; therefore, results were analyzed and organized by research question. The quantitative analyses addressed perceptions of possible causes, proposed remedies, and how they related to race and gender of the participants. The qualitative analysis classified and summarized the open-ended questions by short answer topic as well as with notation of specific quotes relevant to the research questions.

While survey question 1, “I feel well informed about the MAG issue,” was not used to answer a specific research question, it was included to begin the survey and to obtain the overall perception of how well informed the superintendents felt about the issue. Responses to survey items 2 through 10 and 23 through 24 were used to answer research question 1, “What do Georgia superintendents’ view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?” Responses to survey items 11 through 22 and 25 through 26 were used to answer research question 2, “What do Georgia superintendents’ view as proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?” Descriptive statistics were used to provide mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies of the responses to all of the quantitative survey items 1 through 22.

Research question 3 examined to what extent there are racial differences in Georgia superintendents’ perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the

survey demographic questions was used to determine race of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 that related to possible causes of the MAG. Research question 4 examined to what extent there are racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine race of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 that related to possible remedies of the MAG. Descriptive statistics were used to provide mean scores, standard deviations, and frequencies of the responses to all of the quantitative survey items 1 through 22.

Research question 5 examined to what extent there are gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine gender of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 that related to possible causes of the MAG. Research question 6 examined to what extent there are gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine gender of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 relating to possible remedies of the MAG. An independent t-test was used to examine for statistically significant gender differences for survey questions 2 through 22.

Research question 7 examined to what extent years of experience as a school administrator are associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine years of experience as a school administrator of the respondents, which was then

analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 relating to possible causes of the MAG. Research question 8 examined to what extent years of experience as a school administrator are associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine years of experience as a school administrator of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 relating to proposed remedies for closing the MAG. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and each of survey questions 2 through 22.

### Summary

This chapter provided a description of the research methodology for this study, including the research questions, research design, participants, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and limitations. In this study, a survey was administered to the superintendents of each of the 180 Georgia public school districts, in accordance with all research protocols from the IRB.

The survey instrument created by the author examined the Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The survey, with 22 closed-ended Likert scale items and 4 open-ended questions, was used to collect the research data. Also presented were explanations of how the survey data was analyzed.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap (MAG). The study also codifies this information so that it is available to all superintendents and administrators interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. The study utilizes a survey instrument with 22 closed-ended Likert-scaled questions and 4 open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed the superintendents to elaborate their answers or state alternate viewpoints. Additionally, the survey asked for demographic information including gender, race, years of experience as a school administrator, and geographic location. These surveys were sent to every current public school district superintendent in the state of Georgia for the 2007-2008 school year, as of October 2007. The total survey response rate was 44% (80 out of 180).

The population in this study consists of the superintendents for each of the 180 public school districts in the state of Georgia during the 2007-2008 school year. Out of the 180 superintendents, 157 (87%) are white, 22 (12%) are black, and one (1%) is Hispanic. There are 138 (77%) superintendents who are male and 42 (23%) who are female.

Eighty superintendents returned a completed survey. The response rate was 44% (80 out of 180). The demographics of the respondents differed from the overall population. Out of the 80 respondents, 75 (94%) were white, 3 (4%) were black, and 2 (3%) chose not to identify their race. There were 59 (74%) respondents who were male,

20 (25%) who were female, and one (1%) who chose not to identify gender. Compared to the overall population of 23 minority superintendents, only 13% responded to the survey, while 48% of white superintendents responded. Compared to the overall population of 138 male superintendents, only 59 (43%) responded, while 47% of female superintendents responded.

The study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What do Georgia superintendents view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 2) What do Georgia superintendents view as proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 3) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 4) To what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 5) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?
- 6) To what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?
- 7) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the minority achievement gap?

- 8) To what extent are years of experience as a school administrator associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?

Different sets of survey items were used to answer each of the research questions; therefore, results were analyzed and organized by research question. Descriptive statistics were used to provide mean scores and standard deviations of the responses to all of the quantitative survey items, with responses rated as Strongly Agree (1), Agree (2), Neutral (3), Disagree (4), and Strongly Disagree (5).

#### Views of Possible Causes: Quantitative Data

Responses to the following quantitative survey items were used to answer research question 1, "What do Georgia superintendents view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?" Table 1 details the results for survey items relating to views of possible causes.

2. The MAG is a result of historical segregation.
3. The location of schools (urban, suburban, or rural) plays a role in the MAG.
4. Lack of minority access to quality schools is a cause of the MAG.
5. Lack of student effort is a cause of the MAG (student is unmotivated and does not try).
6. Negative peer pressure causes some groups of students to not want to do well in school.
7. Low socioeconomic status (SES) is a cause of the MAG.
8. Lack of parental involvement is a cause of the MAG.

9. Teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups are a cause of the MAG.
10. Standardized testing contributes to the MAG because it does not accurately measure what some students know and can do.

While survey question 1, “I feel well informed about the MAG issue,” was not used to answer a specific research question, it was included to begin the survey and to obtain the overall perception of how well informed the superintendents felt about the issue. Of the 80 superintendents who responded, 33.8% of them strongly agreed and 58.8% of them agreed that they felt well informed about the MAG. Only 5% of them felt neutral and 2.5% of them disagreed they felt well informed about the MAG.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 2, 22.5% of them agreed that the MAG was a result of historical segregation and 20% of them felt neutral. Only 7.5% strongly disagreed and 48.8% disagreed that the MAG was a result of historical segregation. The mean response was 3.40, with a standard deviation of .936.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 3, 6.3% of them strongly agreed and 40% of them agreed that the location of schools played a role in the MAG. While 18.8% of them felt neutral, only 3.8% strongly disagreed and 30% disagreed that the location of schools played a role in the MAG. The mean response was 2.84, with a standard deviation of 1.049.

Of the 79 superintendents who responded to survey question 4, 2.5% of them strongly agreed and 26.6% of them agreed that lack of minority access to quality schools was a cause of the MAG. Only 13.9% of them felt neutral, while 17.7% of them strongly disagreed and 39.2% of them disagreed that lack of minority access to quality schools

was a cause of the MAG. The mean response was 3.42, with a standard deviation of 1.161.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 5, 7.6% of them strongly agreed and 46.8% of them agreed that lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG. While 19% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed and 24.1% of them disagreed that lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG. The mean response was 2.66, with a standard deviation of 1.006.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 6, 17.5% of them strongly agreed and 70% of them agreed that negative peer pressure caused some groups of students to not want to do well in school. While 7.5% of them felt neutral, only 5% disagreed that negative peer pressure caused some groups of students to not want to do well in school. The mean response was 2.00, with a standard deviation of .675.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 7, 30% of them strongly agreed and 46.3% of them agreed that low SES was a cause of the MAG. Only 5% of them felt neutral, while 8.8% strongly disagreed and 10% of them disagreed that low SES was a cause of the MAG. The mean response was 2.21, with a standard deviation of 1.229.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 8, 31.3% of them strongly agreed and 57.5% of them agreed that lack of parental involvement was a cause of the MAG. While 3.8% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed and 5% of them disagreed that lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG. The mean response was 1.90, with a standard deviation of .880.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 9, 17.5% of them strongly agreed and 56.3% of them agreed that teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG. While 7.5% of them felt neutral, only 3.8% strongly disagreed and 15% of them disagreed that teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG. The mean response was 2.31, with a standard deviation of 1.051.

Of the 79 superintendents who responded to survey question 10, 1.3% of them strongly agreed and 35% of them agreed that standardized testing contributes to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do. While 15% of them felt neutral, only 6.3% strongly disagreed and 42.5% of them disagreed that standardized testing contributes to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do. The mean response was 3.18, with a standard deviation of 1.028.

*Table 1, Superintendents' Views of Possible Causes of the MAG*

<i>Possible Causes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Parental involvement	80	1.90	.880
Peer pressure	80	2.00	.675
Low SES	80	2.21	1.229
Teacher expectations	80	2.31	1.051
Student effort	80	2.66	1.006
Location of schools	80	2.84	1.049
Standardized testing	79	3.18	1.028
Segregation	80	3.40	.936
Minority access	79	3.42	1.161

Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Views of Possible Causes: Qualitative Data

Responses to the following qualitative survey items were used to answer research question 1, “What do Georgia superintendents’ view as possible causes of the minority achievement gap?”

23. Write your own perceptions of the causes of the MAG.

24. What is the single biggest cause of the MAG?

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to the survey, 62 chose to answer open-ended survey question 23, indicating 170 perceptions of possible causes of the MAG. They listed 32 unique items, with low SES receiving 28 references (16%). Respondents cited low teacher expectations 23 times (14%), while they indicated lack of parental involvement 18 times (11%). Superintendents mentioned environment and low parental expectations 12 times (7%), followed by peer pressure at 11(6%), low student expectations with 9 (5%), and no preschool with 6 (4%).

The respondents presented some possible causes not directly addressed in the survey questions, such as teen pregnancy, parental drug use, the welfare system, and genetics. Notable comments included the following:

1. “Parents do not have a high regard of education, therefore their children do not place importance on school,”
2. “Low socioeconomic level of the family and related problems associated with poverty-not race,”
3. “It is a result... the soft bias of lowered expectations,”
4. “No achievement gap – opportunity gap!”
5. “Lack of understanding of culture differences and issues of poverty,”

6. “It is closing due to hard work on everyone’s part,”
7. “Too many generations of low achievement,” and
8. “Lack of policies encouraging marriage.”

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to the survey, 64 chose to answer open-ended survey question 24, indicating 101 perceptions of the single biggest cause of the MAG. They listed 20 unique items, with low SES receiving 20 references (20%). Respondents cited low teacher expectations 18 times (18%), while they indicated lack of parental involvement 16 times (16%). Superintendents mentioned low parental expectations 11 times (11%), followed by environment at 6 (6%), peer pressure at 5 (5%), and low societal expectations at 3 (3%).

The respondents again presented items not directly mentioned in the survey as possible causes of the MAG, including loss of hope, few role models, apathy, and low societal expectations. Some quotable answers included the following:

1. “Cycle of failure-student concerned with the perception of peers if he/she aspired to do well academically,”
2. “Generational poverty,”
3. “Awareness,”
4. “Very few at home pushing high achievement,” and
5. “Generally children of parents who have attended college tend to place a higher value on a good education.”

#### Views of Proposed Remedies: Quantitative Data

Responses to the following quantitative survey items were used to answer research question 2, “What do Georgia superintendents view as proposed remedies for

closing the minority achievement gap?" Table 2 details the results for survey items relating to views of proposed remedies.

11. Strict accountability is a solution for closing the MAG.
12. Accountability efforts such as NCLB expect too much too fast.
13. Efforts to close the MAG are hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements.
14. Increasing teacher expectations is a solution for closing the MAG.
15. Increased teacher sensitivity is a solution for closing the MAG.
16. Better classroom instruction is a solution for closing the MAG.
17. More preschool/early learning initiatives is a solution for closing the MAG.
18. More available tutoring, after-school programs and summer school are solutions for closing the MAG.
19. Increased parental involvement is a solution for closing the MAG.
20. Higher family SES positively impacts minority student achievement.
21. Re-integration is a solution for closing the MAG. (Re-integration is adjusting the minority-majority student ratio within a school to reflect the ratio in the community.)
22. More effective leadership of school officials is a solution for closing the MAG.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 11, 2.5% of them strongly agreed and 50% of them agreed that strict accountability was a solution to the MAG. While 17.5% of them felt neutral, only 5% strongly disagreed and 25% of them disagreed that strict accountability was a solution to the MAG. The mean response was 2.80, with a standard deviation of 1.011.

Of the 79 superintendents who responded to survey question 12 (there was one “no response”), 12.5% of them strongly agreed and 47.5% of them agreed that accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much, too fast. While 11.3% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed and 25% of them disagreed that accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much, too fast. The mean response was 2.57, with a standard deviation of 1.082.

Of the 79 superintendents who responded to survey question 13 (there was one “no response”), 8.8% of them strongly agreed, and 50% of them agreed that efforts to close the MAG were hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements. While 20% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed and 17.5% of them disagreed that efforts to close the MAG were hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements. The mean response was 2.54, with a standard deviation of .971.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 14, 21.3% of them strongly agreed and 67.5% of them agreed that increased teacher expectations was a solution for closing the MAG. While 5% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed, and 3.8% of them disagreed, that increased teacher expectations was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.99, with a standard deviation of .803.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 15, 12.5% of them strongly agreed and 72.5% of them agreed that increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG. While 6.3% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed and 6.3% of them disagreed that increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 2.14, with a standard deviation of .807.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 16, 43.8% of them strongly agreed and 52.5% of them agreed that better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG. Only 1.3% of them felt neutral, while 2.5% disagreed that better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.62, with a standard deviation of .644.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 17, 43.8% of them strongly agreed and 47.5% of them agreed that more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG. While 6.3% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% disagreed that more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.70, with a standard deviation of .736.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 18, 31.3% of them strongly agreed and 51.3% of them agreed that more available tutoring, after-school programs, and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG. While 10% of them felt neutral, only 7.5% disagreed that more available tutoring, after-school programs, and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.95, with a standard deviation of .870.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 19, 50% of them strongly agreed and 46.3% of them agreed that increased parental involvement was a

solution for closing the MAG. While 2.5% of them felt neutral, only 1.3% disagreed that increased parental involvement was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.55, with a standard deviation of .614.

Of the 79 superintendents who responded to survey question 20, 35% of them strongly agreed and 48.8% of them agreed that higher family SES positively impacted minority student achievement. While 7.5% of them felt neutral, only 1.3% strongly disagreed and 6.3% of them disagreed that higher family SES positively impacted minority student achievement. The mean response was 1.89, with a standard deviation of .891.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 21, only 10% of them agreed that re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG. While 28.8% of them felt neutral, 16.3% strongly disagreed, and 45% of them disagreed, that re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 3.68, with a standard deviation of .868.

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to survey question 22, 25% of them strongly agreed and 62.5% of them agreed that more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG. While 7.5% of them felt neutral, only 2.5% strongly disagreed, and another 2.5% of them disagreed, that more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG. The mean response was 1.95, with a standard deviation of .810.

*Table 2, Superintendents' Views of Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG*

<i>Proposed Remedies</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Increased parental involvement	80	1.55	.614
Better classroom instruction	80	1.62	.644
More preschool, early learning	80	1.70	.736
Higher SES	79	1.89	.891
Tutoring, after/summer school	80	1.95	.870
Leadership	80	1.95	.810
Increased teacher expectations	80	1.99	.803
Increased teacher sensitivity	80	2.14	.807
Competing agendas	79	2.54	.971
Accountability- too much, too fast	79	2.57	1.082
Strict accountability	80	2.80	1.011
Re-integration	80	3.68	.868

Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Views of Proposed Remedies: Qualitative Data

Responses to the following qualitative survey items were used to answer research question 2, “What do Georgia superintendents’ view as proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap?”

25. Write your own perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

26. What solution to closing the MAG do you think would get the best results?

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to the survey, 57 chose to answer open-ended survey question 25, indicating 122 perceptions of the proposed remedies of the MAG. They listed 32 unique items, with increased teacher expectations receiving 18 references (15%). Respondents cited increased parental involvement 15 times (12%), while they indicated preschool 11 times (9%). Superintendents mentioned better classroom instruction 8 times (7%), followed by accountability at 7 (6%), tutoring/after-school at 6 (5%), and community involvement at 5 (4%).

The respondents proposed remedies for closing the MAG not directly addressed in the survey, such as vocational track, uniforms, smaller schools, and mentoring. Only one listed increased student effort as a proposed remedy. Notable comments included the following:

1. “Take the child at age three and educate them,”
2. “When all is said and fussed about, it comes down to the classroom teacher!”
3. “No excuses,”
4. “Too scattered, too blame oriented. Does not address root causes,”
5. “We should be asking whether we want to close the gap or ensure annual growth for all children,”

6. “No quick fix. Has taken generations to get what we now have,” and
7. “I’m not certain that there is a remedy. It is not a thing that can be done to someone, they have to want it themselves.”

Of the 80 superintendents who responded to the survey, 57 chose to answer open-ended survey question 26, indicating 89 proposed solutions to the MAG. They listed 26 unique items, with increased parental involvement receiving 11 references (12%). Respondents cited pre-school 10 times (11%), while they indicated increased teacher sensitivity 9 times (10%). Superintendents mentioned better classroom instruction 8 times (9%), followed by increased teacher expectations at 8 (9%), improved teacher quality at 7 (8%), and tutoring/after-school at 7 (8%).

The respondents again proposed remedies for closing the MAG not directly addressed in the survey, including personal responsibility, pay incentives to attract quality teachers to troubled schools, increased funding, and all male classes. Quotable answers included:

1. “Parents must buy in to efforts. Attitudes and values determine success and failure,”
2. “Closing the gap between what is lacking at home and needed at school,”
3. “economic opportunity,”
4. : “Quality preschool for all children, especially those in poverty. Greater access to pre-natal health care for poor mothers and parenting skills training,”
5. “Leadership – leadership, and leadership,”
6. “... Society must learn to treasure an education, not reward someone simply for athletic ability as a superior being,” and
7. “If there were a quick fix, we would not have a MAG.”

Overall quantitative survey responses agreeing with possible causes of the MAG were more concentrated than for proposed remedies, with a mean of 1.90 for parental involvement as a possible cause, followed by peer pressure with a mean of 2.00. However, responses agreeing with proposed remedies showed the superintendents felt more strongly about remedies, with a mean of 1.55 for increased parental involvement as a proposed remedy, followed by better classroom instruction with a mean of 1.62 and more preschool with a mean of 1.70. More proposed remedies met with stronger agreement than did possible causes.

#### Race and Perceptions of Possible Causes

Research question 3 examined to what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine race of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 relating to possible causes of the MAG. Of the 78 superintendents who responded to questions 2 through 10 (2 chose not to respond), 75 were white and 3 were black. An independent t-test was not used to examine for statistically significant race differences given that there were only three black respondents. Still, responses were analyzed by their mean and standard deviation as well as percentage. Table 3 details the results for survey items relating to race and perceptions of possible causes.

For survey question 2, the mean of 3.67 for black respondents was slightly higher than that of white respondents with a mean of 3.36, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .939 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 25.3% of white respondents

compared to 0% of black respondents agreed that the MAG was a result of historical segregation.

For survey question 3, the mean of 2.83 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 2.33, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.528 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of 1.018. Although the means were similar, 33.3% of black respondents compared to 5.3% of white respondents strongly agreed that the location of schools played a role in the MAG.

For survey question 4, the mean of 3.41 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 3.00, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.164 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of 1.000. Although the means were similar, 17.3% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed that the lack of minority access to quality schools was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 5, the mean of 2.69 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 2.33, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.528 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of 1.000. Although the means were similar, 33.3% of black respondents compared to 6.7% of white respondents strongly agreed that lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 6, the mean of 2.03 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.33, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .677 compared to black respondents with a standard

deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 66.7% of black respondents compared to 16.0% of white respondents strongly agreed that negative peer pressure caused some groups of students to not want to do well in school.

For survey question 7, the mean of 2.33 for black respondents was slightly higher than that of white respondents with a mean of 2.19, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.528 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of 1.193. Although the means were similar, 33.3% of black respondents compared to 9.3% of white respondents disagreed that low SES was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 8, the mean of 1.87 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .827 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 6.6% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly agreed or agreed that lack of parental involvement was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 9, the mean of 2.31 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.026 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 18.7% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly agreed or agreed that teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 10, the mean of 3.33 for black respondents was slightly higher than that of white respondents with a mean of 3.13, while black respondents

showed a higher standard deviation of 1.155 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of 1.018. Although the means were similar, 66.7% of black respondents compared to 41.3% of white respondents disagreed that standardized testing contributed to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do.

*Table 3, Race and Perceptions of Possible Causes of the MAG*

<i>Possible causes</i>	<i>Respondent's Race</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Parental involvement	White	75	1.87	.827
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Peer pressure	White	75	2.03	.677
	Black	3	1.33	.577
Low SES	White	75	2.19	1.193
	Black	3	2.33	1.528
Teacher expectations	White	75	2.31	1.026
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Student effort	White	75	2.69	1.000
	Black	3	2.33	1.528
Location of schools	White	75	2.83	1.018
	Black	3	2.33	1.528
Standardized testing	White	75	3.13	1.018
	Black	3	3.33	1.155
Segregation	White	75	3.36	.939
	Black	3	3.67	.577
Minority access	White	75	3.41	1.164
	Black	3	3.00	1.000

Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Race and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies

Research question 4 examined to what extent are there racial differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine race of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 relating to possible remedies of the MAG. Of the 78 superintendents who responded to questions 11 and 14 through 22 (2 chose not to respond), 75 were white and 3 were black. Only 77 superintendents responded to questions 12 and 13; 74 were white and 3 were black. An independent t-test was not used to examine for statistically significant race differences given that there were only three black respondents. Still, responses were analyzed by their mean and standard deviation as well as percentage. Table 4 details the results for survey items relating to race and perceptions of proposed remedies.

For survey question 11, the mean of 2.84 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 2.33, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.027 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 31.6% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that strict accountability was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 12, the mean of 2.57 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 2.33, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.528 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of 1.074. Although the means were similar, 33.3% of black

respondents compared to 12.2% of white respondents strongly agreed that accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much too fast.

For survey question 13, the mean of 2.54 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .954 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 100% of black respondents compared to 59.5% of white respondents strongly agreed or agreed that efforts to close the MAG were hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements.

For survey question 14, the mean of 2.01 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .814 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 6.7% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that increased teacher expectations was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 15, the mean of 2.15 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 2.00, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .833 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .0000. Although the means were similar, 9.4% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 16, the mean of 1.64 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.33, while white respondents

showed a higher standard deviation of .650 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 66.6% of black respondents compared to 42.7% of white respondents strongly agreed that better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 17, the mean of 1.69 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.155 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of .735. Although the means were similar, 92% of white respondents compared to 66.7% of black respondents strongly agreed or agreed that more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 18, the mean of 1.96 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .892 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 9.3% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents disagreed that more available tutoring, after-school programs, and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG.

For survey question 19 the mean of 1.67 for black respondents was slightly higher than that of white respondents with a mean of 1.53, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .622 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 4% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents disagreed or were neutral that increased parental involvement was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 20, the mean of 1.91 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .903 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 8% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed or agreed that higher family SES positively impacted minority student achievement.

For survey question 21, the mean of 4.00 for black respondents was slightly higher than that of white respondents with a mean of 3.64, while black respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.000 compared to white respondents with a standard deviation of .864. Although the means were similar, 10.7% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents agreed that re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 22, the mean of 1.96 for white respondents was slightly higher than that of black respondents with a mean of 1.67, while white respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .813 compared to black respondents with a standard deviation of .577. Although the means were similar, 5.4% of white respondents compared to 0% of black respondents strongly disagreed or agreed that more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG.

*Table 4, Race and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG*

<i>Proposed Remedies</i>	<i>Respondent's Race</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Increased parental involvement	White	75	1.53	.622
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Better classroom instruction	White	75	1.64	.650
	Black	3	1.33	.577
More preschool, early learning	White	75	1.69	.735
	Black	3	1.67	1.155
Higher SES	White	75	1.91	.903
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Tutoring, after/summer school	White	75	1.96	.892
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Leadership	White	75	1.96	.813
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Increased teacher expectations	White	75	2.01	.814
	Black	3	1.67	.577
Increased teacher sensitivity	White	75	2.15	.833
	Black	3	2.00	.000
Competing agendas	White	74	2.54	.954
	Black	3	1.67	.577

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Accountability- too much, too fast	White	74	2.57	1.074
	Black	3	2.33	1.528
Strict accountability	White	75	2.84	1.027
	Black	3	2.33	.577
Re-integration	White	75	3.64	.864
	Black	3	4.00	1.000

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Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Gender and Perceptions of Possible Causes

Research question 5 examined to what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine gender of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 relating to possible causes of the MAG. Of the 79 superintendents who responded to questions 2 through 10 (1 chose not to respond), 59 were male and 20 were female. Independent t-tests were used to examine for statistically significant gender differences. In addition, responses were analyzed by their mean and standard deviation as well as percentage. Table 5 details the results for survey items relating to gender and perceptions of possible causes.

For survey question 2, the mean of 3.40 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 3.39, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .983 compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .821. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.042, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 10.2% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed that the MAG was a result of historical segregation.

For survey question 3, the mean of 3.00 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 2.78, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.068, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of 1.026. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.805, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar,

8.5% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly agreed that the location of schools played a role in the MAG.

For survey question 4, the mean of 3.44 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 3.35, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.178, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of 1.137. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .300, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 50.0% of female respondents compared to 35.6% of male respondents disagreed that lack of minority access to quality schools was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 5, the mean of 3.10 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 2.53, while female respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.119, compared to male respondents with a standard deviation of .935. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -2.257, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 45% of female respondents compared to 16.9% of male respondents disagreed that a lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 6, the mean of 2.02 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 1.95, while female respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .759, compared to male respondents with a standard deviation of .656. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .379, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 72.9% of male respondents compared to 60% of female respondents agreed that negative peer pressure caused some groups of students to not want to do well in school.

For survey question 7, the mean of 2.40 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 2.17, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.262, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of 1.142. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.722, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 33.9% of male respondents compared to 15% of female respondents strongly agreed that low SES was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 8, the mean of 1.95 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 1.88, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .966, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .605. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.298, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 80% of female respondents compared to 49.2% of male respondents strongly agreed that lack of parental involvement was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 9, the mean of 2.34 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 2.25, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.092, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .967. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .324, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 65.5% of female respondents compared to 52.5% of male respondents agreed that teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 10, the mean of 3.19 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 3.10, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.042, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of 1.021. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .322, p > .005$ ). The means were very similar, 49.2% of male respondents compared to 45% of female respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that standardized testing contributed to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do.

*Table 5, Gender and Perceptions of Possible Causes of the MAG*

<i>Possible Causes</i>	<i>Respondent's Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Parental involvement	Male	59	1.88	.966
	Female	20	1.95	.605
Peer pressure	Male	59	2.02	.656
	Female	20	1.95	.759
Low SES	Male	59	2.17	1.262
	Female	20	2.40	1.142
Teacher expectations	Male	59	2.34	1.092
	Female	20	2.25	.967
Student effort	Male	59	2.53	.935
	Female	20	3.10	1.119
Location of schools	Male	59	2.78	1.068
	Female	20	3.00	1.026
Standardized testing	Male	59	3.19	1.042
	Female	20	3.10	1.021

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Segregation	Male	59	3.39	.983
	Female	20	3.40	.821
Minority access	Male	59	3.44	1.178
	Female	20	3.35	1.137

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\*An independent t-test yielded no significant differences in mean responses.

Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Gender and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies

Research question 6 examined to what extent are there gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine gender of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 relating to possible remedies of the MAG. Of the 79 superintendents who responded to questions 11 and 14 through 22 (1 chose not to respond), 59 were male and 20 were female. Only 78 superintendents responded to questions 12 and 13 (2 chose not to respond); 59 were male and 19 were female. Independent t-tests were used to examine for statistically significant gender differences. In addition, responses were analyzed by their mean and standard deviation as well as percentage. Table 6 details the results for survey items relating to gender and perceptions of proposed remedies.

For survey question 11, the mean of 2.88 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 2.60, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.052, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .883. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = 1.074, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 6.8% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed that strict accountability was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 12, the mean of 2.84 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 2.49, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of 1.089, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of 1.068. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant

difference between gender ( $t(76) = -1.226, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 42.1% of female respondents compared to 20.3% of male respondents disagreed that accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much, too fast.

For survey question 13, the mean of 2.54 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 2.47, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .988, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .905. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(76) = .269, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 3.4% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed that efforts to close the MAG were hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements.

For survey question 14, the mean of 2.05 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 1.97, while female respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .826, compared to male respondents with a standard deviation of .809. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.399, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 75% of female respondents compared to 64.4% of male respondents agreed that increased teacher expectations was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 15, the mean of 2.19 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 2.00, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .861, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .649. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .886, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 3.4% of male

respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed that increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 16, the mean of 1.63 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 1.60, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .692, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .503. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .161, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 60% of female respondents compared to 49.2% of male respondents agreed that better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 17, the mean of 1.73 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 1.60, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .784, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .598. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .670, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 5.1% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents disagreed that more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 18, the mean of 2.08 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 1.55, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .934, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .510. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = 2.434, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 45% of female respondents compared to 27.1% of male respondents strongly agreed that more

available tutoring; after-school programs and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG.

For survey question 19, the mean of 1.60 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 1.53, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .653, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .503. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -.466, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 60% of female respondents compared to 40.7% of male respondents strongly agreed that increased parental involvement was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 20, the mean of 2.25 for female respondents was slightly higher than that of male respondents with a mean of 1.76, while female respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .910, compared to male respondents with a standard deviation of .858. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = -2.162, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 42.4% of male respondents compared to 15% of female respondents strongly agreed that higher SES positively impacted minority student achievement.

For survey question 21, the mean of 3.73 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 3.50, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .925, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .688. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = 1.013, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 22% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 22, the mean of 1.98 for male respondents was slightly higher than that of female respondents with a mean of 1.80, while male respondents showed a higher standard deviation of .881, compared to female respondents with a standard deviation of .523. Based on an independent t-test, there was no significant difference between gender ( $t(77) = .876, p > .005$ ). Although the means were similar, 6.8% of male respondents compared to 0% of female respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed that more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG.

*Table 6, Gender and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG*

<i>Proposed Remedies</i>	<i>Respondent's Race</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean*</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Increased parental involvement	Male	59	1.53	.653
	Female	20	1.60	.503
Better classroom instruction	Male	59	1.63	.692
	Female	20	1.60	.503
More preschool, early learning	Male	59	1.73	.784
	Female	20	1.60	.598
Higher SES	Male	59	1.76	.858
	Female	20	2.25	.910
Increased teacher expectations	Male	59	1.97	.809
	Female	20	2.05	.826
Leadership	Male	59	1.98	.881
	Female	20	1.80	.523
Tutoring, after/summer school	Male	59	2.08	.934
	Female	20	1.55	.510
Increased teacher sensitivity	Male	59	2.19	.861
	Female	20	2.00	.649

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Accountability- too much, too fast	Male	59	2.49	1.089
	Female	19	2.84	1.068
Competing agendas	Male	59	2.54	.988
	Female	19	2.47	.905
Strict accountability	Male	59	2.88	1.052
	Female	20	2.60	.883
Re-integration	Male	59	3.73	.925
	Female	20	3.50	.688

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\*An independent t-test yielded no significant differences in mean responses.

Scale values: 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree

### Years of Experience and Perceptions of Possible Causes

Research question 7 examined to what extent years of experience as a school administrator are associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine years of experience as a school administrator of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 2 through 10 relating to possible causes of the MAG. Of the 79 superintendents who responded to the question (1 chose not to respond), one had 0-5 years of experience, four had 6-10 years of experience, seven had 11-15 years of experience, 12 had 16-20 years of experience, and 55 had 20+ years of experience. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and each of survey questions 2 through 10. Table 7 details the results for survey items relating to years of experience and perceptions of possible causes.

For survey question 2, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether the MAG was a result of historical segregation. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .030, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether the MAG was a result of historical segregation.

For survey question 3, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether the location of schools played a role in the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.075, p > .05$ ). Years of

experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether the location of schools played a role in the MAG.

For survey question 4, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether the lack of minority access to quality schools was a cause of the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .009, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether the lack of minority access to quality schools was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 5, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether the lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.218, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether the lack of student effort was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 6, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether negative peer pressure caused some groups of students to not want to do well in school. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.184, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether negative peer pressure causes some groups of students to not want to do well in school.

For survey question 7, Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and

their perception whether low SES was a cause of the MAG. A weak negative correlation was found ( $r(78) = -.237, p < .05$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. The more years of experience the superintendents had, the more they tended to agree that low SES was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 8, Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether a lack of parental involvement was a cause of the MAG. A weak negative correlation was found ( $r(78) = -.234, p < .05$ ), indicating a significant relationship between the two variables. The more years of experience the superintendents had, the more they tended to agree that lack of parental involvement was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 9, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .015, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups was a cause of the MAG.

For survey question 10, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether standardized testing contributed to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do. A weak correlation that

was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.116, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether standardized testing contributed to the MAG because it did not accurately measure what some students knew and could do.

*Table 7, Years of Experience and Perceptions of Possible Causes of the MAG*

<i>Possible Causes</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (2 tailed)</i>
Segregation	.030	.792
Location of schools	-.075	.512
Minority access	.009	.935
Student effort	-.218	.053
Peer pressure	-.184	.104
Low SES	-.237*	.036
Parental involvement	-.234*	.038
Teacher expectations	.015	.893
Standardized testing	-.116	.307

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

### Years of Experience and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies

Research question 8 examined to what extent years of experience as a school administrator are associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies of the MAG. One of the survey demographic questions was used to determine years of experience as a school administrator of the respondents, which was then analyzed with survey questions 11 through 22 relating to proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Of the 79 superintendents who responded to questions 11 and 14 through 22 (1 chose not to respond), one had 0-5 years of experience, four had 6-10 years of experience, seven had 11-15 years of experience, 12 had 16-20 years of experience, and 55 had 20+ years of experience. Of the 78 superintendents who responded to questions 12 and 13, one had 0-5 years of experience, four had 6-10 years of experience, six had 11-15 years of experience, 12 had 16-20 years of experience, and 55 had 20+ years of experience. A Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and each of survey questions 11 through 22. Table 8 details the results for survey items relating to years of experience and perceptions of proposed remedies.

For survey question 11, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether strict accountability was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.169, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether strict accountability was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 12, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much, too fast. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.077, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether accountability efforts such as NCLB expected too much, too fast.

For survey question 13, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether efforts to close the MAG are hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.047, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator are not related to their perception whether efforts to close the MAG are hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements.

For survey question 14, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether increased teacher expectations was a solution to closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.028, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether increased teacher expectations was a solution to closing the MAG.

For survey question 15, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.044, p > .05$ ).

Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether increased teacher sensitivity was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 16, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .067, p > .05$ ).

Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether better classroom instruction was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 17, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .079, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether more preschool/early learning initiatives was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 18, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether more available tutoring, after-school programs and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .064, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether more available tutoring, after-school programs, and summer school were solutions for closing the MAG.

For survey question 19, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator

and their perception whether increased parental involvement was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.151, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether increased parental involvement was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 20, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether higher family SES positively impacted minority student achievement. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = -.109, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether higher family SES positively impacted minority student achievement.

For survey question 21, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .150, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether re-integration was a solution for closing the MAG.

For survey question 22, a Spearman *rho* correlation coefficient was calculated for the relationship between the respondents' years of experience as a school administrator and their perception whether more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG. A weak correlation that was not significant was found ( $r(78) = .074, p > .05$ ). Years of experience as an administrator were not related to their perception whether more effective leadership of school officials was a solution for closing the MAG.

*Table 8, Years and Perceptions of Proposed Remedies to Closing the MAG*

<i>Proposed Remedies</i>	<i>Correlation coefficient</i>	<i>Sig. (2 tailed)</i>
Strict accountability	-.169	.136
Accountability- too much, too fast	-.077	.503
Competing agendas	-.047	.685
Increased teacher expectations	-.028	.809
Increased teacher sensitivity	-.044	.702
Better classroom instruction	.067	.556
More preschool, early learning	.079	.488
Tutoring, after/summer school	.064	.575
Increased parental involvement	-.151	.183
Higher SES	-.109	.340
Re-integration	.150	.187
Leadership	.074	.519

## Summary

A survey instrument was sent to Georgia superintendents examining their perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The total survey response rate was 44% (80 out of 180).

Based on the quantitative survey results, most superintendents who responded agreed with the cited possible causes of the MAG, including lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and teacher expectations. Exceptions included standardized testing, segregation, and minority access to quality schools as possible causes of the MAG, with which the superintendents generally disagreed. They also tended to agree with the cited proposed remedies for closing the MAG, including increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning initiatives, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES. One exception included re-integration as a proposed remedy for closing the MAG, with which the superintendents generally disagreed.

Most superintendents who responded to the qualitative survey questions indicated either low SES or low teacher expectations as possible causes of the MAG and either increased teacher expectations or increased parental involvement as proposed remedies of the MAG. Their comments included reflections on parental values, poverty, opportunity, culture, society, and the lack of a “quick fix.”

Although statistically significant race differences were not examined because of the low number of black respondents, analyses of the means and standard deviations indicated little variation by race in each of the survey responses. When analyzed by gender, the superintendents’ responses indicated no significant difference between

genders. Finally, the more years of experience the superintendents had, the more they tended to agree that low SES and lack of parental involvement were possible causes of the MAG. No other responses were significant regarding years of experience as a school administrator. All correlations were low in absolute value.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study is to determine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of both the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The study also codifies this information so that it is available to all superintendents and administrators interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. The study utilized a survey instrument with both closed-ended and open-ended questions about perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG, building on the educator perceptions research of Ferguson (2003), Farkas et al. (2003), Janufka (2002), Uhlenburg and Brown (2002), and others. The study focuses on the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG as well as the associations that race, gender, and years of experience as an administrator have with those perceptions.

Common themes emerge in this survey and in earlier research as superintendents agree that lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and low teacher expectations are possible causes of the MAG (Izzo, et al., 1999; Aronson, 2004; Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Ferguson, 1998). Likewise, they cite increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES as possible remedies for closing the MAG (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Ferguson, 1998; Haycock, 2001). However, the results point to few significant conclusions about the associations of race, gender, and years of experience as an administrator with these perceptions. From this research point future studies could be developed.

## Analysis

A survey instrument was sent to every current public school superintendent in the state of Georgia for the 2007-2008 school year, as of October 2007. The total survey response rate was 44% (80 out of 180).

Based on the survey results, most superintendents who responded agree with the cited possible causes of the MAG, including lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and teacher expectations. Exceptions include standardized testing, segregation, and minority access to quality schools as possible causes of the MAG, with which the superintendents generally disagree. They also tend to agree with the cited proposed remedies for closing the MAG, including increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning initiatives, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES. One exception includes re-integration as a proposed remedy for closing the MAG, with which the superintendents generally disagree.

Although statistically significant race differences were not examined because of the low number of black respondents, analyses of the means and standard deviations indicate little variation by race in each of the survey responses. When analyzed by gender, the superintendents' responses indicate no significant difference between genders. Finally, the more years of experience superintendents have, the more they tend to agree that low SES and lack of parental involvement are possible causes of the MAG. No other responses were significant regarding years of experience as a school administrator.

## Discussion

Research question 1 sought Georgia superintendents' perceptions of possible causes of the MAG. While most superintendents agree that possible causes include lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and teacher expectations, they do not perceive that standardized testing, segregation, and minority access to quality schools are possible causes of the MAG.

These results support the research of Izzo et al. (1999), Aronson (2004), Arnold and Doctoroff (2003), Ferguson (1998), and others regarding possible causes of the MAG. Researchers, principals, and teachers have indicated lack of parental involvement is a likely cause of the MAG (Izzo et al.; Lowman, 2005; Little, 2004). The respondents to this survey also express this view, as noted by the quantitative results and short answer responses, such as the comment: "Parents do not have a high regard of education, therefore their children do not place importance on school."

Research question 2 sought Georgia superintendents' perceptions for proposed remedies for closing the MAG. While they agree that proposed remedies include increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning initiatives, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES, they do not perceive that re-integration is a proposed remedy for closing the MAG.

The survey results also indicated low SES as a possible cause of the MAG. Comments from the survey echoed Arnold and Doctoroff (2003) and Lee (2002), who linked low SES to other conditions such as family and opportunity. As one superintendent noted, the MAG was related to: "Low socioeconomic level of the family and related problems associated with poverty – not race."

Negative peer pressure and the stereotype threat emerged as possible causes of the MAG, just as Aronson (2004), McMillian (2003), and Ferguson (1998) had concluded.

One superintendent wrote that the MAG was a: “Cycle of failure-student concerned with the perception of peers if he/she aspired to do well academically.”

Teacher expectations and behaviors as contributors to the MAG remained a theme throughout the literature and the survey results. The idea presented by Ferguson (1998) and Aronson (2004) of teacher expectations reflecting racial stereotypes is evidenced by this short answer response: “It is a result... the soft bias of lowered expectations.”

The respondents kept parental involvement as a theme, building on the suggestion that increased parental involvement may help close the MAG (Izzo et al., 1999). The following short answers summarize this issue:

- “Parents must buy-in to efforts. Attitudes and values determine success and failure.”
- “Closing the gap between what is lacking at home and needed at school.”

Grant (2005) linked higher grandparent SES to high student achievement.

Kahlenberg (2006) proposed a new integration plan based on SES to help close the MAG. Similarly, one superintendent noted simply: “economic opportunity.”

Research predominantly showed that increased teacher expectations and better classroom instruction may help close the MAG Ferguson (1998), Becker and Luthar, (2002) and Haycock (2001). One superintendent summarized both issues this way: “When all is said and fussed about, it comes down to the classroom teacher!”

As cited by Arnold and Doctoroff (2003) and Reynolds and Temple (1998) preschool and early learning dominate as a proposed remedy to closing the MAG. Noted

one superintendent: “Take the child at age three and educate them.” Just as Allgood (2005) linked early childhood and parenting education, another superintendent touched on this and other issues as she suggested: “Quality preschool for all children, especially those in poverty. Greater access to pre-natal health care for poor mothers and parenting skills training.”

Overall responses for possible causes of the MAG are more concentrated than for proposed remedies (see Tables 1 and 2). Lack of parental involvement is the only possible cause of the MAG with which the superintendents strongly agree, with a mean less than 2.0. However, responses for proposed remedies show the superintendents feel more strongly about remedies. More proposed remedies meet with stronger agreement than do possible causes, with six proposed remedies showing a mean less than 2.0 (from increased parental involvement with a mean of 1.55 up to increased teacher expectations with a mean of 1.99).

Research questions 3 and 4 examined to what extent there are racial differences in Georgia superintendents’ perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Although statistically significant race differences were not examined because of the low number of black respondents, analyses of the means and standard deviations indicate little variation by race in each of the survey responses. This differs from research that suggested teacher perceptions differ based on race (Bol & Berry, 2005; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002). The only indication of a potential racial difference in perceptions comes from analysis of the mean for proposed remedies, which indicates black superintendents show stronger agreement with school-based proposed remedies (such as better classroom instruction and more preschool), while white superintendents

show stronger agreement with the home-based proposed remedy of increased parental involvement. However, because the minority sample size was so small, this information is inconclusive.

Research questions 5 and 6 examined to what extent there are gender differences in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. The survey results point to no significant difference between gender for either the possible causes of or proposed remedies to closing the MAG. This differs from the research of Uhlenberg and Brown (2002), who suggested teacher perceptions of the MAG differ based on gender.

The survey results indicate that the more years of experience the superintendents have, the more they tend to agree that lack of parental involvement and low SES were possible causes of the MAG. This mirrors the survey results from the overall perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG and the research presented by Izzo et al. (1999) and Arnold and Doctoroff (2003). Superintendents with more years of experience have seen a lot of theories, initiatives, and reform movements. Not only have they read the numerous studies that have linked low SES and lack of parental involvement to low academic achievement, they most likely have witnessed it first hand. They have had a lot of time to evaluate their beliefs. On the other hand, the results show no correlation between years of experience and perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Likewise, the research literature did not address years of experience in relation to perceptions. However, it pointed to effective leadership as a key to closing the MAG (Farkas et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). The more years of experience superintendents have, the more opportunity exists for development of leadership skills and for consideration of

possible causes of the MAG. To illustrate this point, when asked in question 26, “What solution to closing the MAG do you think would get the best results?” one superintendent answered: “Leadership – leadership, and leadership.”

It is curious that years of experience as an administrator are not significantly related to proposed remedies, despite the fact that there is relatively strong agreement on over half of them. It would seem that as years of experience increase, there would be more of an association with certain phenomena, such as parental involvement.

It is interesting to note that the superintendents cite parental involvement as both the primary possible cause of and the primary proposed remedy for closing the MAG. In general, the superintendents view parental involvement and low SES as possible causes of the MAG, both of which are beyond a school system’s control. In general, the superintendents seem relatively neutral regarding lack of student effort as a possible cause, and only one listed student effort as a proposed remedy in the qualitative responses. In retrospect, a quantitative survey item regarding increased student effort as a proposed remedy may have been informative.

### Conclusions

In this research study, Georgia superintendents’ responses show that they view lack of parental involvement, peer pressure, low SES, and low teacher expectations as possible causes of the MAG. Likewise, they view increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, preschool/early learning, increased teacher expectations, and higher SES as possible remedies for closing the MAG.

However, the Georgia superintendents’ responses do not lead to any conclusions about the extent of racial differences in their perceptions of the possible causes of and

proposed remedies for closing the MAG. This occurred primarily because of the lack of racial disparity among a low number of respondents, a major limitation of the study. In addition, the Georgia superintendents' responses point to no significant difference between gender for either the possible causes of or proposed remedies to closing the MAG. Therefore, gender has no association with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

The significant findings from this study address to what extent years of experience as an administrator are associated with perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG. The Georgia superintendents' responses reveal that years of experience are associated with their perceptions of the possible causes of the MAG in two instances. The more years of experience the superintendents have, the more they tend to agree that lack of parental involvement and low SES are possible causes of the MAG. On the other hand, the survey results show no significant correlation to what extent years of experience as an administrator are associated with perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG. Therefore, years of experience are not associated with Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the proposed remedies for closing the MAG.

#### Implications

With the implementation of NCLB, the MAG moved to the forefront of educational issues. It is critical that all stakeholders understand the importance of the complicated issues surrounding the MAG. Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the MAG are important. They are the primary decision makers for their school districts. The success of efforts to reduce the MAG depends on teachers and administrators to whom Georgia superintendents provide leadership.

This study codifies Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the MAG so that it is available for consideration by all superintendents interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG. This study is important because it provides other administrators with an understanding of Georgia superintendents' perceptions and research that they can use to address the MAG. Many groups of educational leaders may benefit from the information provided by this research.

Specifically, Georgia superintendents' responses show that they view lack of parental involvement, peer pressure and low SES as possible causes of the MAG and increased parental involvement, better classroom instruction, and increased teacher expectations as proposed remedies for closing the MAG. They can use these results to foster creative efforts to address the MAG with approaches from these perspectives. For example, understanding the reality that low SES may be a given, non-modifiable variable, Georgia superintendents may want to work with families to increase parental involvement, especially those with low SES. By inviting the families in to the schools and engaging them in their children's education, they might help both the families and students learn to value education. With these perceptions in mind, they can take a fresh look at their current efforts.

#### Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is the low response rate, particularly from minority superintendents. Out of an overall population of 180 superintendents, the total survey response rate was 44% (80 out of 180). The number of white superintendents who responded was 75 out of 157 (48%). There are 23 minority superintendents. Only three

(13%) responded to the survey. The study would be more comprehensive with more participation, especially from minorities.

Another recognized limitation of this study is that the data comes from self-report instruments. The Georgia superintendents completed surveys reporting their own ratings and perceptions of the possible causes of and the proposed remedies for closing the MAG, leaving validity of the self-reporting unknown.

#### Recommendations

A major disappointment of this study is the low response rate, particularly from minority superintendents. A recommendation would be to send another set of surveys to minority superintendents. If there were more participation, the results could supplement this study. Another recommendation would be to survey another population with similar demographics. For example, South Carolina has a majority to minority ratio comparable to Georgia. South Carolina's public school superintendents would be a suitable population with which replicate this study.

Options for follow-on research from this study include examining why there are stronger feelings about proposed remedies than possible causes and, conversely, why the possible causes are more concentrated than proposed remedies. A closer look at parental involvement and student effort as both possible causes and proposed remedies might be helpful. Further research also could focus on race and proposed remedies from the perspective of home-based versus school-based proposed remedies. Additionally, a more in-depth look at years of experience could be useful for superintendents and administrators interested in becoming more effective leaders and in closing the MAG.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs	
<b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>	
Phone: 912-681-5465	Veazey Hall 2021
Fax: 912-681-0719	P.O. Box 8005
Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu	Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Thomas W. Usry II  
1029 Longwood Dr.  
Woodstock, GA-30189

**CC:** Dr. Charles Reavis  
P.O. Box-8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** October 24, 2007

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: H08068, and titled "Georgia Superintendent's Perceptions of the Minority Achievement Gap", it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that the Institutional Review Board has approved your proposed research.*

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



N. Scott Pierce  
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

## APPENDIX B

## SURVEY COVER LETTER



COLLEGE OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

10/24/2007

Georgia Superintendents' Perceptions of the Minority Achievement Gap

Dear Dr. xxx:

My name is Thomas Usry. I am a special education teacher with Cherokee County School District and a doctoral candidate in Educational Administration at Georgia Southern University. For my dissertation, I am interested in Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap (MAG). As you know, superintendents are policy makers in challenging high-stress, high-visibility positions. As chief executive officers of Georgia school districts, you play a major role in addressing all aspects of the MAG. However, little research exists to help you achieve these goals. Therefore, a need exists for this study.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data to analyze Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the MAG. There is, of course, no penalty should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached questionnaire and mail it in the pre-addressed, stamped envelope I have provided within 14 days (by 11/7/2007). Completion and return of the questionnaire implies that you agree to participate and that your data may be used in this research. Please be assured that your response is anonymous and will be kept absolutely secure and confidential. All of the questionnaires and return envelopes are identical, with my information on the return address. Neither I nor anyone else will be able to identify your response from those of other participants. Although the study will be most useful if you respond to every item in the questionnaire, participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to answer one or more of them, without penalty. If you have any concerns about someone seeing your answers to this questionnaire, please keep it in a safe place until you mail it in the envelope provided.

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact me at (770) 364-2712 (mobile) or (770) 592-8279 (home) or via email [tomusrv@comcast.net](mailto:tomusrv@comcast.net). I plan to complete this study during Spring 2008, and I will send an abstract of the results to all of the participants via e-mail. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to the Institutional Review Board Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-0843. My doctoral committee chair is Dr. Charles Reavis, Georgia Southern University, P.O. Box 8131, Statesboro, GA 30460, [careavis@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:careavis@georgiasouthern.edu).

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in studying this question. The results should allow me to better assess Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the MAG.

Respectfully,

Thomas Usry  
Doctoral candidate, Educational Administration, Georgia Southern University  
1029 Longwood Dr., Woodstock, GA 30189 [tomusrv@comcast.net](mailto:tomusrv@comcast.net), 770-592-8279/770-364-2712

## APPENDIX C

## SURVEY

**Georgia Superintendents' Perceptions of the Possible Causes of and Proposed Remedies for Closing the Minority Achievement Gap**

The purpose of this survey is to determine Georgia superintendents' perceptions of the possible causes of and proposed remedies for closing the minority achievement gap (MAG). Please take a few moments to respond. Thank you in advance for your prompt response.

**Instructions**

Please provide a narrative response to, or circle the response that best describes your degree of agreement with, each of the following statements:

**SA** = Strongly Agree   **A** = Agree   **N** = Neutral   **D** = Disagree   **SD** = Strongly Disagree

1. I feel well informed about the MAG issue. SA   A   N   D   SD
2. The MAG is a result of historical segregation. SA   A   N   D   SD
3. The location of schools (urban, suburban or rural) plays a role in the MAG. SA   A   N   D   SD
4. Lack of minority access to quality schools is a cause of the MAG. SA   A   N   D   SD
5. Lack of student effort is a cause of the MAG (student is unmotivated and does not try). SA   A   N   D   SD
6. Negative peer pressure causes some groups of students to not want to do well in school. SA   A   N   D   SD
7. Low socioeconomic status (SES) is a cause of the MAG. SA   A   N   D   SD
8. Lack of parental involvement is a cause of the MAG. SA   A   N   D   SD
9. Teachers having different expectations about the academic ability of some minority student groups is a cause of the MAG. SA   A   N   D   SD
10. Standardized testing contributes to the MAG because it does not accurately measure what some students know and can do. SA   A   N   D   SD

11. Strict accountability is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
12. Accountability efforts such as NCLB expect too much, too fast. SA A N D SD
13. Efforts to close the MAG are hampered by competing agendas, such as the many different school reform movements. SA A N D SD
14. Increasing teacher expectations is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
15. Increased teacher sensitivity is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
16. Better classroom instruction is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
17. More preschool/early learning initiatives is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
18. More available tutoring, after-school programs and summer school are solutions for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
19. Increased parental involvement is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD
20. Higher family SES positively impacts minority student achievement. SA A N D SD
21. Re-integration is a solution for closing the MAG. *(Re-integration is adjusting the minority-majority student ratio within a school to reflect the ratio in the community.)* SA A N D SD
22. More effective leadership of school officials is a solution for closing the MAG. SA A N D SD



## APPENDIX D

## KEY STUDIES RELATED TO POSSIBLE CAUSES OF THE MAG

*Key Studies Related to Possible Causes of the MAG*

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<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Arnold & Doctoroff (2003)	Reviewed research on education of low SES children from birth to elementary school	Research review	Qualitative	Linked home factors related to SES, including parental involvement, to differences with student achievement
Aronson (2004)	Studied the effect of stereotype threat on student performance	Black and white college students	Quantitative	Stereotype threat was a significant factor in the achievement gap because it negatively impacted student performance
Becker & Luthar (2002)	Reviewed social-emotional components that influenced academic performance	Research review	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	School reforms needed to include issues such as teacher and student expectations
Ferguson (1998)	Examined impact of teacher perceptions and expectations on student performance	Research review	Qualitative	Black students under-performed because of test anxiety and negative peer pressure

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*Key Studies Related to Possible Causes of the MAG (continued)*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Goldsmith (2004)	Examined how schools' racial and ethnic mix of students and teachers influences students' expectations	Research review	Mixed, both Qualitative and Quantitative	Suggested that teachers in segregated-white schools may lower black and non-white students' expectations
Grant (2005)	Studied effects of different view of family SES, grandparents	Analysis of data from Panel Study of Income Dynamics	Quantitative	Higher SES positively impacted student achievement
Ipka (2003)	Examined trends in the achievement gap between black and white students in the Norfolk Public School System in the 1990s	Standardized achievement test scores for 19,000 students in grades 1 through 11 for the years 1991 through 1996	Quantitative	Suggested segregation, location of and lack of minority access to schools as causes for the MAG
Izzo et al. (1999)	Examined ways in which parental involvement in education changed over time and how it related to social and academic functioning in school	1,205 K-3 students	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Decreased parental involvement over time lead to lower student achievement

*Key Studies Related to Possible Causes of the MAG (continued)*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
McMillian (2003)	Noted results of engagement studies where black students were susceptible to academic disengagement	Research review	Mixed, both Qualitative and Quantitative	Standardized testing disengaged students and lowered achievement because it emphasized stereotypes about ability
Uhlenberg & Brown (2002)	Examined black and white teachers' perceptions of the MAG	Teachers in 14 public schools in North Carolina	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Presented teacher expectations and lack of student effort or motivation as factors

## APPENDIX E

## KEY STUDIES RELATED TO PROPOSED REMEDIES FOR CLOSING THE MAG

*Key Studies Related to Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Arnold & Doctoroff (2003)	Reviewed research on education of low SES children from birth to elementary school	Research review	Qualitative	Cited solutions such as preschool/early intervention, tutoring, after-school, and summer school programs
Becker & Luthar (2002)	Reviewed social-emotional components that influence academic performance	Research review	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	School reforms needed to include social-emotional issues, such as teacher and student expectations
Ferguson (1998)	Examined impact of teacher perceptions and expectations on student performance	Research review	Qualitative	Increased teacher expectations, sensitivity and better classroom instruction helped reduce stereotype effects
Gottfredson & Marciniak (1995)	Staff development program to reduce disparity in education	306 teachers in experimental program	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	More than training must occur to change teacher expectations
Ipka (2003)	Examined trends in the MAG between students in Virginia	Test scores for 19,000 students in all grades 1991 through 1996	Quantitative	Suggested re-integration as a possible remedy

*Key Studies Related to Proposed Remedies for Closing the MAG (continued)*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Hull (2005)	Determined differences in practices and styles of principals in Mississippi.	Principals at 83 schools in Mississippi	Qualitative	Principals needed to focus on staff buy-in; increased parental involvement, and effective internal management
Kahlenberg (2006)	Studied SES of grandparents in addition to parental SES	Research review	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Higher grandparent SES lead to improvement
Leithwood et al. (2004)	Reviewed existing research on how leadership influences student learning	Research review	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Successful leadership improved student performance
McMillian (2003)	Noted results of engagement studies where black students were susceptible to academic disengagement	Research review	Mixed, both Qualitative and Quantitative	NCLB expected too much, too fast and methods other than accountability were needed
Reynolds & Temple (1998)	Evaluated effects of student performance in community-based programs	556 inner city black students	Quantitative	Students in community-based programs showed increased achievement
Scales et al. (2006)	Studied relationship of students between community service, academic success, and SES	National sample of 2,002 U.S. principals	Quantitative	Service learning may be related to increased achievement and smaller achievement gaps

## APPENDIX F

## KEY STUDIES RELATED TO PERCEPTIONS OF THE MAG

*Key Studies Related to Perceptions of the MAG*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Bol & Berry (2005)	Survey secondary math teachers on factors contributing to gap and ways to reduce it	379 secondary math teachers	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Teachers in schools with more white students more likely to link motivation and family support to MAG
CEP (2004)	Implementation and effects of NCLB during 2003	Survey of 47 states and DC, 274 school districts, and case studies of 33 districts	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	42 states agreed standards accountability system will raise achievement
Duis (2005)	Perceptions of NCLB requirements	12 educators in a coalition elementary school	Qualitative	Both reforms were implemented with some overlap ethical concerns, and feelings of disempowerment
Farkas et al. (2003)	Survey of superintendents and principals about what's needed to fix public schools	Nationwide sample of superintendents and principals	Qualitative	Leadership was key to success, and the leaders embraced accountability
Hannah (2004)	Perceptions of principal leadership and impact on achievement outcomes perceived	105 teachers and principals in urban schools	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Communicating high expectations for student performance was key to being an effective principal

*Key Studies Related to Perceptions of the MAG (continued)*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Janufka (2002)	Examine educational administrators' perceptions of the use of student performance profiles to improve student performance	165 school and district administrators	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Administrators positively perceived the use of student performance profiles and were satisfied they improve student performance
Kelly (2006)	Examine white middle school teachers' perceptions about factors influencing the gap	6 white middle school teachers	Qualitative	White middle schools teachers tended to attribute to the gap factors related to parents and community
Little (2004)	Determine perceptions of educators regarding factors that close the gap	School improvement team members in 12 rural elementary schools successful in closing the gap and in 12 schools that were not	Qualitative	Factors that affected the gap included: school practices, parental expectations, parent education/SES, and congruence between home and school culture
Manning (2005)	Rate district curriculum leaders in Kansas perceptions related to four major areas of NCLB	Curriculum leaders in the 300 public school districts in Kansas	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	More potential than actual impact perceived, particularly in proven education methods and stronger accountability

*Key Studies Related to Perceptions of the MAG (continued)*

<i>Study</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Design/Analysis</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Simon (2005)	How feeding schools respond when middle and high schools fail under NCLB	Teachers, parents, administrators in district receiving failing grades in middle/high school subgroups first year of NCLB	Qualitative	Feeder schools disconnected and teachers frustrated in district's assessment-driven accountability system
Uhlenberg & Brown (2002)	Examine black and white teachers' perceptions of possible causes and potential solutions to the gap	Teachers in 14 public schools in North Carolina	Mixed, both quantitative and qualitative	Suggested teachers may need to overcome perceptions that differed based on race and gender before they could truly focus on addressing the gap

APPENDIX G  
ITEM ANALYSIS

<i>Item Analysis</i>		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Research Question</i>
1. Well informed	Farkas et al., 2003; Little, 2004; Manning, 2005; Sherman & Grogan, Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,2
2. Segregation	Goldsmith, 2004; Ipka, 2003; Simmons & Ebbs, 2001; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7
3. Location	Goldsmith, 2004; Ipka, 2003	1,3,5,7
4. Minority access	Goldsmith, 2004; Ipka, 2003	1,3,5,7
5. Student effort	Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7
6. Negative peer pressure	Aronson, 2004; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Bol & Berry, 2005; Ferguson, 1998; Kelly, 2006; Little, 2004; Massey et al., 2003; McMillian, 2003; Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Orfield, 1997; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7
7. SES	Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Bol & Berry, 2005; Grant, 2005; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994; Izzo et al, 1999; Lee, 2002; Little, 2004; O'Rourke, 2002; Phillips et al, 1998; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7
8. Parental involvement	Izzo et al., 1999	1,3,5,7
9. Teacher expectations	Aronson, 2004; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Ferguson, 1998; Goldsmith, 2004; Kelly, 2006; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7
10. Standardized testing	McMillian, 2003	1,3,5,7
11. Accountability	Haycock, 2001; Janufka, 2002; Manning, 2005; Rebola, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2006	2,4,6,8

*Item Analysis (continued)*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Research Question</i>
12. Too much, too fast (NCLB)	McMillian, 2003	2,4,6,8
13. Competing agendas	Snell, 2005	2,4,6,8
14. Increased teacher expectations	Becker & Luthar, 2002; Bol & Berry, 2005; Ferguson, 1998; Gottfredson & Marciniak, 1995; Holloway, 2004; Izzo et al., 1999; Little, 2004	2,4,6,8
15. Increased teacher sensitivity	Aronson, 2004; Ferguson, 1998; Little, 2004; McMillian, 2003	2,4,6,8
16. Better classroom instruction	Ferguson, 1998; Haycock, 2004	2,4,6,8
17. More preschool	Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003; Little, 2004; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	2,4,6,8
18. Tutoring, etc.	Allgood, 2005; Reynolds & Temple, 1998; Scales et al., 2006	2,4,6,8
19. Increased parental involvement	Bol & Berry, 2005; Izzo et al., 1999; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Little, 2004; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	2,4,6,8
20. Higher SES	Kahlenberg, 2006	2,4,6,8
21. Re-integration	Ipka, 2003; Kahlenberg, 2006	2,4,6,8
22. Leadership	Bass, 1997; Brady, 2003; CEP, 2004; Day, 2000; Farkas et al., 2003; Green & Etheridge, 2001; Hallinger, 2003; Hull, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Lafee et al, 2002; Lashway, 2002; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Reese, 2004; Sparks, 2003; Wolf, 2002	2,4,6,8
23. & 24. Causes	Kelly, 2006; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	1,3,5,7

*Item Analysis (continued)*

<i>Item</i>	<i>Research</i>	<i>Research Question</i>
25. & 26. Remedies	Farkas et al., 2003; Little, 2004; Manning, 2005; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	2,4,6,8
27. Gender	Kimport, 2005; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	5,6
28. Race	Bol & Berry, 2005; Kimport, 2005; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	3,4
29. Years of experience	Farkas et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Uhlenberg & Brown, 2002	7,8
30. Geographic	Farkas et al., 2003; Manning, 2005	1, 2