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Superintendents' Beliefs and Identification of District Level Practices Contributing to the Academic Achievement of Black Males in the State of Georgia

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SUPERINTENDENTS' BELIEFS AND IDENTIFICATION OF DISTRICT LEVEL

PRACTICES CONTRIBUTING TO THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK

MALES IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

by

HAYWARD CORDY

(Under The Direction of Abebayehu Tekleselassie)

ABSTRACT

The graduation rate for Black males in the state of Georgia during the 2003-04 school year as reported by the Schott Foundation was 39 percent. This was in stark contrast to a 54 percent graduation rate for non-Hispanic White males. Nationwide, more than 50 percent of Black males drop out of school compared to between 25 and 30 percent of all other student populations. Additionally, Black males are twice as likely as Black females to be in special education. More Black males receive their GED in prison than graduate from college.

The purpose of this study was to explore superintendents' beliefs about and identification of district level practices contributing to the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. This qualitative study was a purposeful sampling of school superintendents' beliefs regarding the academic achievement of Black males and identification of district level practices believed to positively impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males in the state of Georgia.

Superintendents identified multiple factors, both internal and external, believed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Factors identified by superintendents were both school and community based. While

superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males varied, the belief that superintendents can and should play a vital role in implementing district level practices to impact the academic achievement of Black males was universal. District level practices identified by superintendents as being implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males varied among the superintendents and systems surveyed. District level practices as described by superintendents were multifaceted and particular to districts surveyed. The findings from this study enabled the researcher to make several recommendations regarding the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

INDEX WORDS: Black males, Graduation rate, Achievement gap, Teacher perceptions, Stereotype threat, Teacher expectations, Superintendents' role, Student achievement, Academic disidentification

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MALES IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA

by

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DEDICATION

For instilling in the me the desire to do and be my best always,

I hereby dedicate this dissertation to my mother

Carrie Lee Cordy

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The idea of some type of transfer of knowledge, better known as education, has existed since the beginning of time. The role of superintendent, however, is a fairly recent educational development, having emerged well after other administrative positions such as principal were established (Knezevich, 1984). The role of superintendent evolved only after other approaches to deal effectively with the dynamics of an increasingly complex educational system failed (Knezevich, 1984). Most early school superintendents focused primarily on instruction with the responsibility of fiscal and facilities management being added later. According to Knezevich (1984), the first superintendents began their tenure in 1837 in Buffalo, New York, and Louisville, Kentucky. Originally, superintendents were viewed as instructional leaders concerned with developing a graded organization for schools, designing new courses of study, and organizing pupil promotion procedures (Knezevich, 1984). Due to the fact that school board members had brief tenures, the tenure of school superintendents in this day was short lived. Additionally, the development of two agencies with administrative responsibilities, namely the school board and the superintendent's office, led to conflict and misunderstandings just as it does today. Board executive committees continued to exercise authority and control over school management, greatly inhibiting the ability of the superintendent to demonstrate his professional and leadership skills (Knezevich, 1984). The role of the superintendent, though static for some time, slowly began to change.

School superintendents in the 21st century are faced with the daily challenge of facilitating and cultivating a culture of learning amidst constant change. This complex

and socially challenging change requires school superintendents to examine the education delivery system as it relates to the way in which and how well children learn (Houston, 2001). As change stirs up strong emotions within organizations, effective leadership is the key to the success of the superintendent and the organization in the 21st century (Houston, 2001). Houston (2001) states, "Successful superintendents of the 21st century will be those who find a way of leading by sharing power and by engaging members of the organization and the community in the process of leading" (p.430). Successful leaders are change brokers who understand the nature of change so that they can influence it as they institute reform efforts (Houston, 2001). Agreeing with Houston about the constant and complex changes facing school superintendents in the 21st century, Fullan (2001) asserts that these changes are grounded in the rapid nonlinear changes that our present society is facing. According to Fullan, the availability of information is driving this kind of never before seen change. Because information is easily accessible, knowledge gained through business and global information systems has impacted the educational community (Fullan, 2001).

In light of the global and economic transformation currently taking place and its likely consequences for formal education in America, in order to remain viable, superintendents must focus on what makes schools flexible, responsive to change, and effective (Hill and Guthrie, 1999). Guided by a highly effective superintendent, schools must become a vital component of an ever changing learning system within the community (Houston, 2001). While schools cannot become all things to all people, schools can and must form bonds with other care-giving agencies in order to provide a support network of caring around children and their families (Houston, 2001).

Superintendents of the 21st century then must become champions for children, utilizing their skills and influence to garner support for children and families that will enable all children to be successful at learning (Houston, 2001). The superintendent of the 21st century must work to create environmental conditions that get children ready for school while getting schools ready to receive children at the same time (Houston, 2001). Giving school superintendents the responsibility of getting children and schools ready is consistent with his or her role as lead educational decision maker. In making decisions that positively impact children and schools, superintendents must expand their knowledge as to the present day educational dilemmas, determine root causes, and formulate programs and practices to combat the identified problems. The need for educational systems to reform themselves and the need for superintendents to regularly redefine their role, skills, and knowledge base has been a historical constant (Houston, 2001).

Woodson (1933) spoke of the dilemma of education in a state of constant change in his day. Woodson (1933), a pioneer in the movement to educate Blacks, saw a need for the educational system of his day to change if it was to meet the needs of its Black citizenry. Woodson stated, "To simply point out the defects of our schools as they exist today is of little benefit to present and future generations. Defects must be viewed in their historic setting. The conditions of today have been determined by what has occurred in the past, and in review of this history, it is possible to see more clearly the events in which Blacks have played a part" (Woodson, 1933). In his book titled, *The Mis-education of The Negro*, Woodson (1933) theorized that America had missed the mark in educating Black students. Woodson (1933) echoed the earlier writings of Booker T. Washington and W. E. Du Bois. Washington (1901) had previously described the dilemma of the

Black male in America from the vantage point of being born a slave and later

emancipated. Unlike Du Bois, who preached agitation and protest, Washington preached

a philosophy of self-help, racial solidarity and accommodation (PBS.org, 2006). In his

autobiography *Up From Slavery*, Washington (1901), writing about his childhood after

emancipation from slavery wrote:

> The world should not pass judgment upon the Negro, and especially the Negro
>
> youth, too quickly or too harshly. The Negro boy has obstacles, discouragements,
>
> and temptations to battle with that are little known to those not situated as he is.
>
> When a white boy undertakes a task, it is taken for granted that he will succeed.
>
> On the other hand, people are usually surprised if the Negro boy does not fail. In a
>
> word, the Negro youth starts out with the presumption against him (p. 17).

> Du Bois (1903), in his work, *The Soul of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*,

described his lived experiences as a Black male in America in the late eighteenth century

in similar terms. Dubois, an avid supporter of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism,

was the first Black person to earn a doctorate degree in history from Harvard University

(Hynes, 2006). In describing childhood lived experiences, Du Bois (1903) wrote:

> In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put it into the boys' and girls' heads to
>
> buy gorgeous visiting-cards – ten cents a package – and exchange. The exchange
>
> was merry till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card – refused it
>
> peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain sadness that I
>
> was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but
>
> shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down

that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived

above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows (p. 2).

These two similar yet distinctly different voices of the lived experiences of the Black

male in America, W. E. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, deliver conflicting messages

regarding the historical and ongoing difficulties faced by Black males and those charged

with providing them with an education.

Historically, the education of Blacks in the United States has been impacted by

historical, social and political developments since the founding of the United States

(Lewis, 2003). The introduction of the first Black slaves into the new world at

Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 set the stage for the ongoing debate regarding the education

of Blacks in America (Robinson, 1971). As the number of Blacks in the colonies

increased and in the absence of codes in colonial New England prohibiting the education

of slaves, some slave owners educated Black slaves (National Park Service, 2000). Some

slave owners advocated teaching Blacks to read so that they would have a more efficient

labor pool (Vaughn, 1974). Some missionaries wanted Blacks to be taught to read so that

they could read the scriptures (Vaughn, 1974). Many Whites would later rethink this

position after several high profile pockets of resistance to slavery and its practices

(National Park Service, 2000).

The Gabriel Prosser slave revolt occurred in 1800 and the Nat Turner slave

uprising occurred in 1831 (National Park Service, 2000). The Denmark Vessey Revolt of

1822 was also a high profile uprising (Vaughn, 1974). After these uprisings, southern

White fear of further slave uprisings led to more stringent slavery laws and in many cases

prohibitions against educating slaves and free Blacks (National Park Service, 2000).

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Many southern Whites saw it as impossible to educate Blacks without increasing rebellion among Blacks (Vaughn, 1974). After these incidents, laws forbidding the education of Blacks were passed by various states (National Park Service, 2000). At its 1831 legislative session, the North Carolina Legislature passed an "Act To Prevent All Persons From Teaching Slaves To Read or Write" (National Park Service, 2000). A Georgia law passed in 1829, allowed free Blacks who taught slaves to be fined and whipped. Conversely, White citizens caught teaching slaves were treated more harshly as they were subject to a maximum fine of $500.00 and subject to imprisonment at the discretion of the sitting judge (Vaughn, 1974). In 1834, the South Carolina Legislature passed a law forbidding the instruction of free Blacks as well as requiring that a White be present if a free Black taught other Blacks.

The issue of the education of and treatment of Blacks as slaves would later play a pivotal role in escalating hostilities between the states, leading to the Civil War of 1861 (The Civil War Home Page, 2006). It was not until the second year of the Civil War that progress was made in the education of Southern Blacks (Vaughn, 1974). At the beginning of the second year of the Civil War, Northern religious and social organizations began efforts to educate slaves living in the areas occupied by the Union Army (Vaughn, 1974). As a result, between 5 and 10 percent of the adult Black population in the South were literate by 1860 (Vaughn, 1974).

Prior to and after the Civil War, the limited education afforded some Blacks occurred in segregated settings despite the objections of both Black and White citizens as well as attempted legal interventions (National Parks Service, 2000). Roberts vs. City of Boston (1849) is the first documented court case challenging America's segregated

educational system (African American Registry, 2005). Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, in issuing his ruling in Roberts vs. City of Boston (1849) indicated that he could find no constitutional reason for abolishing Black schools (African American Registry, 2005). Boston's schools, like others in the nation, would remain segregated (African American Registry, 2005). The quest for equal access to education would continue into the next century as segregated educational institutions for Blacks continued to be the norm (African American Registry, 2005). Racial segregation within the nation's educational institutions and within the larger society received a major blow when the Supreme Court, in Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka (1954), declared separate but equal schools unconstitutional (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

It has been 50 years since Brown v. Board of Education (1954) outlawed intentional segregation in the South (Orfield & Yun, 1999). A series of Supreme Court decisions in the 1990s helped push the country farther away from the ideals espoused by Brown and closer to the old adage of "separate but equal." The Brown v. Board of Education United States Supreme Court ruling struck down the idea of "separate and equal" schools. The Supreme Court put off its decision about how to enforce Brown until 1955 and then called for gradual change "with all deliberate speed" (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Many politicians, educational leaders, social scientists and political activists applauded the ruling, believing that a universal, equal education would be quickly available to all (Downey, 2003). Many Southern states refused to comply until they were sued individually. In 1964, 98 percent of Southern Black children were still in totally segregated schools (Orfield & Yun, 1999). By 1970, the enforcement of the 1964 Civil

Rights Act by the Johnson Administration and the courts had made the South the nation's most integrated region for both blacks and whites.

After nearly a quarter century of increasing integration, schools began to resegregate in the late 1980s. The percent of Black students in majority White schools in the South fell from a peak of 43.5 percent down to 34.7 percent in 1996 (Orfield & Yun, 1999). At the end of the 2002-03 school year, the average Black student in the southern states of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi attended a school whose racial makeup was more than 70 percent nonwhite (Orfield & Lee, 2005). In Georgia, 37 percent of black students attended majority minority schools at the end of the 2002-03 school year (Orfield & Lee, 2005). While the causes of this shift toward resegregation of schools in the South are many, all lead back to the question of whether "separate but equal" schools afford all children the opportunity to receive a quality and equal education (Duff, 2001). The resegregation of schools in the South has educational, moral, political, social and economic ramifications (Downey, 2003).

In addition to the racial component, the resegregation of schools in the South has a strong class component as well. When Black and Latino students, the majority minority populations in America, end up in segregated neighborhood schools, they are likely to be in schools where poverty is concentrated (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Concentrated poverty is linked to lower educational achievement. Schools of concentrated poverty have proved to be the least able to provide an adequate education to children (Downey, 2003). School level poverty is related to many variables that affect a school's ability to successfully educate children. Poverty related issues such as parent educational level, availability of advanced courses, teacher quality, high dropout rates and low expectation levels in regard

to student achievement impact educational quality (Downey, 2003). In addition, impoverished families grapple with many problems including a lack of health care, poor nutrition, housing evictions, job losses and drug and alcohol struggles. These poverty-based family issues follow impoverished children to school and hinder their ability to achieve (Downey, 2003). In promoting school integration, Justice Thurgood Marshall's goal was more than a mixture of races in a classroom (Downey, 2003). Marshall wanted to insure that all children were provided the same educational opportunities (Downey, 2003). He sought to ensure that all children, even poor children, received the full benefits of a good education (Downey, 2003).

An unintended consequence of Brown (1954) was the negative impact on the number of Black teachers and administrators in the teaching profession. In 1954, approximately 82,000 Black teachers were responsible for teaching 2 million Black school children. By 1965, more than 38,000 Black teachers and administrators in 17 Southern and border states had lost their jobs (Toppo, 2004). Additionally, by some estimates, approximately 90 percent of Black principals in 11 Southern states lost their jobs. Many were fired while some retired. Of those who remained in the teaching profession, many were demoted to assistant principal or to coaching or teaching jobs (Toppo, 2004). The unintended impact of Brown (1954) greatly reducing the number of Black teachers in America is still being felt. In the year 2000, 84 percent of teachers in America were White while only 8 percent were Black. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that only 61 percent of students in America are White while 17 percent are Black (Toppo, 2004). These numbers are of great concern as the number of Black students majoring in education was reported to have dropped by 66 percent from 1975 to 1985 (Toppo, 2004).

During the 1999-2000 school year, 38 percent of public schools had no Black teachers on staff (Toppo, 2003). Within the past decade however, the tide has begun to shift. During the 1999-2000 school year, while only 16 percent of teachers nationwide were Black, 21 percent of teachers new to the teaching profession were Black (Toppo, 2003).

The dramatic decrease in the number of Black teachers and administrators is particularly troubling in light of the impact that Black teachers have on the academic of Black students, especially Black males. According to King (1993), Black teachers have personal experience and institutional knowledge that enables them to better help Black children navigate their way through White-dominated society (p. 121). King (1993) states:

> For many African-American children, African-American teachers represent surrogate parent figures, disciplinarians, counselors, role models, and advocates. African American teachers are able to communicate with African-American students about the personal value, the collective power and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement as opposed to failure. Such a communication process between African-American teachers and students includes African-American teachers' ability to involve students in exchanges which help students to become empowered and involved in their own education (p. 118).

Historically, Black children score lower than white children on standardized measures of achievement. Desegregation, it was believed, would help to narrow this gap (Ikpa, 2003). Upon analysis, the results of a study that was conducted on the achievement gap between minority and White students in resegregated and desegregated schools in Norfolk, Virginia, revealed that the composite tests scores for the resegregated schools in

Norfolk fell below those of students in desegregated schools. In 1992, the gap increased from 21 points to 30 points and grew to 33 points in 1994. A decline of ten points occurred from 1995 to 1996; however, the gap widened by 9 points in 1997. Analysis of the various data elements indicated that the resegregated all Black schools performed poorly when compared to their desegregated counterparts (Ikpa, 2003). While clearly a factor in student achievement, the equal access issue, previously resolved by school desegregation efforts, clearly has moved from center stage (Ikpa, 2003).

As was the focus of Brown v. Board of Education, educational leaders, policies and practices have focused on providing universal access to public education for all children for the past 50 years (Orfield & Yun, 1999). Initially, these efforts focused on racial and ethnic minorities. The focus later broadened to include children with disabilities, migrant children, students whose home language is not English and homeless children (Lewis, 2003).

In her article entitled "From Universal Access to Universal Proficiency," Lewis (2003) theorizes that the American goal of providing universal educational opportunities for all students has largely been met. According to Lewis, the goal has shifted to that of universal proficiency. Universal proficiency focuses on educational quality and accountability (Lewis, 2003).

The ensuing goal of educational proficiency has led to continuing comparisons of student performance nationally and internationally. The launching of Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite, by the Soviet Union on October 4, 1957, marked the start of the space age and the U.S. – U.S.S.R. space race (NASA 2006). The successful launching of Sputnik created a political furor in the United States, leading to serious concerns about

the effectiveness of the American educational system (NASA, 2006). Political leaders, some educational leaders, and the business community saw a need for an accountability system that would insure the development of educational standards as well as measure movement toward the new goal of universal proficiency in education. Various state and federal accountability initiatives were developed as a result (Bracey, 2003). Federal accountability initiatives were often tied to funding. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) continues to be the largest source of federal support for K-12 education, providing more than $12 billion annually for education (United States Department of Education, 2005). ESEA was created as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in 1965. Congress reauthorized ESEA on October 20, 1994 through the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. The Improving America's Schools Act was a precursor to the most recent federal accountability initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act as it focused on changing the way education was delivered, encouraging comprehensive systemic school reform, upgrading instructional and professional development to align with high standards, strengthening accountability, and promoting the coordination of resources to improve education for all children (United States Department of Education, 2005). The No Child Left Behind Act was a bipartisan education reform effort proposed by President George Bush his first week in office. Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act into law on January 8, 2002. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Lewis, 2003). The No Child Left Behind Act was built on four principles: 1. accountability for results, 2. more choices for parents, 3. greater local control and flexibility, 3. an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific

research (United States Department of Education, 2005). The message of the act was that of universal proficiency and accountability. The premise of NCLB was that many children in America have been intentionally or unintentionally left behind (Lewis 2003). NCLB created an expectation from a national perspective that, children who had been allowed to languish, would no longer be allowed to fall through the cracks in the American educational system (Houston, 2003). NCLB set the expectation that all students would be working on grade level by the year 2014. The act requires every school, school system, and state to disaggregate test results by ethnicity, disability, limited English proficiency, and socioeconomic status (Georgia Department of Education, 2005).

Since the mid-1980s and prior to the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), data have been collected on the success in educating the various subgroups that make up the public school enrollment in America (Ravitch, 2000). Data on suspensions, expulsions, retentions, and dropout rates indicate higher percentages in all of these areas for Black males. (Ravitch, 2000).

While the accountability measures contained in NCLB focus primarily on academics, available disaggregated achievement and other related data yields startling facts regarding the plight of school-aged Black males in America. Smith (2005), Director of the Schott Foundation for Public Education, has compiled statistics regarding the plight of Black males in America. While making up only 8.6 percent of public school enrollment, Black males represent approximately 23 percent of students suspended from school and approximately 22 percent of students who are expelled from school (Smith, 2005). While approximately 25 to 30 percent of American high school aged students fail

to graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma, more than 50 percent of Black male students in many cities in America fail to receive a regular high school diploma (Smith, 2005). As reported in the 2005-06 State of Georgia Report Card, the graduation rate for all students in the state of Georgia was 70.8 percent for the 2006-06 school year. Since data was not disaggregated and reported by both gender and race as an individual category, the graduation rate for Black males in the State of Georgia was not reported separately. The graduation rate for Black males was reported within the category of all Black students. The graduation rate for Black students in the state of Georgia during the 2005-06 school year, which includes Black males was significantly lower than the graduation rate for all and White students in the state of Georgia. During the 2005-06 school year, the graduation rate for Black students in the state of Georgia was 63.6 percent. This was in comparison to a graduation rate for all students of 70.8 percent and a graduation rate of 76.4 percent for White students in the state of Georgia during the 2005-06 school year (Georgia Department of Education, 2006). Black males are also over represented in special education programs. Black students in general are 2.9 times more likely to be labeled as mentally retarded, 1.9 times more likely to be designated as having an emotional disability, and 1.3 times more likely to be diagnosed with a learning disability (Smith, 2005). In some large urban districts, 30 percent of Black males are in special education classes, and half or less of the remaining 70 percent receive a high school diploma (Smith, 2005). Black males dominate these bleak statistics, as there are twice as many black males in special education programs as there are Black girls (Smith, 2005). When measuring school failure, statistics indicate that Black males are at the top of the list for all indicators. Black males exceed other sub-groups in the dropout rate,

absenteeism/truancy; suspension and expulsion; and low academic achievement (Smith, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

The graduation rate for Black males in the state of Georgia during the 2003-04 school year as reported by the Schott Foundation was 39 percent. In 2001-2002, the graduation rate for school-aged Black males in America was 42 percent. This was in stark contrast to a 71 percent graduation rate for non-Hispanic White males. More than 50 percent of Black males drop out of school compared to between 25 and 30 percent of all other student populations. Nationwide, Black students are 2.9 times more likely as Whites to be labeled mentally retarded. Black students are 1.9 times more likely to be labeled as being emotionally disturbed and 1.3 times more likely to be labeled learning disabled. Black males are twice as likely to be in special education as Black females. More Black males receive their GED in prison than graduate from college. In addition, twice as many Black females as males now attend college. When measuring school failure, statistics indicate that Black males are at the top of the list for all indicators. Black males exceed other sub-groups in the dropout rate, absenteeism/truancy, suspension and expulsion, and low academic achievement.

Statistical data supports the notion that Black males underachieve at much higher rates than other student populations. Previous studies have focused more on the educational plight of Black males in America. Previous studies have attempted to quantify and qualify the lived and school experiences of Black males. Richardson and Evans (1992), in their research paper titled *African-American Males: Endangered Species and the Most Paddled* focused on the rate at which Black males receive corporal

punishment for disciplinary infractions at school. Terrell (2000), in her doctoral

dissertation entitled *It Just Couldn't Have Been Our School*, did a phenomenological

study of the school and lived experiences of Black male inmates. Terrell's study focused

on school experiences of Black male inmates that she believed contributed to their

dropping out of school and subsequent disengagement with society as a whole.

Additional study that focuses on the beliefs of superintendents and district level

programmatic and policy changes that can positively impact the previously qualified and

quantified school experiences of Black males is needed. It is within this context that the

impact of leadership, primarily the local school superintendent, plays in guiding the

implementation of effective practices and district level policy changes designed to

positively impact Black male achievement and lived experiences. Houston (2001)

contends that the job of superintendent in today's school has high and unrealistic

expectations in many cases. Superintendents, he believes, face inappropriate expectations

and inadequate training working within an organization with changing demographics and

growing diversity, fragmenting culture and increased accountability with no additional

authority given them. Yet, superintendents, as instructional leaders, bear ultimate

responsibility for improving student achievement (Houston, 2001). Anthes (2005), in

analyzing five sets of standards for superintendents and other educational leaders, found

that leadership standards generally fit within nine distinguishable categories. Highly

qualified superintendents based on Anthes analysis of leader strategies model: 1)

developing and articulating a vision, 2) strategic decision making and implementation, 3)

creating a culture of learning, 4) using data effectively, 5) communicating effectively and

honestly with staff, students and the community, 6) Engaging all members of the staff, 7)

providing high-quality professional growth opportunities to staff, 8) understanding effective management, and 9) understanding curriculum and instruction. In a related survey, Belden, Russonello, and Stewart (2005) compiled results from a national survey of superintendents and found that regardless of years of experience or district type, 90 percent of superintendents surveyed believe that superintendents should have a major role in directing instruction in their respective school district. Superintendents' beliefs about and knowledge of educational issues such as the academic achievement of Black males play a key role in the development of policy and programs within their district. Key unknowns included:

1. School superintendents' beliefs regarding the academic performance of school-aged Black males?

2. How and to what extent have the beliefs of school superintendents regarding practices that impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males resulted in programmatic and policy changes in their respective school district?

The researcher explored the beliefs of school superintendents about the growing achievement gap between school-aged Black males and other school populations. Therefore, the researcher's purpose was to explore superintendents' beliefs about and identification of district level practices contributing to the academic achievement of Black males in Georgia.

Research Questions

1. What are school superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males?

2. What are school superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males?

3. What district level practices have superintendents implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

4. What is the role of superintendents' background characteristics on their beliefs about and district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

Significance of the Study

This study was significant in that it increased the body of knowledge regarding district level practices believed to be effective in impacting the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Additionally, this study expanded the body of knowledge regarding factors believed to impact the academic achievement and lived experiences of school-aged Black males. It was believed that increasing the body of knowledge regarding district level practices and factors believed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia could impact the ratings that individual schools and systems receive under the guidelines of the No Child Left Behind Act. From a policy perspective, it was believed that this study would provide insight as to the effect that policy decisions being made by school superintendents, based on their beliefs, have on Black male achievement. In terms of impact on the teaching profession, it was believed that information gained from this study would be useful in identifying beliefs and practices of school superintendents which may impact the beliefs and practices of instructional providers as well as the implementation of programs designed to impact Black male achievement. Being a Black male as well as a Georgia school

superintendent of schools, the researcher had a vested personal interest in the academic achievement level and quality of the lived experiences of school-aged Black males.

Procedures

Design

The researcher utilized a qualitative research design model to explore the beliefs of currently employed Georgia school superintendents regarding school-aged Black male achievement. The qualitative research model was selected due to the researcher's desire to solicit and qualify descriptive data from Georgia school superintendents. The qualitative research design yielded data regarding beliefs of Georgia school superintendents about Black male achievement. Additionally, utilizing the qualitative research design yielded pertinent data regarding superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting Black male achievement. Also, the qualitative research design yielded data regarding superintendents' identification of district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Finally, the researcher believed that the qualitative research design would be useful in qualifying the interaction of local school superintendents' beliefs and current district level practices implemented to impact the academic of Black males.

Population

For purposes of this study, the population was currently employed Georgia school superintendents. The population was identified as currently employed Georgia school superintendents due to regional differences in educational outcomes and methods utilized to evaluate as well as impact Black male achievement. Current local school districts in Georgia were identified by listings developed by the Georgia Department of Education

School Improvement Division. Data from the Georgia School Superintendent's Association was utilized to confirm that superintendents surveyed were currently employed as superintendent in the respective district surveyed. These data were used to select superintendents to be interviewed. Local school superintendents, serving as chief operating officers, have overall responsibility for recommending and implementing local school board policies that may impact Black male achievement. Additionally, local school superintendents, as system leaders, are instrumental in approving strategies and programs as well as determining what resources will be made available for programs and interventions.

Sampling

The researcher utilized purposive sampling to interview five currently employed local public school superintendents in Georgia. Superintendents interviewed were identified by the Georgia Department of Education School Improvement Division as presiding over a district whose graduation rate for black males met or exceeded the graduation rate for all students in the state of Georgia during the 2005-06 school year. A study of this type stresses the importance of context, settings, and participant's frames of reference (Marshall & Rossman, 2002). Seven local Georgia School superintendents were sent a cover letter and a brief description of the proposed study along with consent to participate form. The consent to participate form included a section where superintendents were asked to indicate a day and time that they could be interviewed. Superintendents were asked to return the consent to participate form in the enclosed self addressed, stamped envelope. Within three weeks after the initial mailings, a phone call

was made to each of the superintendents who had not responded. Superintendents contacted by phone were asked for a day and time to be interviewed.

Utilizing socio-demographic factors such as years of experience, age, race, and previous administrative experience of Georgia school superintendents surveyed, the researcher sought to qualify the following: 1. School superintendents' beliefs regarding factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males. 2. School superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. 3. Programmatic changes superintendents have implemented as a result of the data collected regarding the academic achievement of Black males.

Delimitations

1. This study was restricted to educators employed as public school superintendents in Georgia.

2. Because sampling was limited to Georgia school superintendents, results cannot be generalized to the United States.

Limitations

1. Selecting participants purposely for this study involved, to some degree a selection bias.

2. Because of the fact that there were only five respondents for this study, it was difficult to measure trends regarding superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of as well as identification of district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Summary

Many of the studies that have focused on the academic achievement of Black males have often focused on teacher expectations, instructional practices, family related issues, and environmentally related issues. Little is known about the impact of superintendents on the academic achievement of school-aged Black males. Black males have struggled since being brought to America as slaves. While no longer denied an education, the education attainment level of Black males continues to lag behind that of their White non-Hispanic male counterparts as well as that of Black females. The academic achievement level of Black males in the state of Georgia mirrors much of what is reported nationwide. It is believed that the systemic change necessary to improve the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia must begin at the district level. Georgia superintendents, as district leaders, direct the policy and decision making process as well as the allocation of resources necessary to positively impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of the literature began with the history of education of Blacks prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The review proceeded through the era of school desegregation and forced integration. Additionally, Black male achievement trends, possible factors that negatively impact Black male achievement, and intervention strategies and model programs were discussed.

History of Black Education

Historically, even before President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, missionary oriented Northerner's who strongly opposed slavery sought to educate the millions of illiterate Blacks in the South (Vaughn, 1974). While no tax-supported schools existed for free Blacks in the South before 1860, some tax-supported schools existed for Whites (Vaughn, 1974). By 1860, with the exception of the state of South Carolina, all Southern states had passed laws providing for public education of some White children. In some cases, school attendance was optional rather than mandatory (Vaughn, 1974). North Carolina's prewar state school system was begun in 1839 by an act of the state legislature. Each county by law could establish local schools (Vaughn, 1974). From 1853 to 1866, the number of public schools in North Carolina rose from 2,500 to 3,000 while the number of White students enrolled rose from 95,000 to 195,000 (Vaughn, 1974). Public schooling in the state of South Carolina, unlike the state of North Carolina, did not predate the Emancipation Proclamation. The South Carolina Legislature did not pass legislation providing for public schooling until Reconstruction and the adoption of a new state constitution in 1868 (Vaughn, 1974). The

general assembly in South Carolina had previously established free schools for whites in 1811. Because preference was given to orphans and children of poor parents in regard to enrollment, more affluent parents labeled them pauper schools and would not send their children to them (Vaughn, 1974).

Southern school systems deteriorated during the Civil War. Buildings were destroyed or used as hospitals and many of the male teachers enlisted in the military (Vaughn, 1974). From the time period 1864-1866, the state of Louisiana had the most detailed provisions for the public education of White children. Louisiana state law mandated that a public education be provided for all children between six and eighteen years old (Vaughn, 1974). Education for all students at this time did not include Black students. Texas and Florida were the only Southern states during the beginning of the Reconstruction era to provide at least on paper for a system to educate Black children (Vaughn, 1974). In 1866 the Texas legislature passed a constitutional amendment authorizing the establishment of a public school system for Blacks with the stipulation being that only taxes collected from "Africans" could be used to fund the Black school system (Vaughn, 1974). After 1867, political forces began to push the educating of both Black and White children (Vaughn, 1974). The issue of the establishment of tax-supported public schools in the South was discussed at great length during the Reconstruction constitutional conventions of 1867-1868. The issue of whether these schools should be segregated or integrated took the forefront in the discussions at the conventions (Vaughn, 1974). Many Southern Whites during this time believed that Blacks did not favor integrated schools (Vaughn, 1974). Many Blacks seemed to be more concerned about equal educational opportunities especially at the elementary school level

more than integration (Vaughn, 1974). Blacks who expressed a preference for integrated schools did so for several reasons: they believed that any racial discrimination violated the Fourteenth Amendment and newly discovered principles of democracy; they believed that separate facilities would result in less funding going to Black schools; and many believed that segregated schools would be inferior in every respect (Vaughn, 1974). Despite the fact that statutory and constitutional provisions were proposed in many Southern states and the District of Columbia, in most cases the decision concerning integrated schools was never mentioned in the final documents (Vaughn, 1974). Strong demands for integration, it was believed, would eliminate tax-supported public education for Black children (Vaughn, 1974). The majority of White citizens, who paid the majority of the property taxes collected, would not support integrated schools (Vaughn, 1974). White citizens believed that integrated schools were inferior and would in effect exclude White children because White children would not attend integrated tax-supported public school (Vaughn, 1974). School segregation was the general practice in the South throughout the Reconstruction era (Vaughn, 1974). The state of Louisiana was the only Southern state during Reconstruction to tackle the integrated schools issue (Vaughn, 1974). By a vote of 71 – 6, Louisiana's constitutional convention in 1868, passed legislation which provided for tax-supported public schooling for children between the ages of six and twenty-one regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude (Vaughn, 1974). While New Orleans Whites tolerated mixed schools from 1870 to 1874, most Whites in rural Louisiana avoided and ignored public schools, remaining uneducated or attended private schools where possible (Vaughn, 1974). The controversy over integrated schools grew in Louisiana and other Southern states. In 1877, the New

Orleans Board of Education voted to establish separate schools for each race despite injunctions being sought by Black citizens (Vaughn, 1974). Black citizens in New Orleans eventually lost three court cases challenging the establishment of segregated schools, thus ending the only serious effort at public school integration in the post war South (Vaughn, 1974). Segregated schools were once again the norm in the South for many years to come (Vaughn, 1974).

By the end of the 1930's, only 19 percent of 14 to 17 year old black children were enrolled in high school due to the fact that public high schools were not available to Blacks in much of the rural South (Lowe, 2004). The National Association of Colored People (NAACP) began its effort to in the early 1930's and won a number of minor victories regarding issues such as salary equalization for Black teachers in segregated schools (Lowe, 2004). Based on their limited success, NAACP leaders having determined that segregation created intangible inequalities regardless of resources, began on all out assault on school segregation in 1950 (Lowe, 2004). Factors considered by the NAACP in choosing to fiercely attack school segregation was the fact that as late as 1954, black schools were funded at 60 percent of the level that White schools were funded (Lowe, 2004).   Racial segregation within the nation's educational institutions and within the larger society received a direct blow when the Supreme Court, in Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka (1954), declared separate but equal schools unconstitutional. The Brown decision paved the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Lowe, 2004). By 1970, Due to the enforcement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by the Johnson Administration and state and federal courts, the South had become the nation's most integrated region for both blacks and whites (Orfield & Yun, 1999). The academic

achievement of Black males is studied based on the passage of approximately 35 years of public school integration in many schools in the South as many did not fully integrate until forced to in 1971 (Orfield & Yun, 1999).

Black Male Achievement Trends

Despite the belief of many that school desegregation efforts would level the playing field and insure equal education attainment for all children, Black males in America continue to perform poorly academically. Holzman (2006), in the 2006 State Report Card Published by the Schott Foundation, lists statistics regarding the academic achievement of Black males. The Schott Foundation utilizes the School Education Index (SEII) to highlight disparities in the quality of education provided Black Americans by studying the graduation rates of Black and White non-Hispanic males each year. The SEII highlights the disparity in the quality of education provided Black children. The SEII is calculated by subtracting the graduation rate for Black males from 100 percent, yielding the drop out rate, which is added to the difference between the graduation rate of White and Black males (Holzman, 2006). The SEII indicates the degree of racial inequality between the groups. The Schott Foundation believes that the SEII scores illustrate the effectiveness, or lack thereof, as well as difference between the success of schools in the education of Black boys (Holzman, 2006). States are ranked by comparing the graduation rates of Black and White non-Hispanic males. The Schott Foundation calculates graduation rates based on the percentage of students enrolled in school during their freshman year that receive a high school diploma at the end of the twelfth grade year (Holzman, 2006). Data collected by the Schott Foundation indicates that the graduation rate for Black males in the state of Georgia improved by two percentage points between

the 2001-02 and the 2003-04 school years. The graduation rate for Black males in the state of Georgia during the 2003-04 school year as reported by the Schott Foundation was 39 percent while the graduation rate for non-Hispanic White males was 54 percent. This represents a 15 percent gap between the graduation rate of Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanic males in the state of Georgia at the end of the 2003-04 school year (Holzman, 2006).

Results from The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), which is administered to selected states and districts each year, is used to measure achievement in various subject areas (Holzman, 2006). In 4th grade, the percentage of White, non-Hispanic male students in the state of Georgia scoring at or above the Basic level in Reading increased from 67 percent in 1992 to 68 percent in 2005. The percentage of Black, non-Hispanic male students in the state of Georgia scoring at or above the Basic level in 4th grade Reading increased from 32 percent to 33 percent during the same time period (Holzman, 2006). According to the Schott Foundation SEII nationally, the gap between the achievement levels of Black and White, non-Hispanic students narrowed from 42 percent to 33 percent from 1992 to 1998. By the year 2005, the gap had begun to widen and had increased from 33 to 36 percent (Holzman, 2006). NAEP scores for 8th grade Reading indicate that the national percentage of White non-Hispanic male students scoring at or above the Basic level increased from 69 percent to 76 percent by 2005 (Holzman, 2006). In contrast, the percentage of Black non-Hispanic male students scoring at or above the Basic level increased from 35 percent to 43 percent from 1992 to 2005 (Holzman, 2006). The gap decreased from 34 percent to 33 percent during the same time period (Holzman, 2006). Serving as the benchmark, in 2005, 49 percent of 4th grade

Black males from the state of Massachusetts scored at or above Basic level on the Reading section of the NAEP.

In contrast, serving as the benchmark, in 2005, 63 percent of 8th grade Black males scored at or above the Basic level on the NAEP in the area of Reading (Holzman, 2006).

In addition to looking at graduation rates and achievement data as measured by the NAEP, in compiling the State Report Card, Holzman (2006) also looked at inequities in suspensions, expulsions, Special Education classification, and referrals to Gifted and Talented program for Black males. Based on a report of the National Research Council, 7.47% of White non-Hispanic students, 9.9% of Asian, 3.04% of Black non-Hispanic, and 3.57% of Hispanic students are placed in Gifted/Talented programs (Holzman, 2006). In most districts, Black non-Hispanic students are placed in Gifted/Talented programs at a rate half that as would be expected based on the percentage of black students enrolled in school (Holzman, 2006). A higher percentage of Black females are placed in Gifted/Talented programs than Black males (Holzman, 2006). If Black students were enrolled in Gifted/Talented programs in proportion to their school enrollment, nationwide, there would be at least an additional 140,000 Black females and 200,000 Black males in these programs (Holzman, 2006). Data collected by the Schott foundation indicated that during the 2001-02 school year, 7.27 percent of the students enrolled in Gifted/Talented programs in the state of Georgia were Black non-Hispanic males. The percentage of White non-Hispanic males enrolled in Gifted/Talented programs in the state of Georgia during the 2001-02 school year was 37.12 percent, more than five times the participation rate of Black non-Hispanic males (Holzman, 2006).

Mental retardation as defined by Holzman (2006) refers to those students who score below 70-75 on IQ tests. According to data from U. S Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 1 percent of White, non-Hispanic students, 2 percent of Black, non-Hispanic female students, and 3 percent of Black, non-Hispanic male students in public schools are classified as Mentally Retarded (Holzman, 2006). Additionally, data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2003) revealed that in during the 1999-2000 school year, 13 percent of all children 3 to 21 years old receive some type of special education service. The percentage of Blacks receiving special education services during the 1999-2000 school year was 15 percent while the percentage of Whites receiving some type of special education service was 11 percent (NCES, 2003).

In addition to being disproportionately represented in the number of students classified as mentally retarded, Black males are disproportionately affected by out of school suspensions and expulsions as well (Holzman, 2006). Data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2003) revealed that in the year 2000, Black males had the highest out of school suspension rate in America. Of the total number of students suspended in grades K–12 in 2000, Black males represented 17 percent of the total number of students suspended (NCES, 2003). While the expulsion rate for all racial/ethnic groups in 2000 were below 1 percent, black students were expelled at higher rates than other racial/ethnic groups (NCES, 2003). If Black male students were suspended or expelled at the same rate as White males, 500,000 fewer out of school suspensions and 10,000 fewer expulsions would occur among Black males (Holzman, 2006).

After reviewing data regarding the academic achievement of school aged Black males, Holzman (2006) theorized that the over-classification of Black males as Mentally retarded, the under classification of Black males as Gifted/Talented, and the disproportionate out of school suspensions and expulsions, combine to limit the educational opportunities and reduce the achievement levels for Black male students.

Schools in Georgia improved the graduation rate for Black males by approximately 2 percent points while the graduation rate for White, non-Hispanic males fell by 2 percentage points between 2001 and 2004, decreasing the achievement gap by 4 percentage points (Holzman, 2006). The approximate graduation rate for all Georgia school systems for black non-Hispanic males based on state reports was 39 percent in 2003. Conversely, the approximate graduation rate for White non-Hispanic males in 2003 was 54 percent (Holzman, 2006). Graduation rates for Black, non-Hispanic males in Georgia Districts with a student enrollment of more than 10,000 vary from 25 percent in Chatham County to 54 percent in Cobb County (Holzman, 2006). The 2003 – 2004 school year benchmark for graduation rates for Black non-Hispanic males for school districts was 78 percent, which was based on state reported data from Baltimore County, Maryland (Holzman, 2006). In order to reach the benchmark level, five of the eight Georgia school districts which enroll 10,000 or more Black, non-Hispanic male students, would have to more than double their 2003/04 graduation rates for Black males (Holzman, 2006).

As previously stated, the 2006 State Report Card analyzes results from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) which measures achievement levels for various subject areas. Results from the NAEP 2005 administration revealed that the

percentage of White, non-Hispanic males in the state of Georgia scoring at or above basic level in grade 4 Reading increased from 67 percent to 68 percent. The percentage of Black Non-Hispanic male students in Georgia scoring at or above the Basic level in grade 4 Reading increased from 32 percent to 33 percent (Holzman, 2006). A 35 percent gap remains between Black non-Hispanic and White non-Hispanic males in 4th grade Reading as measured by the NAEP (Holzman, 2006). Two thirds of Black male students in Georgia do not reach the Basic level in grade 4 reading as measured by the NAEP (Holzman, 2006). In Georgia, the percentage of White, non-Hispanic male students scoring at or above the Basic level in grade 8 Reading decreased from 76 percent in 1998 to 75 percent in 2005 (Holzman, 2006). During this same time period, in Georgia, the percentage of Black, non-Hispanic Black male students scoring at or above Basic in Grade 8 Reading as measured by the NAEP decreased from 41 percent to 40 percent (Holzman, 2006). The gap between non-Hispanic Black and White males in Georgia remained unchanged at 35 percent (Holzman, 2006).

The National Center for Education Statistics, a division of the United States Department of Education, is the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States and other nations as well. On behalf of the National Center for Education Statistics, Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) compiled the publication entitled *Status and Trends in the Education of Blacks*. The report provides data regarding the academic achievement of Black children. The section titled *Persistence*, focuses on indicators of student effort and persistence (Hoffman, Llagas and Snyder 2003). Persistence indicators include student absenteeism rates, student retention rates, suspension rates, expulsion rates, drop out rates, and high

school completion rates (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) believe that an examination of persistence factors is important as problems early in a child's school career such as behavior that leads to suspension and expulsion, may increase the chances of a student dropping out of school. Persistence Data is as follows:

Based on attendance data from the year 2000, there were no significant differences in the level of days absent from school between Black students, White students, and Hispanic students at the 8th and 12th grade levels. The total percentage of 8th grade students missing three or more days from school in 2000 was 20 percent. The percentage of White, non-Hispanic students missing more than three days was 19 percent, while the percentage of Black students missing three or more days from school in 2000 was 22 percent. The total percentage of 12th grade students absent three or more days was 28 percent while the percentage of White students was 27 percent and the percentage of Black 12th grade students stood at 29 percent (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003).

Nationally, during the year 2000, Black students were retained, suspended, and expelled at higher rates than their White counterparts (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). In 1999, 18 percent of Black students in grades kindergarten through 12th grade had repeated at least one grade. In contrast, only 9 percent of White students had been retained at least one grade. In regard to suspensions and expulsions, higher rates were observed among Black students as well. In 1999, 35 percent of Black students in grades 7 through 12 had been suspended at some time during their school career. In contrast, only 15 percent of White students in grades 7 to 12 had been suspended or expelled at some time in their school career (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003).

Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) define dropouts as 16 to 24 year-olds who are out of school and who have not earned a high school diploma or General Educational Development Degree (GED). In the year 2000, of Blacks aged 16 to 24, 16 percent had not earned a high school diploma or GED. In contrast, only 7 percent of Whites aged 16 to 24 had not earned a high school diploma or GED. These numbers were significantly higher than the graduation rate for all Black students and specifically Black males in America as reported by other sources. Data as reported by Hoffman, Llagas, and Synder (2003) includes data for Black females and Black males who receive their GED post high school, including while in prison. The graduation rate for Black males as reported throughout this study included only black males who graduated from high school with a high school diploma. Black males who received a GED were not included in the statistics. While the drop out rate for Blacks was more than double the drop out rate for Whites, it was far less than the drop out rate for Hispanics, which stood at 28 percent in the year 2000 (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). When comparing data from 1972 to the year 2000, Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) found that the drop out rates for Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics declined during this period. The drop out rate for Blacks declined by 8 percent, the drop out rate for Whites declined by 5 percent, and the drop out rate for Hispanics declined by 6 percent (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003).

While the high school completion rate for Blacks rose by 8 percent from 1972 to 2000, the gap between Blacks and Whites has not narrowed since the early 1980's (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). The high school completion rate as defined by Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) represents the percentage of 18 to 24 year- olds who have received a high school diploma or GED. The higher drop out rate for Black students

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manifests itself in the high school completion gap between Blacks and Whites (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). In the year 2000, Blacks aged 18 to 24 had a high school completion rate of 84 percent while Whites aged 18 to 24 had a high school completion rate of 92 percent (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003). Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder (2003) found the increase in the high school completion rates for Blacks aged 18 to 24 to be statistically significantly higher than all completion rates for Blacks aged 18 to 24 years old before 1982. Data indicates that a greater proportion of Blacks aged 18 to 24 years old were completing high school than in the 1970's. The changes in the high school completion rate for Blacks aged 18 to 24 years old have generally not been statistically significant since 1982 however (Hoffman, Llagas, and Snyder, 2003).

Much research has been done to account for these differences in the achievement level and school completion rate of White, non-Hispanic and Black, non-Hispanic students, specifically Black males. Theories abound that attempt to explain why the academic performance of Black males continues to lag behind their White counterparts. Several possible causal factors are discussed below:

Academic Disidentification

Academic disidentification was a prominent theme woven throughout the literature as a possible causal factor for the low academic achievement of Black males. In his article entitled, *Unraveling Underachievement Among African American Boys from an Identification with Academics Perspective,* Osborne (1999) notes that the idea of identification with academics has as its roots the symbolic interactionist perspective on self esteem. The symbolic interactionist view of self is based on the premise that individuals receive feedback from their environment (Osborne, 1999). Symbolic

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interactionist theory of self asserts that if environmental feedback is perceived by the individual as accurate and valid, it becomes a part of the individual's self concept (Osborne, 1999). If the individual does not value that particular domain or view it as important to self, feedback in that domain will have little impact on the self-esteem of the individual (Osborne, 1999). Disidentification within this domain is believed to be the result (Osborne, 1999). Osborne (1999) argues that previous research supports the notion that individuals are likely to selectively devalue domains in which they or their group do not fare well in. According to Osborne (1999) authors such as Newman (1981) and Finn (1989) have previously argued that identification with academics is necessary in order for learning to occur. It would be expected that students who are identified with academic success in school, should be more motivated to be persistent in their academic endeavors (Osborne, 1999). In contrast, it would be expected that disidentified students would be less motivated to succeed academically due to little to no correlation between academic performance and self esteem (Osborne, 1999). Ample evidence exists that confirms that identification with academics is related to academic outcomes, most likely through multiple variables such as persistence and motivation (Osborne, 1999). In a later work titled *Stereotype Threat, Identification with Academics, and Withdrawal from School: Why the most successful students of colour might be most likely to withdraw*, Osborne & Walker (2006) expand on Osborne's (1999) previous work on academic disidentification. Osborne & Walker (2006) reason that assuming that a positive self-concept is important and rewarding to the individual, and that a negative self view is undesirable, domain identification should be related to outcomes and motivation in that domain. Overall, strong domain identification would be expected to lead to an increased motivation to

achieve in a particular domain and greater chances of positive outcomes in that domain

(Osborne & Walker, 2006). While most students are motivated to and desire to be

successful, all students do not experience success in the academic domain (Osborne &

Walker, 2006). Osborne & Walker (2006) theorize that since poor academic performance

and a strong identification with academics are not compatible with an individual having a

positive self-concept, school and academics create conflict in the life of the individual

who performs poorly academically. Students who perform poorly academically, Osborne

& Walker (2006) believe adapt to this conflict in one of three ways: (1) the poor

performing student begins to identify less with the academic domain and chooses another

domain with which to identify that serves as the foundation for a positive self-view; (2)

threat to self is eliminated by the student choosing to seek the assistance necessary to

improve performance in the academic domain; (3) the struggling student relieves the self

conflict through absenteeism or dropping out of school altogether. Osborne & Walker

(2006) did a longitudinal study beginning in 1999 to determine if a racial component of

academic disidentification could be identified. Urban high school students were tracked

for two years. The student population studied was racially diverse. The racial

composition of the school was 33 percent White, 39 percent Black, 3 percent Asian, 18

percent Hispanic, and 6 percent Native American. White students comprised 26 percent

of the sample, Black students comprised 11 percent of the sample, Hispanic students

comprised 57 percent of the sample, and Native American students comprised 6 percent

of the sample. Additionally, females comprised 63 percent of the sample, while males

comprised 37 percent of the sample (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Identification with

academics levels were measured using the School Perceptions Questionnaire (SPQ) and

the Identification with School Questionnaire (ISQ) (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Withdrawal from school was monitored at the end of each of the two school years studied. School records were examined to determine if a student was enrolled in school. Students attending the school surveyed or another school in the district were considered to be still enrolled in school (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Academic outcomes for students participating in the study were examined at the end of each school year with the overall GPA, absences, and office referrals being recorded. After data analysis for the two year period was examined, it was found that of the study participants, 52.9 percent of White students, 28.6 percent of Black students, 18.7 percent of Hispanic, and 38.5 percent of Native American students had withdrawn (Osborne & Walker, 2006). In the academic domain, there were no race or gender interaction effects detected. There were significant correlations between academic identification and absenteeism in ninth and tenth grade study participants. A significant correlation between academic identification and behavioral referrals was also noted among 10th grade study participants (Osborne & Walker, 2006). No race or gender interaction effects were found in regard to GPA (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Based on the multideterminants utilized in this study, Osborne & Walker (2006) concluded that the correlations noted are, in their opinion, good evidence that academic identification does have an influence on student performance as expected.

In his article entitled *Academic Disidentification, Race, and High School Dropouts*¸ Griffin (2002) discusses and corroborates much of Osborne's research on academic disidentification. Griffin theorizes that students' ability to identify with academics is a determining factor in whether or not students remain in school. Academic

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disidentification as described by Griffin (2002) and other researchers refers to the disconnect that occurs when students attempt to devalue the importance of high levels of academic achievement in order to protect their perception of self. The premise of academic disidentification is that once students have eliminated academic achievement as a relevant domain, student performance on academic tasks will have little impact on the students' positive self perception (Griffin, 2002). The Academic Disidentification Theory is based on the work of Finn (1989). Finn (1989), in reviewing research on school dropouts, identified two models of student behavior that he believed contributed to students dropping out of school (Griffin, 2002). Finn's Participation-identification model argues that the more success a student experiences, the more the student identifies with school (Griffin, 2002). The participation-identification model was predicated on the premise that student identification with school in this context meant that students have internalized major aspects of schooling to the extent that their perception of self is shaped by their school performance (Griffin, 2002). Academic Disidentfication Theory attributes the low achievement and school completion rates of Black students, specifically Black males to their having disidentified a positive self concept with school performance. To test this theory, Griffin (2002) collected data from 132,903 high school students in the state of Florida. After an analysis of the data collected from the Florida study, Griffin (2002) concluded that results from the study were consistent with the disidentification hypothesis. Griffin (2002) found that Black and Hispanic students appear to place less importance on academic achievement than do White or Asian students. Previously discussed achievement and school completion data appear to corroborate this theory as

well. One component of academic-disidentification that has received much review is that of stereotype threat.

Stereotype Threat

Steele and Aronson (1998) define stereotype threat primarily as "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype," such as the stereotype that young Black males are more prone toward violence. Steele and Aronson (1998) explain that some students try to escape stereotype threat by disidentifying with the part of life in which the stereotype originates, such as school and academics. Stereotype threat, Steele and Aronson (1998) believe is partly responsible for the lagging educational achievement and school retention rates of Black children, which has been proven to exist as far back as historical records are available. Examples include the college graduation rate. While 58 percent of White, non-Hispanic college students graduates within six years, only 38 percent of Black students graduate within this same time period (Steele & Aronson, 1998). Additionally according to Steele and Aronson (1998), of the 38 percent of Black college students who graduate in six years, typically, the majority earn grade point averages (GPAs) two-thirds of a letter grade below their white counterparts. Steele and Aronson (1998) believe that these differences in academic performance are attributable to the effects of historic and continuing segregation, discrimination, and ongoing socioeconomic disadvantages. Such deprivation, Steele and Aronson (1998) believe directly impedes the Black children's school performance. Black students facing deprivation, tend to make negative assessments of the prospects of the educational future, encouraging disidentification with school (Steele & Aronson, 1998). It has been

hypothesized by some social scientist that the psychic distress caused by negative stereotypes may be a factor in the underperformance of Black students (Steele &Aronson, 1998). Some researchers assume that the threat of being stereotyped triggers in targeted groups an internalized low expectancy about their ability that has already been established due to previous exposure to the stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1998). In contrast, Steele and Aronson's (1998) stereotype threat model presupposes that the prospect of being negatively stereotyped can be threatening in and of itself and detrimental in its own right irregardless of whether it triggers internalized low expectations or low self efficacy. Tests that purport to measure intellectual ability might cause stereotype threat in Black students (Steele & Aronson, 1998). In testing situations, Steele and Aronson (1998) believe that stereotype threat can cause emotional arousal that reduces the range of cues that students have at their disposal to solve test problems and divert the attention of the student away from the test and to irrelevant concerns. To prove their theory, Steele and Aronson (1998) took 114 Stanford University undergraduates and randomly assigned them to one of three experimental groups. Half of the study participants were White and the other half Black. In the first experimental group, a White male experimenter explained to the students that they were taking a test that would diagnose their intellectual ability, making the racial stereotype about intellectual ability relevant to Black test participants. Group one participants were told to try hard in order to help the examiner better analyze their verbal ability (Steele & Aronson, 1998). In the second experimental group, the same test was described as a laboratory problem solving task designed not as a diagnostic test but as a means of better understanding "the psychological factors involved in solving verbal problems" (p. 405). The experimenter

told study participants to try hard even though their ability was not being evaluated

(Steele & Aronson, 1998). In the third group, study participants were encouraged to view

the difficult test as a challenge. Participants were told that the test would be used by the

experimenter to help determine whether or the challenge inherent in a difficult test would

increase the motivation and performance of study participants (Steele & Aronson, 1998).

Expected results would be for Black students in group one, in which the test was

described as a test of verbal ability, to score lower than White students (Steele &

Aronson, 1998). In contrast, Steele and Aronson (1998) expected to find no difference

between the scores of Blacks and Whites in groups two and three. Group two described

the test as a means of better understanding the factors involved in problem solving while

group three described the test as being used to determine the impact of challenging

activities on performance and motivation (Steele & Aronson, 1998). Black students in

the group one, the diagnostic group, performed significantly worse than those in group

two, the non diagnostic group and group three, the challenge group (Steele & Aronson,

1998). Black students in group one posted a mean score of approximately nine while

White students in group one posted a mean score of approximately twelve (Steele &

Aronson, 1998). Black students posted a mean score of approximately twelve while

White students in group two posted a mean score of approximately thirteen, which is not

considered statistically significant (Steele & Aronson 1998). Black students in group

three posted a mean score of approximately twelve while White students in group three

posted a mean score of approximately fourteen, which is not considered statistically

significant (Steele and Aronson, 1998). In a review of self reported measures, Steele and

Aronson (1998) found that experimental conditions do not appear to have significant

effects on the personal worth, academic ability, or disruptive thoughts of Black students during the test. Steele and Aronson (1998) did find however that Black participants in each group and experimental condition believe the test administered to be more biased than did White participants. Additionally, Steele and Aronson (1998) found that Black participants' estimates of how many problems they solved correctly as well as how their scores compared to other participants were significantly lower in group one, the diagnostic condition than in the other two groups and conditions. Steele and Aronson (1998) found that test description had no effect on the self-evaluations of White participants. After controlling for SAT scores, Black student generally perform worse than White students when presented a test to measure their ability (Steele and Aronson, 1998). The performance of Blacks improves and matches that of their White counterparts when the test is presented in a way other than as a measure of ability (Steele, 1998). Sacket, Hardison, and Cullen (2004) in their article entitled *On Interpreting Stereotype Threat as Accounting for African American-White Differences on Cognitive Tests* raised the question as to the degree to which the stereotype threat results outlined in Steele and Aronson's 1998 study on stereotype threat can be generalized to applied settings. Applied settings would include admissions testing for post secondary school as well as employment prescreening (Sacket et al., 2004). Sacket et al. (2004) contend that to interpret Steele and Aronson (1998) results as indicating that in the absence of stereotype threat, scores for White and Black students who participated in Steele and Aronson's 2004 study would be comparable is an inaccurate assessment. Steele and Aronson (1998) did not report that the actual test scores of study participants were the same when

stereotype threat was removed, but that scores were statistically adjusted for differences in students' prior performance on the SAT (Sacket et al., 2004).

Sackett et al. (2004) contends that Steele and Aronson's finding show that absent stereotype threat due to labeling the test as a measure of intelligence, Black and White student scores differed to the degree that would be expected based on prior SAT scores. Wax (2004) corroborates Sacket's contention that Steele and Aronson's studies were flawed. In her studies on stereotype threat, Wax (2004) also refutes Steele's results based on her assertion that the SAT scores of the Black Stanford students studied were 40 points behind those of white students. She states that Steele adjusted the SAT scores of black students in his study, resulting in a study of students whose intellectual ability was unequal from the start.

In a similar study, Steele (2002) examined the perceptions of undergraduate women in male dominated academic areas. The study sought to determine if sex discrimination and stereotype threat played a role in causing large numbers of undergraduate women to switch out of math, science, or engineering by the end of their first year. The study revealed that undergraduate women in math, science, or engineering were most likely to report feeling threatened by negative gender stereotypes that allege that they are not as capable as men. (Oswald & Harvey, 2001) noted previous research that indicated that women tend to have slightly more negative attitudes towards mathematics than males and are more likely to experience math anxiety than males. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of stereotype threat and the removal of stereotype threat and hostile environment on women's math performance. It was found that stereotype threat and hostile environment significantly interacted in their effect on

mathematical performance. The trend exhibited was that of women in the control non-hostile environment with the stereotype threat removed performed better than stereotype threat environment participants (Oswald & Harvey, 2001).

Similar finding were made in a study on the effect of stereotype threat and the race of the interviewer effects in a survey of political knowledge, Davis & Silver (2003) used nonthreatening and threatening stereotypical type questions to conduct phone interviews with African Americans. Findings of the study indicated that among white respondents, the mean number of correct answers was not associated with either the respondent's perceived race of the interviewer or the interviewer's self identified race. In contrast, among Black respondents, the perceived race of the interviewer mattered a great deal. When interviewed by a Black interviewer, Black respondents answered an average of 3.42 political knowledge questions correctly. When interviewed by a white interviewer, black respondents answered an average of 2.80 questions correctly. When interviewed by an interviewer whose race is not perceived as black or white, Black respondents answered an average of 2.39 questions correctly. The respondents' perception of the interviewers' race made a great deal of difference for Black respondents and no difference for White respondents.

Stereotype threat appears to transcend age lines as well. Hess (2004) conducted studies on the aging and memory loss as measured by previous studies. Hess argued that some of the age differences that have been found in standard laboratory tests may be in fact due to stereotype threat rather than decreased memory. In his research, Hess found that older adults were just as adept as younger adults in distinguishing between essential and extraneous information when making decisions that could impact their lifestyle. Data

indicated that although some basic concepts of cognitive ability decline as we age, functioning is preserved in many contexts, and there are some areas that actually improve as one ages (Hess, 2004). Whether in academic or other settings, the theory of stereotype threat has received much review and support. A second component of the theory of academic disidentification and usually associated with stereotype threat is that of cultural inversion (Griffin, 2002).

Cultural Inversion and Acting White

Cultural inversion as defined by Ogbu (1991a, 1992), (Griffin, 2002) is better defined as cultural opposition. Cultural inversion occurs when the members of a minority group adopt behaviors that directly contradict a specific, prominent aspect of the dominant culture in which they live (Griffin, 2002). Ogbu argued that cultural inversion for Black students was tied to the history of Blacks in America as involuntary minorities (Griffin, 2002). Ogbu inferred that the history of Blacks being brought to America against their will and being forced to work as slaves makes Blacks prime candidates for cultural inversion. Involuntary immigrants, namely Black Americans, may often not hold positive expectations for their future. Voluntary immigrants, on the other hand, who came willingly to America, looking for a better life, may expect economic, educational, or social benefits by immigrating (Griffin, 2002). According to Griffin (2002), while the validity of Ogbu's (1992) theory regarding voluntary and involuntary minority status and its effect on culture formation and inversion has been challenged, in the education arena, achievement data appears to corroborate Ogbu's observations. Black students along with Hispanic students do appear to be members of a subculture that values academic

achievement less than their White counterparts (Griffin, 2002). This supposed subculture

formed by involuntary minorities is linked to the theory of "acting White."

In a manuscript titled *Collective Identity and the Burden of "Acting White" in*

Black History, Community, and Education submitted just before his death, Ogbu (2004)

attempts to clear up misconceptions regarding his previous work on "Acting White."

After fifteen years of doing comparative studies on minority education, Ogbu (2004)

concludes that marked discrimination in society and school, operating in conjunction with

the responses of minority students to the discrimination, by itself, does not adequately

explain the differences in academic performance of minority students. Ogbu (2004)

suggests that additional factors that make up the dynamics of minority communities

contribute to differences in the academic performance of minority students. Ogbu (2004)

asserts that researchers who have studied and critiqued Fordham & Ogbu's (1986) work

have translated his multifaceted cultural-ecological framework into a single-factor

hypothesis of oppositional culture. Additionally, Ogbu believes that many authors who

write on the subject "the burden of acting White" fail to realize that throughout the

history of Blacks in America, Blacks have always experienced "the burden of "acting

White"" due to their oppositional collective identity and cultural framework of reference

(Ogbu, 2004). The lack of awareness of multiple cultural factors Ogbu believes, results in

the historical and community contexts of Black students' behavior being ignored and

instead focusing solely on Black students and their school interactions (Ogbu, 2004). The

collective identity of Black students in America cannot be ignored (Ogbu, 2004).

Collective identity is defined as a peoples' sense of who they are and their feeling of

"belonging" (Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu states that the collective identity of an oppressed

minority group is created and maintained by two factors, perception of status and the

response of minorities to the status issue (Ogbu, 2004). Blacks in America, Ogbu

believes, have evolved into a separate and enduring segment of the population in America

as a result of slavery (Ogbu, 2004). These status problems, of a collective nature, are

believed to be difficult if not impossible for minorities to resolve within the existing

system of majority-minority relationships (Ogbu, 2004). Status problems of Blacks in

America identified by Ogbu (2004) include being forced into minority status through

slavery, instrumental discrimination such as denial of good jobs and housing, social

subordination such as the prohibition of assimilation into the majority group, and

expressive mistreatment such as cultural, language and intellectual denigration. In

response to the status problem, Ogbu believes that involuntary minorities respond

collectively as a group and individually in ways that reinforce their separate existence

and collective identity (Ogbu, 2004). To assimilate into the dominant culture, Ogbu

(2004) believes that minorities must adapt and take on the collective identity of the

dominant culture, bringing on the burden of "acting white," Ogbu (2004) theorizes that

the burden of "acting white" has existed since the introduction of Black slaves into the

new world. Additionally Ogbu believes that before the emancipation of slaves, the burden

of "acting White" for Blacks consisted of talking and acting in ways that the dominant

White culture thought that Black should talk and act (Ogbu, 2004). The burden of "acting

White" after emancipation from slavery, according to Ogbu (2004), was for Blacks to

talk and behave like Whites in order to gain social acceptance and access societal

institutions, including schooling and education. After emancipation, Ogbu theorizes that

Blacks now had to master two distinctly different sets of cultural and dialectic frames of

reference (Ogbu, 2004). The problem Ogbu (2004) believes with this dual frames of

reference for Blacks was the belief that Blacks were often not rewarded once they

mastered this dual system and were able to successfully act and talk like Whites and had

met predetermined education and training stipulations (Ogbu, 2004). Blacks, after

emancipation, did not give up their oppositional cultural and dialectic frames of reference

in order to embrace the White cultural frame of reference for education and social

mobility (Ogbu, 2004). Some Blacks chose to assimilate in culture and language and tried

their best to emulate the White culture, while other Blacks chose to accommodate rather

than assimilate in culture and language (Ogbu, 2004). Other Blacks, after emancipation,

Ogbu (2004) believes developed the coping strategy of ambivalence, realizing that

"proper English" was necessary for school and job success.   Blacks, realized though that

no matter how well they spoke "proper English," they would still sound Black (Ogbu,

2004). Blacks, after emancipation, based on the ambivalence model, viewed trying to

"talk proper" as "puttin on" or "acting White" (Ogbu, 2004). Based on this idea of

"putting on," some Blacks opposed adopting White cultural and dialectic frames of

reference or "acting White" at anytime because it meant giving up their Black ways

(Ogbu, 2004). Finally, other Blacks, after emancipation became encapsulated in Black

cultural and dialectic frames of reference, refusing to adopt White cultural and dialectic

frames of references even though they were versed in doing so (Ogbu, 2004). In

discussing the impact of the "burden of acting White" on Blacks in society today, Ogbu

(2004) believes that contemporary Blacks adopt the previously mentioned coping

strategies that they adopted after emancipation. Blacks today, Ogbu (2004) believes,

adopt these coping strategies to resolve the internal conflict that is caused by the demands

of White controlled situations and the demands to conform to their Black community expectations as well. Ogbu (2004) cites various references that provide evidence of negative social and psychological consequences that Blacks experience for "acting White." Ogbu (2004) noted that accusations commonly made toward Blacks striving for academic success include being an Uncle Tom or being disloyal to the Black cause or Black community. Ogbu (2004) theorizes that Black students face the same burden of "acting White" faced by Blacks throughout history of America and still face in contemporary society today. Under these circumstances, Ogbu (2004) believes that Black students have developed the same ways of coping with the burden of "acting White" found in contemporary Black communities today. Just as Blacks throughout history have faced peer pressure against "acting White," the social sanctions and coping strategies that still exist within and are imposed by the Black community for "acting White" are shared by Black students since they are a part of the Black community (Ogbu, 2004).

In her article titled, *The Making of a "Burden": Tracing The Development of a "Burden of Acting White" in Schools*, Tyson (2006), based on data collected from four research studies, dismisses the notion that a relationship exists between race and achievement. Tyson (2006) acknowledges that some Black students are accused of "acting White" by their peers, but attributes this characterization to highly visible institutional patterns such as ability grouping. Data drawn from classroom observations and student interviews, Tyson (2006) found, did not support the notion that an oppositional culture is prevalent and pervasive among Black students. The inability of Black students to reach goals of high achievement, Tyson (2006) believes, is the real burden that many Black students face. According to Tyson (2006) Black students begin

school with the same enthusiasm as White students and do not begin school with notions that academic achievement is only for Whites. Using cross-sectional rather than longitudinal study results, Tyson (2006) found that a connection between early academic success and future educational outcomes. Tyson (2006) found clear evidence to support her belief that Black students begin school achievement oriented and fully engaged in the educational process. Tyson (2006) theorizes that for Black students who experience academic success, school can be satisfying. In contrast, Tyson (2006) believes that for Black students whose attempts at high achievement are not successful, school seems worthwhile in so much as it affords low achievement students the opportunity to socialize and engage in other enjoyable activities such as sports. Tyson (2006), in contrast to research previously done by Ogbu on "acting White" and academic disidentification, theorizes that that the actions of students are not based on cultural values, but on their ideas about their chances for success in school and the options available for them. Over time, Tyson (2006) believes, low achieving Black students begin to focus on behaviors that do not depend on positive feedback from their school experiences and instead engage in activities such as being a class clown, being a good athlete, or being tough or cool.

<center>*Cool Pose*</center>

The idea of low achieving students adopting behaviors to mask their lack of academic success as proposed by Tyson (2006) such as being cool has been studied by other researchers attempting to unravel the root causes of low academic achievement and negative behaviors exhibited by Black males. Majors and Billson (1992), in their book, *Cool Pose: The Dilemma of Black Manhood in America* define cool pose as a ritualized form of masculinity that includes behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression

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management, and performances designed to deliver a single, critical message: control, strength, and self pride. Glasgow argues that cool is essential to the development of the black male identity as he develops his unique style. This style is expressed in walk, talk, choice of clothing and hairstyle (as reported by Majors and Billson, 1992). Beginning in early adolescence, Black males learn how to develop and maintain his own brand of cool so that he will with the in crowd (Majors and Billson, 1992). Cool pose according to Majors and Billson (1992) serves as a type of coping mechanism that serves to counter the dangers Black males encounter daily, being constructed from attitudes and actions that become deeply entrenched in the Black male's psyche.

Cool pose it is believed provides a mask to hide self-doubt, insecurity, and inner turmoil by masking it with the impression of competence, high self-esteem, control and inner strength. By acting calm, emotionless, fearless, aloof, and tough, Black males it is believed, are striving to offset an externally imposed "zero" image (Majors and Billson, 1992). Historically, according to Majors and Billson (1992), cool pose represents one of many survival techniques that Black males have developed to deal with white society. For some Black males, Majors and Billson (1992) believes, cool pose represents a fundamental structuring of the psyche designed to hide the rage held in check beneath the surface. These males, it is believed, have developed a keen sense of what to say, how to say it, and when to say it in order to avoid punishment and pain, thus improving their life experiences.

According to Majors and Billson (1992) Cool pose often creates conflict with school personnel, often White. Many Black males Majors and Billson (1992) suggests are suspended for culture-specific behaviors such as strutting, rapping, woofing, playing

the dozens, using slang, wearing hats or expressive clothing, or wearing pants which fall below the waist level. Most teachers are White, and many lack the cultural insight and sensitivity necessary to recognize that young Black males may perceive expressive and cool behavior as a source of pride rather than as negative or disruptive (Majors and Billson, 1992). The sentiments of Majors and Billson are echoed by Hooks (2004) in his book *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. Hooks (2004) believes that Black males are stereotyped by racism and sexism as being more body than mind. Hooks does not believe that society affirms the correlation between a Black male's ability to think, process ideas and level of school, choosing instead to view Black males as slow. As a result, Hooks (2004) believes that well-educated Black males have learned to act as if they know nothing in a world where a smart Black male risks punishment. Additionally, Hooks (2004) believes that well-educated Black males due to class warfare within the Black community are often discouraged by a spirit of anti-intellectualism imposed upon them by uneducated Black in the community who are not upwardly mobile. A strong family support network is seen by Hooks as vital if Black males are to rise above anti-intellectualism forces within their community. This support network Hooks (2004) believes has been negatively impacted by the disintegration of the Black family.

Family Involvement

Based on United States Census (2005) data, Black children are less likely than any other group of children in American under the age of 18 to live with two married parents. In 2005, only 35 percent of Black children under the age of 18 lived with two married parents. The percentage of Black children under 18 living with two married parents is in stark contrast to 84 percent of Asian, 76 percent of non-Hispanic, and 65

percent of Hispanic children (Child Trends Data Bank, 2006). Additionally, in 2005, 10 percent of all Black children did not live with either parent, compared to 5 percent of Hispanic children, 3 percent of Asian children, and 3 percent of non-Hispanic children (Child Trends Data Bank, 2006).

Much research has been done on the effect of parental involvement on educational outcomes of Black students. In a study of 175 third grade inner city students in Chicago, Illinois, Hara & Burke (1998) examined the effects of a broad-based parental involvement program. Significant student achievement gains were made in reading among students participating in the parent involvement program when compared to those who were not (Hara & Burke, 1998). The number of parents involved in the program grew by 43 percent over a two year period with parents reporting observed improvement in their children's interest in and attitude toward school (Hara & Burke, 1998). In a study titled, *Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement*, Sui-Chi & Willms (1996) studied a representative sample of 25,000 middle school students throughout the United States. Factors studied included parent-teacher communication, parent involvement at school, and home supervision. Su-Chi & Willms (1996) found that regular discussion of school-related activities at home in conjunction with helping children plan their educational program had the most significant impact on student achievement. Findings of the study indicated that parents discussed school issues more with boys than with girls but tended to have more contact with school officials regarding boys (Su-Chi & Willms, 1996). The study showed that parents of children with learning and behavioral issues were less likely to participate in school and discussed school issues less with their children (Su-Chi & Willms, 1996). In a similar study on the impact of high school

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parental involvement on academics, Hickman, Greenwood & Miller (1995) examined the

relationship between the achievement level of high school students and the types of

parental involvement of the primary care-giving parent. An analysis of the data indicated

that based on the results of this study, the only type of parent involvement positively

related to student achievement was the home-based type, which consisted of a parent

monitoring homework and editing papers and projects (Hickman, Greenwood & Miller,

1995). The study results also indicated a lack of active involvement on the part of parents

in the lives of Black and average and low achieving students (Hickman, Greenwood &

Miller, 1995). In a study on the role of family in the success of high achieving Black

males, Maton, Hrabowski, and Grief (1998) surveyed Black males enrolled in the

Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland. The parents of these sixty

high achieving Black males were also interviewed. 55 percent of the Black males had

been raised by two parent families and had at least one parent with a college or more

advanced degree. 20 percent of the mothers and 25 percent of the fathers had never

attended college. The remainder of the fathers and mothers had some college experience.

In regard to occupation, 42.4 percent of the mothers and 43.9 percent of the fathers were

professionals or business executives. 37.3 percent of the mothers and 40.3 percent of the

fathers were skilled or technical workers. 20.4 percent of the mothers and 15.8 percent of

the fathers were semiskilled, unskilled or service workers. 60 percent of the Black males

grew up in metropolitan areas suburbs while 37 percent grew up in urban areas with the

remaining 3 percent being raised in rural areas. 33 mothers were interviewed by the

Black female director of the scholars program and 24 fathers were interviewed by the

Black male assistant director of the scholarship program. Results of the interviews

yielded a clear and consistent picture of the parenting style of the majority of parents of the Black males in the scholarship program. Parents of the Black males in the scholarship program seemed determined that their children would succeed. The determination of the parents was evidenced by their active and persistent engagement in emphasizing the importance of education, extremely high performance levels, and extremely high expectations. Further evidence included the parents' involvement in preschool educational activities as well as parent teacher organizational activities, advocating for appropriate academic placement in school, providing structure and help with homework, and placing their sons in educational programs during the summer (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998). Sons, during interviews, spoke often of their parents facing many difficulties growing up including poverty, which sons felt made their parents want more for their children. Sons also spoke often of education being stressed with bad grades not being tolerated (Maton, Hrabowski, et al., 1998). Sons commonly spoke about their parents confronting incidents of lowered teacher and school expectations such as their parents resisting the efforts of the school to place them in a lower ability track based on test scores. The majority of sons, during the interview process, recalled physical punishment as punishment that was directed and not random. Both parents and sons saw discipline as a means of teaching important lessons for Black boys in a sometimes racist and dangerous world where juvenile behaviors can be misperceived as criminal behavior and acts (Maton, Hrabowski, et. all, 1998). Parents reported the importance of strict limit setting, and consistent, sometimes physical enforcement of the rules. Parents and sons both reported strict limit setting and discipline as being necessary to successfully raise Black males. Researchers found that strict limited setting and discipline characterized the

upbringing of 84 percent of the sons. Additionally, parents of sons in the scholars program reported that they were more strict on their sons than other parents in their neighborhood. 93.1 percent of the fathers surveyed, 81.6 percent of the mothers surveyed, and 77.1 percent of the sons surveyed agreed that the parents of sons in the scholars program were more strict than their other parents in their neighborhood (Maton, Hrabowski, et al., 1998). Another constant was the reported degree of love and support provided by parents to their sons. Most parents were seen as being available and having strong faith in their sons (Maton, Hrabowski, et al., 1998). It appeared to the researchers that the loving support of the parents of the sons surveyed fostered in many of the sons surveyed a strong belief in self and in their ability to achieve despite the odds (Maton, Hrabowski, et al., 1998). Although the sons interviewed as previously stated reported the presence and importance of strong love and support from their parents, not all of the sons had a father figure or male role model in their lives. In most cases however, the sons that had a relationship with their father described the relationship as positive (Maton, Hrabowski, et al., 1998). Some students described their fathers as primary role models. The most frequent portrayal of fathers as role model by student interview participants was of fathers who went to work everyday to support their families but were also at home helping to raise their sons. Additionally sons described fathers who were primary role models as also being at sports practices and events as well as helping them with homework (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998).

The importance of community connectedness and resources was also reported by sons and parents surveyed. Both parents and sons placed an emphasis on the influence of extended family, church, extracurricular activities, peers, and teachers (Maton,

Hrabowski et al., 1998). As far as extended family was concerned, aunts and grandmothers were seen as especially influential in the sons' upbringing as well as contributing to their academic focus (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998). Regular church attendance was reported by most sons as a family activity and source of support. Additionally, parental support for extracurricular activities was highlighted by the sons as a major contributing factor in helping them to maintain their focus and achieve success (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998).

Many of the sons described teachers who had positively impacted their lives, especially those who took a special interest in them and motivated them to succeed (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998). Black males study participants, participants in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, in summary painted a portrait of the effective parent of Black males as being extremely engaged, determined, loving, strict, encouraging, demanding, and resourceful who place an emphasis on educational achievement and positive connections to the community at large (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998). Parents of the Black males in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program had high expectations for their sons and demanded that their teachers have high expectations and challenge them as well (Maton, Hrabowski et al., 1998).

Teacher Expectations

The publication of a study on teacher expectations and its affect on student intellectual ability by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) first brought attention to the issues of teacher expectations (Bruns, Mcfall et al., 2000). The results of this study later became known as the Pygmalion Effect. According to Bruns, McFall, et al. (2000), the Pygmalion Effect asserts that the expectations one has about a person can eventually lead that person

to achieve and behave in a manner consistent with those expectations. In their research, Rosenthal and Jacobson required elementary school teachers to administer to each student the Test of General Ability (TOGA) which was designed to measure a students' IQ (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). After administration of the TOGA, some students were chosen at random to be labeled as academic bloomers and their names were given to their teachers as such (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). Results of the study found that upon retesting students at the end of the school year, the students believed by the teachers to be academic bloomers showed a more significant increase in TOGA scores than students not believed to be academic bloomers (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). Based on these results, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) concluded that teachers' expectations could influence students' intellectual abilities (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). According to Jussim, Smith, Madon, and Palumbo (1998) the strongest influences on teaching are usually the previously demonstrated performance and motivation of students (as cited by Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). Based on this conclusion, students who performed well previously would be expected to perform well in the future. Conversely, students who previously performed poorly would be expected to perform poorly in the future.

In addition to research on the effect of past performance on teacher expectations, research indicates that race also plays a role in teacher expectations (Bruns, McFall etall, 2000). Baron, Tom, and Cooper (1985) compiled sixteen studies in order to determine if data was found to support the notion that race had an impact on teacher expectations (as cited by Bruns, McFall et al. 2000). Nine of the sixteen studies revealed that teachers demonstrated behaviors indicative of higher expectations for White students. One study revealed that teachers demonstrated behaviors indicative of higher expectations for Black

students. Six studies showed no evidence of teachers demonstrating behaviors indicative of differing expectations for Black or White students (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000). In a similar study compilation, Finn, Gaier, Peng, and Banks (as cited by Bruns, McFall et al. 2000) did a study of eight teachers from majority White schools and six teachers from majority Black schools. Without exception, teachers studied placed higher expectations on White students than Black students. Three additional studies done by Baron, Tom & Cooper, and Wilkerson (as cited by Bruns, McFall et al., 2000) found that teacher expectations were higher for White students than for Black or Hispanic students. In contrast, Wong (as cited by Bruns, McFall et al., 2000) found that teachers held higher expectations for Asian-American students than for White students.

Results from a compilation of the sixteen previously discussed studies as performed by Bruns, McFall et al. (2000) reveal that while teachers are unique individuals with different life experiences and perspectives, research indicates that teachers tend to have expectations for certain types of students that they do not have for others. In regard to past performance, race, socioeconomic status, and gender, teachers tend to expect more from students who have been high performers in the past and are White and middle class. Studies reveal that teachers generally have higher expectations for boys in math and science courses and for girls in all other subject areas. Research indicates that teachers demonstrate their differing expectation levels in various ways (Bruns, McFall et al., 2000).

Good (1981), in analyzing a decade of research on teacher expectations and student achievement had previously found results similar to those of Bruns, McFall et al. (2000). In addition based on a decade of research, Good (1981) was able to identify ways

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in which teachers vary their behavior toward high and low achieving students. Teachers, based on research as compiled by Good (1981), vary their behavior toward high and low achieving students in the following ways:

1. Seating slow students further away from the teacher or in a group making it harder to monitor low-achieving students or treat them as individuals.

2. Paying less attention to low-achieving students on academic situations smiling less often and maintaining less eye contact.

3. Calling on low-achieving students less often to answer questions or to make public demonstrations.

4. Waiting less time for low-achieving students to answer questions.

5. Not staying with low-achieving students in failure type situations providing clues and follow-up questions.

6. Publicly criticizing low-achieving students more than high- achieving students.

7. Praising low-achieving students less often than high-achieving students.

8. Praising low-performing students more than high-performing students for marginal or inadequate responses.

9. Providing less accurate and less detailed feedback to low-achieving students while providing more accurate and detailed responses to high-achieving students.

10. Providing high-performing students with more feedback regarding their performances and less feedback to low-achieving students.

11. Requiring less effort and less work from low-achieving students.

12.   Interrupting the responses and performances of low-achieving students

more than those of high-achieving students (p. 416).

As a result of these demonstrated teacher practices according to Good (1981) slower students become less willing to take risks in class and less willing to seek help from the teacher. Lower-achieving students Good (1981) theorizes devote their efforts to pleasing the teacher rather than learning the content. Without sufficient feedback, low-achieving students are unable to properly assess how well they are doing and conversely teachers, lacking sufficient contact with low-achieving students, are less able to make necessary changes in his or her behavior that would if demonstrated guide the low-achieving student toward greater success (Good, 1981). Additionally, Good (1981) found that student interviews revealed that students see differential treatment toward high and low-achieving students in regard to classroom management and tasks assigned. Good (1981), while acknowledging the document pattern of differing expectations that some teachers model in respect to student expectations, students play an active role in determining whether or not teacher expectations are internalized or resisted and thus the long term effect is unclear and more than likely depends on the individual student.

Whereas the research on teacher expectations done by Good (1981) focused primarily teacher expectations of low-achieving and high-achieving students, Neal, McCray et al. (2003) focused specifically on the effects of the movement style of Black males and its impact on teacher perceptions an reactions. Specifically, Neal, McCray et al. (2003) sought to determine if the stroll of Black adolescent males affect teachers' perceptions of their achievement level, level of aggression, and need of special education services. The 136 middle school teachers surveyed were shown a videotape of two

students walking and then asked to complete a questionnaire with adjectives to indicate perceptions of aggression and achievement. The researchers made two videotapes of two males, one Black and one White. The two males were of similar size and weight and wore similar attire. Each male was asked to make two videos each. In one video each student walked what was deemed the "standard" walk. In the second video each student was asked to walk with what was deemed by the researcher to be symbolic of the typical Black male stroll (Neal, McCray et al., 2003). Teachers watched each of the two videos of each student and completed the adjective checklist. The interaction between movement and race was not significant. Teacher participants perceived the students with a stroll to be lower in achievement than the students who walked utilizing standard movement style. Teachers rated the White student with a stroll lower than the Black student with a stroll while rating the Black student with the standard walk higher in the achievement domain than the white male with the standard walk (Neal, McCray et al., 2003). Similar results were found when rating the two males in the aggression domain. While no statistically significant interaction between movement style and race, there was a statistically significant difference for movement style (Neal, McCray et al., 2003). Students who walked with a stroll were perceived as more aggressive than those who walked with a standard movement style (Neal, McCray et al., 2003).

Multiple possible causal factors that impact Black male achievement were discussed throughout the literature. Some causal factors such as family involvement and dynamics are outside of the school factors while factors such as teacher expectations are inside of the school factors. Whether inside or outside, these possible causal factors

appear to impact Black male achievement and quality of lived experiences, leaving them to languish in mediocrity with little hope for the future.

How Superintendents Impact Achievement

"The mission of public school leaders is to help children create a future where democracy is preserved and the ideals of this nation are moved forward. And that is a wonderful challenge and an amazing gift to receive" (Houston, 2001). The words of Paul Houston in his article, *Superintedents for the 21st century: it's not just a job, it's a calling* are a call to arms for local school superintendents. A sense of urgency pervades public schools as they attempt, often in vain to help students meet the high standards set by state government, federal government, and the nation (Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al, 2003). Classroom teachers are being pushed more than ever to improve not only the quality of education but the equity of education amidst achievement gaps between minority and majority student populations and advantaged and disadvantage school populations. Leadership that brings about significant improvement in learning and a narrowing of achievement gaps is called for (Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al, 2003). For change to occur, superintendents must become instructional leaders and lead for learning. In order to lead for learning and advance powerful, equitable learning, Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al (2003) theorize that superintendents must focus on five primary areas. Areas of focus include:

1. Establishing a focus on learning by publicly and continually focusing their attention and the attention of others on learning and teaching.

   a. Meeting with students on a regular basis to talk over what they are learning.

b. Focusing staff attention on analyzing disaggregated data and making data available early in the school year to assess learning progress for individual schools, grade levels, and individual classrooms.

c. Modeling ambitious standards that include a high level of understanding and skills in critical subject areas.

d. Insist on effective support and instruction so that students can meet ambitious learning standards.

e. Be committed to narrowing and ultimately eliminating achievement gaps among students who differ by class, race, ethnicity, and language.

f. Insist that teachers and administrators share responsibility and hold each other accountable for improving educational quality and equity.

g. Be committed to inquiry and use data and research to evaluate and change practices as needed to maintain continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

h. Find ways to focus on learning in general as well as on particular aspects of student learning such as how well certain kinds of students are learning.

i. Be present in schools on a regular basis.

j. Make contributions to student learning a primary reference point for system decision making, allocation of resources, and faculty and staff evaluations.

2. Building professional communities that value learning by fostering a district and school culture that values and supports staff professional learning and development.

   a. Building trusting relationships among professionals in the school district by valuing others, displaying empathy, and dealing openly and honestly with colleagues.

   b. Allowing time for professional learning communities to interact on a regular basis.

   c. Working with professional staff to help define tasks that require joint efforts by group members.

   d. Create opportunities for staff to have a voice in decision-making.

   e. Celebrate accomplishments in student and teacher learning.

   f. Recruit teachers who work from a values base consistent with the culture that the leader seeks to develop.

3. Engaging external environments that impact learning through the building of collaborative relationships and acquisition of resources from outside groups that can foster students' or teachers' learning.

   a. Encourage the schedule home visits and educational activities for parents of students who are struggling academically to help staff better understand the child's environment and point of reference.

   b. Encourage the solicitation of parent and community volunteers to assist in intervention programs.

c. Visit families and communities to explain the instructional program and system standards.

d. Establish educational opportunities for community members and parents.

e. Draw in potential critics by involving them in the school improvement process.

f. Form partnerships with neighborhood groups focused on improving learning, especially those groups with traditionally limited voice.

4. Acting strategically and sharing leadership by distributing leadership across all levels and among individuals in various positions.

a. Identify pathways that address aspects of students and teachers work that need improvement.

b. Draw on staff expertise in developing school improvement initiatives.

c. Create positions that share instructional leadership with principals.

d. Link student support activities with efforts to support and mentor teachers.

e. Support the development of school-level leadership directed at improving learning.

f. Evaluate school curriculum and assessment guidelines and revise if needed to insure that they promote student and teacher learning.

g. In collaboration with teacher leaders, develop policies that provide teachers with time and resources necessary to implement school and district improvement plans.

5. Creating coherence by connecting students, staff, and system learning with one another as well as with system goals.

   a. Utilize staff study groups to examine samples of student work for evidence of learning progress as well as to determine areas in need of improvement.

   b. Have study groups report their progress and evidence of student learning improvement to the entire faculty and staff.

   c. Build professional developing activities around data on student learning.

   d. Use inquiry into learning and teaching performance as the basis for ongoing school improvement.

   e. Use teacher evaluation and school improvement planning as a means of focusing on learning goals.

   f. Communicate persistently with schools and central office staff about learning improvement agendas and ways that stakeholders can work together in order to achieve system learning goals.

   g. Make expert staff available in schools to help with specific school improvement efforts.

   h. Restructure system professional development functions so that they focus on and support curriculum and instructional improvement.

   i. Allocate resources necessary to accomplish and support the attainment of professional learning goals.

j. Develop data that provides information about student learning which can be used to drive the focus of professional development.

The five areas of focus for superintendents as identified by Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al (2003) provide a framework for superintendents, who bear formal responsibility for improving student learning and are most able to garner influence and provide the support necessary to meet system learning goals for students and staff. This framework is also applicable for teacher leaders, community leaders and policy makers such as school boards as they are empowered by the local school superintendent to lead for learning.

In their review of research on how leadership influences student learning, Leithwood, Louis, Anderson et al (2004) corroborate much of the research results on leadership reported by Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al (2003). Broad goals recommended for leadership to adopt include:

1. Create and sustain competitive schools as districts compete for students with charter, magnet, and private schools by developing programs that meet the varying needs of varied student populations.

2. Utilize distributive leadership to empower others to make significant decisions by giving a greater voice to community stakeholders through the utilization of data-informed decision making.

3. Provide instructional guidance in the setting of professional standards and their use for purposes of ongoing professional development activities and personnel evaluation.

4.   Develop and implement strategic and school improvement plans by having all district leaders knowledgeable of and proficient in large-scale strategic planning processes.

Waters and Marzano (2006), conducting a meta-analysis of 27 studies done since 1970 to determine the influence of district superintendents on student achievement as well as characteristics of effective superintendents found results similar to those of Houston (2001), Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al (2003), and Leithwood, Luis, Anderson et al (2004). An analysis of 14 reports that contained information about the relationship between overall district-level leadership and average student achievement revealed a computed correlation of .24 at the 95 percent confidence interval. As the 95 percent confidence interval does not include 0, this correlation was considered to significant (Waters and Marzano, 2006). One interpretation of this correlation would be that as the leadership abilities of the superintendent rises, average student achievement will rise also. An example would be of a superintendent, who is presently operating at the 50th percentile, improving his or her leadership abilities by one standard deviation to the 84th percentile resulting in a 9.5 percentile point increase in average student achievement scores within the district (Waters and Marzano, 2006). Specific district leadership responsibilities related to average student achievement gains are identified by Waters and Marzano (2006) as being indicators of superintendents' leadership ability growth. Responsibilities include:

1.   Collaborative goal setting.

a. Including relevant stakeholders including central office staff, building administrators, and board members in establishing non-negotiable goals for the school district.

b. Insuring that once stakeholders reach an acceptable level of agreement regarding district goals, all stakeholders agree to support the attainment of those goals.

2. Establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction.

a. Insuring that collaborative goal setting results in non-negotiable goal setting in the areas of student achievement and classroom instruction that all staff members must act upon.

b. Setting district achievement targets for the whole district, individual schools, and student population subgroups.

c. Insuring that all staff members are aware of the goals and developing an action plan for district goals.

d. Insuring that building level principals support the goals explicitly and implicitly by engaging in behaviors that support district goals and by not doing anything to subvert the accomplishment of district goals.

3. Insuring school board alignment with and support of district goals.

a. Working to align the local school board with and gain support of the non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction.

b. Having the local school board adopt broad five-year goals for achievement and instruction and consistently supporting these goals both privately and publicly.

4. Monitoring achievement and instructional goals.

    a. The superintendent continually monitors district progress toward established achievement and instructional goals.

    b. The superintendent insures that each school regularly examines the extent to which each school is meeting achievement targets.

    c. The superintendent working in conjunction with other staff examines discrepancies between articulated goals and current practices and determines if a change or redoubling of efforts is needed.

    d. The superintendent examines discrepancies between expected teacher behavior in classrooms as articulated by agreed-upon instructional models and observed teacher behavior and takes corrective action.

5. Allocating the resources necessary to support the goals for instruction and achievement.

    a. The superintendent ensures that necessary resources, including time, money, personnel, and materials are allocated to accomplish district goals.

    b. The superintendent insure that professional development activities and funding focus on building the requisite skills, knowledge, and competencies teachers and principals need to accomplish district goals.

These characteristics of district superintendents associated with professional growth and their direct impact on average student achievement in the school district, were supported by a majority of the studies utilized in the meta-analysis done by Waters and Marzano (2006). Additionally, Waters and Marzano (2006) found that when districts

superintendents allowed building level principals increased autonomy average student achievement levels increased also. One study reported a positive correlation of .28 with average student achievement in the school district. This indicated that an increase in building autonomy is associated with an increase in student achievement provided that it is defined autonomy. Defined autonomy is characterized by an expectation and support of building level principals leading within boundaries defined by the school district goals (Waters and Marzano, 2006). In contrast, a site-based management approach revealed a negative correlation of (-) .16 with student achievement. Meta-analysis results indicate that an increase in site-based management is associated with a decrease in student achievement. Waters and Marzano (2006) speculate that this may be due to the fact that the site-based management approach does not incorporate the non-negotiable district goals for achievement and instruction, which are characterized by leadership within the boundaries defined by the district goals (Waters and Marzano, 2006). The site-based management approach is based on school level developed goals which may or may not mesh with district level goals. Defined autonomy, unlike the sire-based management approach, allows school level governance within the constraints of non-negotiable district level goals (Waters and Marzano, 2006). Closely tied to the granting of defined autonomy to building level principals and increased average student achievement is the longevity of superintendents. Waters and Marzano (2006) found that two studies reported a significant correlation of .19 at the .05 level between the longevity of the district superintendent and his or her impact on average student achievement. These positive effects appear to manifest themselves as early as two years into a superintendent's tenure (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

The idea that effective leadership improves learning is supported by research and is not a new or novel idea. The idea that there are specific leadership behaviors and goals that if embraced and practiced by system leaders, namely superintendents, improve student learning is supported by Knapp, Copland, Ford, et al (2003), Leithwood, Louis, Anderson et al (2004), Houston (2001), and Waters and Marzano (2006). If low achieving populations such as Black males are to be helped, local school superintendents must take the lead role as system instructional leaders and support and guide the development, establishment, and maintenance of programs and practices to effectively meet the needs of a diverse and challenging student population (Houston, 2001).

Interventions and Strategies

While the issue of educating Black males in America is complex and has been an issue since the founding of America, many interventions and strategies exist which have been found to positively impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males. Finn (2006) in writing on closing the test score gap between minority and majority student populations in latest work, *Many Causes, No Easy Solutions*, lists what he believes to be several solutions to the test score gap and thus the Black male dilemma. Finn recommends:

1. Governmental intervention in stopping school resegregation throughout the nation.

2. Reduce barriers by assuring that more Black students are enrolled in "gifted" classes and honors programs.

3. Reduce the number of Black children assigned to special education classes.

4. Improving majority Black schools by supplying them with better teachers, more minority teachers, smaller classes, more relevant curricula, tutoring, after-school programs, and preschooling.

5. Utilize standards, testing, and accountability to leverage improvement and reward success.

6. Give Black and other minority children better schools to attend.

Lynch (2006), in his work on closing the racial achievement gap, shares many of the beliefs of Finn (2006) as to solutions to the dilemma of educating Black males and other minority students. Preferring to approach solutions from the classroom level, Lynch recommends:

1. Provide teachers of minority students with cultural diversity training which exposes them to the characteristics of Black students. Examples cited by Lynch include:

    a. The discussion style of many Black Americans is simultaneous talk instead of alternating talk.

    b. Black American verbal communication uses colorful language.

    c. Black students prefer to study while music or conversation occurs in the room.

    d. Black American values hold that there is unity among and between all things.

    e. Black Americans have an outer-directed rather than an egocentric focus.

2. Teachers should include creative arts in interdisciplinary units to teach literature and history.

3. Students should be given frequent opportunities to move around, speak, read aloud, and participate in hands-on activities.

4. Uphold high expectations for students.

5. Practice daily rituals and routine.

6. Dress and act like a teacher.

7. Involve parents.

Ellis (2004) addresses solutions to the Black male education crisis from a post secondary perspective. Ellis, in doing research on programs that positively impact the academic achievement of Black males, identified model intervention programs. The programs are as follows:

Minority Achievement Committee (MAC)

Operating out of the Shaker Heights High School in Ohio since 1990, the Minority Achievement Committee (MAC) was initiated, developed, and implemented by high achieving Black male students. Volunteer counselors work with students while all programming is academically focused and run by the students at the school. 11th and 12th grade students (referred to as "Scholars") guide 9th and 10th grade male students who are performing below C average ("Potential Scholars") through the passages of becoming successful students. Peer mentors encourage students to enroll in challenging course work. Scholars and potential scholars meet every two weeks to discuss topics such as advocating for oneself, confronting discipline issues, developing good study habits, approaching teachers, as well as being a Black male in America. Success of the program

is based on grade point average, commitment to academics, observable changes in attitude, and belief in long term fulfillment.

Project: Gentlemen on the Move (PGOTM)

Gentlemen on the Move (PGOTM) began when the University System of Georgia commissioned a task force to develop recommendations for increasing the number of Black males who enter and graduate from their member institutions. Gentlemen on the Move was originally developed by Deryl Bailey, UGA professor while working in North Carolina. PGOTM is a comprehensive program designed to have an impact on the academic and social aspects of the student's life. Bailey believes that this aspect of the program is critical to ensuring that the academic progress made during the program is not undone in the home setting. The main ingredients of the program are: 1) acceptance of all interested students; 2) trusting relationships; and 3) clear boundaries. The core assumption of the PGOTM program is that all young people are capable of learning and there must be positive images of Black males as mentors and community members. The program stresses the importance of high expectations for Black males and the reliance on caring relationships with adult males. PGOTM offers intensive Saturday academies to middle and high school students. Sessions include curriculum in science, math, vocabulary, reading, and character education. Graduate students serve as program staff along with teacher volunteers. Parents are supported through parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, weekly progress reports are prepared by the students' school teachers. Retreats are held by PGOTM staff for teachers who teach the program participants in order to facilitate dialogue as to the teachers' impact on the academic and social performance of Black males.

Young Leaders' Academy

Young Leaders' Academy (YLA) is based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. YLA is an outgrowth of the INROADS initiative. INROADS is a national program designed to prepare minority youth for business and community leadership. YLA is comprised of two programs. The core program is designed to serve one hundred or so Black males between the ages of 8-14. Program components include Saturday academies, summer academy, after-school tutorials, and mentoring by older/adult males. Black males must be nominated by their elementary school principals as 3rd, 4th, or 5th graders. Participant costs of $2,000 per youth are paid by corporate sponsors. Summer programs and Saturday academies are held on the campuses of Louisiana State University and Southern University, respectively. The mentoring component of the program is staffed by Black males throughout the community. Graduates of the program participate in YLA's Senior Academy. Senior Academy participants volunteer their time to local organizations and serve as volunteers in the mentor program. Mentors must pass rigorous screenings which include background checks and references.

The success strategies of these programs are just as multiple – combined strategies and mobilized resources from community, home, schools, and colleges and universities. An examination of these programs reveals the heterogeneity of Black males and calls for context-specific interventions (Ellis, 2004).

In his book titled, *Empowering Black Males III,* Lee (2003) provides context-specific interventions that promote the development of effective strategies and programs that positively impact black males from a counseling approach. Lee developed five

modules designed to positively impact the academic achievement and lived experiences of black males. The modules and descriptions are as follows:

The Young Lions Program

The Young Lions Program is designed for black boys in grades 3-6. The goal of the program is to help black boys develop the motivation and skills necessary for academic success, positive and responsible social behavior, and an understanding and appreciation of Black culture and history. This is accomplished by providing opportunities for boys to spend quality educational time during the school day with an older Black male mentor. The mentor provides modeling of positive Black male attitudes, behaviors, and values.

Black Manhood Training: A Developmental Program for Black Males

The goal of the Black Manhood Training Program is to help adolescent Black males develop positive masculine identities through a strengthening of body, mind, and soul. This strengthening is accomplished by promoting an understanding and appreciation of the Black man in history and culture, developing achievement motivation, fostering positive and responsible behavior, and modeling positive Black male images.

Tapping the Power of Respected Elders

Tapping the Power of Respected Elders is a module designed to provide direction in locating and preparing committed Black men to serve as leaders in elementary and secondary schools. This module offers new ideas and media resources for implementing a mentor preparation program with interested Black men.

Educational Advocacy

Educational Advocacy presents a comprehensive in-service training experience for teachers and other school personnel. This professional development activity is designed to help teachers better understand Black male development and more effectively promote the academic success of Black males.

Strengthening Our Native Sons (SONS)

Strengthening Our Native Sons offers a workshop to help African American parents, in particular, mothers, learn skills to promote the academic and social empowerment of their sons.

Research indicates that successful interventions for Black males include programs, strategies, and context-specific interventions that develop the mind, body, and soul of the Black male in a structured, supportive, culturally responsive learning environment. Learning environments supported by teachers, parents, and community stakeholders with high expectations for learning, respect, and self responsibility and accountability appear to be essential elements also.

<div align="center">*Summary*</div>

The debate regarding access and equity in the education of Black males in America began with the introduction of slaves into the New World. After the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and up until the institution of court ordered school desegregation as mandated by the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision, Black males were educated in segregated schools with limited resources and often inadequate facilities. Despite the hope and expectation of a brighter future, as represented by school integration, Black males continue to graduate at much lower rates

than other students nationwide. Black males continue to perform well below their White and Asian counterparts on nationally norm reference tests such as the National Assessment of Education Progress in reading and math. Black males are disproportionately represented in the number of students enrolled in special education classes for the emotionally behavior disordered and mentally retarded nationwide. Additionally, Black males are suspended and expelled from school at much higher rates than other students nationwide. Many theories abound as to causal factors that impact the achievement of black males. One theory includes the belief that Black males, due to not experiencing positive feedback from the school environment, begin to disidentify with school and academics and cease to view academic success as essential to a positive self concept. Another theory is based on the belief that Black males, aware of the negative stereotype bestowed on them by society, become immobilized by the fear of fulfilling these negative stereotypes, and thus fail to perform well academically. Additional theories are loosely based on the premise that Black males reject behaviors associated with high academic achievement and school completion due to their identification with the dominant, White culture.

The role of parents with high expectations, who monitor homework, participate in school activities and advocate for advanced placement for their children has also been shown to positively the academic achievement of Black males.

Coupled with high expectations and support of parents, teacher expectations and related behaviors also impact student achievement. While it appears that the long term impact of low teacher expectations on student achievement vary depending upon the child, teacher behaviors such as giving slower students less time to answer questions,

providing less feedback, and requiring less effort and work from low ability students negatively impact achievement.

The role of the superintendent as system instructional leader is closely tied to teacher expectations. The new and emerging trend of the superintendent as instructional leader has become a major focus of the research being conducted on student achievement and school reform. The role of the superintendent in directing collaborative goal setting, establishing non-negotiable system goals for achievement and instruction, and monitoring achievement and instructional goals anchors school reform initiatives.

School reform initiatives throughout the nation have focused on four "cornerstones" for improvement: (1) curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (2) staff development; (3) family, school, and community engagement; and (4) school organization. Additionally, much research has been done which documents the benefits of culturally relevant instruction, mentoring, Black male teachers, all male classes, and supportive and engaged parents/guardians. Some school districts across the nation have embraced these reform initiatives with some success.

Literature suggests that there are no easy solutions other to than to attack the problem head on. A key theme that is woven throughout the research is that of the need for structure and high expectations of the Black male (Reglin, 1994)

The dilemma of being Black and male in America has been a matter of much discussion since the day that the first Black male slave set foot on soil deemed, "the New World." For this land was a new world indeed. For the pilgrims who traveled far to arrive there, it was a new world of opportunity and religious freedom. For the Black male slave who lost his freedom, family, dignity, and identity, it was a new world in which hundreds

of years of struggle would reveal no easy solution or end to the often debated rhetorical question, "What will we do with the Black male in America?" The answer being, "Let us educate him!" Herein lies the dilemma. How do you successfully educate the Black male in America?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter was to identify the research questions answered by this study, to describe the participants and research design, to explain the instrument and data collection procedure, and to provide a description of the procedures used in data analysis. This description encompassed the research methodology.

Introduction

This study was a purposeful sampling of school superintendents' beliefs regarding the academic achievement of Black males as well as district level practices which may positively impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males in the state of Georgia. Utilizing socio-demographic factors to include experience, degree level, age, and race of superintendents surveyed, this research sought to describe and qualify the following: 1. School superintendents' beliefs regarding the lived experiences and academic achievement of school-aged Black males. 2. School superintendents' beliefs regarding the role of the superintendent from the district level in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. 3. Programmatic changes designed to impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males that superintendents have implemented as a result of data analysis and program review. The study was qualitative in nature and was concerned primarily with determining the status quo or rather "what is" (Gall, Borg & Gall, 2002).

Utilizing sampling and in-depth interviews, the goal of this qualitative ethnographic study using multiple sources of data from superintendents was to determine and understand within the setting what role superintendents played in the development of

practices believed to positively impact the academic achievement of Black males in their district. Secondly, the study sought to identify district level practices implemented by superintendents. Finally, the study sought to identify superintendents' beliefs regarding barriers to the academic achievement of Black males.

Discussion of the methodology for the study included: (a) the design of the study, (b) the research questions to be considered, (c) the population to be included, (d) the instrumentation to be used, (e) the data collection and (f) the analysis of the data.

Research Questions

1.   What are school superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males?

2.   What are school superintendents' beliefs about their role in the development of district level practices designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

3.   What district level practices have superintendents implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

4.   What is the role of superintendents' background characteristics on their beliefs about and district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

The Design of the Study

The qualitative ethnographic research design model was selected for the purposes of this study. The qualitative ethnographic research model was selected due to the researcher's desire to solicit and qualify descriptive data from Georgia school superintendents. The qualitative ethnographic research design model yielded data

regarding Georgia school superintendents' worldview about the subject of Black male achievement. Specifically, utilizing the qualitative ethnographic research design model, pertinent data regarding superintendents' beliefs about, identification of, and their role in the development of district level practices currently in place in local school districts in Georgia designed to impact Black male achievement was collected.

Other typologies of qualitative research rejected were as follows: 1. Participation due to its demands that the researcher have first hand involvement in the social world chosen for the study. 2. Observation as it only details the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen. 3. In-depth interviewing as it is viewed much like conversations rather than informal events with predetermined response categories. (Marshall & Rossman, 2002).

Population

For purposes of this study, the population was currently employed superintendents of districts identified by the Georgia Department of Education School Improvement Division as having attained a Black male graduation rate equal to or higher than the rate for all students in the state of Georgia during the 2005-06 school year. Participants chosen were current Georgia school superintendents who also served as superintendent of their respective district during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school year, the two school years in which comparative data was available to determine eligibility for participation. Superintendents varied by age, race, sex, prior administrative experience, and years of experience as a school superintendent.

Instrumentation

Ethnographic interviewing was utilized to gather information from superintendents. For purposes of this study, ethnographic interviewing, based on the discipline of cognitive anthropology, sought to elicit the cognitive structures guiding

participants' worldviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2002). Ethnographic questions were used by the researcher to gather cultural data. The three types of ethnographic questions include descriptive questions which collects a sample of the participants' language, structural questions which seek to discover the basic units in that cultural knowledge, and contrast questions which provide the ethnographer with the meanings of the various terms in the participants' language (Marshall & Rossman, 2002). Descriptive rather than structural or contrast questions were utilized as the research sought to elicit the cognitive structures guiding the participants' worldview of the topic of the academic achievement of Black males.

One of the advantages of the ethnographic interview is its focus on culture through the participant's perspective and through a firsthand encounter. This approach is useful for eliciting participant's meanings for events and behaviors, and generates a typology of cultural classification schemes. The ethnographic interview method is flexible in that it avoids oversimplification in description and analysis because of the rich narrative descriptions (Marshall & Rossman, 2002).

One disadvantage of the ethnographic interview method is the fact that values may be imposed by the ethnographer. Another disadvantage of this method is that it is highly dependent upon the skills of the researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2002).

Data for this qualitative ethnographic study was collected from researcher designed interview questions. Questions asked were specific to the needs of this study. The instrument used was developed through a literature review, review of various research instruments, and the researcher's experiences. A pilot of the interview questions was conducted prior to implementation to establish the face validity of the questions and

to possibly improve the interview questions and format. The interview questions were field tested by local system administrators in the Johnson County Georgia School District. Feedback from the field test did not reveal a need to revise the instrument as presented. As a result, the face validity of the research instrument was established.

Data Collection

The Georgia Department of Education School Improvement Division collects and analyzes student data submitted electronically by school systems annually through the Georgia Student Information System. Among data collected are high school graduation rates. Under the direction of State Superintendent of Schools, Kathy Cox, The Georgia Department of Education School Improvement staff, under the direction of Dr. Wanda Creel, School Improvement Division Director analyzed data for all Georgia public school systems submitted during the 2004-2005, and 2005-2006 school year and developed a rank ordered list of school systems in Georgia that have shown continuous improvement in the academic achievement of Black males in the State of Georgia as measured by high school graduation rates (Georgia Department of Education, 2006).

Georgia school superintendents of systems identified by the Georgia Department of Education Division of School Improvement as having achieved a Black male graduation rate equal to or higher than the graduation rate for all students in the State of Georgia during the 2005-2006 school year were asked to participate in the study. Survey participants were sent a cover letter which contained: (1) a brief description of the proposed study, (2) notification that their participation was requested due to their elite status, (3) possible benefits of the proposed study. In addition, two informed consent forms were included along with a stamped return addressed envelope. Superintendents were asked to return one informed consent form in the enclosed self addressed, stamped

envelope. Within approximately two weeks after the initial mailings, a phone call was made to each of the superintendents who had been sent a letter requesting their participation in the proposed study. Superintendents who had already returned their informed consent form were contacted first to arrange an interview. Superintendents who had not returned their informed consent form were then contacted by phone. Five of the seven Georgia school superintendents contacted participated in the study. Three of the identified Georgia school superintendents did not participate. One superintendent declined to participate in the proposed study. One superintendent was determined to be ineligible to participate in the proposed study because he had been recently appointed and had not served as superintendent in the identified system during the specified time period. One superintendent was eliminated due to the fact that the percentage of Black students, specifically Black males enrolled in the district was negligible.

Interviews with the five superintendents agreeing to participate in this study were arranged and a date and time arranged during the initial phone call to potential primary participants.

Process

In mid December 2006, a study proposal, data collection instrument, and an informed consent letter were submitted to the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board for consideration. Approval to collect data was received on January 21, 2006. The superintendents selected to participate in the proposed study were contacted by phone after being sent an introductory and informed consent letter. Interviews were scheduled at an interview time convenient to both the researcher and participants. Interviews were conducted in the office of the superintendent being interviewed.

At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained to the participants the role of the researcher and the participant in the data collection process. Any questions posed by the participants were answered by the researcher prior to and during the interview process. As suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), the researcher explained to the participant what he or she was actually going to do, informed the participant as to what would be done with the findings, explained why each individual had been chosen to participate, and what they might gain from participating. Consent to participate in the interview process was secured prior to beginning each interview.

During each interview the researcher took hand-written and tape recorded notes. Creswell (1994) recommended audio taping the interview and transcribing the interview later. The researcher took notes in the event that the recording equipment failed. The researcher labeled and overwrite protected each audio tape, carried a backup recorder, and extra batteries.

Use of an audio recording device such as a tape recorder provided many advantages. This "reduced the tendency of interviewers to make an unconscious selection of data favoring their bias" (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996. p. 320). A tape recorder provided a complete audio record; thus allowing a thorough study of the data that was collected. A tape recorder also speeded up the interview process. The researcher understood that the main disadvantage of recording an interview was the possibility of the primary participant being reluctant to express their true feelings freely (Gall et al.); every attempt was made to insure that the primary participant felt comfortable and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

After the data were recorded for each interview, the information was transcribed by the researcher. The researcher replayed the data recording several times to check for accuracy and then compared the data recording scripts to notes taken during the interview. The participants were not asked for editorial comments or additional thoughts. This preserved the spontaneity and richness of information collected (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

All interviews were conducted in the superintendent's office and lasted from 30 to 45 minutes each depending on the respondents' comments. Participants appeared to be relaxed and talked openly during the interview process. Transcribing interviews and developing interview scripts took approximately 4 hours per interview.

Analysis of the Data

Marshall and Rossman (1999) define data analysis as "the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data" (p. 150). Further clarifying the process of data analysis, Patton (1987) added that data analysis is also organizing available data into patters, categories, and basic description units. He further stated the interpretation is a separate process from analysis and defined it as "attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions" (p. 144). Miles and Huberman (1994) described the process for working with interview transcripts as "interpretivism" (p. 8). According to Neal (2006) the underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand particular phenomena. Interpretivism proposes that rather than single realities of phenomena, multiple realities exist and that these realities can differ across time and space (Neil, 2006).

Data analysis required that the researcher be comfortable with developing various categories and making comparisons and contrasts (Creswell, 1994). Due to the complex nature of qualitative data, it was necessary to identify themes and categories rather than attempt to convert data to standard units of measure (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Patton (1987) further explained that in organizing the analysis of the data, the qualitative researcher must draw from two primary sources: research questions generated during the development of the study and analytic insights and interpretations that emerged during data collection.

Responses were analyzed for themes, patterns, and categories in order to aid in understand the beliefs of superintendents interviewed in this study. Wolcott (1994) believed that the researcher singles out some things as worthy or not and dismisses other data simply from the act of obtaining data out of experience.

Marshall & Rossman (1999) stated, "All research must respond to canons of quality – criteria against which the trustworthiness of a project can be evaluated" (p. 191). The researcher understood that the nature of this qualitative study lends itself to being replicated by future researchers interested in the surveying the beliefs of superintendents, their role in the development of, and explanation of district level practices that may positively impact the achievement of Black males.

The researcher's background and experience of having served as a Georgia superintendent for seven years and the method of inquiry were utilized to establish credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Anecdotal information from the questions asked was presented in descriptive narrative text form. Descriptive data was disaggregated to find trends and/or patterns of

strategies utilized to impact the academic achievement of Black males as well as beliefs of superintendents surveyed.

Summary

Black males consistently perform well below their White and Asian counterparts on nationally norm reference tests and subsequently have lower high school graduation rates (Holzman, 2006). Additionally, more Black males are enrolled in special education classes for the emotionally behavior disordered and mentally retarded nationwide than any other student population (Smith, 2005). In regard to discipline, Black males are suspended and expelled from school at much higher rates than other students nationwide also (Smith, 2005). A review of the literature suggests that there are many theories as to the causes of this phenomenon with no easy solutions other to than to attack the problem head on (Ogbu, 1991a, 1992, 2004). A key theme that is woven throughout the research is that of the need for mentoring relationships, high expectations, and structure (Ellis, 2004) (Lynch, 2006).

This study focused on the beliefs of superintendents in Georgia regarding practices that contribute to the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Superintendents were asked during the interview process questions specific to their beliefs about the nature of Black male achievement and effective practices utilized to positively impact Black male achievement. Descriptive data was analyzed and categorized in order to find trends and/or patterns of strategies utilized to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Data was presented in narrative form.

CHAPTER IV

REPORT OF DATA ANALYSIS

Included in this chapter is a brief introduction to the study as well the purpose of the study and a summary of the research methodology. Included as a part of this chapter are the research questions to be answered, factual interview responses from the data gathered, and an interpretation of this data.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore superintendents' beliefs about and identification of district level practices contributing to the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. The intent of the study was to identify the beliefs of superintendents regarding factors which impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. In addition, the study sought to identify district level practices implemented by superintendents as well as superintendents' beliefs regarding their role in the development of district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Research Questions

1. What are school superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males?

2. What are school superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males?

3. What district level practices have superintendents implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

4.   What is the role of superintendents' background characteristics on their

beliefs about and district level practices implemented to impact the

academic achievement of Black males?

The research design was qualitative in nature. The researcher interviewed the

individuals who participated in the study by using face to face structured interviews.

There was one purposive sample. The group included five current Georgia school

superintendents. Each participant was assigned a number to protect his or her identity and

maintain anonymity.

Table 11 shows the interview schedule. The interviews took place over a period of

approximately two weeks. With the exception on the interview with PP3, two interviews

were scheduled and conducted on a given day based on proximity.

The interviews were recorded using a tape recorder and were transcribed by the

researcher within twenty four hours of the interview and checked for accuracy against

written notes. The interview responses were reviewed and read numerous times to

identify major patterns and themes. The transcribed data was then analyzed using the

software package HyperRESEARCH Version 2.7. The reason for using

HyperRESEARCH was to provide additional validity. This software program was

utilized rather than another person as a means of eliminating as much bias from the

researcher as possible. The patterns and themes identified by both the researcher and the

software program were compared and resulted in the data analysis. This analysis was

used to answer the research questions.

Findings

The results of this study were used answer each of the research questions. This

section was organized through the use of research questions by providing the first

question, the findings, and a discussion of these findings at the end of this section. The

same process was utilized for questions two, three, and four. The major research

questions were then discussed and included in the summary at the end of this chapter. For

the purpose of reporting results, each participant has been identified as Primary

Participant One, Primary Participant Two, etc. Superintendent background factors data

was reported first. School district demographic data included in the superintendent

background factors section was retrieved from The Georgia Department of Education

2006 State Report Card and The Georgia Department of Community Affairs Georgia

County Snapshots publications.

Superintendent Background Factors

To what extent do the beliefs and district level strategies utilized to combat Black male

underachievement vary by superintendent background characteristics? (sex, age, race,

years of experience as a superintendent, past professional experience) Due to the limited

number of participants in this study, it was not possible to identify patterns based on

superintendents' background factors regarding their beliefs about the factors impacting

the academic achievement of Black males or district level practices implemented to

impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Participant

background data is listed below.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One was a veteran educator with 31

years of experience as a professional educator and 11 years of experience as a Georgia

superintendent and had previously served as an assistant superintendent. Primary Participant One serves a rural district with a reported total enrollment of 3,098 students at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Primary Participant One's district student racial composition was majority Black non-Hispanic. Sixty four percent of the district administrators are Black while 36 percent are White. The teaching pool is comprised of 30 percent Black, 68 percent White, 1 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Native American. Twenty two percent of teachers in the district are male while 78 percent are female. The graduation rate for Black students during the 2005-06 school year was 77.2 percent while the graduation rate for Whites was 72.3 percent. The graduation rate for Black males was 72.3 percent for the 2005-06 school year. 40.8 percent of the 2006 graduates were eligible for Hope Scholarships. From a community perspective, the 2004 per capita income for the county was $21,117. During 1999, 27.0 percent of the county's population lived below the poverty level compared with Georgia's rate of 13.0 percent and national rate of 12.4 percent. During 1999, 36 percent of the children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty level. The unemployment rate for 2005 was 8.3 percent.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two was a veteran educator with 25 years of experience as a professional educator and 4 years of experience as a Georgia superintendent and had previously served as an assistant superintendent. Primary Participant Two serves a rural district with a reported total enrollment of 821 students at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Primary Participant Two's district student racial composition was majority Black non-Hispanic. During the 2005-06 school year, 50 percent of the district administrators were Black and 50 percent were White. The teaching pool was comprised of 55 percent Black, 43 percent White, and 2 percent Native

American. 25 percent of teachers in the district were male while 75 percent were female. The graduation rate for Black students during the 2006-06 school year was 77.8 percent while the graduation rate for Whites was too few to be reported by the state of Georgia. The graduation rate for Black males was 75.0 percent for the 2005-06 school year. 41.9 percent of the 2006 graduates were eligible for Hope Scholarships. From a community perspective, the 2004 per capita income for the county was $20,899. During 1999, 23.0 percent of the county's population lived below the poverty level compared with Georgia's rate of 13.0 percent and national rate of 12.4 percent. During 1999, 28.9 percent of the children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty level. The unemployment rate for 2005 was 8.8 percent.

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three was a veteran educator with 32 years experience as a professional educator and 7 years as a Georgia superintendent and had previously served as a middle school principal. Primary Participant Three serves a rural district with a reported total enrollment of 1562 students at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Primary Participant Three's district student racial composition was majority Black non-Hispanic. During the 2005-06 school year, 45 percent of the district administrators were Black and 55 percent were White. The teaching pool was comprised of 32 percent Black, and 68 percent White. 21 percent of teachers in the district were male while 79 percent were female. The graduation rate for Black students during the 2006-06 school year was 80.5 percent while the graduation rate for Whites students was 72.3. The graduation rate for Black males was 70.83 percent for the 2005-06 school year. 40.7 percent of the 2006 graduates were eligible for Hope Scholarships. From a community perspective, the 2004 per capita income for the county

was $21,622. During 1999, 17.5 percent of the county's population lived below the poverty level compared with Georgia's rate of 13.0 percent and national rate of 12.4 percent. During 1999, 24.2 percent of the children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty level. The unemployment rate for 2005 was 6.8 percent.

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four was a veteran educator with 32 years of experience as a professional educator and 3 years of experience as a Georgia superintendent and had previously served as a middle school principal. Primary Participant Four serves a rural district with a reported total enrollment of 1677 students at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Primary Participant Four's district student racial composition was majority Black non-Hispanic. The teaching pool was comprised of 19 percent Black, and 81 percent White. 18 percent of teachers in the district were male while 82 percent were female. The graduation rate for Black students during the 2006-06 school year was 79.6 percent while the graduation rate for Whites students was 79.7. The graduation rate for Black males was 70.83 percent for the 2005-06 school year. 40.7 percent of the 2006 graduates were eligible for Hope Scholarships. From a community perspective, the 2004 per capita income for the county was $21,622. During 1999, 17.9 percent of the county's population lived below the poverty level compared with Georgia's rate of 13.0 percent and national rate of 12.4 percent. During 1999, 24.2 percent of the children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty level. The unemployment rate for 2005 was 6.8 percent.

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant five was a veteran educator with 34 years of experience as a professional educator and 8 years of experience as a Georgia superintendent and had previously served as an assistant superintendent.

Primary Participant Five serves a suburban district with a reported total enrollment of 21,015 students at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Primary Participant Five's district student racial composition was majority White non-Hispanic. During the 2005-06 school year, 10 percent of the district administrators were Black, 89 percent were White, and 1 percent Native American. The teaching pool was comprised of 4 percent Black, 92 percent White, 2 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Asian, and 1 percent Native American. Of teachers in the district 14 percent were male while 86 percent were female. The graduation rate for Black students during the 2006-06 school year was 76.9 percent while the graduation rate for Whites students was 81.3 percent. The graduation rate for Black males was 72.48 percent for the 2005-06 school year. 63.2 percent of the 2006 graduates were eligible for Hope Scholarships. From a community perspective, the 2004 per capita income for the county was $33,253. During 1999, 5.1 percent of the county's population lived below the poverty level compared with Georgia's rate of 13.0 percent and national rate of 12.4 percent. During 1999, 5.6 percent of the children under the age of 18 lived below the poverty level. The unemployment rate for 2005 was 4.4 percent.

Summary

The group of five superintendents interviewed was comprised of 1 White female in her 40's, 1 Black female in her 50's, and 3 White males in their 50's. Four of the five participants had more than 30 years of experience as a professional educator. All participants had three or more years of experience as a superintendent. Three of the participants served as an assistant superintendent of schools at the central office level while two served as middle school principals before being named superintendent of the respective district.

Superintendents' Beliefs About Factors Impacting Black Male Achievement

What are school superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males? The findings from Georgia participants for this question follow and were reported based on the response category into which respondents' comments were deemed to fit when evaluated by the researcher.

Stereotypes/Stereotypical Beliefs

The majority of the participants talked about stereotypes and stereotypical beliefs as being barriers to the academic achievement of Black males. Participants spoke from the vantage point of both student and adult when identifying the role played by stereotypes and stereotypical beliefs. One White participant spokes of being stereotyped by the community as being detached and doing harm to the school and community after veteran Black teachers and administrators deemed ineffective in improving the academic achievement of students in the system were non-renewed.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about the societal stereotypes ascribed to black males as being a factor impacting Black male academic achievement. Primary Participant One said, "I think some barriers would be the stereotypes that are out there, a lack of understanding of Black males" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two identified the stereotyping of White superintendents working in predominately Black communities as unable to identify with Black males as an external factor that impacts the academic achievement of Black males.

One of the barriers that I found believe it or not in 2006 and 2007 is that I'm White. When I got here, it was automatically assumed that's since I was White and superintendent, I grew up you know with money and that I was Ms. Hooty Tooty and that I couldn't relate to Black students or poverty. And that's been a real hurdle for me. It's the first time I've been the victim of racism because I went to school during integration. I always went to school with Black and White people and they had no way of knowing my husband was the only family living in the projects in Villa Maria in _ _. And I grew up in poverty, my parents were both teachers. We were real poor, we had a garden, my mother sewed all of my clothes. We didn't really know we were poor but we were real poor. And they just, just that first thing of having to accept a White female, you know, that was a barrier. Now it's not a barrier with the Black students. Every summer, I bring the Black ah guys, I say Black guys, I don't have any White students hardly, anyway, I bring our football team, the track team, basketball team, cheerleaders, they'll come to my home and I'll take em to the lake with my boat. And I'll pull them on the ski's or inner tubes and I'll let them ride our 4 wheelers out at the farm and then I have a fish a thon, you know, have a contest fishing and then I'll cook them supper and ah that seemed to help erase that barrier. The students and I don't have a barrier. It's just old timers in the community who are still maybe living in the past. They still, but at first that was a barrier but anyway I have overcome (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about stereotypical beliefs as a factor impacting Black male achievement.

I'm going to talk very openly and I don't care who hears this because I've done this with my board and other community members. If we could change racist ideas on all sides. If I could wave a magic wand and get everybody to see kids, Black males, White males, everybody, as people and individuals who are important and can contribute important things to our society and I guess this goes back to my religious background. Being a Christian and getting folks to love each other, I mean actually love people so that we would meet their needs and do thing for them. If I could wave a magic wand and do that, I don't think we would have a problem at all (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Three talked about racial stereotypes within the community.

Ah, and going along with changing stereotypes, not just between races but even inside of races, if this makes sense. And especially that stereotype I felt like I saw and heard other people saying, especially among the Black male population and its out there among some of the White population too, that if you do well in school, you're not, I don't know, they don't call it cool anymore, that's what we use to call it, but whatever they call it now, hip or whatever, that you're not hip if you do well in school. You're a nerd or you're something else, is what we use to call it. I don't know what they call it now but that kind of stereotype, that kind of idea. We've got to let them see this means something different, this is important and it means it's very important to your future and what you are going to be able to accomplish in life and how you are going to be

able to live, the lifestyle of that (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 6).

Poverty

Participants talked about the impact of poverty and poverty related issues on the academic achievement of Black males. Participants cited poverty and poverty related issues as impacting Black males' world view, quality of life, employment seeking and unemployment rate, academic preparedness for school, and ability to function within the school social setting which often operates from a middle class perspective.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant one talked about poverty being the number one external factor impacting Black male achievement. Primary Participant One stated, "If we could have a strong economic engine running, we could do away with some of the poverty issues" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant One talked about a home visit made in December 2006 as evidence of the impact of poverty and lack of employment opportunities on Black male academic achievement.

Just this past Christmas, we try to do something for a family, so Dr. _ _ and I took some groceries and Christmas stuff to one little family. They live in an apartment complex and the little boy was, we walked in and he was smiles, smiles when I was coming in, he was helping me get the stuff in, but standing on the curve were six or eight young Black males smoking their cigars and I don't know what was in the cigars but they were, and they were able bodied young men and they but they were unemployed. They were underemployed and not doing what you and I would consider to be gainful employment and that the exposure that

many of the kids have on a day to day basis and I think that sometimes we are the

company we keep and we have to be able to step beyond that (Primary Participant

One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant One talked further about the impact of poverty and lack of

employment opportunities on Black male academic achievement.

I think, I think the thing that would impact Black male achievement in _ _

_ _ _ County would be jobs. If I could do any one thing, it would be to provide

economic opportunities in this community because I think that would possibly do

more to provide hope to families which I feel like would directly affect what is

happening in the classroom. There are no jobs available unless they are in

education that they can come back into our rural communities, so, I believe that

the economic part of it is the part that if I could wave a magic wand, I would start

with that (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two also talked about poverty as

an external factor affecting Black male achievement.

A barrier here is poverty. That's just the effects of poverty. If you look at

the research on that, that shows that children raised in that kind of poverty have

no sense of like time and planning and future because everything is now. You

know, am I going to go home today and my family is going to be still where they

were? Am I gonna have enough to eat today? Those effects of poverty are

something that are just hard to overcome (Primary Participant Two, January 19,

2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about poverty in which children grow up providing children of poverty a different perspective than that of educators, who are generally believed to operate from a middle class perspective on life.

Ah, you know, as I think about this whole situation, as educators, we, even Black educators, we are middle class. Our thought process, the way we operate, ah, the way our lifestyle is set up, we're middle class. Even the ones of us that ah, were born in poverty, we're because of ah, opportunities that have been afforded us, we're middle class. Well, the population that we deal with a lot of time are not middle class. So, we're gonna have to recognize that there is a difference in the way that these students that are not middle class, the way they relate to school, their perceptions of school and, we're going to have to be the ones that initiate that, ah, crossing that barrier and trying to understand these students because if you think about how they react, how a child born into poverty and that's his lifestyle. How they react to situations is totally different from how middle class, ah, people react to situations and so sometimes, we're just not communicating because we're operating out, out of a totally different perspective (Primary Participant Four, January 30, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about poverty.

I think the, I think the biggest problem is just the support and the environment that they're coming from. You know the nurturing, valuing education, seeing the importance of it. Parents being involved in the process and supporting the school when they go home. Improving you know, just the health, I mean, all those factors that can interfere, we're working with them. I don't mean

to, you know, I guess whether the biggest challenge in being Black or White is poverty in my opinion. We've got a lot of top achieving Black male students but they are coming from homes where the parents are educated. They know the value, they are, they are pushed at home. It's the kids that are coming out of those impoverished conditions where you know, they've got so many struggles outside of school, that school can't be that important to them. That's really the bigger, the bigger question. I don't know how you do that, how do you cure that problem? I mean, we do it by just trying to make sure that they know that the teacher and that the school are there because we do care about them and you do win a lot that way. They'd rather be in school than anywhere else just because it's safer there, it's more nurturing there. There's a lot they've got to overcome (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 4, 5).

Peer Pressure

Participants talked about the peer pressure imposed on Black males to not value academic achievement emanating from the home and the community.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about peer pressure as an external factor in addition to poverty believed to impact Black male academic achievement. Primary Participant One stated, "I think that the peer pressures that many of our Black males have and expectations that families have for their children and poverty would probably be the number one thing again (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about peer pressure as a societal barrier to Black male academic achievement.

You've got to get them to see that education is important. To a

Large extent, they don't. They're coming out of a situation where kids make fun

of you if you take school seriously. They, they the values that they adhere to are

different now. It's, it's the street, that's where they want to be successful and I

think that's clearly one of the problems.

Elementary School Experiences

Two participants described the elementary school experiences of Black males as

the beginning place for many of the problems faced by Black males later in middle and

high school. One participant expressed a belief that a lack of understanding of the gender

differences in boys and girls existed among elementary teachers, resulting in the creation

of a learning environment at the elementary school level that is more conducive for

learning for females than for males. One participant talked about the elementary school

experiences of Black males being a barrier to their academic achievement due to the lack

of male teachers at the elementary school level.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the elementary

school experiences of Black males.

I think they lose hope early on, in elementary school. This is another thing

I'm trying to do, have the elementary school teachers realize that boys are boys

and at an early age, don't try to make them sit still all day long in PreK and 4K

and kindergarten. You know, let em be boys. They loose hope when they are

required to sit like this (still with hands in lap) and that's not in their nature. I

know that sounds sort of corny but it's the truth (Primary Participant Two,

January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about the elementary school experiences of Black males.

What I was saying is that I taught third grade for seven years, eight years, and one of the ah, phenomenon. that I started noticing with boys in third grade and it usually happened about mid year of third grade, about Christmas time. It was very noticeable. Boys stop listening to women, okay, really! Now they would give you eye contact but they were no longer listening. Ah, and I even noticed it with my son. I have a biological son and I raised another boy, okay! Same thing I noticed with the two of them. About that age, they stopped listening to me. They would give me eye contact but they were not listening, okay! As I studied this, and this is nothing really research based, it's just my own observation, is that they regarded us as naggers, okay! You are always nagging me, you are always telling me what to do, you are always telling me how to do it, you are always telling me when to do it, and I think that was a turn off to them, okay! So, as they develop into young men and older, they no longer responded to that and that is another reason why males (teachers) are so needed, because they respond, they responded so differently. That's through my school observation, they responded so differently to a male than to a female. Now in school, who do we have teaching those boys? You have females. Very few schools that there are males at all in the elementary school (Primary Participant Four, January 30, 2007, pp. 4, 5).

Becoming Fathers in High School

One participant talked about the impact of Black males becoming fathers while in high school and assuming responsibility for providing for their child as a barrier to the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about Black males becoming fathers while still in high school as an external factor impacting Black male achievement.

Ah, we have a lot of high school Black males who are already fathers, now we are working with them in our Parents As Teachers program. That's one barrier, they are often out with a sick child or having to take the child to the health department or they are worried about getting a job because they've got to help pay and then they can't get to school on time because they've worked all night or they can't come to school because they have got to go to work because of the baby that's one thing (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Lack of Positive Role Models

Participants described the lack of individuals, who are gainfully employed and have completed high school within the communities in which school-aged Black males reside as a barrier to the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about a home visit made in December 2006 as evidence of the impact of the lack of positive role models on Black male academic achievement.

Just this past Christmas, we try to do something for a family, so Dr. _ _ and I took some groceries and Christmas stuff to one little family. They live in an

apartment complex and the little boy was, we walked in and he was smiles, smiles

when I was coming in, he was helping me get the stuff in, but standing on the

curve were six or eight young Black males smoking their cigars and I don't know

what was in the cigars but they were, and they were able bodied young men and

they but they were unemployed. They were underemployed and not doing what

you and I would consider to be gainful employment and that the exposure that

many of the kids have on a day to day basis and I think that sometimes we are the

company we keep and we have to be able to step beyond that (Primary Participant

One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two cited the lack of positive role

models as a factor within the school setting that impact the academic achievement of

Black males.

The second one as I have said is few role models and we're trying to

provide those now by aggressively recruiting minority male applicants as much as

possible that can relate and help make a difference (Primary Participant Two,

January 19, 2007, p.5).

Low Teacher Expectations

One participant talked about the low academic achievement of some Black males

being the fulfillment of prophecy as stated and demonstrated by some teachers. Black

males achieving at the low academic level set for them by some teachers was seen as

barrier to the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two cited low teacher expectations

as a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

And one of the other barriers is, and we've really worked on this, and this

has probably made one of the biggest differences on low expectations by teachers,

both Black and White and research shows that that is, that can be true of any

teacher with Black males, but we have really worked on that and we just don't

accept any excuses now.   They can do it. And another thing is they're proud

when they do it.   You can see the results of this on our football team. 4 years ago,

we had seventeen people who could play football, seventeen players.   The reason

for that was because most of them were ineligible. And this year when we had

spring football last summer, we had 48 and we played probably 35. So, it's

beginning to make a difference Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 5)

Black Males' Self Perceptions

The majority of the participants talked about what they viewed as a low self

perception and self concept within Black males as a barrier to the academic achievement

of Black males. Participants stated a belief that these low self perceptions and low self

concept manifested themselves in Black males in the form of a lack of valuing academic

achievement, failure to seek gainful employment, and failure to complete high school and

pursue post secondary opportunities.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about Black males low

self expectations level in regard to gainful employment as a factor that impacts the

academic achievement of Black males.

Just this past Christmas, we try to do something for a family, so Dr. _ _ _

_ and I took some groceries and Christmas stuff to one little family.   They live in

an apartment complex and the little boy, was, we walked in and he was smiles,

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smiles when I was coming in, he was helping me get the stuff in but standing on

the curve were six or eight young Black males smoking their cigars and I don't

know what was in the cigars but they were, and they were able bodied young men

and they but they were unemployed (Primary Participant One, January 17, 2007,

p. 5).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about Black males'

level of self expectation as impacting Black male achievement.

The thing that I would want to do is probably impossible to do but I would

love to find a way to help our black male students realize all that they really could

do and they are able to do it. You know, like get inside of them to help them

realize, okay you've got a whole future out there, take advantage of what's being

offered to you and you can go anywhere. But sometimes in a small town when

that hasn't been modeled for you know, fifty years, the model has been Black

students, male students might make it through high school if they are lucky, might

get a job over at the timber man maybe. One or two go on, but not enough of them

go on and come back here to _ _ _ to serve like as role models (Primary

Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about low self

expectations levels as a barrier to Black male academic achievement.

And especially that stereotype I felt like I saw and heard other people

saying, especially among the Black male population and it's out there some

among some of the White population too, that if you do well in school, you're not,

I don't know what, they don't call it cool anymore. That's what we use to call, but

whatever they call it now, hip or whatever, that you're not hip if you do well in

school. You're a nerd or you're something else is what we use to call it. I don't

know what they call it now but that kind of a stereotype, that kind of an idea

(Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 6).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about Black males not

valuing education as being a factor that impacts the academic achievement of Black

males.

> In part, what I just said, I think that ah, again, you're talking about if we
>
> can lift that lowest performing group of Black male students. You've got to get
>
> them to see that education is important. To a large extent, they don't. They're
>
> coming out of a situation where kids make fun of you if you take school seriously,
>
> they, they, the values that they adhere to are different now, it's, it's the street, that
>
> where they want to be successful and I think that's clearly one of the problems
>
> (January 30, 2007, p. 4).

Low Family Expectations/Support

Participants talked about the impact of the lack of modeling and setting of high

expectations by immediate family and sometimes by the community at large as a barrier

to the academic achievement of Black males. Participants spoke of multiple generations

in which academic success and the ensuing accomplishment of life goals rarely occurs

and is rarely sought after.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about low family

expectations and lack of support as a barrier to the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant One said, "I think that the peer pressures that many of our Black

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males have and expectations that families have for their children and poverty would probably be the number one thing again" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about low expectations level being modeled within the community.

You know like get inside of them to help them realize, okay you've got a whole future out there, take advantage of what's being offered to you and you can go anywhere.   But sometimes in a small town when that hasn't been modeled for you know fifty years, the model has been Black students, male students might make it through high school if they are lucky, might get a job over at the timber man maybe (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about low family expectations. Primary Participant Three said, "And this one, I think is very important, parent expectations. Sometimes, lack of parent support, parent involvement, all those kinds of things go together" (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 6).

Absent Fathers

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about the role of fathers play in the lives of Black males and the impact of their absence on Black male academic achievement and development.

More and more we're getting homes where there are not males in the home. So again, if they are, if homes are headed by females and if classrooms are headed by females, then that is an indicator if they are not, if they are truly, if my observations are correct, and they are truly not listening to us, okay, then that is

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the level in which we need to start addressing some things. We need to start

before that, but certainly that is the level that we are gonna have to address these

issues and follow these kids through if we hope to make ah, some changes with

these students. It (my one wish) would be for Black fathers to be involved in their

sons' lives throughout their childhood, from the beginning throughout their

childhood, actively involved in every aspect of their children, or their child's life.

I think that this is the one thing that is lacking for so many of our males and that

ah; the older they get, the more this, ah, has an adverse, ah, effect on their

achievement (Primary Participant Four, January 30, 2007 pp. 3, 4, 5).

Shortage of Black Teachers (Males)

Two participants talked about the lack of Black male teachers in the schools in

which most Black males are taught as a barrier to the academic achievement of Black

males. Participants spoke from the perspective of many Black males not having positive

male role models at home and also lacking positive Black male role models at school to

make up for the deficit often flounder and eventually give up.

    Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the

shortage of Black male teachers available to serve as role models for Black males.

Primary Participant Two said, "The second one as I have said is few role models

and we're trying to provide those now by aggressively recruiting minority male

applicants as much as possible that can relate and help make a difference"

(Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 5).

    Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about the lack of

Black teachers as role models as a factor that impacts Black male academic achievement.

Okay, we don't have ah, a lot of ah, role models, in the way of Black teachers in our schools ad more and more, those numbers are diminishing and it's hard for us to recruit Black teachers, and especially Black males in this area because of the very small town atmosphere and it's not a lot of recreation or entertainment in this area. So, we're having a hard time just recruiting Black teachers, especially Black males (Primary Participant Four, January 30, 2007, p. 3).

Healthcare Issues

One participant talked about healthcare issues related impacting the academic achievement of Black males. Health related issues, the participant believed, would cause Black males to not focus on academic achievement due their having to focus on basic needs not being met.

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about health care issues being a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

Ah, I guess the other would be, of course this may be the younger grades, getting them you know, medical care, dental care, those type of things, nutrition. You know, if a child, if a child comes with a teeth hurting, a toothache, stomachache, other health issues, they're especially when they're young, they are not going to, they are not going to do well in school. Their minds are on this tooth. Putting some kind of clinics in schools. You know, putting some more money there than in other places. You've got to address those physical needs, that might be money well spent (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 5).

Summary

For research question number one, superintendents identified multiple factors as barriers believed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Factors identified as barriers were internally based, family and community based, and school based. Internally based factors included Black males' low self perceptions and peer pressure. Community and family based factors identified included: 1. Negative stereotypes 2. Poverty. 3. Becoming fathers while in high school. 4. Lack of positive role models. 5. Low family expectations/ support. 6. Absent fathers. 7. Healthcare issues. School based factors included low teacher expectations, a shortage of Black teachers, and the elementary school experiences of Black males.

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Superintendents' Beliefs About Their Role

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What are superintendents beliefs about their role the development of district level practices designed to impact Black male academic achievement. The findings from Georgia participants for this question follow and were reported based on the response category into which respondents' comments were deemed to fit when evaluated by the researcher.

Providing Resources

Participants identified providing the monetary resources necessary to support the programs and initiatives implemented within the school system to help Black males achieve academically as a role of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about the role of the superintendent in the development of district level practices designed to impact the

academic achievement of Black males as being providing necessary resources. Primary Participant one said, "I think my role is more broad than laser focus as the role of the principal at the school may be. I see my job as giving the resources, making the resources available to the school so that they can achieve what they think is important (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the role of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males as being providing resources.

My role is also to provide those support opportunities. Make sure we have opportunities for additional support before the Georgia High School Test and after it, tutoring, after school programs and transportation home (Primary Participant Two, January 17, 2007, p. 2).

Setting Expectation Levels and Goals

Participants described the role of the superintendent as being that of setting high expectations for all involved in the education process. Participants described their role as that of conveying to students and staff the expectation all students can and will achieve academically. Program articulation and goal setting were seen as vital to accomplishing this task.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about the role of the superintendent in setting high expectations from the district level. Primary Participant One said, "I think my job is to have that expectation and to provide the resources to achieve that. Also, helping shape the philosophy that we expect that all students will

achieve and measure that and look at the data and measure how well we are doing in that area" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant One talked about setting district and school goals by involving school and community stakeholders in developing a new strategic plan for the school district. Primary Participant One said, "One of the things that we are about to embark upon right now in the next few weeks is, we're looking at a strategic plan for our school system. We are about to engage the community and look and see what we want to be like in five years (Primary Participant One, January 17, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the role of the superintendent in setting high levels of achievement for Black males. Primary Participant Two said, "The second thing is for me to make sure that our teachers understand that there is just no reason that they shouldn't be performing and that they shouldn't be able to graduate" (January 17, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked the role of the superintendent in impacting Black male achievement as being primarily to work with teachers in order to set the tone and expectation level for learning.

> My role, I believe, really is to set the tone for this atmosphere and to work with staff to create it and to empower them to create it and that's what I've really tried to do is to empower our staff to do the things that they feel are important not just in this area but really in all areas is just the philosophy that I have that I think is very important and it's been very successful in every situation that I've been in. Ah, and I think it is especially important in this area because you know, with me being a White _ _, I would not understand that as much as some of our staff

members do and I think that has helped create a good atmosphere to do what they need to do to get this done. (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 3).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about the role of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males as being that of setting goals and expectation levels.

Well, I think it is to set those goals and expectations. I know we talked about the Black male, but we just take the position that all these cohort groups, we want to move forward. There really are no excuses. We know that with the proper instruction and proper care and attention, students can achieve and ah, we set our goals and we, we expect, just like the No Child Left Behind Act, increasing numbers of students who show progress, show results and ah, we analyze that every year and expect it to happen school by school and for them to do their own school improvement, ah, planning, based on the results they're getting and that's pretty much, my role is just to make sure that's being done and carried out (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, pp. 2,3).

Establishing Supportive Relationships

One participant identified the establishment of personal relationship with students inclusive of mentoring and regular individual counseling and advisement as a role of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. The participant described the importance of the superintendent knowing students by name as well as knowing their current status in regard to meeting graduation requirements.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the role of the superintendent in impacting Black male achievement as being establishing a supportive, personal relationship with students.

> I'm very hands on and I'm in the schools almost every day and I know many of our students, you know, by name. And, one of my roles is to check on them personally. I mentor a couple of Black males in the high school and I am constantly checking on their progress, that's the first thing. It's a very, very, I don't know, very interesting, but it's very rewarding when you can finally relate to them and they know that you understand them and they trust you, build that trust factor there. But, I have a very, a very hands on role. Now, I look at the seniors every year. I can tell you how many haven't passed what parts of the test. My role is also to provide those support opportunities. Make sure we have opportunities for additional support before the Georgia High School Test and after it, tutoring, after school programs, and transportation home (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Analyze Data

Participants talk frequently about data decision making as a role of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. Participants reported meeting regularly with administrative staff at the central office level to autopsy date and get a clear picture as to how Black males and other subgroups of the student body were doing. The allocation of resources, program initiatives, and professional development activities were determined based on this ongoing data analysis.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about using data

analysis to as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement

of Black males.

> Also helping shape the philosophy that we expect that all students
>
> will achieve and measure that and look at our data. We look at our data
>
> four times a year with our principals. The Board and I have given the
>
> schools a formative and benchmark program to measure the data before,
>
> what we refer to as autopsy data, all during the year. This is third grade
>
> through twelfth grade (Primary Participant One, January 17, 2007, pp. 2,
>
> 3).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about analyzing data to

determine what strategies to implement to impact student achievement.

> Before we did daily advisory and ninth grade academy, these
>
> things were studied for about a year and then each year at the end of the
>
> year, we do a complete data analysis. And, we just look at, we are small
>
> enough to look at the specifics of data by child and we look at teachers too
>
> (Primary Participant Two, January 17, 2007, p. 3).

Primary Participant Two talked about utilizing data to drive district level

decisions. Primary Participant Two indicated that after data analysis, the low academic

achievement of black males was revealed and that the high school schedule was changed

to include a 0 period during the lunch hour in which students could recover lost course

credit and receive remedial assistance.

One of the first things we did, this is terrible, but, three years ago one of the changes I implemented was to move on our two Science teachers and we had to because of the data, not only from student data but from the teacher historical data over time. We've made scheduling changes. Ah, we've even changed our lunch period based on data (Primary Participant Two, January 17, 2007, p. 4).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about analyzing data to evaluate the effectiveness of district level strategies and programs designed to impact student achievement as a primary role of the superintendent.

Just primarily those success rates that we get information on, the measures that we have. The High School Graduation Test, End of Course Test, CRCT in the lower grades. Ah, we do periodically survey kids, you know, subjective type of stuff, but ah, we do, we do that, but it's primarily test scores and pass/fail rates (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 2, 3).

Summary

For research question number two, respondents identified four primary roles of the superintendent in impacting the academic achievement of Black males from the central office level. Respondents identified the role of the superintendent as: 1. Providing necessary resources. 2. Setting high expectation levels for students and staff. 3. Establishing supportive relationships with students. 4. Analyzing data to drive decision making in regard to resource allocations, programmatic changes, and professional development activities. Superintendents viewed their role as vital and as actively participating in the effort to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

District Level Practices Implemented By Superintendents

As a result of data analysis, what district level practices have superintendents implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males? The findings from Georgia participants for this question follow and were reported based on the response category into which respondents' comments were deemed to fit when evaluated by the researcher.

Scheduling Changes

Participants described creative and non traditional schedule changes as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. The majority of participants did not express a preferred scheduled format as being more beneficial in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. Two participants, however, did express a scheduling preference. One participant described 4 X 4 block scheduling in which students take four courses each semester in 90 minute blocks as being the most effective scheduling design in impacting the academic achievement of Black males in that it allows more opportunities for credit recovery because students can earn 8 rather than the 6 Carnegie units that would be earned using a traditional high school schedule. One participant described the traditional six period day schedule with a 0 period added in during the lunch hour during which students can recover lost course credit and receive additional remediation as being the most effective in impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about utilizing block scheduling as a district level practice designed to impact student achievement.

One of the first things that we did when we ah, reorganized into one consolidated high school, we went on block scheduling, and we believe block scheduling gives students more opportunities. It gives opportunities for quicker recovery if they falter in a course. They don't get behind. We also provided additional opportunities (Primary Participant One, January 17, 2007, p.1).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about remediation and tutorial opportunities for students.

One of the best things we have done is a 0 period in the middle of the day. Our 4th period is like a 0 period and during that time, seniors who have failed the High School Test and juniors who have not taken it are, they are routed through classes, support classes, to help them pass. Students who have failed courses previously go into a class called Credit Recovery using the Nova Net curriculum, and they can actually recover credit that they have lost using a seat time waiver. We also have a performance learning school within a school, and children can volunteer an apply to go to the performance learning school and what that means is instead of going to their content classes with their teachers, they take those subjects on Nova Net and they can go on and move at their own pace and they can recover also in that class. If there is something they failed before, they can recover it (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, pp. 2, 3).

Setting High Expectation Levels

The majority of the participants talked about the importance of setting high expectation levels for students, staff, and the community as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Participants expressed

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the belief that as district superintendents, it must be their practice to insist that no excuses be made and that all efforts be exhausted to provide the opportunities necessary for Black males to achieve academically.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about setting high expectation levels for all students as district level strategy implemented that impacts the academic achievement of Black males.

> Ah; we've been able to have that high expectations for all students through all of our courses. For example, math courses now. We don't offer any lower level math courses, everything is Algebra or better, or above. We're getting phenomenal achievement in Algebra the way we are teaching Algebra now (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 1).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about requiring all students to take higher level courses.

> Factors that have contributed here is the fact that we have gotten rid of the tech prep or applied content area courses. Everybody takes Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, the regular Biology and all those classes. What we were finding was that the applied courses did not prepare them for the Georgia High School Test or the End of Course Test, and since we've changed this, ah, that's one of the factors that have resulted in our good achievement. Four, five years ago, our passing rate in Science on the High School Test was 29 percent, and now it's right at 60 (percent) (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 1).

Primary Participant Two said, "That's on thing, the second thing is that we reconstituted the faculty at the high school and our current teachers have high

expectations and have a more rigorous curriculum" (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 1).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about creating an awareness of the problem and setting expectation levels.

> We've done several things, specifically for that, as I told you a moment ago, also that I think have helped all students. But, I think one of the biggest things is to create an awareness of the problem to start with and the situation as it has been in the past in creating that awareness with staff, students especially, and also creating and atmosphere where there are high expectations and we've not just done that for Black males but they certainly are included in the group. Our motto now is high levels of learning, every student every day (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 1).

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about setting high expectation levels for Black males as a district level strategy designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

> Okay, one of the things and ah, we have not completely gotten to the point where I can say that it is, it has been fully implemented, but one of the things we are talking about and I am interested in is making sure that our Black males take high level courses. Okay, A. P. courses that we offer. I'm looking at the participation rate of our Black males and it's, it's very low and I think we need to increase ah, this participation in those type courses so that when they are ready to go to the next level, whether it's college, whether it's ah, tech school or military. You know, ah, just from school to work, but they are prepared and I

think ah, a lot of times, our Black males, without that kind of guidance, will take the path of least resistance and that's not necessarily those high level classes (Primary Participant four, January 30, 2007, p. 3).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about Learning Focused Schools walkthroughs as a district level practice implemented to reinforce and monitor for high expectation levels in all classrooms and all schools.

I think it's been the Learning Focused Schools. We just bought into that. We really feel like it sets the stage for teachers. When we go in the rooms, we're looking to see that everybody is involved with, you know the something we look for, are the kids actively engaged. Are they just sitting there? We involve teachers from other schools, our principals from other schools. They go in and they make these type observations (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 3).

Providing Tutorial and Remediation Opportunities

A majority of the respondents talked about the importance of providing tutorial and remediation opportunities for Black males throughout their school career but especially at the high school level as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Participants presiding over rural districts stressed the importance of providing transportation from after school tutorial programs in order to prevent the students not participating due to a lack of personal resources.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about remediation opportunities.

The other things, other things, I think, I'll just go down the list, would be after school tutorial and transportation for after school tutorial, are things that are

not luxuries, they are essential to making a difference in children. A child may

have the best intentions of staying but if they gotta walk and don't have

transportation to get from one end of the county to the other, which may be

twenty miles, there's no way they can say stay (Primary Participant One, January

19, 2007, pp. 1, 2).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about remediation and

tutorial opportunities for students.

One of the best things we have done is a 0 period in the middle of the day.

Our 4th period is like a 0 period and during that time, seniors who have failed the

High School Test and juniors who have not taken it are, they are routed through

classes, support classes, to help them pass. Students who have failed courses

previously go into a class called Credit Recovery using the Nova Net curriculum,

and they can actually recover credit that they have lost using a seat time waiver.

We also have a performance learning school within a school, and children can

volunteer an apply to go to the performance learning school and what that means

is instead of going to their content classes with their teachers, they take those

subjects on Nova Net and they can go on and move at their own pace and they can

recover also in that class. If there is something they failed before, they can

recover it (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, pp. 2, 3).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about creating

remediation and credit recovery opportunities for students.

One of the better things I think we've done here is created what we call

our Phoenix Center, which is we identified students based on scores and some

other factors and we pull them out of the regular high school setting for short periods of time or sometimes it's even longer periods of time depending on how well they function in the Phoenix Center. And, we focus on their achievement and that historically here has been a large percentage of Black males (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about remediation opportunities made available to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

I think thing, a big thing that's helped, particularly graduation rate, is that all those after programs we're trying to help these kids get caught up. We're using every program we can and we let those some kids take up to 8, (courses) in some cases, Black males are involved. You know, it's got to be the right child, you got to be motivated. But again, those who are falling behind, we're letting them take online courses, ah, in addition to their regular six load, if we feel like they can handle it. You know, so that they can get caught up (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 2)

Professional Development for Teachers

A majority of the participants talked about the importance of providing professional development activities for teachers. The goal of these professional development activities as described was to increase the teacher content knowledge and skill level while increasing their understanding of the needs of as well as strategies deemed effective in impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about the role of teacher training in impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

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We've been able to find, to try to place the focus on certain problem areas, whether it be physical science and might have a high fail rate or certain courses, and we have tried to provide the staff development, professional development to those teachers to help them with understanding diversity and understanding the need for teaching maybe a little differently. And, I think most of all that, it can't be done without a total change of philosophy of teachers. Teachers have to understand and buy into the fact in the mission statement that all students can learn if given the opportunity. And that's been an evolution of eleven years where we have preached and taught that language and had professional development and given professional development to grow and be teacher leaders and it is really now a culture of the school (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant One said, "We have had High Schools that Work in our high school and middle schools, which would be Middle Schools That Work" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 3).

Primary Participant One said, "We've had things anywhere from America's Choice to Reading First and SREB Courses. Presently in our middle schools. We are requiring all of our middle school math teachers to take 5 of the SREB math courses, taken online, to raise the awareness of our teachers" (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 3).

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the role of teacher professional development in impacting the academic achievement of Black males.

The other thing is our professional learning for our teachers where we talk

to them about quality student work and engaging students. When we go to visit

them, we're not really actually watching what the teacher does, we are really

actually watching what the kids do and I think that's all sort of played in as

factors (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 1).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about the role of

teacher professional development in sustaining continuous progress in impacting the

academic achievement of Black males.

Ah, we've certainly devoted a lot of professional development ah, funding

to, you know, some of the more at risk populations and kind of focused on that,

ah. Ah, and we believe we're getting some results particularly in those learning

focused schools strategies where ah, you know, they're just straight forward and

there's a clear objective for the lesson. They use graphic organizers and those

kinds of things to help some of these kids better assimilate the information. And

we feel like, you know, that, that staying that course, not just changing from year

to year but really more and more teachers using those kinds of strategies and I

think it's served us pretty well (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, p. 1).

Grant/Monetary Incentives

Participants described the awarding of individual school grants to fund

instructional improvement initiatives as a district level practice implemented to impact

the academic achievement of Black males. In addition, participants described offering

financial incentives to both teachers and students participating in remedial programs and

activities.

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Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about local grant opportunities to allow schools to be laser focused and target specific areas.

We also, the thought of being laser focused, we asked the high school to give us a focus they would like to achieve and then we would forth by making grants, local grants available to, for an example, for Science. We have a grant at the high school, which is a $35,000 grant that they can use to develop their own program about how they would choose to improve and then there's accountability and we follow that and check it and we have to see results the next year.

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about the use of cash incentives as a means of recruiting staff to work in tutorial and remediation programs designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

We're actually taking those federal monies, school, Family Connections, I said Communities and Schools, it's Family Connections. If they get a 70 or higher percent pass rate, we're giving them a little financial bonus. Ah, so, a lot of them don't like to work, you know, after school, but we're to come up with an incentive to do that (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, pp. 1, 2).

Primary Participant Five. Primary Participant Five talked about the use of monetary student incentives to impact the academic achievement of Black males participating in tutorial and remediation after school programs.

We are clearly, you know, using different grant funds to go along with our instructional extension money so that we can give these kids, you know, more time, more opportunity after school, before school, ah, and really are providing busing transportation. We're actually taking those federal monies, school, Family

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Connections, I said Communities and Schools, it's Family Connections, where

we're giving an incentive to kids to come back and pass, get caught up, come

after school. If they succeed, if they are successful, we give them a $50.00 gift

card (Primary Participant Five, January 30, 2007, pp. 1, 2).

Individual Student Advisement/Counseling

Participants talked about the importance of individual and group counseling

opportunities as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement

of Black males. Participants described individual and group counseling as being

necessary in order to help Black males overcome the effects of poverty and poverty

related issues on their academic and social development.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the use of small

group student advisement as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic

achievement of Black males. Primary Participant Two said, "We have a daily advisory

period where one teacher works with about 12 or 14 kids and keeps up with what they are

doing (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about individual

counseling for Black males.

We do a lot of pull out counseling, especially for Black males as it relates

to things like peer pressure, as it relates to their expectations academically. You

know, historically, they haven't been as concerned about making good grades. In

fact on some occasions, you even find that it's, they look at it as a bad thing. And,

so, we've tried to change that mind set through a lot of pull out counseling

(Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 2).

Terminating Ineffective Teachers

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about terminating teachers deemed ineffective as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Primary Participant Two said, "One of the first things we did, this is terrible but three years ago, one of the changes I implemented was to move on our two Science teachers and we had to because of the data, not only from the student data but from the teacher historical data over time. Later on, we moved on some other teachers" (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 4).

District Level Strategic Planning

One participant talked about the importance of district level strategic planning in which all of the community and school stakeholders are involved. The participant described the strategic planning process as one in which stakeholders analyzed multiple school system data elements, determined the current status of the school district, set future goals, and developed a plan to gain the resources necessary to reach these goals.

Primary Participant One. Primary Participant One talked about the role of district level directed strategic planning in developing strategies to impact the academic achievement of black males.

> We are doing a system wide approach to the SACS and which this fits in real well with that and the time of strategic planning effort we are about to embark upon. One of the things that we are about to embark upon right now in the next few weeks is, we're looking at a strategic plan for our school system. We are about to engage the community and look and see what we want to be like in five years. And I think we'll be able to tell more from that. We've had a strategic plan

in the past but it's been a while since we have addressed that and it's time now to bring the community back together for ongoing conversations and I think that's going to really tell us a lot. I think we need another look, an external as well as internal one (Primary Participant One, January 19, 2007, p. 4).

Mentoring

In the absence of positive male role models in the home, community, and especially the elementary school classrooms where Black males are taught, participants talked about the importance of mentoring for Black males. Participants described mentoring and mentoring programs as a means of combat the deprivation experienced by many Black males as a result of poverty. Participants talked about the importance of providing mentoring opportunities to model appropriate behaviors, teach life skills, provide necessary support, and instill dreams and hope into the lives of Black males as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about the role of mentoring select students as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Primary Participant Two said, "I mentor a couple of Black males in the high school and I am constantly checking on their progress" (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about the utilization of mentoring programs as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

> We've tried to bring in mentors. I know we've worked a lot with a group called the 100 Black Men in Macon. They had a career fair for em and have done

other things to work with our Black males and I think that has helped (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 2).

Primary Participant Four. Primary Participant Four talked about supporting community based mentoring programs implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

I think, ah, it's been my experience that so many of our Black males do not have positive role models, okay! Because, and that's in the home, in the community and at school. We have ah, we have and have had a number of mentoring programs, not originating from inside the school system but outside the school system, but right now and some of those have been successful and some have been in my opinion, unsuccessful. Right now, we have two mentoring programs. One is a church based program ah, that targets Black males and I, I ah feel like that program has been highly successful with the students that are involved in that program. We have a community based mentoring program and it is not specifically geared for black males, it's ah for just students in general, but there are a lot of Black males involved in that program and again, that program has been successful. Ah there are just some individuals around town that are interested in, have taken an interest in certain children, so they are not a part of any program. They've pretty much just worked one on one with different black males and that has helped (Primary Participant Four, January 30, 2007, p. 1, 2).

Highlighting the Historical Contributions of Blacks in America

One participant described the importance of insuring that Black males are made aware of the past contributions of Blacks and other minorities through exposure in the

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various content areas. While the participant talked about activities done during Black History Month each year, the participant stressed the importance of highlighting the contributions of Black Americans throughout the year as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Primary Participant Three. Primary Participant Three talked about highlighting the contributions of Blacks in America, specifically Black males.

> We encourage teachers all the time to try to be aware in every subject area; you know historically also, we've done this a lot in Social Studies especially during Black History month. We've tried to encourage them even in Math and Science and other areas to highlight the important contributions, especially of Black males (Primary Participant Three, January 23, 2007, p. 2).

Revamp Student Discipline Code

One participant talked about redoing the student discipline code as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. The participant expressed the belief that the academic gains on the part of students in the district could not happen until disruptive behaviors exhibited during instructional time were eliminated.

Primary Participant Two. Primary Participant Two talked about revamping the student discipline code as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Primary Participant Two said, "Ah, one of the other things, the factors, is that we have had a new discipline code for the last four years and four consecutive years now, we've eliminated discipline problems in our schools" (Primary Participant Two, January 19, 2007, p. 1).

Summary

For research question number three, *district* level practices implemented by superintendents varied by system. District level practices as described by superintendents are multifaceted and particular to districts surveyed. Practices included: District level practices implemented by superintendents, irregardless of locale focused primarily on setting high expectation levels for student achievement and instruction, using data to assess progress, and committing the resources necessary to achieve the goals and high expectations previously established.

Data Analysis Summary

Superintendents identified multiple factors, both internal and external, believed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Factors identified by superintendents were both school and community based. Factors identified by superintendents included: 1. Stereotypes and stereotypical behavioral expectations 2. Poverty. 3. Peer pressure. 4. Elementary school experiences. 5. Becoming fathers in high school. 6. Lack of positive role models. 7. Low teacher expectations. 8. Low family support and expectations. 9. Absent fathers. 10. Shortage of Black male teachers. 11. Healthcare issues. While superintendents' belief about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males varied, the belief that superintendents can and should play a vital role in implementing district level practices to impact the academic achievement of Black males was universal. District level practices described by superintendents as being implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males vary among the superintendents and systems surveyed. District level practices as described by superintendents are multifaceted and particular to districts surveyed.

Practices included: 1. Scheduling changes at the high school level. 2. Setting high expectation levels for students, staff, and the community. 3. Providing tutorial and remediation opportunities. 4. Providing professional development opportunities for teachers. 5. Utilizing grant and monetary incentives to motivate students and staff. 6. Provide individual student counseling and guidance. 7. Conduct district level strategic planning activities. 8. Providing mentoring and mentoring programs. 9. Highlighting the historical contributions of Blacks in America. 11. Revamping the student discipline code.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a brief summary of the study on superintendents' beliefs and identification of district level practices contributing to the academic achievement of Black males. It presents a brief summary, an analysis of the research findings, conclusions, and a discussion of the research findings, implications, and recommendations.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to extend the field of research on the academic achievement of Black males by studying the belief's about and identification of practices identified by superintendents. This study looked at several issues. One was to determine factors believed by superintendents to impact Black male achievement. It also examined superintendents' beliefs about the role that they play in impacting the academic achievement of Black males. This study further examined district level practices that have been implemented by superintendents of districts in the State of Georgia who have demonstrated success in improving the academic achievement of Black males as measured by high school completion rates.

The major question for this study was: What are superintendents' beliefs about superintendents' beliefs about and identification of district level practices contributing to the academic achievement of Black males in the State of Georgia? The following sub questions guided the research:

1. What are school superintendents' beliefs about factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males?

2. What are school superintendents' beliefs about their role in impacting the academic achievement of Black males?

3. What district level practices have superintendents implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males?

4. To what extent do the beliefs and district level strategies utilized to combat Black male underachievement vary by superintendent background characteristics?

In order to answer the research questions, a qualitative design study was done. The study consisted of a purposeful sampling of Georgia superintendents whose systems have demonstrated unusually high school completion rates among Black males. Data was collected through the use of face to face interviews.

Analysis of the Research Findings

Superintendents' Beliefs About Factors Impacting Black Male Achievement

Georgia superintendents identified a range of problems that indicate their understanding of the factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. The majority of the participants talked about the impact of poverty and its related factors on the academic achievement of Black males. A review of the literature indicates that concentrated poverty is linked to lower educational achievement. A review of the literature further indicates that poverty perpetuates poverty related issues such as low parent educational level, lack of availability of advanced courses, less qualified teachers, high dropout rates and low expectation levels in regard to student achievement. Concentrated poverty is linked to lower educational achievement. Schools of concentrated poverty have proved to be the least able to provide an adequate education to

children (Downey, 2003). School level poverty is related to many variables that affect a school's ability to successfully educate children. Poverty related issues such as parent educational level, availability of advanced courses, teacher quality, high dropout rates and low expectation levels in regard to student achievement impact educational quality (Downey, 2003).

The majority of participants talked about the lack of positive role models in the lives of Black males as having a negative impact on the academic achievement of Black males. Included in the discussion on the lack of positive role models was the identification of the absence of fathers in the lives of Black males. Participants talked about the lack of Black teachers, specifically males, especially in rural communities as a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males. This observation coincides with the research regarding the possible impact of Black teachers in the lives of Black students, specifically Black males. A review of the literature revealed a belief by some researchers that Black teachers have personal experience and institutional knowledge that enables them to better help Black children navigate their way through White-dominated society. Literature further revealed a belief among some researchers in the field that for some Black children, Black American teachers represent surrogate parent figures, disciplinarians, counselors, role models, and advocates. This cultural familiarity is believed by some to provide Black teachers greater ability to communicate with Black students about the personal value, the collective power and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement as opposed to failure. According to King (1993), Black teachers have personal experience and institutional knowledge that enables them to better help Black children navigate their way through White-dominated society (p. 121).

An unintended consequence of Brown (1954) was the negative impact on the number of Black teachers and administrators in the teaching profession. A review of the literature revealed that in 1954, approximately 82,000 Black teachers were responsible for teaching 2 million Black school children and by 1965, more than 38,000 Black teachers and administrators in 17 Southern and border states had lost their jobs as a result of Brown (1954). Additionally, a review of the literature revealed by some estimates, approximately 90 percent of Black principals in 11 Southern states lost their jobs as a result of Brown (1954) Literature further revealed that many were fired while some retired and that of those who remained in the teaching profession, many were demoted to assistant principal or to coaching or teaching jobs. A review of the literature revealed that in the year 2000, 84 percent of teachers in America were White while only 8 percent were Black. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that only 61 percent of students in America are White while 17 percent are Black. These numbers are of great concern as a review of the literature revealed that the number of Black students majoring in education dropped by 66 percent from 1975 to 1985 (Toppo, 2004). Within the past decade however, the tide has begun to shift. During the 1999-2000 school year, while only 16 percent of teachers nationwide were Black, 21 percent of teachers new to the teaching profession were Black (Toppo, 2003). A recently released report on the status of the Georgia educator workforce corroborates Toppo's (2003) research and provides evidence that the racial composition of Georgia's teacher workforce is becoming more representative of its student demographics than the trend nationwide. From the year 2000 to year 2006, the proportion of Black teachers in Georgia's teacher workforce rose from 20.2% to 21.5%. Black administrators made greater gains, comprising more than 30% of

the Georgia educational administrative workforce (Professional Standards Commission, 2006). This gives hope that Black students in Georgia will be exposed to more Black educators, both male and female, who also serve as role models.

Some participants saw the establishing of stereotypes and stereotypical behavioral expectations for Black males as a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males. It has been hypothesized by some social scientist that the psychic distress caused by negative stereotypes may be a factor in the underperformance of Black students (Steele &Aronson, 1998). Two participants reported incidents of being stereotyped and having stereotypical expectations set for them due to their being a White superintendent of a majority Black school district. One of the two participants further expressed pain at the belief that because the participant, who was also born poor, but was White, could not understand and help impact the academic achievement of Black males. A review of the literature revealed an awareness of the sentiments expressed by the participants regarding the impact of stereotypes and stereotypical behavioral expectations experienced imposed upon Black males.

Three of five participants saw self imposed low expectations among Black males as a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males.
Some participants saw peer pressure from in school peers and well as neighborhood peers who were not enrolled in school as a factor impacting the academic achievement of Black males. Some participants saw this negative peer pressure as discouraging Black males from succeeding academically due to academic success among black males being viewed by Black males and conveyed to other Black males as not being cool or "Acting White". The participants' observations as stated coincide with a review of the literature as stated

in research on the theory of cultural inversion (Ogbu, 2004). A review of the literature regarding the theory of cultural inversion indicated that Black students along with Hispanic students do appear to be members of a subculture that values academic achievement less than their White counterparts (Ogbu, 2004). This supposed subculture formed by what research termed involuntary minorities, is linked to the theory of "acting White."

Summary

An analysis of the findings indicates that superintendents are well aware of the factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Therefore, the researcher understands that Georgia Superintendents believe that multiple external and internal factors exist which impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. While superintendents identified factors as often residing within the community and within the child, the researcher understands that superintendents are acutely aware of these multiple factors and believe that once identified, factors must be addressed regardless of location or origin in order to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

The researcher's experiences as a Black male from a family of thirteen, reared in poverty and whose mother completed only 8th grade and whose father was illiterate has had personal experience with the factors described by superintendents surveyed. While the researcher understands that the factors described do have an impact, the researcher believes that Black males by virtue of being reared amidst the factors described by superintendents are not automatically destined for a life of low academic achievement and school failure. Based on personal experience as a Black male and as a Georgia

superintendent, the researcher believes that while it is important that an awareness of the fact that the factors previously reported by superintendents can and often do impact the academic achievement of some Black males, it is important that superintendents not develop a defeatist attitude regarding their ability to impact the academic achievement of Black males. These factors as defined do not negatively impact the academic achievement of all Black males exposed to these negative contributing factors. Just as with a virus or some other type of immune system invader, some Black males develop an immunity to the reported negative factors and flourish in spite of their presence.

Superintendents' Beliefs About Their Role In Impacting Black Male Achievement

All participants saw the role of the superintendent as being setting high expectation levels for students and staff as a primary role of the superintendent in impacting Black male achievement. Some participants also saw the role of the superintendent as being that of analyzing data to drive the setting of expectation levels.

Some participants saw providing the resources necessary to support and fund district initiatives and programs as the primary role of the superintendent in impacting Black male achievement. One superintendent identified knowing students personally and establishing supportive relationships with them as being a necessary resource in impacting Black male achievement and a primary role of the superintendent in impacting Black male achievement. Some participants talked about setting goals from the district level to impact the academic achievement of Black males as a primary role of the superintendent. A review of the literature reveals that research corroborates the participants' beliefs regarding the role of the superintendent in setting goals and expectation levels. A review of the literature on the role of the superintendent in

impacting student achievement included as an objective of collaborative goal setting by

superintendents as insuring that stakeholders reach acceptable levels of agreement

regarding district goals and that all stakeholders agree to support the attainment of those

goals (Waters & Marzano). Superintendents talked about goal setting but primarily from

the school level. In contrast, a review of the literature indicates the importance of

superintendents establishing from the district level non-negotiable goals, which guide the

establishment of school level goals, and must be adhered to (Waters & Marzano).

Georgia superintendents identified various roles that superintendents play in impacting

the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

Summary

An analysis of the findings indicate that superintendents are well aware of the role

that superintendents can play in impacting the academic achievement of Black males in

the state of Georgia. Therefore, the researcher understands that superintendents still

believe that they can, do, and must play a decisive role in impacting the academic

achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

The researcher, as a current Georgia superintendent, understands the importance

of superintendents in directing strategic planning and establishing non-negotiable from

the district level. The researcher understands that superintendents in the 21st century must

be knowledgeable of curriculum and effective teaching practices, be a capable negotiator

and cheerleader for the providing of a quality education for all children.

District Level Practices Implemented By Superintendents

Superintendents identified a range of practices implemented to impact the

academic achievement of Black males. All participants saw setting high expectation

levels from the district level as a practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Evidence of this as reported by participants was requiring all students to take higher level in lieu basic level courses, which were eliminated. Other participants talked about the utilization of research based programs and training opportunities designed to increase teacher instructional competencies as being district level practices implemented to impact Black male achievement. Only one participant identified the practice of dismissing teachers identified as ineffective based on historical student and teacher data as a district level practice implemented to set high expectation levels and impact Black male achievement. A review of the literature corroborates that the issues of teacher expectations must be addressed if the academic achievement of Black males is to be impacted (Good, 1981). A review of the literature revealed that while teachers are unique individuals with different life experiences and perspectives, teachers tend to have expectations for certain types of students that they do not have for others. A review of the literature further revealed that based on past performance, race, socioeconomic status, and gender, teachers tend to expect more from students who have been high performers in the past and are White and middle class. A review of literature revealed that teachers generally have higher expectations for boys in math and science courses and for girls in all other subject areas (Bruns, McFall et al. 2000).

Some of the participants saw changing the high school schedule as a district level practice implemented to impact Black male achievement. One of the two participants who identified changing the high school schedule identified moving from a 6 period day to block scheduling as a district level practice implemented to impact Black male achievement while the other participant identified the creation of a 0 period during 4th

period as a district level schedule change implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. The remaining participants expressed no beliefs about the impact of scheduling on the academic achievement of Black males.

After school tutorial sessions for students with most providing transportation in order to eliminate students failing participate due to distance was identified as a district level practice that impacts the academic achievement of Black males. Additionally one participant reported using monetary performance incentives for students and staff as a component of tutorial programs.

Most participants identified opportunities for credit recovery and remediation through professionally developed programs as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. Some participants identified the establishment of separate alternative education programs for credit recovery and remediation opportunities as a district level practice implemented to impact Black male achievement. Additionally, one participant identified the establishment of a 9th Grade Academy as vital component of district level practices implemented to allow credit recovery for Black male students.

Participants identified the implementation of individual student advisement and pull out counseling to help Black males learn to deal with peer pressure and conflict as being a district level practice implemented to impact Black male achievement. Closely tied to this, participants identified the implementation of mentoring programs, whether district based, community based, or informally designed for Black males as a being a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males. A review of the literature reveals the benefits of mentoring programs for Black males. An

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example cited was The Young Lions Program, which was designed for Black boys in grades 3-6 with the goal of the program being to help black boys develop the motivation and skills necessary for academic success, positive and responsible social behavior, and an understanding and appreciation of Black culture and history. This is accomplished by providing opportunities for boys to spend quality educational time during the school day with an older Black male mentor. The mentor provides modeling of positive Black male attitudes, behaviors, and values (Lee, 2003).

Participants identified district level led classroom observations/walkthroughs led by district level administrators to monitor implementation of identified educational best practices as being a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Strategic Planning activities that engages stakeholders and the community was identified as being a district level practice designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Some participants identified a good athletic program in conjunction with high expectations for academic achievement as a district level practice implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males.

Summary

An analysis of the findings indicates that superintendents have implemented multiple district level practices designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. Therefore, the researcher understands that the practices identified by superintendents are multifaceted and are implemented based on superintendents' identified beliefs about the current level of academic achievement

among Black males in their school district. Practices identified by superintendents vary from one district to another and are specific to the identified needs of each district.

The researcher, as a Black male and veteran superintendent understands and agrees that articulating the expectation that Black males can and are expected to achieve academic success is a key district level practice. The researcher, while appreciative of the many efforts made to provide remediation and credit recovery opportunities for Black males believes that if appropriate teaching strategies and expectation levels are set and maintained upon entry of Black males into the public school setting, there would be less of a need for remediation and credit recovery opportunities. The researcher is convinced that it is far better to engage in strategies that help insure that Black males enter school academically and socially prepared for school in PreK and Kindergarten and strategies utilized to prevent them from ever lagging behind.

Superintendent Background Factors

Because of the limited number of participants available for this study, it was not possible to show a relationship between superintendent background factors and their identification of district level practices, their beliefs about their role, and their identification of district level practices implemented to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. For this reason, question 4 was excluded.

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Conclusions

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The researcher understands that Georgia superintendents are well aware of the factors that impact the academic achievement of Black males in the State of Georgia. Georgia superintendents identified a range of multifaceted problems faced by Black males which impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

Factors identified were of an external as well as internal nature. The researcher further understands that, superintendents, being fully aware of the factors that impact the academic achievement of black males in the state of Georgia, believe that they shoulder the responsibility of providing the leadership and resources necessary to address these factors if the lived experiences of Black males in the state of Georgia are to be positively impacted.

The researcher understands that superintendents believe that they can play a vital role in the implementation of district level practices which impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia. The researcher further understands fully that the description of the roles identified by Georgia superintendents as the roles that superintendents play in the implementation of district level practices that impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia vary. The researcher understands that superintendents describe their role as being actively engaged in the process of implementing district level practices designed to impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

The researcher understands that superintendents have implemented multiple district level practices to impact the academic achievement of Black males. There was no one set of practices identified that work for all. The researcher fully understands that while no one set of best practices exists, the Georgia superintendents surveyed have answered the clarion call to be about the business of impacting the lives of all children, especially Black males by implementing what they believe to be effective practices. Georgia superintendents surveyed have taken to heart the words of Booker T. Washington espoused in Up from Slavery (1901). Rather than sit in judgment of Black

males, Georgia superintendents surveyed expressed belief in the realization that Black boys face obstacles, discouragements, and temptations to battle that are different from those of other students in the state of Georgia. Superintendents surveyed expressed a belief that Black males can succeed academically and that just as with other student populations, it should be taken for granted that when Black males undertake academic tasks, they will succeed. The researcher realizes that superintendents believe that while there are no easy answers to improving the lived experiences of Black males in the state of Georgia, the work must be begun and not end until no child is left behind.

Implications

Based on the findings of this study, several implications are noted for using the study results. The implications are provided as follows:

1. Overall, respondents indicate a bleak outlook for Black males raised in impoverished conditions. Is poverty the culprit or are expectation levels lowered to the extent that beliefs become prophetic and true?

2. It is reported that many of the parents of impoverished Black males have low expectations for them and their future. Do parents of impoverished Black males really have low expectations of the sons or this a false perception that exists among superintendents and other educators?

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study several recommendations are made. Recommendations for implementing the results of the study and for further research are presented.

Recommendations for Implementing the Results of the Study

1. It is recommended that those seeking to become a district superintendent utilize this study to identify the most recent research available on the role of the superintendent in the area of instructional supervision and improvement of instruction.

2. It is recommended that universities and school systems collaborate so that university course work is relevant to the needs of school system personnel in providing quality instruction that meets the needs of all students, especially Black males.

3. The Georgia Department of Education should serve as a repository and distribution site for research based practices identified as being effective in impacting the academic achievement of all students, specifically Black males.

4. The state of Georgia should insure that school systems have the resources necessary to provide the level of instruction and necessary to positively impact the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Further study should be done to determine whether or not the achievement gap is widening.

2. Further study should be done to compare the academic achievement of Black males in relation to Black females and identify factors which are believed to impact the academic achievement of Black females.

3. Additional study should be done to identify additional strategies being utilized to positively impact the academic achievement of Black males in Georgia as well as throughout the nation.

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Table 1

Superintendents' Beliefs About Factors Impacting The Academic Achievement of Black Males

	Participants				
	1	2	3	4	5
Stereotypes/Stereotypical Beliefs	X	X	X		
Poverty	X	X		X	X
Peer Pressure	X				X
Elementary School Experiences		X		X	
Becoming Fathers in High School		X			
Lack of Positive Role Models	X	X			
Low Teacher Expectations		X			
Black Males' Self Perceptions	X		X		X
Low Family Expectations/Support	X	X	X	X	
Absent Fathers				X	
Shortage of Black Teachers (Male)		X		X	
Healthcare Issues					X

Table 2

Superintendents' Beliefs About Their Role In Impacting Black Male Achievement

	Participants				
	1	2	3	4	5
Providing Resources	X	X			
Setting Expectation Levels	X	X	X		X
Establishing Supportive Relationships		X			
Leading Initiatives					
Analyze Data	X	X			X

Table 3
District Level Practices Implemented by Superintendents

	Participants				
	1	2	3	4	5
Scheduling Changes	X	X			
Setting High Expectation Levels	X	X	X	X	X
Providing Tutorial and Remediation Opportunities	X	X	X		X
Professional Development for Teachers	X	X			X
Grant/Monetary Incentives	X				X
Individual Student Advisement/Counseling		X	X		
Terminating Ineffective Teachers		X			
District Level Strategic Planning	X				
Mentoring		X	X	X	
Highlighting the Historical Contributions Of Blacks in America			X		
Revamp Student Discipline Code		X			

Table 4
Demographics of Participants

Age (n=5)		
	Frequency	Percent
45-50	1	20.0%
51-55	3	60.0%
56-60	1	20.0%

Years of Experience As A Superintendent (n=5)		
3	2	40.0%
7	1	20.0%
8	1	20.0%
11	1	20.0%
Race (n=5)		
White	4	80.0%
Black	1	20.0%
Sex (n=5)		
Male	3	60.0%
Female	2	40.0%

Table 5

Study Related to Academic Disidentification

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Osborne & Walker (2006)	To examine the effects of stereotype threat on withdrawal from school	Incoming 9th grade students at a distressed urban high school in the Midwest	Quantitative ANOVA results based on the Schools Perceptions Questionnaire and the Identification With School Questionnaire	No race and gender interactions with the academic domain were detected while there was a significant correlation between academic disidentif- ication and absenteeism and behavior referrals

Table 6

Study Related to Academic Disidentification

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Griffin (2002)	To study the Relationship between student GPA and persistence	132,903 Florida high school students from 14 school districts	Quantitative Hosmer & Lemeshow (1989) Logistic Regression Model	Results showed that grades in school were less predictive of school withdrawal or persistence for Black and Hispanic students. Hispanic students had the weakest relationship between academic achievement and dropping out

Table 7

Study Related to Stereotype Threat

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Steele & Aronson (1998)	To study the impact of negative Stereotypes on student academic performance	114 Stanford University undergraduate students	Quantative	Black students generally perform worse than Whites when a test/task is described as a measure of ability

Table 8

Study Related to Parent Involvement

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Maton, Hrabowski, & Grief	To examine the role of family in the academic success of high achieving Black males	60 Black males and parents of these males who were enrolled in in the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at The University of Maryland	Qualitative	Parents appeared determined that their children would succeed, were strict disciplinarians and monitored homework and grades while being actively involved in community and sports activities

Table 9
Study Related to Teacher Perceptions

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, Bridgest	To study teachers' perceptions of African American males' aggression, achievement, and need for special education services based on African Students movement style	136 middle school teachers in a suburban school district in a south-western state	Qualitative	Teachers rated both Black and White students who walked with a stroll higher in aggression and lower in academics than the Black and White students who walked with with a standard walk while rating the White student who walked with a stroll lower than the Black student who walked with a stroll

Table 10

Study Related to Superintendents' Impact on Achievement

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/ Analysis	Outcomes
Waters and Marzano	To study the effect of superintend-ent leadership on student achievement	27 studies involving 2,714 districts, 4,434 ratings of superintendent leadership, and 3.4 million student achievement scores	Meta-analysis	Determined 5 characteristics of superintendents that significantly positively impact student achievement including giving principals defined autonomy as well as longevity in the system

Table 11
Interview Dates for Superintendents

Georgia Superintendents	Day, Date/2007
Primary Participant One	Friday, January 19
Primary Participant Two	Friday, January 19
Primary Participant Three	Tuesday, January 23
Primary Participant Four	Tuesday, January 30
Primary Participant Five	Tuesday, January 30

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1.   What words best describe your beliefs about the current level of academic achievement of Black males in your district?

2.   What factors contribute to the academic achievement of Black males in your district?

3.   What are your beliefs regarding the role of the superintendent in improving the academic achievement of Black males?

4.   What programs or strategies have you utilized to impact Black male achievement?

5.   What criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of program and strategies implemented by your system to positively impact Black male achievement?

6.   What additional changes have you made or anticipate making after an analysis of current program and strategies effectiveness?

7.   Imagine for a minute that you had the power to do one thing within or outside the school setting that would most positively impact the academic achievement of Black males, what would it be?

8.   What are some of the barriers to improving Black male achievement?

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

INFORMED CONSENT

My name is Hayward Cordy, an EDD student in the Educational Leadership Program at Georgia Southern University. You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled Superintendents' Beliefs and Identification of District Level Practices Contributing to the Academic Achievement of Black Males in the State of Georgia. Your participation will help me complete the final requirements for my doctoral degree and assist me in identifying district level practices in the state of Georgia that have been shown to positively impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males.

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this research is to explore district level practices, as identified by superintendents, which positively impact the academic achievement of school-aged Black males in the state of Georgia. Additionally, the study will focus on the beliefs of school superintendents regarding district level practices and the academic achievement of Black males in the state of Georgia.

PROCEDURES:
Participation in this research will include completion of a face to face interview with the study participants conducted by the principal investigator.

The participants will consist of Georgia superintendents of districts identified by the Georgia Department of Education School Improvement Division as having maintained a Black male graduation rate greater than or equal to the State of Georgia graduation rate for the 2005 and 2006 school year. Only eight Georgia school systems meet this criteria. Participants chosen will be current system superintendents who also served as superintendent of their respective district for the two years in which data was collected and utilized to determine eligibility for participation.

The individual interviews will last from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

DISCOMFORS AND RISKS:
There will be minimal risk for study participants. As the issue of race and achievement is a sensitive issue for some, there is a minimal risk of study participants experiencing some mild discomfort when discussing the issue of Black male achievement, especially in ascribing causal factors. Additionally, some study participants might experience some discomfort when asked questions that might appear to probe their knowledge of and beliefs regarding the status of Black males and achievement in the state of Georgia.

BENEFITS:
From a policy perspective, this study may provide insight as to the district level practices being utilized by school superintendents in the state of Georgia to positively impact Black male achievement. In terms of impact on the teaching profession, information gained from this study may be useful in identifying beliefs of school superintendents regarding the academic achievement of Black males which may impact the implementation of programs and practices to impact Black male achievement. Information gained from this study may provide a compilation of effective practices and programs currently being used to impact the academic achievement of black males that can be replicated in other school systems. This replication of exemplary programs and practices could help to improve the academic achievement of Black males as well as improve their lived experiences.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:
The researcher will not release any information that can identify you. All information will be kept strictly confidential. As a way of securing anonymity, the information that you provide will be assigned a code.
A tape recorder will be used to record the individual interviews, and audiotapes will be transcribed verbatim. The principal investigator will interview you.

RIGHT TO ASK QUESTIONS:
Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-486-7758.

COMPENSATION:
No additional costs to the participants will be associated with this study. The principal investigator will assume responsibility for costs incurred associated with traveling and making phone calls to the participant when scheduling and completing the interview process.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Research participants don't have to participate in this research. Additionally, you may end your participation at any time by telling the principal investigator, and/or by not returning the informed consent form. As a research participant, you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

PENALTY:
There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study.

AGE REQUIREMENTS:
You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: SUPERINTENDENTS' BELEIFS AND IDENTIFICATION OF
                         DISTRICT LEVEL PRACTICE CONTRIBUTING TO THE
                         ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF BLACK MALES IN THE STATE
                         OF GEORGIA

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_____   _____
Participant Signature   Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____   _____
Investigator Signature   Date

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Phone: 912-681-5465   Administrative Annex
                                                                             P.O. Box 8005
Fax:912-681-0719   Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu   Statesboro, GA 30460

To: Cordy Hayward

CC: Dr. Abebayehu Tekleselassie

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

Date: 12/21/2006

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

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: **H07119.** and titled **"Superintendents' Belief and Identification of District Level Practices Contributing To The Academic Achievement of Black Males In The State of Georgia",** 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,

Julie B. Cole

Julie B. Cole
Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

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