

ABSTRACT

HOWARD, SR., DORWIN LLEWELLDYN. Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies. (Under the direction of Dr. Lance Fusarelli and Dr. Paul Bitting.)

This qualitative case study gives authentic insight into the experiences of African American males who serve as local school superintendents in the state of North Carolina. It investigates their career experiences on the way to becoming a superintendent and while serving in the superintendent's role, particularly their perceptions of how, if at all, race has impacted their leadership as superintendent. This research seeks to know and understand what the superintendents perceive of the behaviors of people they have encountered during their tenures as educational leaders. The study poses the question of whether the experiences of African American superintendents are similar to those traditionally described by White superintendents or whether their race has impacted their leadership or careers in ways that Whites may not have had to deal with. Utilizing the conceptual framework of critical race theory, the researcher interviewed African American males who serve as public school superintendents in North Carolina. Data collection and analysis revealed whether common patterns of perceptions exist among research participants as to the impact of race on their superintendencies.

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Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina
on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies

by
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DEDICATION

It is with the most sincere love and gratitude that I dedicate this work to my wife Jaynette Whitt Howard, our daughter Malorie V. Howard, and our son D. L. Howard. Jr.

Jaynette believed in me from the very beginning; and has given me encouragement and support of every kind along the pathway to completing this dissertation and earning my Doctor of Education Degree. I am grateful for the sacrifices which she made while I attended classes, completed assignments at home and in the library, and put hours of work into the research and writing of this dissertation. I am truly blessed to have Jaynette as my wife.

I've had the unique experience of being a doctoral student while our two children were also in college pursuing their Bachelor Degrees. There were moments during this time when I considered quitting; but I continued because I couldn't let my children see their father give up in defeat; and I wanted them to see firsthand that dedication and hard work pay off in great ways. I hope that I've not only been an inspiration to them, but also their exemplar. Malorie and D. L. have both made their mom and me proud. I trust that they too will endure the challenges of their academic endeavors, and not stop until they have diplomas in-hand.

BIOGRAPHY

Dorwin L. Howard, Sr. is a native of Granville County, N. C. where he was educated in the public schools. He earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from North Carolina A&T State University and a Master of Arts Degree from North Carolina Central University.

In his professional career, Howard has worked as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and director, and is now Assistant Superintendent of Granville County Schools. In 1991 while principal of Joe Toler- Oak Hill Elementary School, he was named Granville County Schools' "Wachovia Principal of The Year". He holds a North Carolina School Superintendent's License.

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Howard is an ordained Baptist minister who as a bi-vocational minister, served as a pastor for almost 32 years.

He is married to the former Jaynette Whitt of Roxboro, N. C. He and his wife have two adult children, Malorie Howard and D. L. Howard, Jr.

In 2009, the Oxford Business and Professional Chain awarded Howard the "G. C. Hawley Merit Award" for Outstanding Public Service and Exemplary Support of the Total Granville County Community. In 2010 he was presented The Key to The City of Roxboro for Outstanding Service.

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Secondly, I offer my sincere thanks to Dr. Lance Fusarelli, also Co-chair of my dissertation committee. While a student in Dr. Fusarelli's classes, I decided that I wanted him to be my dissertation advisor. Fortunately, that occurred, as he became the lead chair for my dissertation work. He has patiently and kindly, yet unapologetically demanded that I make a good product, better.

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I am, without question, grateful for and indebted to the superintendents who participated in this study. Thank you for graciously and candidly sharing with me your

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	5
Statement of the Problem.....	7
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Definition of Terms.....	11
Theoretical Framework	12
Critical Race Theory.....	12
Perceptual Theory.....	15
Significance of the Study.....	17
Overview of Research Approach.....	22
Chapter Summary	23
Organization of the Study.....	23
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	25
Introduction.....	25
Perceptions of Race and Academic Ability.....	25
Affirmative Action.....	27

The Effects of Race on the Perceptions of Leadership	30
The School Superintendent and the Leadership Challenge.....	34
Unique Challenges for African American Superintendents.....	39
Visions from the Past of the Future of African American Superintendents.....	44
The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study.....	46
Community and District Data.....	46
Personal Characteristics.....	47
Career History Development.....	48
Professional Preparation and Affiliation.....	50
Different Career Tracks for African American and White Superintendents.....	50
Chapter Summary.....	55
The Ensuing Chapter.....	56
CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....	57
Introduction.....	57
Appropriateness of the Conceptual Framework.....	57
Appropriateness of the Case Study Analysis.....	58
Case Study Design.....	60
Case Study Types.....	60
Case Study Analysis.....	62
Research Questions.....	63

Site Selection and Sample.....	63
Data Collection.....	65
Data Analysis.....	68
Research Validity and Reliability.....	70
Safeguards Against Research Bias.....	72
Ethical Issues	74
Limitations of the Study.....	75
Chapter Summary.....	75
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	77
Introduction.....	77
Comparative Data on Research Participants.....	78
Census Information on Counties Where Participants Work.....	80
Demographic Information on School Districts Where Participants Work.....	82
Comparison of County and School District Demographics.....	84
Observations from Interviews of Participants.....	84
Findings from Participants' Responses to Interview Questions.....	86
Research Question 1.....	86
Interview Question 1.1.....	86
Interview Question 1.2.....	87
Interview Question 1.3.....	89

Interview Question 1.4.....	90
Summary of Responses to Research Question 1.....	91
Research Question 2.....	92
Interview Question 2.1.....	92
Interview Question 2.2.....	93
Interview Question 2.3.....	94
Interview Question 2.4.....	95
Summary of Responses to Research Question 2.....	96
Research Question 3.....	97
Interview Question 3.1.....	97
Interview Question 3.2.....	99
Interview Question 3.3.....	99
Interview Question 3.4.....	101
Summary of Responses to Research Question 3.....	101
Concluding Interview Question.....	102
Mr. Martin Bailey.....	103
Dr. James Moore.....	103
Dr. Waddell Barnes.....	103
Dr. George Cooper.....	104
Mr. Kenneth Wilson.....	104
Dr. Paul Jone.....	104

Dr. John Fields.....	104
Cross-Case Analysis: Identification of Common Themes.....	106
Theme 1: Participants Do Not Perceive That Race Impacted Their Being Selected to The Superintendency.....	106
Theme 2: Being Competent Is Key to Becoming A Superintendent and Succeeding.....	107
Theme 3: A Good Working Relationship Between the Superintendent and The Members of The Board of Education Is Critical.....	108
Theme 4: Participants Feel Some Pressure on Their Jobs Just Because They Are African American Males.....	108
Theme 5: It Matters to African Americans in the Community That the Superintendent Is an African American.....	109
Summary.....	110
 CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....	 111
Introduction.....	111
Research Question 1.....	112
Research Question 2.....	114
Aggrandized Difficulties.....	115
Trust.....	115
Research Question 3.....	117

African American Community.....	117
White Community.....	119
Employees.....	121
Summary.....	122
Implications for Research.....	123
Recommendations for Research.....	124
Implications for Practice.....	125
Recommendations for Practice.....	128
Concluding Thoughts.....	129
Perception and Pressure.....	129
REFERENCES.....	133
APPENDIX.....	140
Appendix A. Interview Questions.....	141
Appendix B. Basic Assumptions of The Perceptual Tradition.....	143
Appendix C. North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Submission for New Studies.....	145

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Dissertation Topics Related to Race, Gender, and School Leadership 1991-2001.....	18
Table 2.1	Race/Ethnicity and Perceptions of Factors Restricting Access to the Superintendency for Persons of Color.....	49
Table 4.1	Routes and Times to the Superintendency, and Time Served.....	78
Table 4.2	Superintendents' Ages When Hired.....	79
Table 4.3	Census Data by Counties.....	80
Table 4.4	School District Demographics.....	82
Table 4.5	District Student Enrollment by Race and Free & Reduced Lunch.....	83
Table 4.6	Racial Composition of Boards of Education.....	88

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework Illustrated..... 14

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

John Maxwell describes leadership as *positive influence* (Sanborn, 2006, p. xiii). An anonymous person defined leadership as the art of getting extraordinary performance from ordinary people (Sanborn, 2006, p. 50). There are numerous definitions of the term leadership, but regardless of how it is defined, there is always a need for leadership in the various arenas of life. The education arena is no exception. Schools provide children the opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop skills that help prepare them to become contributing citizens to their communities and the world. The leaders of classrooms, schools, and school systems have important roles and responsibilities as they teach students and administer educational processes that touch the lives of students in positive ways and ultimately impact the world around them. The leadership of the local school superintendent is vitally important as he or she provides vision and leadership in the execution of teaching and learning to faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.

A poignant question exists concerning leadership in general and particularly in the area of education. Do people believe that there is a correlation between the race of a person in a leadership role and his or her ability to lead? For years, African American educators have believed that they have been victims of double standards. Solomon Bonds, Jr., former Superintendent of Schools in Ridgeland, South Carolina, is quoted as saying, "It is true but unfair that a black superintendent must be far better at handling the demands and fulfillment

of the role of superintendent and the solution of day-to-day problems in a meaningful framework” (Scott, 1980, p. 54).

This predicament which Superintendent Bonds speaks of is aptly referred to by Susan E. Chase as “ambiguous empowerment,” contradictory experiences of power and subjection (Chase, 1995, p. x). This dilemma is about having been elected or appointed to a position, yet lacking the power to perform the duties required of the job. It is being superintendent, but lacking support of others to have the autonomy to make leadership decisions. To be superintendent, but be held in check because there is uncertainty about whether one is capable of doing the job well because of his race must be demoralizing. Just as demoralizing must be the tragedy of a person possessing the credentials and capabilities necessary to be a superintendent, yet not being given the opportunity because of his race.

As an African American man, I have encountered some piercing experiences during my professional career as an educator which led me to believe that my ability to lead or my right to the opportunity to lead was not fondly looked upon by some others. One such case occurred when in August of 1987 the school district’s superintendent approached me with the news that he was considering appointing me as principal of an elementary school in our district. We talked and I assured him that I was ready for this new responsibility of leadership. Following our conversation, the superintendent recommended to the Board of Education that I be appointed principal of that school and the Board approved his recommendation. After working eleven years in education as a teacher and assistant

principal, I was now a principal; but I was reminded often, sometimes subtly and sometimes directly, that I was not just a principal. I was a Black principal.

My appointment came at an unusual and a critical time in the school year - the day that teachers reported to work from summer vacation. There was no time for gradual adjustment. This was hit the ground running time. Fortunately the former principal had prepared well for the opening of school and the staff was in place. It didn't take them long to let me know in no uncertain terms that we were in "their school". For several years, the school staff had been involved in a pilot site-based management program. By now the principles and practices of self-autonomy were engrained in the thinking and operations of the faculty and staff.

Once in the fall of my first year as principal there, I was scheduled to meet with the superintendent to present the school's goals and objectives for the school year. As faculty members and I prepared for my meeting with the superintendent, one of the lead teachers approached me and announced that she was going with me to meet with the superintendent; and she followed with the explanation that it was because I had no elementary school experience. How dare a teacher say such to a principal? I would like to have perceived that her announcement originated out of a genuine concern for the betterment of the school, but I didn't. I did perceive that I was the object of this unthinkable show of disrespect because I was Black. This lead teacher and the majority of teachers and staff were White. None of them had ever worked for an African American principal, and I had never experienced such condescension. Two decades after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech for

equality and justice on the Washington Monument, I believed that I had been unfairly judged by the color of my skin.

In 1970 when schools were integrated in this rural southern community, what had been all-African American grades 1-12 school was converted to an elementary school where for the first time African American and White students and teachers would share the same classrooms. The principal of the once all African American school received a new assignment as an assistant principal under a White principal at the newly integrated high school. A White elementary principal whose school was closed as a result of integration became the new elementary principal on the campus of the former historically African American school.

For nineteen years after schools were integrated, five persons served as principals of this elementary school. All of them were White. In 1999 I became the school's first African American principal. Not long after my appointment as principal, the alumni association of the former African American high school demanded that I change the school mascot and colors to those of the former African American school which existed in the building where the elementary school now stood. To my knowledge, for almost twenty years, African American in the community did not ask for nor suggest such to any one of the five White principals who preceded me in that school. After receiving their request, I wondered, "Why was the African American community silent for 20 years? Why were former principals not approached with the subject? Why now? Why me? Could it be that the African American community feared speaking out about their concerns until an African American male became

principal?” After a process directed by Board of Education Policy the school staff and I addressed the matter of the request and decided that the school mascot or colors would remain unchanged. As a result, my relationship with the African American community was hampered until after much hard work.

Here are just two of a larger number of examples from my long career, were I perceived that I was challenged as a school leader because of my race. In one case, my ability was questioned. In the other, my allegiance to people who believed they were entitled to something was questioned; and in both cases I perceived that I was being challenged and denigrated because I was an African American male. How ironic that The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines denigrate as “to make black.”

Background of the Study

Barack Obama, an African American, holds the highest position of leadership in the nation, the presidency of the United States, yet many African Americans and persons of other minority races often perceive that requirements for obtaining and keeping leadership positions are more stringent for them than they are for White people. The experiences of these African Americans affect how they believe others view them as leaders, how they see themselves as leaders, and how they maneuver within their work environments.

There are one hundred and fifteen public school districts in North Carolina, but there are only 14 African American superintendents in the state. One might question why there are so few African American superintendents in North Carolina; and wonder as well what it's

like for the fourteen African American superintendents to be a minority working in such a high profile position.

Solomon Bonds, Jr. told what it was like to be an African American superintendent 40 years ago. He is quoted as saying:

Of all the lonely positions in public service, the Black superintendent's is the most isolated. Only a few of his or her colleagues are Black. The Black superintendent cannot expect to gain much in the manner of constructive advice and counsel from his or her White counterparts. To them the very presence of a Black superintendent represents a White's displacement. Until demonstrated actions support the contrary, the Black superintendent must assume the precautionary position and view White superintendents as willing or unwilling agents in the process of maintaining the subjugation of Black Americans (Scott, 1980, p. 189).

This research will explore the perceptions of seven of the African American males who now serve as superintendents in North Carolina concerning their views on the impact of their race on their experiences as superintendents. The researcher believes that the African American superintendents' stories about their careers should be told and heard, and hopefully, will be understood and appreciated. It is hopeful that this research will shed some light on why there are so few African American superintendents in North Carolina as well as what this small number of African American male superintendents in the state experience, think, and feel.

Statement of the Problem

In his book, *The Black School Superintendent: Messiah or Scapegoat?* Hugh J. Scott (1980) quoted Solomon E. Bonds, Jr., Superintendent of Schools in Ridgeland, South Carolina, as he spoke about the unique aspects of being a black superintendent. He said:

The black superintendent's response to his responsibilities is uniquely affected by the fact that people – black and white – respond to him differently because he is black. The school superintendency is one of the most crucial and perhaps most difficult positions in American life today. The black superintendency is doubly difficult and complex because this type of leadership is at the center of virtually all the current social revolutions of educational leadership. (p. 53)

Almost four decades after Superintendent Bonds made that chilling statement, this researcher contemplates whether his words are relevant for superintendents now in the second decade of the 21st century. Bonds' words reflected the times of the civil rights movements in the 1960s and the 1970s when desegregation and integration of schools in the South was just beginning to occur. I believe that positive change has occurred too slowly and too little for black superintendents during the time since Superintendent Bonds gave his reflections.

Is there evidence that Bond's statement is unwarranted today? Is the educational environment unbiased towards African American leaders? Has the playing field become level for those who have the talents and skills for the top leadership position in the local education community? In a search for answers to these questions, the researcher will

interview five to seven African American male superintendents in North Carolina about their career experiences and their perceptions on whether being African American males impacted their superintendencies.

Purpose of the Study

The researcher's aim in conducting this study on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies* is to inquire of the African American male superintendents about their experiences as educators and more specifically as superintendents; their perceptions of whether they were accepted and respected by others as competent and capable leaders; whether they observed or perceived differences in how they were treated in comparison with their White counterparts; and if so, how they responded; and whether they overcame the obstacles they faced.

The researcher was interested in investigating whether African American male superintendents in North Carolina perceive their experiences with people generally to be problematic, and if so, whether they believe the problems are due to a lack of acceptance of them because of their race. The central question is: Does "race" matter in the superintendency in the 21st century? Cornell West, author of the book titled *Race Matters* (1993) wrote: To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin not with the problems of black people but with the flaws of American society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes. How we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perception and response to these issues. As long as black

people are viewed as a “them,” the burden falls on blacks to do all the “cultural” and “moral” work necessary for healthy race relations. The implication is that only certain Americans can define what it means to be American – and the rest must simply “fit in.” (p. 3)

According to Michael Dantley (2009), historically, African American leadership has been grounded in a critique of the status quo linked with an agenda to reconstruct institutions and indeed, the entire society in such a way that democratic and equitable treatment of all citizens becomes the norm. African American leadership is not limited to organizational management but pursues the radical reconstruction of society. It is a type of protest leadership (p.43).

Dantley continues by stating that critical theory unravels the hegemony, that is, the accepted way of thinking or the dominant ideologies that form the traditions and rituals practiced and celebrated in our society. The whole point of critical theoretical thought is not only to unmask those systemic ways in which institutions such as schools marginalize and disenfranchise those deemed to be outside of the accepted traditions and classifications, but also to propose an oppositional rearrangement of these institutions. The ultimate goal of this institutional reconstruction is an egalitarian way of dealing with every person in and affected by the organization (p. 45).

African American school leaders who ground their work in a critical frame of reference have been called purposive leaders. Purpose-driven leaders use critique and possibility as the motivations for their work. These school leaders critique the forms and structures that traditionally have contoured the work of schools and, through a prophetic

tradition, declare an all-out war against those ways in which schools perpetuate forms of oppression against students of color. A purpose-driven leader (Dantley, 2003) becomes one who is focused on helping those in the learning community cope with elusive and volatile matters while maintaining a vision and hope that transcends them (p. 281). What is most notable about these African American school leaders is that they put the work of schools in a broader social context and cause the members of the learning community to understand that academics must be tied to an agenda that dismantles the systems of “everyday racism.”

With the previous thoughts in mind, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with several African American male superintendents in North Carolina, and draw conclusions from the information and data collected. During the investigation, he will document the participants’ oral recollections of the accounts of their experiences. I am interested in knowing their thoughts and opinions on the meanings of those experiences; and how both pleasant and unpleasant experiences have affected them personally and professionally. The researcher’s interests lie in whether the superintendents perceive that correlations exist between their race and the behaviors of their constituents, as well as their own behaviors.

In 1974 there were 16,700 school superintendents in the United States. Only forty-four (0.25%) of those superintendents were African American (Scott, 1980). Only 2% of the superintendents, male and female combined, were African American in the year 2000 and according to the National Alliance of Black Educators (2011) that percentage remains relatively constant a decade or so later as only 3% of the 15,000 superintendents today are

African American. The researcher is concerned that in almost four decades, there has only been a 2.75% increase in the number of African Americans serving as superintendents across the nation.

As the researcher conducts this study, his goal will be to answer the following research questions about African American male superintendents in North Carolina.

1. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?
2. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?
3. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Definition of Terms

Critical Race Theory - As a form of oppositional scholarship, critical race theory: challenges the experience of whites as the normative standard and grounds its conceptual framework in the distinctive experiences of people of color. This call to context insists that the social and experiential context of racial oppression is crucial for understanding racial dynamics, particularly the way that current inequalities are connected to earlier, more overt, practices of racial exclusion. Critical race theory is grounded in the realities of the lived experience of racism which has singled out, with wide consensus among whites, African Americans and others, as worthy of suppression. Critical Race Theory thus embraces this

subjectivity of perception and openly acknowledges that perceptions of truth, fairness, and justice reflect the mindset, status, and experience of the knower (Taylor, 1998, p. 122).

Perceptual Theory – people act according to how they understand themselves within a situation (Combs, Avila, & Purkey, 1978). According to Purkey and Novak (1996) all behavior is dependent upon the individual’s personal frame of reference and is a function of the perceptions that exist for the person at the moment of behaving.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory

The researcher utilized critical race theory as the theoretical foundation for this research. The following excerpt by Taylor Edwards in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* explains why critical race theory is the appropriate theory for use in this study. Professor Richard Delgado points out an important distinction between the viewpoints of African Americans and Whites; “Whites don't see their viewpoints as a matter of perception. They see it as the truth” (Taylor, 1998, p. 122). In contrast, Harvey Charles (2008) wrote in a book review of the book titled, *Critical Race Theory in Education: All God's Children Got A Song* which was edited by Adrienne Dixson and Celia Rousseau:

There is a certain resonance that comes with knowing something that is known by only a select population of insiders, particularly when that knowledge comes in experiences that are reinforced in numerous ways from early in life. The resonance is heightened when that knowledge is consistently denied, questioned, or ridiculed by outsiders. The permanent and pervasive nature of racism is felt very keenly and

known in a deeply existential way by people of color in the United States. It is further exacerbated by the chorus of denial they encounter from outsiders (the dominant group in this case) when representing this knowledge as a reality of their lived experiences. (p. 63)

One powerful way to challenge the dominant mindset of society, the shared stereotypes, beliefs, and understandings, and to obtain “resonance” is the telling of stories (Charles 2008). Stories cannot only challenge the status quo, but they can help build consensus and create a shared, communal understanding. They can, at once, describe what is and what ought to be.

As a result, scholars who study and apply critical race theory often use storytelling as a way to engage and contest negative stereotyping. This strategy makes use of the experiences of people negatively affected by racism as a primary means to confront the beliefs held about them by whites. This is what Professor Crenshaw calls a condition for the development of a distinct political strategy informed by the actual conditions of black people (Taylor, 1998, p. 122).

This researcher entered his investigation without any prior knowledge which would indicate whether the persons who will be subjects of the study perceive whether they have been treated differently than others or mistreated in their roles as superintendents because of their race. The study revealed the nature of the experiences of the African American male superintendents in North Carolina and their perceptions of the meaning and impact of those experiences. The study will place emphasis on the significance of race on the experiences of

African American male public school superintendents in North Carolina. The researcher supposes that the participants of the study will have a wide variety of experiences which took place in a diversity of school systems and communities.

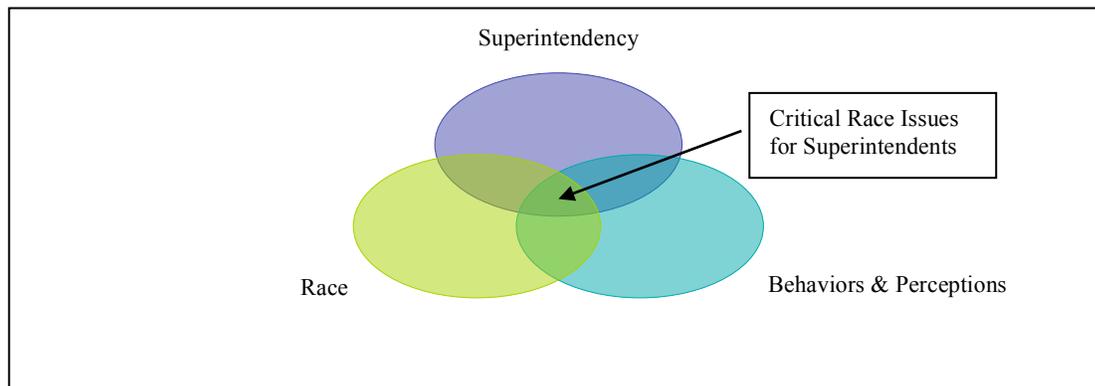


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework Illustrated

Applying critical race theory to this research, as illustrated above, lends its focus to the dynamics between the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the superintendent; the perceptions and behaviors of the superintendent's constituents, as well as the superintendent's own perceptions and behaviors; and the race of the superintendent as well as the race of others. This framework is built on the premise that there are interrelationships between each of the components of the framework. It proposes that neither component of the framework stands totally independent of the other. These conceptual parts may be evident and relevant in various degrees through the social and political activities that are experienced in the superintendent's work with the board of education, influential business leaders,

prominent community personalities, representatives of local and state governmental agencies, school parent groups, and other stakeholders.

As one views the Venn diagram above, he should see each of the circles as a separate segment of the phenomenon. The superintendency circle represents everything that is included in the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the superintendent of any race. The circle representing perceptions and behaviors denotes psychological and behavioral responses which occur as part of the interpersonal interactions. Race includes the biological, cultural, and social realities. The interrelationships of the superintendency, perceptions, and behaviors with respect to race create a unique set of issues for the superintendent.

Perceptual Theory

Of equal significance is the Perceptual Theory because the researcher is most interested in studying the perceptions of the participants. The perceptual tradition seeks to understand human behavior from the perception of a person's own personal and unique experiences. It assumes that all behavior is dependent upon the individual's personal frame of reference and is a function of the perceptions that exist for the person at the moment of behaving (Purkey and Schmidt, 1987). Purkey and Schmidt have outlined fourteen basic assumptions of the perceptual tradition. It is important to understand these assumptions as they validate the significance of the perceptions of the superintendents in this research. See the appendix for the list of assumptions.

Purkey and Novak (1996) later said, these core perceptions guide decisions and serve as a "frame of reference for judgment" and are the heart of one's self-concept (p.48).

In An Overview of Self-Concept Theory for Counselors, William Purkey writes: There is growing awareness that of all the perceptions we experience in the course of living, none has more profound significance than the perceptions we hold regarding our own personal existence—our concept of who we are and how we fit into the world.

Self-concept may be defined as the totality of a complete, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. Self-concept is different from self-esteem (feelings of personal worth and level of satisfaction regarding one's self" or self-report (what a person is willing and able to disclose) (1988).

American sociologist, William Isaac Thomas is most notably known for a statement written in his book *The Child in America* which was published in 1928. "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences", now referred to as the Thomas Theorem follows Thomas' belief that "It is not important whether or not the interpretation (of what one perceives) is correct". This theorem grew out of Thomas' earlier work in 1923, recorded in a book titled: *The Unadjusted Girl*. There he wrote:

Preliminary to any self-determined act of behavior there is always a stage of examination and deliberation which we may call the definition of the situation. The individual's definition of the situation is always subject to a rivalry between the spontaneous definition of the situation made by members of an organized society and the definition which his society has provided for him. The individual tends to a hedonistic selection of activity,

pleasure first; and society to a utilitarian selection, safety first (Thomas & Thomas 1928, p.572).

Thomas believed that the interpretation of a situation leads to particular action. He believed actions to be affected by subjective perceptions. In laymen's terms, what one sees depends on the location of the window from which he is looking. Based on Purkey's assumptions and Thomas' Theorem this researcher must remain keenly aware that analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions are not to be judged by the researcher as true or false, but accepted as true to the participant. The researcher's major focus will be on identifying whether common threads run from a perceived truth of one person to another. As Purkey's 11th assumption suggests, the researcher will attempt to clearly understand the participants' phenomenal fields.

Significance of the Study

While some studies of race and the superintendency exist, this researcher is confident that this study will embark upon new streams of knowledge while not duplicating previous studies. As part of his investigation, the researcher will review studies on similar topics which examine the reactions of various races of people to leadership by African Americans across a variety of careers. This research will focus specifically on what African American male superintendents in North Carolina experienced and what they perceive of their experiences that may have influenced the dynamics of their work including their leadership, management, relationships, politics, professionalism, and the implementation of related core values of the school system in which they serve.

According to Rusch (2004), dissertation research exploring equity for women and minorities or gender and race related to leadership is surprisingly scant. McGee Banks' (2000) twenty-five year review of dissertations that explored the intersections of race and gender found minimal attention to the employment of experiences of women and people of color in schools. According to Banks, women and men are often discouraged by dissertation advisors from pursuing studies that use feminist perceptions or concentrate on issues of equity (Rapp, 2001). During the course of an investigation, similar stories emerged, primarily from women who were openly discouraged by a dissertation chair from pursuing studies that included attention to gender and race. A basic search in dissertation abstracts using keywords related to race, gender, and leadership uncovered a disturbing pattern in the ten years spanning from 1991 through 2001. Table 1 shows the resulting numbers of dissertation studies guided by professors who have the privilege to overtly and covertly determine what counts as important knowledge.

Table 1.1

Dissertation Topics Related to Race, Gender, and School Leadership 1991-2001

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Number of Dissertations</u>
Leadership	11,268
Leadership and education	3,513
Leadership and schools	2, 559

Table 1.1 Continued

Leadership and principals	1,608
Leadership and superintendents	557
Leadership or gender or race or diversity	1,764
Principals and gender	650
Leadership, schools, and gender	225
Leadership, principals, and gender	245
Principals and race	118
Leadership, superintendents, and women	94
Leadership, superintendents, and gender	93
Leadership, schools, and diversity	73
Superintendents, race and gender	22
Leadership, superintendents, and race	9
Leadership, superintendents, and minority	12
Leadership, race, women, and schools	9
Leadership preparation and gender	4
Leadership preparation and race	0

(Rusch, 2004)

Note from Table 1 that only 9 dissertations were written on the topic of leadership, superintendents, and race; and just 12 dissertations were written on leadership, superintendents, and minorities. Of 22,853 dissertations reviewed on topics related to race, gender, and school leadership, a total of only 21 related to superintendents and minority or race. That equates to .0009% of all the dissertations reviewed. These numbers clearly show that a lack of attention has been given to the intersection of leadership of school superintendents, gender, and race. There is a possibility of overlap where a dissertation in this study could be counted more than once between leadership, superintendents, and race throughout the last nine categories in this study. If that group of three-hundred and sixteen dissertations was made of 316 individual research studies, the maximum percent of students who wrote dissertations on the topic would be just 1.3%. Regardless of the figure used, the attention given to the subject is minimal. “The small numbers of studies focused on the subjects of gender and race related to school leadership or key administrative roles speak volumes about the silence surrounding the discourse. Without persistent and supported study of these complex issues our capacity to foster a dynamic democracy continues to be a deferred dream” (Rusch, 2004, pp. 21-22).

More recent data on dissertation topics related to race, gender, and school superintendents is unavailable. The researcher cannot quantify precisely but does note that more dissertations, thesis, and professional articles appear to be available on the subjects of superintendents and gender rather than superintendents and race.

There is a great need for the research which will be conducted in this study, not merely because few have studied it. As stated earlier, other writings on critical race theory suggest that few have researched the topic because people are often uncomfortable discussing race related issues. This researcher's personal experience, as he was choosing a dissertation research topic, was rather uncomfortable. Even as an African American, he contemplated whether to research and write about the experiences and perceptions of African American superintendents because he was concerned how his colleagues and others would view him if he chose to focus his research on the delicate and often uncomfortable subject of "race relations". He pondered what others might think of him. He considered whether doing such research might be perceived with negative connotations. He struggled to make the decision because he desperately was interested in studying this topic, yet was more than concerned of how he would be perceived if he wrote about of all things, race relations in the workplace. Then he realized that the reason for his discomfort was the very reason that he should conduct the research. It is in all probability one reason so many others have not conducted similar research.

Racial inequity is a problem in U.S. society. The perception that racial inequity exists in the educational profession is a great concern to the researcher. To ignore this topic because it is controversial or because it makes people uncomfortable to talk about it may suggest to some that it is not a problem or at least not one that deserves serious attention. This researcher decided that to be silent on the subject is neglectful and irresponsible. He

hopes that this research will inspire others to delve deeper and expand more broadly into research related to equality and equity among races of people.

Hopefully, information and results from this study will foster open and honest conversations about the African American superintendents' experiences and perceptions as well as other minorities in a wide variety of occupations. Clearly and succinctly stated, the researcher believes there is a need for people of minority races who work in educational leadership positions, particularly school superintendents, to openly articulate their experiences and to make known whether they experienced differential treatment in their professions. The researcher will seek to learn whether the superintendents who will be subjects of the study believe unfair or disrespectful treatment, if any, was in response to their being African American. He aims, through this research, to encourage members of the White majority race to become cognitively aware that such perceptions of mistreatment exists and to create a platform from which both minority and majority members of the educational profession and entire community can and hopefully will work to eradicate even the appearance of racial improprieties.

Overview of Research Approach

This qualitative research will utilize critical race theory to investigate the careers of the African American males who serve as local superintendents across North Carolina. Through interviewing the subjects, the researcher hopes to accomplish the following objectives: (a) to learn about the complexities, if any, related to performing their duties as superintendents, and (b) to become knowledgeable of what they consider typical experiences

for superintendents of any race or ethnicity, as well as, (c) to learn whether they observed atypical behaviors from others toward them as superintendents, and (d) to learn how those atypical behaviors, if they existed, affected their own behavior.

Chapter Summary

It has been articulated that people of color are often discriminated against in the workplace. Discrimination which prevents them from being hired is a common complaint. This research proposes that African Americans may be shown discrimination both in not being hired and after being hired as superintendents.

Critical race theory is the theoretical foundation upon which this qualitative study will be conducted, as the researcher seeks to determine what occurs at the intersection of race, perceptions and behaviors, and the superintendency. Interviews of African American male superintendents from across the state of North Carolina are expected to shed light on the matter which scarcely has been studied.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 of this study will include a review of literature which addresses the topic of the relationship between leadership and race. It will also include a review of the expectations for superintendents in the 21st century. The researcher will examine a historical view of experiences and perceptions of some African American superintendents from across the United States. Literature will be reviewed on the broad topic of leadership and race and will continue with a narrowed focus on the specific area of leadership and race as it impacts the school superintendency.

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology to be used in conducting the author's own research of the experiences and perceptions of African American males who now serve as local school superintendents in North Carolina. It will include information related to the appropriateness of using the phenomenological inquiry design for the research model. It will also address the reliability and validity of the study, descriptions of the sample participants of the study, site selections to be used, processes and procedures for collecting the data and for analyzing data.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will investigate the question, “Does the race of the person in a leadership role matter?” It will begin with a look at how race plays a part in how people perceive leadership throughout the general population across a variety of careers. Focus will then be placed on the school superintendent with an introduction of the challenges that exists for him. The third major section of the review will focus specifically on the African American superintendent with a historical perception of his experiences and perceptions of what they meant, as well as review some recent studies which will present interesting data comparing and contrasting African American and White superintendents and their thoughts about issues relating to hiring practices and working conditions.

Perceptions of Race and Academic Ability

Racism, according to Deborah Waire Post, creates a profound skepticism about the abilities of blacks, a skepticism which is perpetuated even in the solutions which are proposed to cure one of the symptoms of racism: the absence in meaningful numbers of black people in law teaching. She writes that the idea that black law professors need some remedial help with scholarship is absurd. The problem is not ours (blacks). The problem is institutional. We exist in an environment where the decision not to write is eminently rational. We realize that our scholarship is suspect because our areas of interest are unacceptable, that average work, work comparable to that of our peers, is unacceptable. We

cannot afford to make mistakes because everything we do is scrutinized with such attention to detail and minutiae that it would paralyze most creative people (p. 423)

As long as we define the “problem” as something external to the white males who are the decision-makers in our institutions, as long as we ignore the biases of those who administer the process and the manipulability of the criteria of selection, the problem will not go away. As it currently stands, the institutional position condemns racism and sexism without seeking to eradicate them. Instead it offers extra assistance to people of color and women so that they can compete and occasionally succeed on an unequal playing field (p. 423).

Randall L. Kennedy in *Racial Critiques of Legal Academia* (1995) writes that of all the many racially derogatory comments about people of color, particularly Negroes, none has been more hurtful, corrosive, and influential than the charge that they are intellectually inferior to whites. In the age of slavery, the image of Negro intellectual inferiority became entrenched in the minds of pro-slavery and anti-slavery whites alike and helped to rationalize the denial of educational resources to blacks. Throughout the century following the abolition of slavery, efforts by blacks to participate equally in American intellectual culture continued to encounter the skepticism of those who held a low opinion of the intellectual capacity of Negroes and the opposition of those who believed that educated Negroes posed a special menace to a well-ordered society. As students, teachers, and writers in the humanities, sciences, and professions, Negroes confronted exclusionary color bars in every imaginable context. W. S. Scarborough, an accomplished Negro scholar of Greek and Latin, found that there simply was no place for him in academia in late nineteenth-century America, not even

at the predominantly Negro Howard University, where the white members of the Board of Trustees took the position that the chair in classical languages could be filled only by a Caucasian (Kennedy, 1995, p. 434).

Affirmative Action

Hardly could a serious study founded on the Critical Race Theory be conducted without giving attention to the topic of “affirmative action”. Affirmative action means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded. When those steps involve preferential selection—selection on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity—affirmative action generates intense controversy.

The development, defense, and contestation of preferential affirmative action have proceeded along two paths. One has been legal and administrative as courts, legislatures, and executive departments of government have made and applied rules requiring affirmative action. The other has been the path of public debate, where the practice of preferential treatment has spawned a vast literature, pro and con.

One period of passionate debate over affirmative action began around 1972 and tapered off after 1980. A second resurgence of debate in the 1990s led to the Supreme Court's decision in the summer of 2003 upholding certain kinds of affirmative action. The first debate in the 1970s encompassed controversy about gender and racial preferences alike. This is because in the beginning affirmative action was as much about the factory, the firehouse, and the corporate suite as about the university campus. The second debate

represents a quarrel about race and ethnicity. This is because the burning issue at the turn of the twentieth-first century is about college admissions. In admissions to selective colleges, women need no boost; African-Americans and Hispanics do (Fullenwider, 2011, p. 1).

Richard Delgado, a noted authority on critical race theory, in the book edited by him titled *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (1995) calls affirmative action a majoritarian device. He proposes that scholars of color have grown increasingly skeptical about both the way in which affirmative action frames the issue of minority representation and the effects that it produces (p. 355). According to Delgado, affirmative action addresses minority representation by asking questions such as should we as a society admit, hire, appoint, or promote some designated number of people of color in order to promote certain policy goals, such as social stability, an expanded labor force, and an integrated society? At best, he says, affirmative action serves as a homeostatic device, assuring that only a small number of women and people of color are hired or promoted. Not too many, for that would be terrifying, nor too few, for that would be destabilizing. Just the right small number, generally those of us who need it least, are moved ahead (p. 356).

Whites ask how far can affirmative action go without sacrificing innocent white males, and is it fair to hire a less qualified minority over a qualified white? Delgado argues that historically whites have been the beneficiaries of their own affirmative action through unjustified preferences in jobs and education resulting from old-boy networks and official laws that lessened the competition. His major argument though is that those for whom affirmative action was designed, had no say in what the framework should look like or how

the program should work. He adds that an affirmative action plan designed by minorities would look quite different from what it does today.

Delgado wrote about what he calls the affirmative action mythology, specifically, an aspect of that mythology which he refers to as the role model argument. He declared that a predominantly white institution hires a minority, not because of his accomplishments, not because deserves the job, but rather because he speaks politely, is well groomed, can be trusted, and above all, for what others think he can do for them. Once getting the job, the minority is labeled as a good role model. Delgado strongly urges minorities not to accept jobs to become role models. He tells us why.

1. Being a role model is a tough job, with long hours and much heavy lifting. You are expected to uplift your entire people.
2. The job treats you as a means to an end. Even your own constituency may begin to see you this way.
3. The role model's job description is monumentally unclear.
4. To be a good role model, you must be an assimilationist, never a cultural or economic nationalist, separatist, radical reformer, or anything remotely resembling any of these. You are expected to conform to prevailing ideas of beauty, politeness, grooming, and above all responsibility.
5. The job of role model requires that you lie. Not everyone who works hard and stays out of trouble becomes whatever they dream of becoming (p. 357-358).

While Delgado clearly does not recommend being a role model, he does offer alternatives that he believes would be more productive and impactful including being a mentor, an organic intellectual, offering analysis and action programs for blacks, a matriarch, a patriarch, a legend, or a provocateur. He says you can be a socially committed professional who marches to your own drummer. You can even be yourself (pp. 359-360).

The Effects of Race on the Perceptions of Leadership

In an article titled, “A Critical Review of Race and Ethnicity in the Leadership Literature: Surfacing Context, Power and the Collective Dimensions of Leadership”, Sonia Ospina and Erica Foldy (2009) researched sources that answered one of these three fundamental questions:

- (1) How does race-ethnicity (of leaders, followers or both) affect perceptions of leadership?
- (2) How does race-ethnicity affect the ways leadership is enacted?
- (3) How do leaders (and/or followers) grapple with the social reality of race-ethnicity? (p. 878)

Ospina and Foldy (2009) stated that research on the effects of race on the perceptions of leadership stems from an underlying assumption that leaders of color are disadvantaged because, for various reasons, they are not perceived as legitimate. Some research suggests that perceivers or potential followers are less likely to accept people of color as leaders, while other research finds that positional leaders of color, such as managers, may face challenges to their leadership that White leaders do not (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 879).

The authors point out that there appeared to be a difference in which leadership characteristics were given more weight: "...across the studies, there does appear to be a tendency to evaluate Blacks in leadership positions more heavily on interpersonal factors than on content or task-related factors" (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 879) though little research at that time investigated why this might be the case. This article also cites an early study that found that White subordinates of Black managers often act in ways that challenge and undermine their leadership.

Many of these studies also investigate or speculate about why these obstacles exist. (Bass, 1990) cites studies to suggest that "stress created by marginality" is likely to be a constraining effect for Black leaders, even as he allows that marginality in some circumstances can be quite beneficial (p. 742). He specifies that African American managers may lack access to important networks and appreciation and encouragement from their superiors.

In "Effects of race-ethnicity on leadership enactments" (Ospina & Fold, 2009, p. 881) the researchers address the question of how the race of the leader affects the ways that he or she enacts that leadership. Some studies in this category tend to view race as an independent variable, but in this case, they tend to emphasize its impact on preferences, styles, and behaviors. Unlike the first major category, here the focus is on the leader, paying less attention to followers, unless one aspect of the enacted leadership is to reach particular audiences, usually members of the same racial group.

The research comparing African American and White supervisory styles provides few consistent findings and took place mostly in the 1970s. One study, which stands out because it was conducted fairly recently (Pitts, 2005), broadly compared school superintendents of color with White superintendents, hypothesizing that the former would be more empowering of their staff than the latter, but found the opposite was true. Pitts speculates that because there are so few superintendents of color, they feel more vulnerable and therefore need to exercise greater control (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 882).

Most of the other relevant articles Ospina and Foldy studied investigated the leadership style of particular racial groups, including Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, and African Americans. Overall, the literature shows how these leaders turn mechanisms of oppression into “effective vehicles for constructive change” (Alston, 2005, p. 677). In fact, while these leaders are exquisitely aware of the importance of perceptions in a system where race matters, they transform this into strength because they are attuned to how they are viewed by others (Case, 1997; Dillard, 1995). Another theme across the critical race research is that non-white managers and leaders must be bi-culturally fluent (Bell, 1990), able to lead in ways that resonate with members of their own racial-ethnic group but also connect with the dominant ways of working in their white-majority contexts (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 882).

Thirdly, the study of “grappling with the social reality of race-ethnicity” seeks to understand how social actors-leaders and/or followers grapple with the reality of race as it manifests in their environment. Here race-ethnicity is not treated exclusively as an individual

characteristic. It is also a social or political issue with personal and collective meaning, which may become salient within the context in which leadership happens. Studies in this category explore not only how leaders respond to an environment where race-ethnicity is salient, but also how they explicitly make it more salient as part of their leadership work (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 884).

Social identity theory argues that social minorities will most likely encounter obstacles in contexts that render them “intrinsically less prototypical than majorities. In this theory, minorities can use race-ethnicity as a strategic resource. It is suggested that emerging African American leaders will choose how to identify themselves and others according to the organizational context they navigate, particularly if they work in a so-called minority or a majority firm” (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 885).

Most studies in this category start with the premise that race-ethnicity not only shapes individuals’ psychological makeup and their relationships, but is also intrinsically part of their collective identities and of the larger social structures and representations of the world within which leadership emerges. In this view, a reciprocal causal mechanism operates: social structure shapes individuals’ experience of race and conditions its meanings: at the same time, these interpretations shape how individuals relate to the institutions and organizations which imbed them in the social structure of society (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 60). Race-ethnicity constructs individuals just as individuals construct race-ethnicity. The racial sense making that emerges from these dynamics both reproduces and challenges the processes that create inequality, such as racism, subordination, discrimination, and

segregation. This critical lens emphasizes the relevance of considering power when studying the relationship between race-ethnicity and leadership (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 886).

The School Superintendent and the Leadership Challenge

A prominent early superintendent and pioneer professor of educational administration, Ellwood Cubberley, described the dynamic calling of public education by saying:

The administration of education each year becomes a more important and a more dignified piece of work... To engage in it is to enlist in the nation's service. Its call is for those who would dedicate themselves in a noble way. Those who would serve must be of the work, with red blood in their veins; they must know the work, its needs and its problems; they must have largeness of vision, and the courage to do and dare (Cubberley, 1909, pp. 60, 68). (Chapman, 1997, p. 2)

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducts national studies of the superintendency every ten years. In 1952, it expressed perceptions of the superintendency in which it stated the following.

It is the superintendent of great heart and courageous spirit, possessed of sound judgment and deep understanding, who will carry the profession and the schools forward... His spirit and his devotion to education will be magnified many times through the teachers, principals, pupils, and citizens of his community. His world will be immeasurably enriched by his service and leadership. (AASA, 1952, p. 437). (Chapman, 1997, p. 2)

This researcher believes that Ellwood Cubberley and the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) statements concerning the significance of the school superintendent were correct. He also is convinced that the same statement made six decades ago by the AASA is quite relevant for current superintendents. While much about education has changed since 1952 through educational reform, the integration of technology as instructional and administrative tools, instructional innovation, and policy changes, one thing remains constant - the superintendent's leadership is a major factor in the success of a school system.

Not only is the superintendent's leadership critical to the success of students and the school system as a whole; John Merrow, after studying David Hornbeck, former superintendent of the Philadelphia Public Schools, wrote that his job was, "The Toughest Job In America". Hornbeck's task was to orchestrate positive change in inner-city classrooms in the midst of big city political forces. Hornbeck worked to improve Philadelphia's educational system against the negative forces of poor funding, unruly teachers' unions, and a board of education who answered to the city's mayor. While every superintendent's job cannot be correctly characterized as "The Toughest Job In America", they all can be characterized as unique in comparison with other jobs held by chief executive officers in other industries and sectors.

Robert Ramsey strongly declares that leadership in schools and school systems is uniquely different from leadership in the private sector. He lists the following characterizations affecting educational leadership:

1. School leaders head up organizations with no clear and consistent mission.
(Americans can't agree on what they want their schools to do or be.)
2. School leaders contend with chronic uncertainty about funding and often have little or no control over their sources of funding.
3. School leaders don't always know who their customers are (students? parents? taxpayers?)
4. School leaders have no quality control over their raw materials (students). They have to take whatever the parents send them.
5. School leaders have to make daily decisions in the midst of all the constituencies involved. They function in a fishbowl. Many work under stringent "open meeting laws." Being a school leader means operating in a constant crossfire without the luxury of being able to distance yourself in order to make a more objective decision.
6. School leaders exercise a wider span of control, play to more diverse audiences, and serve a broader range of constituencies than do most leaders in the private sector.
7. School leaders work for results that are not always readily measured. For school leaders, the payoff is often years away.
8. The decisions made by school leaders affect more segments of the community than do their counterparts in most other fields.
9. School leaders work in a highly politicized environment and report to a politically elected board of directors. What CEO in the private sector would stand for that?

10. School leaders have to be accountable to more “bosses” than most leaders in the private sector.
11. School leaders are expected to perform both leadership and management functions, unlike leaders in many other fields.
12. School leaders work in a field where everyone feels they are experts.
13. Leadership is always difficult. Leadership in schools is even a little more tricky and complex than in most private sector situations. In schools, as in most factories, shops, or offices, being a manager is challenging enough; but being a true leader is a lot tougher. (Ramsey, 1999, pp. 4-5)

In 2007 North Carolina’s State Board of Education adopted new standards for superintendents. Titled, “A 21st Century Vision of School Leadership”, the opening statement describes the need for “a new type of school leader” as the local superintendent. It reads:

Public education’s changed mission dictates the need for a new type of school leader - an executive instead of an administrator. Like their executive colleagues in business, government, or health and human services, superintendents must create school districts as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance. School systems need chief executive officers, supported by local boards of education, who are adept at creating systems for change and at building powerful relationships with and across all staff that tap into the collective knowledge and insight they possess and stir their passions for their work for children. Out of

these relationships the superintendent must create a common shared understanding of the purpose of the work of the schools and school district and commitment to and ownership of a set of beliefs and goals that focus everyone's decision making. The staff's common understanding of the district's identity empowers them to seek and build powerful alliances and partnerships with students, parents, and community stakeholders in order to enhance their ability to produce improved student achievement. The successful work of the new executive will only be realized in the creation of a culture in which leadership is distributed and encouraged with teachers and others; communication is honest and open; there is focus on the use of data, teamwork, and research-based best practices; and modern tools are used to derive ethical, principled, and goal-oriented action. This culture of disciplined thought is rooted in the ability of the superintendent to build a trusting, transparent environment for all stakeholders. (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2007)

Fusarelli, Cooper, and Carella (2002) wrote, concerning the modern superintendency, "No one ever claimed that the position of school superintendent was an easy one. In fact, in the last four decades, the job of superintendent has become increasingly complex, if not impossible" (p. 5). They later ask:

How can anyone professional handle all the competing expectations: the need to be an ace administrator, competent manager, and somehow an instructional leader; to carry the torch for children and their teachers, while playing politics before the school board and community; to reassure staff inside the system while being spokesperson

for public education outside in the community and state; and to respond to the demand for change while championing traditional values? (pp. 5-6)

Interestingly, despite all these pressures, many people seek to become superintendents. What makes the role of superintendent appealing to some educators, even in times of conflict, has been described as:

“the opportunity to be involved in the whole flow of events that make a school district tick. It’s seeing people, particularly adults, learn and grow and knowing that you’ve influenced their development. It’s testing your skills against situations that sometimes seem unchangeable. It’s seeing things happen in your district and knowing that, though your role may have been behind the scenes, without you they wouldn’t have happened. (Blumbert, 1985, p. 216)

Unique Challenges for the African American Superintendent

One should easily see that the job of the school superintendent is complex to say the least. North Carolina’s standards for superintendents for example, comprise a tall order for any superintendent to fill; but add to these lofty expectations the daunting task of a superintendent attempting to achieve them in an environment that judges the superintendent by the color of his or her skin.

While David Hornbeck’s challenges in the Philadelphia Public Schools were greater than those of most superintendents, and although all superintendents face some challenges, African American superintendents and members of other minority groups experience what Richard Hunter calls “aggrandized difficulties” (Hunter, 2005, p. 419). Hunter points out that

school superintendents are directly accountable to school boards and politicians at both the state and local levels. As such, the relationship of superintendents with these officials often defines their relationship in these situations with the school district. This political relationship also might define their relationship with the community and may last for the duration of the superintendent's employment. Administrators who receive adequate support and enjoy sufficient autonomy from the political system experience fewer distractions, which makes it easier for them to devote more time to improving their schools. However, African American superintendents rarely enjoy this degree of support from political officials and often experience very little autonomy while working with state and local politicians (Hunter, 2005).

Hunter gives this account of an eye-opening experience when he, an African American, served as superintendent of the Richmond Public School System in Richmond, Virginia during the 1970s. He recalls that his first budget cycle did not go well. The Richmond City Council voted to reduce the amount of appropriation for the school system that the city manager had recommended. He stated that such action was not so unusual, but he noted that his predecessor who was White received an increase in his appropriations. Hunter notes that there were no significant differences in the financial position of the city when the two appropriations were made. This example illustrates the differential treatment that African American superintendents receive from the political structure and illustrates how some African American superintendents are treated differently by the political system. Although both the Black and White superintendents worked with the same personnel on the

Richmond City Council, they encountered different politics. The fact that the Richmond City Council reduced the funds available to the African American superintendent in spite of the recommendation of the city manager to increase the allocation is one example which demonstrates the differential standards placed on the two superintendents (Hunter, 2005).

According to Hunter and Donahoo (as cited in Hunter, 2005), African American superintendents often don't have the trust of school board members or politicians to lead their school districts. They conclude, "Even before they assume their positions, some elected and appointed officials have already cast African American superintendents in the role of puppet or scapegoat" (p. 483).

At about the same time that Hunter faced his unfair treatment from Richmond's school board, Russell Jackson, an African American, served as superintendent in East Orange, New Jersey and later as superintendent in Phoenix, Arizona. He made the following comments about the special demands placed on black superintendents. Like Hunter, he spoke on the lack of trust for the Black superintendent:

There is a tendency for people to respond with a lack of trust. The mistrust varies in many ways. It may be a lack of trust in your ability or as they perceive your ability to perform a job. There is a lack of trust that you will respond any differently than the White superintendent who may have preceded you. The expectation quite often is that you will not respond and that you will simply ignore their demands and petitions. The whole lack of trust exists in the White community as well as the Black community. There is a fear in the White community that you will hire all Black

personnel in administrative positions or that the district is moving to an employment policy which will preclude the hiring of White personnel. Many of the things which deal with the whole matter of trust are preconceived notions of what you might do as a Black superintendent. (Scott, 1980, p. 56)

While stating that there was a lack of trust from the White community, the African American superintendent also faced challenges brought on by the expectations by the Black community. Scott (1980) recorded Bond's reflections of those expectations this way:

There is the demand from the people that you be highly accessible to them. This demand for accessibility comes from not only the established power structure of a community, it also comes from other levels of the community which more readily identify with you because of your blackness. These would be people from low-income families who are themselves Black. They expect you to be immediately accessible to them. They expect you to respond to their demands and their petitions in a way in which they have not expected other superintendents who are White to respond. These people are very often parents. They expect you to be available by phone when they call. They expect you to return their calls. I find that they call me as a Black superintendent much more readily than they would call a White superintendent. I have found this to be uniquely true, and it has been reported to me by other employees who have worked for many years in the superintendent's office – both White and Black personnel. (Scott, 1980, p. 57)

He further states:

The conflicts which exist in the Black community create problems for the Black superintendent. Very often these conflicts are among the Black leadership. Demands are made from the various conflicting groups to identify with their particular group. You are often torn between the various conflicting groups. These groups will seek to get your allegiance or your participation. At times, you are used by one or more of the contending groups. (p. 57)

When Blacks assumed the position of superintendent the challenges and expectations were at times unreal (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). They were expected to perform at a level beyond that of others and to provide immediate or miraculous solutions to social, financial, and racial problems that had developed over years. Their tenure in the position was often short because of such expectations (p. 37).

Their sparcity in the ranks is the result of several factors. The usual ways of securing a superintendency include encouragement of administrators and professors, networking (tapping into the old boys' network), consultant nomination, notification by placement personnel, and mentoring or sponsorship. Historically, blacks have received little encouragement by their professors. High-level administrators in local systems seldom took them under their wing and mentored them, and they frequently lacked the right connections to consultants and organizations who worked in the superintendent placement arena (p. 37).

African American writer and activist bell hooks, expressed her thoughts in *Teaching Community* (2003) as she reflected on her own experiences after being hired as an associate

professor at predominantly White Oberlin College. If we are not able to find and enter the open spaces in closed systems (no matter the catalyst for the openness), we doom ourselves by reinforcing the belief that these educational systems cannot be changed. Throughout my academic career I have sought the spaces of openness, fixing my attention less on the ways colleagues are closed and more on searching for the place of possibility (p. 74).

Visions From The Past of the Future of the Black Superintendent

Hugh Scott, in his book, *The Black School Superintendent: Messiah or Scapegoat?* wrote in 1980 concerning the future of African American superintendents:

In the future Black superintendents can expect to fill positions in school districts with the most demanding challenges. They will inherit little that is worth preserving, and much that needs to be changed. Upon acceptance of the responsibilities of executive leadership, superintendents will encounter few people who will publicly support either many of the system's past efforts or many of their proposed recommendations and programs. Black superintendents must engineer improvements at a time when school personnel are well organized and resist change. (p. 187)

Scott further predicted (1980) that the number of African American superintendents would increase, but never to the level that would match White superintendents. More interestingly, he declares that the increase will not be linked to any assertive affirmative action program in the educational establishment. Rather, he predicted that the number of African American superintendents would increase because they would be hired in locations and situations where Whites would choose not to work, such as those with increased social deterioration,

unabated decline in academic achievement, deficient financial resources, higher percentage of African American students and students from low-income families, an African American majority or activist African Americans on the school board, large numbers of African Americans in the community, and demands from vocal African Americans in the community.

Scott paints three black and white pictures which indicate the level of possibility of an African American person becoming a superintendent. He states first that when the African American students constitute less than 50 percent but more than 40 percent (of the student population), the chance of an African American becoming superintendent depends on the level of declining white interest in the schools. Secondly, he suggests that where blacks constitute the majority of the student body and the community, the best opportunity exists for the board's appointment of a Black superintendent. The other condition he presents is that when a heavy majority of the student population is African American, but the majority of the population in the school district is White, the appointment of an African American superintendent depends on pressures exerted by the African American and White communities (p. 188).

With regard to their school boards, Black superintendents often enter a house divided. Differences between Black and White factions on school boards and disputes among Black members will present serious difficulties to a superintendent looking for a cohesive board-superintendent relationship. Superintendents must produce improvements that curb the imprudent and impetuous whims of some board members. They must maintain the respect

of their board while each learns how best to respond to the peculiarities of the relationship and the difficulties of the tasks (Scott, 1980, p. 187).

The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study

The American Association of School Administrators conducted its most recent decennial study on school superintendents in 2010. Chapter 7 of the report dealt with issues relating to gender and race of superintendents. The following data and information from the study are worth noting.

There were 1,867 superintendents who responded to the survey questions, thus who participated in the study. Of those participants, 1,800 (96.4%) were White and 67 (3.6%) were minority. The minority distribution of participants was as follows: American Indian or Alaska Native 27 (1.5%), Asian 5 (0.3%), Black or African American 36 (2.0%), Hispanic or Latino 36 (2.0%), Other 4 (0.2%) (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010). Thus, only 2% of superintendents who responded to the survey were African American.

Community and District Data

More than half (55.6%) of the minority group superintendents were employed in school districts in which the percentage of residents of color exceeded 50%, whereas only 3.7% were employed in districts in which the percentage of residents of color was 5% or less. The data clearly showed that the number of minority superintendents increased as the percentage of minority residents in the district increased. Nearly two-thirds (61.7%) of minority group respondents were employed in school districts in which the percentage of students of color exceeded 50%, whereas only 4.7% of them were employed in districts in

which the percentage of students of color was 5% or less. There was a correlation between the number of minority students in the school district and whether a minority person served as superintendent. As the percentage of minority students in districts decreased, the number of minority superintendents also decreased.

There was no correlation between the number of minorities serving as superintendents and the race of the employees in the school districts; yet, there was a correlation between Whites serving as superintendents and the percentage of minority employees. Of all school districts, 88.6% of those with White superintendents had 15% or fewer minority employees (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Personal Characteristics

In response to a question about the reason they were selected for their current position, the respondents' choices were: (a) personal characteristics, (b) potential to be a change agent, (c) ability to maintain the status quo, (d) ability to be an instructional leader, (e) ability to manage fiscal resources, (f) having leadership/managerial experience outside of education, (g) ability to communicate with stakeholders, and (h) uncertain. The three most common responses (in order of frequency) for minority superintendents were:

1. potential to be a change agent
2. ability to be an instructional leader
3. personal characteristics

Conversely, the three most common responses for White superintendents were:

1. personal characteristics

2. potential to be a change agent
3. ability to be an instructional leader

(Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Career History Development

A number of findings from the decennial study related to career history development are worth noting. When comparing the number of years of teaching experience prior to becoming school or school system administrators, there was virtually no difference between the White and minority groups. However, in spite of the near equality in numbers of years as a teacher, minority respondents lagged behind White respondents in comparison of age when they became superintendents for the first time. Half of the White respondents became superintendents by age 46 while only one-third of the minority respondents became superintendent by the same age.

There was little difference in the data which compared the amount of time that elapsed between first applying for a superintendent position and being hired. After entering the superintendency, twice as many White respondents than minority respondents were superintendents for more than 12 years. When asked if they had encountered discrimination in their pursuit of the superintendency, 44.9% of the minority respondents answered “yes”, while only 19.1% of White respondents responded “yes”. When respondents were asked to identify factors that they perceived as restricting access to the superintendency for people of color, 46.8% of Whites responded that they perceived there were no restricting factors for

minorities while only 29.6% of minorities responded there were none. The table below reflects the responses of superintendents who replied.

Table 2.1 Race and Perceptions of Factors Restricting Access to the Superintendency for Persons of Color

Perceived Restrictions	% Minority	% White
Absence of mentors who are district or school administrators	38.9	26.4
Absence of mentors who are professors of school administration	22.2	11.6
Prejudice (i.e., hostile feelings, opinions, or attitudes of a racial, religious, or national group)	40.1	20.3
Racial/ethnic discrimination (i.e., treatment of a person based on race/ethnicity rather than on individual merit)	47.2	20.6
Limited role models (people of color who are superintendents)	41.7	33.9
None	29.6	46.8
Other	2.8	5.5

(Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010)

A greater percentage of minority respondents than White respondents perceived that they were restricted from becoming superintendents because of the lack of school administrators who served formally or informally as mentors. They also identified the absence of mentors from the ranks of professors who taught school administration as impacting the restriction of Blacks from becoming superintendents. The percentage of minority respondents who felt that they were restricted from becoming superintendents because of prejudice and racial discrimination more than doubled the White respondents who indicated prejudice hindered or prevented minority promotions to the superintendency. Of

the minority respondents, 41.7 % compared to 33.9% of the White respondents believe that the lack of minority superintendents to serve as role models negatively affected their being hired to superintendent positions.

Professional Preparation and Affiliation

Responses from minority and White respondents regarding the quality of their academic preparation for the superintendency were almost identical. Overall, 78.0% of the minority responders and 77.7% of white responders rated their academic preparation as either excellent or good. Both groups rated their former professors high with only 2 percentage points difference. Both minorities and Whites were highly involved in professional associations. Of both groups, 84.4% identified that they were considerably or moderately involved. When asked if given the option, would they select the same career path again, 86.3% of minorities and 88.6% of white superintendents responded either “definitely yes” or “probably yes” (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Different Career Tracks for African American and White Superintendents

In a 2001 survey of superintendents and assistant superintendents in New York State Jerry L. Jackson (2006) found that there were separate career pipelines at work to the office of school superintendent, one for white candidates and a different one for people of color. His study involved a total of 67 administrators, 53 of whom were white and 14 of whom were African American. The study concluded with the following findings:

1. The white superintendents and assistant superintendents were working in white school districts and were not applying to minority school districts at the same rate they were applying to white school districts.
2. A higher percentage of those in the African American pipeline planned to apply for a superintendency than those in the white pipeline.
3. Most of those in the African American pipeline worked in minority school districts and applied to minority school districts, while most in the white pipeline worked in white districts and applied to white districts.
4. African Americans did not get offers to apply for superintendencies in white school districts. However, white superintendents were recruited for positions in African American districts.
5. Fifty percent of the white respondents who applied for a superintendency in a predominantly white school district did so because they received an offer/invitation to apply.
6. None of the African American respondents who applied for a superintendency in a predominantly white school district received such an offer.
7. Of the African American superintendents and assistant superintendents, 70 percent received an offer to apply to minority school districts.
8. Eighteen percent of the African American males had applied to nonminority school districts, but none were hired. (p. 26)

Jackson, a former superintendent in New York, makes the case that there is a hiring barrier in New York and across the country that seriously needs to be broken down. He cites a case of an African American in her mid-40s, with a doctorate degree from Columbia University and five years of experience as a superintendent in a high minority district who wanted to work in another district where the Board of Education did not micromanage the district leader. She spoke of her search for a superintendent's position in a new district only to find doors closed. She recalled receiving a telephone call from a district representative who told her that they were looking for African American applicants, but he never prompted or encouraged her to submit her application. He had, one might say, reached out to a minority. She did not get the job. She was not the "right match."

Many African Americans seeking teaching and administrator positions are having similar experiences. Jackson (2006) stated "I've heard white administrators, search consultants, and school board members lament that they cannot find qualified African American candidates for administrative positions. Typically, their most common refrain is that not enough African Americans are in the pipeline" (p. 25).

Jackson continued by saying "There are African Americans in the pipeline. But my research suggests that these candidates are not pursued, recruited, or promoted as vigorously as white candidates. If anything, there is a logjam in the pipeline. While white candidates can take positions in both white and minority districts, the reality is that African American candidates are rarely considered for positions in nonminority districts" (p. 25).

An African American superintendent who Jackson interviewed pointed out that 99 percent of the time he receives inquiries about African Americans applying for superintendencies, they are for school districts located in communities that are poor and dysfunctional. Jackson believes there is no reason that black administrators should not be able to find jobs in majority white districts. Ultimately, whites can move across racial lines and increase their opportunities for career advancement more easily than African American. In Long Island, New York, 563 whites held principal positions in predominately white communities, while African Americans were left competing with one another for 50 principalships in minority communities.

Jackson concluded by saying “On those rare occasions when the topic of recruiting minorities is raised in public, it is often couched in such words as: “We cannot find ‘qualified’ minority applicants to fill teacher and administrative vacancies,” or, “I would love to hire an African American administrator but we cannot find any,” or, “We have participated in local and national recruitment fairs, to no avail,” or, “We sent representatives to historically black colleges and universities, only to come back empty-handed” (p. 25)

This chapter closes with a condensed version of a story told by Derrick Bell in *The Civil Rights Chronicles: The Chronicle of the DeVine Gift, a chapter in Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Geneva Crenshaw was the first Black professor hired at a major predominantly white university. When she was hired, the faculty promised that although she was their first black instructor, she would not be their last. This was not to be a token hire, they assured her, but the first step toward achieving a fully integrated faculty. But according

to Crenshaw, subsequent applicants, including a few with better academic credentials than her own, were all found wanting in one or another respect.

With help from the DeVine Gift provided by DeVine Taylor, a prominent owner of one of the country's most successful African American businesses, DeVine Hair Products Company, the law school hired its second African American professor; not long afterwards, a Hispanic man, an Asian woman, another black woman and one of the African American graduates from the law school. The law department had grown from one to six minority instructors.

Bell quotes Crenshaw as saying, "Had we stopped at six, perhaps nothing would have been said." But the following year, Mr. Taylor's company recruited an exceptionally able African American lawyer. His academic credentials were impeccable. The top student at our competitor school, he had been a law review editor and had written a superb student note. After clerking for a federal court of appeals judge and a U. S. Supreme Court Justice, he had joined a major New York City law firm and was in line for early election to partnership. He would be our seventh minority faculty member and based on his record, the best of all of us.

When the Dean of the law school, a white gentleman, came to see me Crenshaw said, he talked rather aimlessly for some time before he reached the problem troubling him and, I later gathered, much of the faculty. The problem was that our faculty would soon be twenty-five percent minority. "You know, Geneva, he said, we promised you we would become an integrated faculty, and we have kept that promise-admittedly with a lot of help from you. But I don't think we can hire anyone else for a while. I thought we might share the wealth a

bit by recommending your candidate to some of our sister schools whose minority hiring records are far less impressive than our own.”

After a negative reply from Crenshaw the Dean replied, “... let’s be realistic. This is one of the oldest and finest law schools in the country. It simply would not be the same school with a predominantly minority faculty. I thought you would understand” (pp. 391-392).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has been a review of some significant literature related to race and leadership, with a focus on the superintendency. Focus was then placed on the school superintendent with an introduction about his challenges. The third major section of the review was on the African American superintendent with a sampling of stories told by African American superintendents about challenges they endured. The research review also included some recent studies which presented interesting data comparing and contrasting African American and White superintendents and their thoughts about issues relating to hiring practices and working conditions. This review of literature gives evidence that while literature is available on the perceptions of African Americans about discrimination or fairness in hiring and social working conditions in careers, such as college professors, lawyers, and writers, research is not prevalent on the perceptions of African Americans who serve as school superintendents. This is particularly important when one considers the positive impact that a person of color serving in such a critical role in education could have on minority and majority children.

The Ensuing Chapter

Chapter 3 will describe the methodology to be used in conducting the author's own research of the experiences and perceptions of African American men who serve as local school superintendents in North Carolina. It will include support for the reliability and validity of the study, descriptions of the sample participants of the study, site selections, as well as processes and procedures for collecting and subsequently analyzing the data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

Of the one hundred and fifteen public school systems in North Carolina, only 14 (12%) of them are presently led by superintendents who are African American. Of those ten, 12 (10%) are males and 2 (2%) are females. This number is larger than it has ever been in the history of the state's public education system but to this researcher it appears strikingly small. This research will involve a study of this small group of African American men who presently serve as local superintendents across the state of North Carolina.

Information that will be covered in Chapter 3 include: Appropriateness of the Conceptual Framework, Appropriateness of the Multiple Case Study, Research Questions, Site Selection and Sample; a section on Data Collection, Data Analysis, Research Validity and Reliability, Safeguards Against Research Bias, Ethical Issues, and the Limitations of the Study will be included.

Appropriateness of the Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory is the framework for this study. Critical race theory works to shift what is understood as normal in American life. Rather than see racism as an aberration, as more traditional theories do, it understands racism as a normal part of American life (Bogdan, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2003). This qualitative study of African American male superintendents will seek to obtain first-hand knowledge of how they perceive actions and interactions of people towards and about them during their superintendencies.

Bell (1987) and Delgado (1989, 2000), experts in the field of critical race theory, call this type of research “a centrality of experiential knowledge”. Critical race theory recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racial subordination. The application of a critical race theory framework in an analysis of research and practice in the field of higher education requires that the experiential knowledge of people of color be centered and viewed as a resource stemming directly from their lived experiences. The experiential knowledge can come from storytelling, family history, biographies, scenarios, parables, chronicles, and narratives (Parker, 2007).

Appropriateness of the Case Study Analysis

Case Study research according to Creswell (2007) involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context). It is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a case or multiple cases over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents, and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 73).

Case studies allow a great deal of flexibility in research because they are variable in size, theory, and final product. They may be written for different purposes and with different processes performed by the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They can be used to test hypotheses, particularly to examine a single exception that shows the hypothesis to be false. They can be highly statistical; institutional research and vocational counseling case studies often are. But in the social science literature, most case studies feature: descriptions that are

complex, holistic, and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables; data that are likely to be gathered at least partly by personal observation; and a writing style that is informal, perhaps narrative, possibly with verbatim quotation, illustration, and even allusion and metaphor. Comparisons are implicit rather than explicit. Themes and hypotheses may be important, but they remain subordinate to the understanding of the case (Stake, 1978, p. 7).

Although case studies have been used by anthropologists, psychoanalysts, and many others as a method of exploration preliminary to theory development, the characteristics of the method are usually more suited to expansionist than reductionist pursuits. Theory building is the search for essences, pervasive and determining ingredients, and the makings of laws. The case study, however, proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less. The case study attends to the idiosyncratic more than to the pervasive. The fact that it has been useful in theory building does not mean that that is its best use (p. 7).

Stake continues by saying, “Its best use appears to me to be for adding to existing experiences and humanistic understanding. Its characteristics match the “readinesses” people have for added experience. As Von Wright and others stressed, intentionality and empathy are central to the comprehension of social problems, but so also is information that is holistic and episodic. The discourse of persons struggling to increase their understanding of social matters features and solicits these qualities. And these qualities match nicely the characteristics of the case study” (p. 7).

Case Study Design

The general design of a case study (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007) is best represented by a funnel. The start of the study is the wide end: The researchers scout for possible places and people that might be the subject or the source of data, find the location they think they want to study, and then cast a wide net trying to judge the feasibility of the site or data source for their purposes. They look for clues on how they might proceed and what might be feasible to do so. They go with the study. They may throw aside old ideas and plans and develop new ones. They continually modify the design and choose procedures as they learn more about the topic of study. In time, they make specific decisions on what aspect of the setting, subject, or data source they will study. Their work develops a focus. They formulate questions. The data collection and research activities narrow to particular sites, subjects, materials, topics, questions and themes. From broad exploratory beginnings, they move to more directed data collection and analysis (p. 59).

Case Study Types

According to Creswell (2007) types of qualitative case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case, such as whether the case involves one individual, several individuals, a group, an entire program, or an activity. They may also be distinguished in terms of the intent of the case analysis. Three variations exist in terms of intent: the single instrumental case study, the collective or multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study (p. 74).

In a single instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue. Stake points out in *The Case Study Method of Social Inquiry* (1978) that the object (target) of a social inquiry is seldom an individual person or enterprise. Unfortunately, it is such single objects that are usually thought of as a constituent member of a target population. And since single members poorly represent whole populations, this case study is seen to be a poor basis for generalization (p.7).

A second type of case study design is an intrinsic case study in which the focus is on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation. This resembles the focus of narrative research, but the case study analytic procedures of a detailed description of the case, set within its context or surroundings, still hold true (Creswell, 2007). In the intrinsic case study... no attempt is made to generalize beyond the single case or even to build theories. The idea of a purely intrinsic case study is resisted by many qualitative researchers (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

When researchers study two or more subjects, settings, depositories, or data (as was done in this study) they are usually doing what we call multiple case or collective case study. In a multiple case study, the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site. Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue. Yin

(2003) suggests that the multiple case study design uses the logic of replication, in which the inquirer replicates the procedures for each case.

Multiple case studies take a variety of forms. Some start as a single case only to have the original work serve as the first in a series of studies or as the pilot for a multiple case study. Other studies are primarily single-case studies but include less intense, less extensive observations at other sites for the purpose of addressing the question of generalizability. Other researchers do comparative case studies. Two or more case studies are done and then compared and contrasted. If you are doing a second case study to compare and contrast, you pick a second site on the basis of the extent and presence or absence of some particular characteristic of the original study (Brodgan, Knopp & Biklen 2007, p. 69-70). This research is a comparative study. Data collected through interviews and study of related documents of 7 African American male superintendents, serving in 7 North Carolina school districts will be analyzed by comparing and contrasting.

Case Study Analysis

Case studies are greatly improved when guided by a-priori theoretical propositions to guide the research design (Yin, 1994). While not the only way to conduct a case study (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the creation of theoretical propositions and categories reduce bias, increase validity, and improve generalizability of results. Case analysis can either confirm or refute current theoretical models and propositions, thus helping to explain questions of how and why phenomena occur.

Yin (1994) suggests that the following four principles help to ensure high quality case study analyses. First, case study analysts should use all relevant evidence. Second, rival explanations should be explored and included in the analysis. Third, the study should focus on the most significant aspect of the case. Finally, the researcher needs to bring his or her own expert knowledge to bear on the case analysis.

Research Questions

The investigator will search for answers to the following questions during this study:

1. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?
2. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?
3. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Site Selection and Sample

The potential participants to be interviewed are current African American male superintendents in North Carolina. Plans include conducting face-to-face interviews in each participant's school district, in his office building, or in another location of his choosing, with the option of using email to ask and respond to follow-up questions.

The reason the researcher has specified male superintendents rather than both males and females is that he predicts that the inclusion of females as participants in the research will give rise to research questions that would broaden the focus of the study to include the impact of gender in addition to race and ethnicity. While gender equity of the superintendency is certainly important, the researcher believes it can best be studied in a separate research study where the subject of gender will receive the full attention that it rightly deserves. Second, since only two of the fourteen African American superintendents in North Carolina are women, it would be necessary to include women of races other than African American to generate an acceptable sample size of participants for a gender focused research study and likely persons from several states rather than limiting the subjects to those in North Carolina. Third, much more research exists on women in general and African American women more specifically than on African American male superintendents.

In this study of a miniscule segment of the 3% of African American men who serve as school superintendents in the United States, this research will employ the use of in-depth interviews with six or more, preferably all of the twelve African American men who are presently serving as superintendents in North Carolina. The potential participant pool will include all twelve African American male superintendents. Clearly stated, the criteria established to be a participant in this study is that the preferred person must be an African American male who is a local superintendent in North Carolina.

The researcher will contact each potential participant from the sample pool by written letter. The letter will include a brief introduction of who the researcher is along with a brief

description of the research which he will be conducting as part of his dissertation requirements. In the letter, he will ask potential participants to participate in the study by allowing him to conduct at least one face-to-face interview with each of them. The potential interviewee will also receive a Consent-to-Participate form along with the letter. The researcher will follow-up the letter with a phone call to personally ask each gentleman to participate in the study. He will also call each person who agrees to be a participant to thank him and to schedule days and times for interviews. He will follow the phone calls with letters to express his thanks and confirm appointments for interviews.

Data Collection

The data collected during this research will be used to document and describe each participant, the nature of his work, his challenges, and his relationships in the workplace. It will give insight into the social and political arena in which he works and the impact, if any, that being African American had on him and his productivity as a public school superintendent.

Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher will collect background information about each school system in which the superintendent is employed. The information will include, but will not be limited to, a geographic description of the school district and whether the school district is located in a rural, suburban, or urban community. Data will be collected which reflects the economic condition of the community. Demographic information such as race, gender, and age of both the general population as well as the school system population of students and staff will be collected. The number of schools and the number of students

enrolled in the system will be collected. Information about the school system's academic achievements will be collected from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Annual Report Card. It is vitally important that the researcher possess this kind of information prior to conducting interviews so he can have a contextual backdrop of the community where each superintendent works.

The method for collecting data will be to conduct two face-to-face interviews with each superintendent. If, in some cases, it is not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews, the researcher will conduct interviews by telephone. He will interview each participant in a one-on-one setting. During the interview, he will review with the interviewee the purpose of his research and will make assurances that what is communicated in the interview will be treated with strict confidentiality. The interviewer will ask several open-ended questions about the general work of the superintendency and about the uniqueness of and the criticality of issues related to being an African American serving as a superintendent in the public school system. The questions will be categorized around the themes of: (a) the superintendent's selection to his or her position, (b) the superintendent's goals, (c) key steps for the superintendent to take towards achieving success, (d) support systems the superintendent may have or desire to have, (e) the superintendent's relations with the public, and f) the superintendent's personal reflections, both on his interest and pathway into the superintendency and how his superintendency has been effected by his race.

The researcher is interested in acquiring information that may give insight into the individual's personality, philosophy, and future pursuits. The researcher is interested in why

each participant chose to enter the field of education for a career, how each moved through the ranks of teacher and administrator to become a superintendent, or how they became superintendent by some nontraditional path. He wants to be able to view the superintendency from each interviewee's perception. He hopes to learn about each person's circle of concerns as well as his circle of influence.

Questions will be designed to guide the interviewee to do more than present quantitative facts or to respond with simple "yes" or "no" responses. The interviewer will ask guiding questions that he hopes will lead each participant to speak openly about his experiences. When the opportunity presents itself where the conversation is going in an interesting but unforeseen direction, the interviewer will give the interviewee the latitude to articulate his story with more breadth and depth. The researcher will be observing and documenting facial expressions, body language, and voice tones as well as listening to the content of the information. He will document the interviews by using an audio recorder to help assure authenticity and accuracy.

Listening carefully is a vital part of skillful interviewing. This researcher will listen as participants recall their career experiences and during review of audio recordings, not with the intent of drawing certain answers from the participants, but rather in an effort to truly understand the individual's experiences accurately, and in an in-depth rather than shallow degree of understanding. When appropriate, he will follow-up responses with probing questions such as, "What do you mean?" "I'm not sure that I follow you." "Would you explain that?" "What did you say then?" "Take me through the experience" (Bogdan, 2007).

The researcher will seek to learn what each interviewee's career experiences were and what those experiences mean to them. He will ask questions that he hopes will allow and enable him to connect to each person's innermost thoughts about how they saw themselves and view their experiences as superintendents; whether they view themselves as African American superintendents or simply superintendents, and how they believe others view them. He is interested in whether they perceive that their constituents and those they interact with are colorblind to race or just saw a school system leader.

Data Analysis

The audio recordings of each interview were transcribed. I coded data by performing horizontalization which includes highlighting significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomenon. As he analyzes the data, he will constantly reflect on the principal foundations of critical race theory. He will interpret the data in light of the theoretical framework which shows the interrelationships between the superintendency and his constituents as well as the superintendent's perceptions about the interactions between and behaviors of the superintendent and the education community. The researcher will refer to his research questions throughout his study, as he searches for commonalities or patterns in interviewees' responses and their stories. He will also attempt to make connections between the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the data that will be collected and documented in Chapter 4. Then he will record themes as they appear. Themes will be comprised of the clusters of meaning from the significant statements which the participants will make (Creswell, 2007). He will

follow the theme development by writing textural descriptions, descriptions of what the participants experienced, and subsequently follow the textual descriptions by identifying essentials or variant structures--a composite description that represents the essence of the phenomenon.

The researcher will study the data for meaning. "Meaning is of essential concern to the qualitative research approach. Researchers who use this approach are interested in how different people make sense of their lives. In other words, qualitative researchers are concerned with what are called participant perceptions. They focus on such questions as: What assumptions do people make about their lives? What do they take for granted?" (Bogdan, 2007, p. 7). The essence of this research is to acquire knowledge and understanding about what the African American male superintendents' experiences mean to them.

Participants' responses to interview questions will be thoroughly studied and analyzed. The researcher will use situation codes. Under this type of code your aim is to place units of data that tell you how the subjects define the setting or particular topics. You are interested in their worldview and how they see themselves in relation to the setting or your topic. What do they hope to accomplish? How do they define what they do? What is important to them? Do they have a particular orientation that affects how they define participation (religious, political, social class, feminist, right-to-life)? (Bogdan, 2007, p. 174).

One type of situation code is "Narrative Codes" (Bogdan, 2007, p. 178). Narrative codes describe the structure of talk itself. When informants tell you their stories, they offer

an account of their lives framed in a particular way. If it is in narrative form, what is the structure of the narrative? Where does the story start, what does it tell, and where does it conclude? The structures informants choose to organize their stories may tell you something about their beliefs. Also, when the informants structure their stories, where are the contradictions? Often, informants want to communicate two ideas at once, or they are conflicted over their talk, pulled in multiple directions, or they may not have the language to articulate a particular position.

Vivo coding (codes from phrases or terms used by the interview subjects) will be utilized to create categories of information. The coded categories and the information in each will reveal important information about each participant's perceptions of himself, others and the impact of race on his superintendence. The codes will also be important in determining whether similarities or patterns exist as all of the participants' responses are coded.

Research Validity and Reliability

Research is valid to the extent that its outcomes convincingly answer the questions on which the study has focused--including both the original questions and ones that may have emerged during the study (Thomas & Brubaker, 2000, p. 258). In their book *Doing Qualitative Research*, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) include the following definition of validity by Martyn Hammersley: "By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers" (p. 258). Therefore, the validity of this research will be evident: (a) in the data which proves that the

critical race theory is the appropriate theoretical foundation for the research, and (b) in the demonstration of answering the research questions and other questions which may arise during the research processes. Validity is strong in this research because the sample pool of respondents will be every African American male superintendent in North Carolina. Information will be collected directly from each participant through face-to-face interviews. If needed, interviews by email will be used to follow-up the face-to-face interview. Interview questions will be open-ended in an effort to get the interviewee to elaborate on his career experiences and get him to draw inferences of what those experiences mean to him. Questioning procedures and processes will be consistent and the authenticity of the participants' responses will be guarded. Efforts will be made to create a level of comfort during interviews so respondents will feel comfortable enough to answer questions forthrightly and without fear of retribution.

Hammersley defined reliability (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008) as “the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (p. 258). Throughout the course of this research, interviews will be audio recorded, carefully transcribed, and coded in thematic categories. Reliability will be evident in the appearance of patterns in the data, if they exist. If patterns are not revealed in the data, reliability will still be apparent by the presentation of identical questions to every superintendent who will be interviewed. In addition, the likelihood of reliability is increased by all of the participants having the same characteristics

as: superintendent, male, African American, in North Carolina, and employed as superintendents at the time of the interviews.

The researcher will make concerted efforts to develop an atmosphere of trust with participants creating in them a high level of comfort in knowing that the researcher is conscientious and trustworthy as he conducts the research. Prudent steps will be taken in each research activity to assure confidentiality of the participants' responses to interview questions and throughout the dissertation. The anonymity of the participants will be protected by assigning fictitious names and numbers if necessary to be as discreet as possible. Every caution will be exercised, to demonstrate carefulness, to create trust, and to protect every participant from the possibility of damage to his career or relationships as a result of information being disclosed in the research data.

Safeguards Against Researcher Bias

This researcher wishes that he could write about his experiences as a teacher, a principal, a director, and assistant superintendent with the confidence that any reader could understand his experiences and would identify with me. Unfortunately, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about other cultures within our own communities which, in the researcher's opinion, causes differences among people in what should be common among us all. As an African American man, the researcher has lived and worked with what he believes to be issues of race and ethnic inequity which he does not believe were issues for White persons serving in the same roles as he was serving.

As a career educator, this researcher has worked in various roles. He has achieved a certain degree of success, but it has not been without negative race-related incidents. He served as the first African American principal at a school which for nineteen years had been led by five principals – all of whom were White. The White teachers and staff had never worked for a person of color before his arrival as principal. Behaviors of some people led him to feel less than welcomed at that school. Words and actions of some people made him aware that some employees lacked confidence in his ability to lead the school.

He has had other negative experiences throughout his career which he believes were in part, if not totally, due to the fact that he was an African American male performing in roles that people of his race and gender traditionally did not hold in the local educational arena. He does not recall this now because he harbors hard feelings after spending nine years as principal of that school and more than thirty years as a public school educator. He recalls those experiences in his career because he believes that it is indicative of what many other persons of minority races and ethnicities have experienced in their careers as well. With that being said, the researcher feels compelled to, and will deal with the subject of his own feelings as he interviews participants in the study, and as he endeavors to make sense of their perceptions. C. Ellis stated in his article titled “Sociological Introspection and Emotional Experience” (1991) that for the serious qualitative researcher, “Feelings are not something to repress” (Bogdan, 2007, p. 101). Robert Bogdan suggests that the researcher’s feelings can be an important indicator of subject’s feelings and therefore, a source for reflecting. They also can help formulate questions to get at subjects’ experiences.

In addition, the researcher does not consider himself by any means to be politically savvy; but he has realized through his experiences as an education administrator that the ability to interact appropriately in the political world whether by way of formal or informal politics is necessary for the superintendent. While all persons must participate in the political process, this researcher perceives that politics for him may be different than for persons who are not African Americans. This time - he would like to be proven wrong.

Ethical Issues

Every effort will be made to assure compliance with the ethical standards of research in general and those of North Carolina State University. All criteria for approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will be satisfied. Participants in this study will be volunteers, and must meet the criteria of African American, male, and local public school superintendents in North Carolina. Prior to the study, each will be given written information which will explain the nature of the research. Informed consent will be sought from each prospective subject and will be appropriately documented.

The participants will not be exposed to risks which could be damaging to their careers or to their character. Adequate provisions will be made to protect the subject's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data. Audio recordings of the interviews will be conducted only with the written consent of the interviewee. A written summary of the interview will be submitted to each participant documenting only his interview. He will be given the opportunity to refuse the inclusion of any part of the interview which he deems not suitable

for publication and assure that information which will be included is accurate. All precautions will be taken to assure anonymity of the subjects.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. The sample size is small, making it difficult to generalize the findings to all African American male superintendents. Also, conducting just one interview with each participant in the study may not reveal complexities of race which may exist. The superintendents' unfamiliarity with the researcher may cause them to be more guarded with their responses to questions, particularly with questions which may be deemed sensitive such as those related to racial prejudice. Given their positions as superintendents and the fact that there are so few African American superintendents, the participants may be uncomfortable with being openly candid when discussing the subject of race since a careful reader might be able to identify one or some of the respondents.

In addition, this research will be conducted with African American male superintendents in one southern state, North Carolina. Similar information is not available from each of the other states which comprise the southern region of the country. Future research related to this topic might explore the expansion of participants to those who work as superintendents in the other southern states. More expanded research may include other regions of the nation or the nation as a whole.

Chapter Summary

This will be a qualitative study, utilizing face-to-face oral interviews of African Americans who are serving in the role of local school superintendent in North Carolina.

Interviews will be conducted at each superintendent's office or another site which lends to his being comfortable with the interview. Each interview will be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed. The researcher will search for patterns, similarities, or differences in the responses of those being interviewed. During the analysis, particular attention will be given to the perceptions of the interviews about their professional experiences. This research will be both valid and reliable. Every safeguard will be taken to ensure that the research is conducted without bias and with the highest standards of ethics.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The researcher's aim in conducting this study on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies* was to ascertain from the African American male superintendents what their experiences were as they sought after superintendent positions and while serving in that role. Findings which will be disclosed in this chapter are the result of asking research participants to share their perceptions of whether they were accepted and respected by others as competent and capable leaders; whether they observed or perceived differences in how they were treated in comparison with their White counterparts; and if so, how they responded; and whether they overcame the obstacles they faced.

African American males serve as superintendents in 11 of the 115 North Carolina public school systems. The districts in which they serve are located in the Piedmont and Coastal Plains regions of the state, with the majority of them located in the northeastern portion of the state in the vicinity of the Highway 158 East-West corridor. No African American male serves as superintendent in the western region of the state.

The researcher contacted eleven African American male local school superintendents in North Carolina by letter and requested that they participate in interviews as a part of this research. Seven superintendents agreed to participate, signed and returned Informed Consent Forms for Research to the researcher. One of the seven superintendents retired before an interview was scheduled. As a result, a superintendent who did not respond to the written

request to participate was contacted by telephone and asked to participate. He agreed to be a participant in the study.

Comparative Data on Research Participants

Table 4.1 Routes and Time to the Superintendency, and Time Served

Superintendent	Bailey	Fields	Moore	Barnes	Cooper	Wilson	Jones
Years as superintendent in present school district	2	3	2	8	1	5	6
Superintendent posts held	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Years employed in the field of Education	50	26	20	35	27	42	16
Route to becoming superintendent (Career Educator)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Times applied for a job as superintendent	1	2	3	3	1	1	1

Information from Table 4.1 reveals the following information related to the seven African American male superintendents interviewed.

1. The range of years served as superintendent is 1 to 8 years.

2. Six of the seven superintendents are in their first superintendency. One superintendent is in his second role as a local superintendent, but his first in North Carolina.
3. The number of years that the superintendents have worked in the field of education ranges from 16 to 50. The average number of years worked in education is 30.86.
4. All of the superintendents followed the traditional career educator path to becoming superintendent.
5. Four superintendents received appointments as superintendents after their first attempt, 1 was hired as superintendent after applying twice, and 2 persons applied 3 times before being hired as superintendents.

Table 4.2 Superintendents' Ages When Hired

	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
Number of African American males interviewed who are in each age group when hired for first superintendent's job	1	2	3	1

Notice in Table 4.2 that all of the superintendents interviewed were at least 30 years old when being hired as superintendent for the first time. The majority of them (four of 7) were 50 years old or older when they were hired for their first superintendent's job. Eighty-six percent though were at least 40 years old when hired as superintendent.

Census Information on Counties Where Participants Work

Table 4.3 Census Data by Counties

School District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Supt.	Bailey	Fields	Moore	Barnes	Cooper	Wilson	Jones	NC
Metropolitan, Micropolitan, Rural	Micro	Metro	Rural	Rural	Rural	Micro	Rural	
Approximate County Population	45,000	96,000	35,000	50,500	24,500	40,600	21,500	

Racial Composition of County Population by Percentage								
Black	50.6	38.4	35.0	34.2	60.6	38.0	58.3	22.0
American Indian /Alaska Native	0.7	0.9	2.7	9.7	1.3	0.5	0.6	1.5
Asian	0.6	0.9	0.3	1.3	0.7	1.3	0.2	2.5
Pacific Islander	Z	Z	Z	0.4	Z	0.1	Z	0.1
Two or More Races	1.3	1.7	1.4	4.0	1.2	2.0	1.0	2.0
Hispanic or Latino	7.0	6.5	7.3	12.4	3.1	4.4	1.7	8.7
White	41.5	52.8	54.6	41.1	34.1	54.8	38.8	64.2
Median household income	\$34,084	\$45,042	\$30,273	\$46,540	\$31,969	\$45,298	\$32,090	\$25,256
Percent of persons living at or below the poverty level	27.6	16.0	23.6	20.9	24.7	19.9	21.9	16.1

Z – Value greater than zero, but less than half unit of measure shown

1. Most of the African American male superintendents interviewed served in rural communities. Only one serves in a metropolitan area. Two others are located in districts with towns which are considered micropolitan areas. One of the counties classified as rural has more residents than the two counties which are classified as micropolitan. The town in the county has fewer residents even though the county has a greater total number of residents than the counties which are classified as micropolitan.
2. Four of the 7 African American male superintendents serve in counties where the majority of the residents are White, while three superintendents serve in counties where the majority of its residents are Black.
3. The highest Black population is 60.6 % with an overall average of 45.01 among the seven counties. This average is 23.01 percentage points higher than the state average of 22.0.
4. The highest White population is 54.8%. The overall average is 45.38%. This is 18.82 percentage points below the state average of 64.2%.
5. The median household incomes in the counties where the seven African American male superintendents serve ranges from \$30,273 to \$46,540 with the average median household income of the seven counties being \$37,899.

6. Among the seven counties, the percent of people living at or below the poverty level ranges from 16.0 to 27.6. The average poverty level among the seven counties is 22.08% which is 5.98% higher than the state average of 16.1%.
7. Only one of the 7 counties has a higher Hispanic or Latino population than the state average of 8.7%. Its Hispanic or Latino population is 12.4% of its total population.

Demographic Information on School Districts Where Participants Work

Interviews were conducted with seven African American male superintendents. They lead school districts which range in size from as small as approximately 2,200 students enrolled in 8 schools in one district to as large as almost 16,000 students enrolled throughout 27 schools in another district. The table below lists the superintendents, the number of students, and the number of schools in each district.

Table 4.4 School District Demographics

African American Male Superintendents	Student Enrollment	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Specialty Schools	Total Schools
Mr. Martin Bailey	7,000	10	2	4	0	16
Dr. John Fields	16,000	15	5	5	2	27
Dr. James Moore	5,000	7	3	2	1	13
Dr. Waddell Barnes	8,000	8	2	3	0	13
Dr. George Cooper	2,500	3	1	2	1	7
Mr. Kenneth Wilson	6,000	7	2	2	1	12
Dr. Paul Jones	2,200	4	1	1	2	8

The average student enrollment among the school districts led by the African American male superintendents who participated in the research is 6,671 with an average of 13.7 schools per district.

Table 4.5 District Student Enrollment by Race and Free & Reduced Lunch

School District	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Superintendent	Bailey	Fields	Moore	Barnes	Cooper	Wilson	Jones
Percent of Students Enrolled by Race	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Black	61.59	49.44	40.80	37.06	79.47	43.59	78.93
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.18	0.53	1.45	11.20	0.78	0.46	0.40
Asian	0.49	0.65	0.15	0.74	0.52	0.56	0.31
Pacific Islander	Z	Z	Z	Z	Z	0.13	0
Two or More Races	2.83	4.45	4.01	5.94	1.21	3.32	1.29
Hispanic or Latino	12.45	9.63	13.29	17.02	2.13	4.72	2.85
White	22.41	35.20	40.25	27.81	15.82	47.19	16.19
Percent Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch	95.25	69.62	79.11	69.33	84.95	61.69	98.19

According to the data in Table 4.5:

1. Black students make up the largest percentage of the total student population in 6 of the 7 school districts, ranging from 37.06% to 79.47%. The average Black student enrollment throughout the seven counties is 55.84%.
2. The percentage of white students range from as low as 15.82% to 47.19%. The average percentage of White students among the seven counties is 29.26%.

3. Hispanic or Latino students enrollment in the seven school districts range from 2.13% to 17.02% with an average of 8.87%
4. The majority of the students, 61.69% or greater, in each of the seven school districts, qualify for free or reduced priced meals.
5. The percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced meals is higher than 95% in two of the seven systems.
6. The average percent of students qualifying for free or reduced meal is 79.73%.

Comparison of County and School District Demographics

In comparing data from Table 4.3 with data from Table 4.5 the following analysis made.

1. While Whites make up the majority of the population in four of the seven counties, Whites only make up the majority of the student enrollment in one of the seven districts.
2. The average Black population among the seven counties is 45.01% of the total population, while the average percentage of Black student enrollment compared to total enrollment in those seven counties is 55.84%.

Observations from Interviews of Participants

The six face-to-face interviews were conducted, each in the respective superintendent's Central Office Administrative Building. Five of those interviews were held in the superintendent's office and one interview was held in the Board of Education meeting room. The conditions of the administrative buildings and offices where the superintendents

work range for impressively attractive to quite old and simple, causing the researcher to believe the school system lacks funding to provide a more modern looking Central Services building.

The researcher and one superintendent were not able to arrange a time that the superintendent would be available for a face-to-face interview. That superintendent, however, participated in a telephone interview. The lengths of the face-to-face interviews ranged from 21 minutes to 54 minutes. The interview conducted by telephone lasted only 10 minutes, but the superintendent thoroughly responded to all the interview questions.

Upon arrival for the face-to-face interviews, the researcher found some superintendents on very tight schedules and others having time for additional conversations after the interviews. One superintendent gave the researcher a tour of the central office building, introducing him to several staff members. One superintendent scheduled the interview during the time which would have been his lunch hour. Rather than having lunch he ate a slice of cake as the interview began. When the interview ended someone else was waiting to meet with him.

All of the superintendents interviewed were very cordial and appeared genuinely interested in participating in the research study, regardless of their workloads. One superintendent appeared somewhat uneasy at the beginning of the interview, but became very relaxed and openly answered questions.

Findings from Participants' Responses to Interview Questions

The following are findings from the responses of the seven African American male superintendents who participated in interviews on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies*.

Research Question 1: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?

Interview Question 1.1: Describe the process that the Board of Education used to select a superintendent when you were selected.

Six of the seven Boards of Education acquired the services of the North Carolina School Board Association to coordinate the process for announcing superintendent vacancies, screening applications, and conducting interviews. In each of those cases, the Boards conducted national searches for superintendents. After applications were reviewed and the candidate pool was reduced, the Boards interviewed candidates, utilizing two to three rounds of interviews to narrow the field of candidates until one candidate was selected as the new superintendent.

One of the six persons interviewed, Mr. Martin Bailey, was asked to apply for the superintendency. He was serving as assistant superintendent in the system at the time. He did apply, and his application was included with the applications of the other candidates. He

participated in three rounds of interviews before the Board of Education selected him to become the next superintendent of the district (Personal communication, 2013).

One Board of Education chose not to conduct a regional or national search, but voted to make the interim superintendent, Mr. Kenneth Wilson, who had been an assistant superintendent in that school district, the new superintendent. The Board Chairperson approached Mr. Wilson and disclosed his desire to submit a recommendation to the full Board for Mr. Wilson to become the next superintendent of the district. After giving thought to the Board member's wishes, Mr. Wilson agreed to have his name submitted to the Board for consideration. When the recommendation was made, some Board members expressed the desire to conduct a nationwide search instead. Rather than receive applications and hold rounds of interviews, the Board interviewed Mr. Wilson and later approved his appointment as superintendent with a 5 to 2 vote (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 1.2: What was the racial composition of the Board of Education which hired you? How do you think that composition impacted your selection of superintendent?

Table 4.6 Racial Composition of Boards of Education

	Superintendent	Total Number of Board Members	Number of Board Members by Race	
			Black	White
1.	Mr. Martin Bailey	7	4	3
2.	Dr. John Fields	11	5	6
3.	Dr. James Moore	9	3	6
4.	Dr. Waddell Barnes	5	2	3
5.	Dr. George Cooper	5	4	1
6.	Mr. Kenneth Wilson	7	2	5
7.	Dr. Paul Jones	7	5	2

The table above shows the racial makeup of each Board of Education which selected and hired one of the African American superintendents who participated in the interview. The number of total Board members ranged from 5 to 11 members. In four of the seven school districts, White Board members held the majority of the seats.

Only one of the seven African American male superintendents interviewed believed the racial makeup of the Board impacted his being selected as superintendent. Superintendent Bailey stated, “I think what the Board was really looking for was someone to be somewhat innovative and start some things that would really energize the system” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Fields said in response to this question, “...this Board was really looking for somebody who was willing to come in and tackle, I think, the real challenges that they perceived at that time were prominent for the county” (Personal communication, 2013).

However, Dr. Moore responded, “So I think it had an impact, not a great impact, but I do believe that it was something that was on their minds, in terms of could this person lead our district; and we know the demographics of our community” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Cooper is quoted as saying, “I guess what I’m trying to say is that it’s not always even about the composition (of the Board), it’s the number of, sometimes African Americans (on the Board) because there can be some pressure that comes to bare on them to prove that they are being fair to the community” (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 1.3: What do you think or know are the reasons the Board selected you to be superintendent?

Two of the 7 African American superintendents, Mr. Bailey and Dr. Barnes, believed the Boards selected them because of their commitment to education and Mr. Bailey, particularly because he had worked in that school system and lived in the community for a large number of years (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Fields thought he was selected because the Board wanted someone who would communicate with them often and clearly. He felt they were impressed with his communication skills as well as his insistence on keeping lines of communication open between the superintendent and the Board of Education member (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Moore and Dr. Cooper both said they were selected for their respective superintendencies because their professional experiences equipped them for what the school

system needed (Personal communication, 2013). Similarly, Mr. Wilson believed he was selected because he had already worked in that school system for many years. As a result, he brought a wealth of knowledge about the school system to the position.

One superintendent, Dr. Jones, was a native of the community in which he was a candidate for the superintendency, and the Board believed if he returned to his native home he would bring stability to the position which had experienced a high rate of turnover (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 1.4: Why did you think you were a good fit for superintendent of this school system?

Mr. Bailey had been an employee for more than forty years in the district in which he vied to become superintendent. He believed the time which he had already spent in the system made him the most knowledgeable and best candidate (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Moore (Personal communication, 2013) was applying to become superintendent in a school system which had a relative small number of students. He believed that he understood the dynamics of a small district and that knowledge made him a good fit for the job. He stated, “I also think that my demeanor has a lot to do with it because the one thing that I tell black male administrators that work with me is that the last thing you want to be identified as is the angry black man. And what that means, it means that I know there’s a perception of how African American men can be when they talk. If there’s a raised tone or reflection in their voice, those things have a tendency to cause people to run for the corner. I

don't want to say polarize people but they view you differently. It's always been my business to keep an even temperament, to not be argumentative, to not get into shouting matches with people, cause I know that you want people to know that you have a level of calmness about you and that if you are the district administrator, you are representing the district, then you have to have a high level of professionalism.”

Dr. Barnes had not previously worked in the district, but stated that he understood the academic needs of the district. In his words, “It bottomed out.” And he thought he had the tools to lead the system as its academic leader (Personal communication, 2013) Previous central office experiences are what Dr. Cooper believe made him a good fit for the superintendency for which he applied as well as his belief that he was just the best overall candidate for the job (Personal communication, 2013).

Mr. Wilson said he saw his ability to solve problems, his understanding of poverty, as well as his understanding of kids, and his possessing good people skills as key to his ability to meet the needs of the district (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Jones thought his understanding the area (the community) where he grew up, in spite of having lived away for many years, coupled with having a strong academic background made him a good fit for the job (Personal communication, 2013).

Summary of Responses to Research Question 1

All seven Boards of Education reviewed applications and interviewed candidates as part of the superintendent selection process. Six of them utilized the services of the North Carolina School Boards Association and conducted national searches. In four school

districts, Whites held a majority of the School Board seats which selected African American males to become superintendents. Only one superintendent interviewed perceived that race impacted his selection as superintendent; and his perception was not that they questioned his ability to lead, but he felt that there was pressure on the Board members who were African American to be fair to the community in their selection. In other words, he thought they were pressured to hire the best candidate, regardless of race, rather than work to hire a minority for the job of superintendent. The superintendents interviewed perceived that they were selected because of their professional experiences, commitment to education, communication skills, willingness to communicate often and openly with members of the Board of Education, knowledge about the school system, and in one case, his ability to bring stability to the school system. Neither subject verbalized having a perception of unfairness or bias due to race throughout the superintendent selection process. All of them believed they were selected because they convinced the Boards that they possessed the skills that were needed to be the leader for the school district.

Research Question 2: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?

Interview Question 2.1: Discuss the degree of latitude which you have to make decisions for the school system.

All the African American male superintendents interviewed felt that they had a good amount of latitude to make decisions on behalf of the school system. Responses ranged from

“I pretty much have latitude.” to “It’s come a long ways.” to “I have all the latitude in the world; day to day operations are one hundred percent mine” (Personal communication, 2013).

Two superintendents, Dr. Fields and Dr. Barnes, said when they were hired they negotiate their contracts to get the latitude which they felt needed to operate effectively (Personal communication, 2013). Dr. Moore stated, “What I’ve discovered is that once a School Board becomes comfortable with you, your leadership, your ability to run the district, then they don’t look so much as who you are or your race. They discover that you are competent and then I think you have the latitude that they would give anybody else (Personal communication, 2013).”

Superintendent Bailey stated, “So they know what my role is and they don’t step on it.” while Superintendent Barnes said, “They understand that their job is to be policy makers and not to micromanage me...” (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 2.2: Describe the working relationship which exists between you and the members of your Board of Education.

Superintendents described their relations with their respective Boards of Education as “good”, “pretty good”, “really good” and “great” (Personal communication, 2013).

Superintendents Bailey and Fields spoke of the importance of establishing and adhering to boundaries where roles and responsibilities of the superintendent and Board are clarified and implemented. They and Dr. Cooper also emphasized the importance of keeping all of the Board members informed (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Barnes and Mr. Wilson pressed the significance of establishing trust between the superintendent and the Board. Dr. Barnes stated, “The life and death of a superintendent is that relationship piece.” He went on to say, “But when it comes down to trust, don’t you ever, ever violate that trust once you earn it. You might as well leave, because you know, they’ll never believe you again” (Personal communication, 2013).

Superintendent Fields commented on times when new Board members break protocol. He says, “... so they start handling the other Board members.” “I don’t have to do it” (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 2.3: What have been your greatest challenges to achieving your goals for the school system?

Two superintendents, Mr. Bailey and Dr. Fields, spoke about dealing with change as a major challenge. Mr. Bailey saw resistance to change as his greatest challenge, while Dr. Fields saw the need to convince the schools and community that there was a need for change as his greatest challenge (Personal communication, 2013).

Superintendents Dr. Moore and Mr. Wilson saw lack of funding resources as their greatest challenge, while Dr. Barnes determined that the need to build capacity among his faculty and staff as his greatest challenge (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Cooper described his greatest challenge as the need to close the systemic gaps left by high superintendent turnover. The school district had hired three superintendents in one year prior to his being appointed to the post (Personal communication, 2013). Dr. Jones (Personal communication, 2013) viewed teacher retention as his greatest challenge.

Interview Question 2.4: Do you feel any added pressure to being a superintendent because you are African American? How do you respond to those feelings?

Only one of seven superintendents interviewed, Dr. Barnes, stated that he felt no added pressure as superintendent because he is an African American male. The other six responded that they do feel some amount of pressure because they are African American males. Both Dr. Moore and Dr. Cooper responded to the question of added pressure with the word “absolutely”. Mr. Bailey stated that his pressure was self-imposed. Here are a couple of notable quotes.

“...we live with the fact that we have to prove ourselves every day. We have to prove ourselves on every issue, and we can’t be offended by that” was Dr. Barnes response (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Cooper is quoted as saying, “You gotta always work harder, get up earlier, work twice as hard, because you’re being held to a different standard” (Personal communication, 2013).

“So, if you pay more attention to background noise than where you’re trying to take a system, you’ll fail. And especially by being black, you have a tendency to want to second guess yourself and you know, you need to cross your Ts and dot your Is. But if too cautious, too something, next thing you know, you’re just a bag of nerves, you’ve messed up; cause you’re busy trying to watch your back and second guess every decision and don’t trust any of the people that’s around you... you’ll probably fail.” These are the words of Mr. Wilson (Personal communication, 2013).

Summary of Responses to Research Question 2

The superintendents interviewed communicated that after being hired and while serving as superintendents, they perceive that they are treated with respect and are given the autonomy which they need to lead their respective school systems. Two of the subjects believed that having autonomy was so necessary to their leadership that they negotiated their contracts to reflect their having the freedom to administrate without interference or prior approval from Board members. Generally, the interviews revealed that Boards of Education, when looking for the right person to lead their school districts, look for competence over race.

Those interviewed spoke of the importance of having good working relationships with Board members. Characteristics of those relationships include establishing and adhering to boundaries, basically that Boards make policies and superintendents perform administrative duties according to the policies. They spoke of the importance of the Board and superintendent trusting each other. One participant said the relationship piece is the life and death of the superintendent.

When asked about their greatest challenges to achieving their goals, the responses varied. Two superintendents spoke of the challenge of dealing with change. One of them faced faculty and staff which were resistant to changing. Another spoke of having to convince his schools and community that the need for change existed. A third superintendent's greatest challenge was the lack of funding. Another spoke of having to build capacity among faculty and staff. One superintendent was the fourth superintendent the

school district had hired in less than two years. He saw the impact of high superintendent turnover as his greatest challenge. Lastly, one of the school systems typically had a high teacher turnover rate, and the superintendent there saw establishing teacher retention as his greatest challenge.

When asked if they felt added pressure as superintendents because they were African American males, six of the seven interviewed said “yes”. Only one of them expressed that he did not feel pressure because he is Black. Two of them responded to the question by saying “absolutely”. One person said the pressure is “self-imposed”. Generally they believe African American male superintendents are held to a higher standard than superintendents of other races.

Research Question 3: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Interview Question 3.1: What is your perception of how African American parents and community people feel about having an African American superintendent?

When one considers the plight of so many African American children in the United States which is often characterized by families having too little wealth, too few children living in wholesome home environments, high suspension rates, high dropout rates, and low graduation rates, he might conclude that the need for more African American men in leadership roles, particularly in the field of education is great. One might also assume that all African Americans in any given community would be delighted to have an African American

male serving as superintendent of their school district. When asked how African American parents felt about having an African American male superintendent, most of the superintendents interviewed conveyed that the Black community was delighted. One superintendent said "... they almost make me feel like a celebrity..." (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Moore stated, "One of the things that people may not talk about is the expectation that you have from the African American community. And that also can be a challenge; and what that means is that you have a group of constituents that see you as someone that can do special favors for them; meaning that you're a black superintendent, you understand the issues that we have as black people so you need to do this for us or do that for us" (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Barnes' response was, "The hardest conversations have been in the African American community, as often is the case. And the conversation has been, folks who are upset about kids and you say, well... it's your fault, you didn't raise an issue, didn't even come to the meetings, you didn't show up and ask why did that happen to my child. And so the struggle has been to build that relationship and let folks know it's alright to ask questions; it's alright to complain if something is not right" (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Cooper said, "They have incredible pride." "There's a lot of pride in the community, the black community, that someone that they know was able to come back and be in this job."

According to Superintendent Wilson, “It’s mixed”; while Dr. Jones stated, “Without question, they are excited and very supportive, and wanting me to be successful -without question” (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 3.2: What is your perception of how Caucasian parents and community people feel about having an African American superintendent?

Interviewees’ responded to this question with a wide variety of answers. Mr. Bailey said, “I think the Caucasian community is accepting” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Fields said, initially he was met with skepticism, but that changed. Later on a county commissioner said of the superintendent, “This guy’s the real deal.” The superintendent responded to him by saying, “So what were you expecting?” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Cooper said he’d been well received by the white community and Dr. Jones said “...they want me to be successful” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Moore said about white citizens that they view him as competent; while Dr. Barnes said Whites want to know that you’re going to be fair (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 3.3: Share your perception about your relationship with your employees and whether race has impacted those relationships.

Most of the African American male superintendents interviewed said they did not believe race impacted their relationship with their employees. Their responses ranged from the staffs “warmly receive them” to we have a good relationship. Mr. Bailey believed race

didn't impact his superintendency as much as employees knowing the superintendent's expectations (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Fields is convinced the employees feel very comfortable with him at the helm (Personal communication, 2013). He stated, "African American employees who have always seen the superintendent as elusive and detached now feel comfortable with the superintendent." He elaborated on the importance of spending time in schools with the faculty and staff.

Dr. Barnes said the relationship with employees is seen as great. "...Before I came to the district, there was a lot of turmoil in terms of the superintendence, the person that was here before me – not a lot of great leadership. One of the things that I did coming in was want to provide good solid leadership but also to put systems in place to deal with a lot of the issues that are not always addressed equitably; who gets a job, how people are interviewed, how resources are given out. And what I found is that in small districts, a lot of the work is done based on who you know, political favors, things of that nature. And I think employees are proud, or actually glad to see someone come in and actually put systems in place and reduce a lot of the network activities that have a tendency to divvy out resources. For that I think they were grateful." He said, "They want to know one thing; you honor what you say" (Personal communication, 2013).

Superintendent Wilson felt he was respected by employees because he has been through the ranks, where they are now (Personal communication, 2013).

Interview Question 3.4: Discuss whether you perceive that your work with Business and Industry leaders has been affected by your race.

Two of the seven African American male superintendents interviewed, Dr. Jones and Mr. Bailey, said they didn't see race as a factor to their relationships with business and industry leaders while Dr. Fields said, "That's probably where I think it affected me more. I've seen it more pronounced. There's that skepticism" (Personal communication, 2013). "...there is a good-ole boy's network out there and I don't happen to play golf, so for me, I have to find other ways to engage; I have to sit on every Board and build those kinds of relationships, which I find sometimes are very, very hard because I'm not from the areas, I'm not in that business sector." Most of them admitted they are making efforts to develop relationships with their local businesses and industries in their local communities.

Summary of Responses to Research Question 3

The third research question dealt with the African American male superintendent's perception of whether he believes it matters to people in the community that he is Black. When asked about their perception of the African American community, the superintendents stated that African Americans have expressed gladness and pride, and have given their support to the superintendents. Some superintendents interviewed pointed out that it's also challenging to have conversations with African American parents because they often expect African American superintendents to do favors for them because they are Black.

When asked about how Caucasians have responded to them, the African American male superintendents interviewed stated that most whites were accepting. Some Whites met

the Black superintendents with skepticism. That improved over time. One superintendent said the Caucasians viewed him as competent. One of the subjects said White parents wanted him to be successful. Another said they wanted him to be fair.

Most of the African American male superintendents interviewed said they did not believe race impacted their relationships with their employees. They believe that it's important to employees that the superintendent is approachable, that they know what he expects of them, that he treats them equitably, and that he honors what he says.

The least amount of feedback from the superintendents during the interviews was overwhelmingly in the area of their relationships with the business and industry sector. Two superintendents said race was not a factor. One admitted his relationship with persons in business and industry was the area which he believed was most affected by his being African American. Most of them said they are working on developing relationships with business and industry the leadership in their local communities.

In essence the impact of the superintendent being an African American male varies between cultural groups. African Americans see a Black superintendent as an opportunity to level the playing field. Whites want him to be fair and do a good job. Employees want him to be approachable, transparent, and trustworthy.

Concluding Interview Question

What advice would you give an African American male who aspires to be or is contemplating becoming a local school superintendent?

The nature of the concluding interview question was different from the other 12 questions in that the participant in the study was not asked to give his perception of how other people thought, felt, or treated him, nor did it require the participant to tell whether he had been successful or not. This question simply asked the superintendent to give his advice to another African American male who may be considering entering the school superintendency. The respondents replied with some powerful advice. While much was stated, the researcher has included some interesting and thought provoking quotes from the interviews which show the sincerity and depth of the superintendents' thoughts and commitments to their work.

Mr. Martin Bailey

“So I would say to anybody inspiring for the superintendency; get ready for hard work. Get ready for total devotion to your job” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. James Moore

“The three things I would say are; establish a network of other African Americans who serve in these positions, learn all that you can learn about various jobs that take place in the district, and then understand the political ramifications, the political world, in which you operate as superintendent. If you get those 3, then I think you can do fine” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Waddell Barnes

“Realize that you can. Realize that you should. Realize that the obligation when you do become superintendent is not to yourself. Part of it is, but the obligation is to the person

that will follow behind you; and again, if you're African American, we've already said, you understand and you shouldn't be offended that you have to prove yourself every day"

(Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. George Cooper

"I would tell them, first of all, make sure you got thick skin because the door will probably be closed many times before you find one that's open" (Personal communication, 2013).

Mr. Kenneth Wilson

"But if you're not committed and dedicated, with passion and surround yourself with good people, you won't even be in the race. It's not easy my brother. So, you have to be one of those guy that's a motivator, you have to tell people, *we can do this*. You might go home and say, "I have no idea how we're gonna do this." But in front of everything you have to tell folk, "We can do this" (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Paul Jones

"I tell people all the time, I love what I do. I have a great job. It's a difficult job. It can get tough at times, but ninety nine percent of my job is outstanding. It's just that one percent that's difficult to deal with, and that 1% is a lot of what people see publically. But I love it and I would encourage anyone to do that" (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. John Fields

"Make sure that you are ready. Make sure that you are committed. Make sure, most of all, that you've taken the time to know yourself. This is not work for the weak; it's not work

for the faint. They are not going to like you 24/7. They're not even gonna like you 22/7. You just have to expect that as a leader, and most who get to the superintendent's position; you've been a leader. You've been a leader at a different level. Just understand that you have to come with... Competence is critical for me.

Make sure that you bring the right tool set, the toolkit, skill set, to the table. Don't get the job owing anyone other than kids; don't take the job owing anybody but kids. I mean don't take the job as a favor. Don't take the job as a hook-up. Don't take the job as a good-ole boy. We know you, slap on the back, come on. Don't do it. Earn the job. Bring credibility to the table. Have the skill set, the grit, and the courage. All of those things are necessary to lead with integrity; and you're going to be fine. Anything other than that, that skepticism, you know, creeps in, then your competence is challenged and eventually your ability to lead is eroded.

So I use a real clean formula; I tell this to anybody going into any leadership role; you got three clear phases that will help you be successful in this work. And then go in this order, I tell people, you go out of this order you're on your own. I tell people, just listen, you have to learn, and then you can lead. If you go in, you know learning and then try to listen, they are gonna perceive you as incompetent because they don't think you know it. If you go in leading and you haven't listened and learned, they're gonna see you as arrogant and they are not gonna follow. So you go in and you listen to them. Hear what they have to say. Learn all that you can while you're listening. Put together a plan. Then you can lead. And I

promise you, you'll be successful every single time. That's the formula" (Personal communication, 2013).

Cross-Case Analysis: Identification of Common Themes

Five themes emerged from this study on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies*. They are:

Theme 1: Participants Do Not Perceive That Race Impacted Their Being Selected to The Superintendency.

When the subjects of the study were asked whether they perceived that the racial makeup of the Board of Education impacted their being selected to the superintendence, six of the African American male superintendents interviewed said they did not believe it impacted their selection. Four of the seven superintendents were selected by Boards where Whites made up the majority of the members. The seventh superintendent said he believed race may have impacted his being selected. Four of the five Board members which comprised the Board which selected him were Black. At the same time, he stated that African American Board of Education members have to be cognizant of the fact that they will be scrutinized on whether they vote for or against a Black candidate. He stated that there is a pressure on those Board members to prove that they are being fair to the community. They must not be perceived as selecting a candidate simply because he is African American.

Neither superintendent suggested that he was selected because of his race or the race of Board members. They were all clear in declaring that they believe they were selected to

lead the school districts because of their various skills, abilities, and professional experiences.

Theme 2: Being Competent Is Key to Becoming A Superintendent and Succeeding.

It soon became clear during the interviews that these superintendents, though African American males, did not see race as a hindrance or deterrent to being selected as a school superintendent, or that being Black gave them any advantage. One thing was clear. It resounded over and over again. It is important that the person seeking the superintendency and surely the person who holds the superintendent's job be competent to carry out his job responsibilities. Everyone interviewed spoke about the necessity of being prepared for the work, having the skills to do the job, having the knowledge necessary for the role, and having the ability to perform the duties of superintendent. Each believed he was selected to the superintendency because the Board saw him as being prepared for the work. Each believed he and his school system had experienced a certain level of success, at least in part, because he had demonstrated that he was competent to lead the school system. Seldom did an interviewee express any perception that persons in the community objected to him being superintendent because he was an African American male; but repeatedly, references were made to the Board of Education, school system employees and the community at-large insisting that the superintendent have the capacity to provide the leadership which was needed.

Theme 3: A Good Working Relationship Between the Superintendent and The Members of The Board of Education Is Critical.

Superintendents were replete in emphasizing the importance of a good ongoing working relationship between the superintendent of any race and the members of the Board of Education. All of the persons interviewed saw themselves as having good relationships with their Boards, but spoke more about the necessity of good relationships. Key terms used by subjects in the interviews were “boundaries” and “trust”. Superintendents spoke of the importance of boundaries being established and adhered to. Both the superintendent and Board members benefit from being aware of each other’s roles and responsibilities and respecting them by refraining from doing or interfering in the other persons role.

Superintendents interviewed made it clear that relationships with Board members had to be developed over time; and that an important part of the relationship is trust. It appears that the development of trust between the Board and superintendent gives rise to the superintendent’s freedom to operate with a reasonable amount of latitude to make professional decisions.

Theme 4: Participants Feel Some Pressure On Their Jobs Just Because They Are African American Males.

None of the seven African American male superintendents who were interviewed disclosed having experienced prejudicial treatment in their tenures as superintendents because they are Black. They did, one-after-another, express feeling an inner pressure, or as one superintendent termed it, “a self-imposed pressure” because of their race. Whether true

or not, they perceived that they were being scrutinized more than White superintendents would be. One superintendent talked about the tendency of the African American male superintendent to look over his shoulder to see who's watching him, as-well-as the feeling that he must cross every T and dot every I. The cause for this feeling of pressure among the African American male superintendents may be unfounded, but the reality is that the pressure is there.

Theme 5: It Matters to African Americans In The Community That The Superintendent Is An African American Male.

While the African American male superintendents don't perceive that the racial makeup of the Board of Education members who selected them impacted their being selected for the job, they do believe that the majority of their constituents in the Black community are glad to have an African American male holding the position of school superintendent. It was interesting that the superintendents presented both sides of the coin in that they perceived both pluses and minuses in their relationships to people in the Black community.

First the superintendents expressed the African American community's pride in having one from their own race in such a prestigious and maybe powerful role in the community. This is especially important when reminded of the fact that out of 115 public school systems in North Carolina, only 11 districts are led by African American men.

Secondly and most interestingly is the point made by a couple of the superintendents in the study that they have experienced some challenges as they've dealt with parents and others in the African American community. A particular challenge is that of Blacks

expecting favoritism from a Black superintendent because he is a part of their culture. It was stated that Black parents don't communicate with White school system personnel enough to gain clarity about their children, in good or bad situations, but they feel comfortable in talking with a Black superintendent and expect that he will give them an audience, and satisfy their requests.

Summary

Chapter four of this qualitative study presented the findings obtained from the research which was conducted. The researcher collected and analyzed census information of the counties in which the school districts were located, demographic information on the schools and students in each school district, comparative analysis of information about the superintendents' careers, and superintendent responses to thirteen interview questions. Four interview questions were crafted around each of the three research questions. There was one concluding question. Each research question was summarized.

Chapter Five will include a discussion on how these findings are similar to or different from the research which was presented in Chapter 2, implications for research, implications for practice, and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this study on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies*, the researcher sought to answer three prevailing questions.

1. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?
2. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?
3. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Critical race theory recognizes that the experiential knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racial subordination. For that reason, seven African American male public school superintendents in North Carolina were interviewed during this study in an effort to acquire the answers to the research questions listed above. Each person gave his personal account of his experiences while a candidate for superintendent and during his time while serving in that capacity. In addition, each person was asked to express what he perceived those experiences to mean. The reader is reminded that a person's perception

about something is the truth. The following discussions contrast and compare information acquired during the literature review with that gained through interviewing the subjects of this study.

Research Question 1: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?

As was noted in the literature review, Hugh Scott (1980) stated that the best possibility of an African American person becoming a superintendent is in the case where African Americans constitute the majority of the student body and the residents in the community. That held true for only three of the participants in the study: Mr. Bailey, Dr. Cooper, and Dr. Jones. African American students comprised the majority of the enrollment in 6 of the 7 school districts, but only three districts were located in counties where the majority of the citizens were also African American. One district had more White students than African American enrolled, but the total minority student population was larger than the White student population by 5.59 percentage points.

Here is evidence that some things have improved during the thirty-four years since Hugh Scott shared his view on the best possibilities of African Americans becoming superintendents. As data from this study shows more than three decades later, African Americans are being hired as superintendents in districts where African Americans don't necessarily make up the majority of the student body and the general population of citizens in the county or city boundaries. Clearly some things have improved since 1980. While most

of the superintendents interviewed served in districts where most of their students were African American, it is encouraging to see that most of the residents and in most cases, the majority of the Board of Education members of selected the superintendents were White. It is encouraging to see that African Americans are being given more opportunities and are being entrusted with leadership in communities where Whites make up the majority of the citizens. Maybe this data is evidence that White citizens in those communities are more open-minded, less biased, and more accepting than those were during the time of Scott's observations and reflections.

It is worth noting that this study does not identify whether or if so, what percentage of White students attended private, parochial, or charter schools. One superintendent did mention that a large number of White students who live in the community served by the public school system attended non-public schools. Regardless, 5 of the 7 superintendents interviewed were the first African Americans superintendents in their respective districts.

In a research study conducted in New York, (Jackson, 2007) more than half (55.6%) of the minority superintendents were employed in school districts in which 50% or more of the residents were of color. That held true for 57.1% of the superintendents who participated in this study. In addition, the majority of the students enrolled in every district in this study qualified for free or reduced lunch, indicating that the majority of the students in the seven school districts are from families with low incomes. The average poverty level among the school districts of the superintendents in this study is 21.99% or 5.09 percentage points higher than the state average of 16.9%.

Included in the literature review was a section where Richard Delgado wrote about the affirmative action mythology or the role model argument. He declared that a predominantly white institution hires a minority not because of his accomplishments, not because he deserves the job, but rather because he speaks politely, is well groomed, can be trusted, and above all, for what others think he can do for them. Once getting the job, he says, the minority is labeled as a good role model (Delgado, 1995). Data collected in this research do not confirm nor disprove Delgado's theory, but the participants when interviewed as part of the study, believe they were hired as school superintendents because of their commitment to education, their willingness to work with Board of Education members, having good communication skills, and their records of successful professional experiences. They believe that their show of competence or capacity for the job proved to be the major reasons that they were selected as superintendents. Neither superintendent interviewed believed that the Board of Education which hired him was searching for an African American to be the next superintendent; nor did either superintendent express a belief that the Board rejected the idea of hiring an African American for the job. They each believe that they impressed Board members with their resumes and during the job interviews.

The following are discussions relative to information gathered about each research question.

Research Question 2: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?

Aggrandized Difficulties

Richard Hunter stated in the literature review that African American superintendents and members of other minority groups experience what he calls “aggrandized difficulties” (2005, p. 419). He says that administrators who receive adequate support and enjoy sufficient autonomy from the political system experience fewer distractions, which makes it easier for them to devote more time to improving their schools. However, African American superintendents rarely enjoy this degree of support from political officials and often experience very little autonomy while working with state and local politicians (Hunter, 2005).

When the participants in the study were asked about having autonomy, they all agreed that it was vitally important to have the ability to make decision without feeling that their hands were tied or that they had to get approval from the Board of Education on decisions relative to the day-to-day matters of operations. Two of the superintendents felt that having the liberty to administrate freely was so important that they negotiated with their respective Boards of Education to ensure that their contracts reflected that they would have the authority to make the decisions necessary to perform the normal duties of the superintendent. All of them said their Boards of Education had given them adequate amounts of latitude to do their jobs.

Trust

It was discovered during the literature review that African American superintendents often don't have the trust of school board members or politicians to lead their districts. Even

before they assume their positions, some elected and appointed officials have already cast African American superintendents in the role of puppet or scapegoat (Hunter, 2005, p. 483).

Russell Jackson also spoke on the subject of trust for the Black superintendent when he said:

There is a tendency for people to respond with a lack of trust (both among board members and in the community). The mistrust varies in many ways. It may be a lack of trust in your ability or as they perceive your ability to perform a job. There is a lack of trust that you will respond any differently than the White superintendent who may have preceded you. The expectation quite often is that you will not respond and that you will simply ignore their demands and petitions. (Scott, 1980, p. 56)

During the interviews, superintendents repeatedly said that having a good working relationship with Board of Education members is vital to the superintendent's ability to successfully lead the school system. They stated that the superintendent must earn the board members' trust, and that he is honest and transparent in his communications with them. They agreed that the superintendent has to work hard and work smart to develop that trust over time. One superintendent emphasized that the superintendent's relationship with board members is critical to determining whether his superintendency lives or dies. In essence, they believe that the superintendent proving that he is trustworthy is at the foundation of being given the autonomy to perform one's duties.

Research Question 3: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

African American Community

In the literature review, it was stated that African American superintendents faced challenges brought on by the expectations of the African American community. A quote by a superintendent who had faced such experiences summarized those challenges this way.

There is the demand from the people that you be highly accessible to them. This demand for accessibility comes from not only the established power structure of a community; it also comes from other levels of the community which more readily identify with you because of your blackness. These would be people from low-income families who are themselves Black. They expect you to be immediately accessible to them. They expect you to respond to their demands and their petitions in a way in which they have not expected other superintendents who are White to respond. These people are very often parents. They expect you to be available by phone when they call. They expect you to return their calls. I find that they call me as a Black superintendent much more readily than they would call a White superintendent. I have found this to be uniquely true, and it has been reported to me by other employees who have worked for many years in the superintendent's office – both White and Black personnel. (Scott, 1980, p. 57)

The superintendents who participated in this study, more than two decades after that statement was made expressed very similar sentiments. Dr. Moore stated, “One of the things that people may not talk about is the expectations that you have from the African American community. And that also can be a challenge; and what that means is that you have a group of constituents that see you as someone that can do special favors for them; meaning that you’re a black superintendent, you understand the issues that we have as black people so you need to do this for us or do that for us” (Personal communication, 2013).

Dr. Barnes’ response was, “The hardest conversations have been in the African American community, as often is the case. And the conversation has been with folks who are upset about kids and you say, well... it’s your fault, you didn’t raise an issue, didn’t even come to the meetings, you didn’t show up and ask why did that happen to my child. And so the struggle has been to build that relationship and let folks know it’s alright to ask questions; it’s alright to complain if something is not right” (Personal communication, 2013).

Challenges don’t always come from people who oppose each other or who are racially different. The data from this research makes it clear that most people in the African American community strongly support having African American males as local school superintendents; but there is also evidence which shows that many of the challenges that these superintendents face come from the same community of Black constituents. So in addition to the African American male superintendent having to clearly communicate and project genuine transparency in an effort to build trusting relationships with non-Blacks, he is confronted with having to do the same with those of his own race and culture.

White Community

No superintendent in the study expressed having a perception that people in the White community were disappointed with his appointment as superintendent. They spoke using phrases such as, “I think the Caucasian community is accepting” (Personal communication, 2013). Another said he’d been well received by the White community. One superintendent made the following statement about his White constituents. I believe it to be powerful. He said “...they want me to be successful” (Personal communication, 2013). I reflect on that and believe that everyone should want the superintendent to be successful, because the real and ultimate success of a superintendent is correlated to the success of his students.

Superintendent Bailey made this observation:

People will never forget race in the United States. I don’t think that will ever happen. Sometimes, when you drive up to a situation or when a person comes through the door and they don’t know you, and they see you, you can tell by their eyes, their facial expression that they didn’t expect this to be an African American male. But you don’t let those things get in your way. As long as you treat people as people, as long as you show everybody worth and dignity, as long as you do those things that are fair to people, some of those pressures can be removed. You know, as a superintendent or as a teacher, as a principal, the thing you have to let the public or your public know is that my concern is about what’s good for your child. And as long as you can focus on making people well-rounded, provide opportunities for people, showing people what they can do and what their children can do and your interest is

genuine, you're gonna have those that will like you and you're gonna have those that dislike you. You just have to put it out there and let them make the decision and that's the way I do it and leave it at that. (Personal communication, 2013)

Issues related to race, whether perceived or not, are matters which will always exist in America and around the world. The African American male superintendents in this study perceived that it does not matter to Whites in their communities whether the local school superintendent is African American. The superintendents are wise enough to know that they probably do not have the support of all persons in any one race, Black, White or other, but they feel good about the support that is being given them in their communities. They perceive that regardless of color, Whites want to know what the superintendents are going to do for their children's education. They are concerned parents, not racists.

Race issues are most often adult issues. The superintendents are spending their energies working on student issues like teaching them to read with comprehension, helping them learn the various concepts of math and science, teaching them to learn from history in order to prepare for the future, and teaching them to develop skills in the arts and Career and Technical Education. These African American male superintendents did not see their race as an issue for Whites in the school community.

Employees

Ospina and Foldy (2009) stated that research on the effects of race on the perceptions of leadership stems from an underlying assumption that leaders of color are disadvantaged because, for various reasons, they are not perceived as legitimate. Some research suggests that perceivers or potential followers are less likely to accept people of color as leaders, while other research finds that positional leaders of color, such as managers, may face challenges to their leadership that White leaders do not (Ospina & Foldy, 2009, p. 879). They also cited a study which found that White subordinates of Black managers often act in ways that challenge and undermine their leadership (p. 879).

Those interviewed for this study said little specifically about their perceptions of how White employees felt towards them and their leadership except to say that they had good relationships with their employees in general. One superintendent did state that he believes Black employees feel they have more access to the superintendent who is Black and they feel more comfortable talking with the Black superintendent than they do with a White superintendent.

Included in the literature review was this statement by author Hugh Scott. "Black superintendents must engineer improvements at a time when school personnel are well organized and resist change (Scott, 1980, p. 187). Of the seven African American male superintendents interviewed, one of them said his greatest challenge is resistance to change by his staff. Another said trying to convince people in the schools and community that change is needed is his greatest challenge (Personal communication, 2013)

Summary

In summation, the findings of this study support the idea that it's not the color of one's skin or a person's gender which makes him a good fit or a misfit for the superintendency or for success in other leadership role. There are some things though which I believe are necessary for one to lead an organization to achieve excellence. They are competence, character, and good communication skills. While some people do have extreme ideas about race, this research shows that the superintendents who were interviewed believe that most people, regardless of race, want a superintendent who will provide leadership which produces quality education for children.

The findings do not support the theory that African American male superintendents in North Carolina perceive that hiring practices which they experienced were unfair or biased. They do not perceive that they were treated with prejudice because they were African Americans. This research does not show the perception of any pattern of discrimination against African American male candidates for superintendencies in North Carolina. All of the superintendents who participated in this study said they believe that this is a good time for minorities to pursue jobs as superintendents. There are growing numbers of opportunities available. School and central office administrators need to be preparing themselves to take on the district leadership role in public education.

As a result of these findings, I am left contemplating. If these African American males have had such unobstructed paths to the superintendency and have been accepted and shown confidence and given support by the community, why aren't there more African

American male superintendents? Considering my own workplace experiences in the field of education, I was left puzzled by the fact that even in the 21st Century, problems related to race were almost never mentioned. I am left to consider whether the experiences of these African American males could be so different than my experiences have been. I propose that a better question is “Are there relevant conversations that we could have engaged in about whether their superintendencies have been affected by race, but we never had for their fear of retribution?” I truly hope that the relationships of the superintendents and their constituents were as racially positive as their remarks would lead one to believe. Maybe this is the age which Dr. King envisioned.

While I have no reason to believe that the information disclosed during the interviews was false, I wonder whether the whole truth was told. I suppose that these superintendents are no different from persons in similar positions in society. It is very unlikely that anyone would speak openly about negative occurrences when it’s possible that their relationships with their employers, employees, or others in the community could be negatively affected by their comments.

Implications for Research

This qualitative study focused on the perceptions of seven African American male superintendents about what their experiences mean to them. Qualitative studies using interviews include recall and retelling of occurrences and stories, and are rich with persons internalizing their experiences and verbally regurgitating them with emotion. The intent of this research was not to prove a theory. The researcher did not hypothesize a result or

findings. This study did though, engage seven African American men in conversations about how they feel and what meaning they have drawn from what they experienced as public school superintendents in North Carolina.

I believe that my being an African American male made the research experience more engaging for me, while at the same time, I remained unbiased and I refrained from presupposing the participants' responses or interjecting my own thoughts and perceptions. Hearing the respondents' answers to the interview questions, their descriptions of interesting events, their explanations of their own and others' behaviors, and their perceptions of the meanings of certain occurrences caused me to reflect on many of my own professional experiences and to contemplate what a future as a local school superintendent might be like. Repeatedly, these superintendents referenced self- awareness, self-discipline, and self-imposed pressures. While the study questioned the participants' perceptions about others, our conversations often returned to perceptions about themselves. I never heard them say, nor did I perceive that they felt entitled to either the position of superintendent or special treatment because of the position which they had acquired. Listening to the superintendents speak of their experiences solidified the thought that the public schools superintendent has a unique responsibility of grand proportions. In the words of my father, "It's more than a notion".

Recommendations for Research

Additional research on this subject should be conducted expanding the subject pool to African American male superintendents in other states, making it a regional or national study.

Participants in this study (all of whom are African American male superintendents) believe race did not impact their being selected as superintendents. A similar study should be conducted where the subjects are African American males who applied for superintendent positions, but were not hired.

A similar study should be conducted with African American females who are superintendents. There are so few African American female superintendents in North Carolina that the researcher would have to reach out to potential subjects who work in other states across the nation.

Research should be conducted which studies African American males who served as assistant and associate superintendents, but never became superintendents; seeking to understand why they retired or left the profession some other way without becoming superintendents.

A study should be conducted which compares the perceptions of African American superintendents with the perceptions of Caucasian superintendents about their experiences as superintendents.

A study should be conducted which studies whether there is a correlation between the race of superintendents and the academic success of the students in the school district.

Implications for Practice

There was a time when African American men and women stood before multitudes of students in classrooms across the country as teachers and filled huge numbers of school administrator positions. Integration of schools and the improvement of job opportunities in

other venues created situations where the number of African Americans working in education dwindled drastically. While it is commendable that African Americans in the last half-century have been given more career opportunities, have taken advantage of them; and have careers in business, law, engineering, medicine, technology and more, that fewer and fewer African Americans enter the educational profession, even to the point that the presence of Black teachers and administrators can aptly be described as scarce.

When data on student discipline problems in schools across the state and the nation are reviewed, it is disappointing and disheartening to see that the vast majority of those committing infractions are African American males. Annual data on school dropouts also reveals that high percentages of African American male students do not complete the K-12 matriculation cycle and graduate from high school.

The effects of poverty and the demise of the family structure have negatively impacted thousands of children, particularly minority children during the last several decades. Children need structure. They need safe environments for their physical and mental health. They need role models, and adults with whom they can communicate. It is important to minority children that they get to see and carry on conversations with educators who look like them; who understand their culture; who may not speak their lingo, but who understand their language. It is important that Blacks and other minority students see and interact with minority teachers, counselors, principals, and superintendents during their time in school. They need to regularly see what they could become.

Unfortunately, the number of African Americans in the educational profession has diminished drastically since desegregation was enacted in the 1950s and 1960s. The integration of schools brought Black and White students together, but gave rise to fewer and fewer African Americans working in education. The need for Black teachers and administrators in education is greater now than ever before.

There are approximately 1.4 million North Carolina public school students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12. African American children comprise 26.3 % of that enrollment; yet, only 13% of the 115 local school districts in the state are led by African American superintendents; 9% by African American male superintendents. There are various reasons that Blacks and other minorities traditionally have not held the top positions of leadership in education. Such miniscule representation is an unfortunate reflection of American history. Can our future be different? Can it be better? Can and will more minorities become superintendents in North Carolina? This qualitative study set out to understand whether those African American males now serving as local school superintendents in North Carolina perceived that their race has impacted them becoming selected to the superintendency and whether race has hindered or improved their relationships, and whether their race ultimately impacted their ability to accomplish the job of educating children.

The number of superintendent job openings in North Carolina and the nation is rapidly increasing. White male superintendents, members of the baby boomers generation, are retiring by the droves; but there are only a few African Americans, particularly males,

who are eager to enter the ranks of superintendent. This research has investigated what it's like to be an African American male superintendent in North Carolina. It has studied what those who occupy those ranks have seen, heard, felt, and perceived. Maybe a better understanding of what it's like to walk in the shoes of an African American male superintendent will shed light on why there are so few; and maybe it will give insight on how the numbers of minority superintendents may be increased. Maybe African American males in the superintendency can become the norm rather than an exception.

Recommendations for Practice

African American superintendents in North Carolina should form a network where they share helpful information with and provide support for each other.

Local district superintendents should identify African American males within their school systems who show potential to become superintendents; then mentor them and direct them to opportunities to prepare them to enter the superintendency.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction or a statewide professional educational organization for administrators should provide professional development for persons of all races who have an interest in becoming superintendents.

African Americans should seek opportunities to learn as much about all facets of school district operations as possible prior to interviewing for superintendent jobs.

African American males may not pursue superintendencies because they have negative perceptions of the superintendency more than because they lack opportunities.

Work must be done to encourage more African American males to prepare themselves and apply for superintendent jobs.

Concluding Thoughts

At the conclusion of interviewing the research participants, collecting data and carefully analyzing it, the findings reveal the following:

(1) The African American male superintendents perceived that they were treated fairly and equitably when they were candidates for superintendent positions for which they were hired.

(2) The African American male superintendents perceived that people in the schools and community gave them the respect which they deserved and their Boards of Education gave them the autonomy which they needed to do their jobs well.

(3) The African American male superintendents perceived that people in schools and community, regardless of race, are more concerned with the superintendent's capacity to successfully lead the school district than they are about the superintendent's race and gender.

Perception and Pressure

When asked if they felt added pressure as superintendents because they were African American males, six of the seven interviewed said "yes". Only one of them expressed that he did not feel pressure because he is African American. Two of them responded to the question by saying "absolutely". One person said the pressure is "self-imposed". Generally they believe African American male superintendents are held to a higher standard than superintendents of other races.

In the literary review, a number of scholars and persons quoted by researchers strongly believed that African Americans are often highly scrutinized on their jobs; more than their White counterparts. Deborah Waire Post, an African American, is quoted as saying, “We cannot afford to make mistakes because everything we do is scrutinized with such attention to detail and minutiae that it would paralyze most creative people (p.423)”. It was also stated that “When Blacks assumed the position of superintendent the challenges and expectations were at times unreal. They were expected to perform at a level beyond that of others and to provide immediate or miraculous solutions to social, financial, and racial problems that had developed over years (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

During this study, one superintendent, Dr. Barnes said during the interview “...we live with the fact that we have to prove ourselves every day. We have to prove ourselves on every issue, and we can’t be offended by that” (Personal communication, 2013). Another participant, Dr. Cooper said, “You gotta always work harder, get up earlier, work twice as hard, because you’re being held to a different standard” (Personal communication, 2013). All of the superintendents who were interviewed as a part of the study felt some degree of scrutiny because they were African American males.

It has been stated that challenges will make one either bitter or better. It became clear to this researcher that although each participant in this study faced challenges and obstacles, some believed to be unique to African American males, that each of them became better. Neither subject expressed bitterness or any kind. They did rather, take the cards dealt them

and stimulated their own intellect, pursued jobs where the odds of getting them were thought not to be in their favor, and once getting the jobs, produced good quality results.

While neither participant in the study perceived that his being an African American male impacted his being selected, they do believe that Board of Education members probably contemplated the issues surrounding race of a superintendent as they deliberated during the candidate selection process. One thing is for sure. Their race and gender did not prevent the Boards of Education from entrusting them with the responsibility of leading their school systems. By-and-large, the superintendents who were interviewed, stressed that people throughout the community, Boards of Education, parents, educators and others are less concerned about the superintendent's race and are much more concerned about whether the superintendent is competent to do the job.

Each superintendent portrayed genuine comfort and satisfaction in being respected as a superintendent, without thought of race. Participants never cited or referenced being treated with prejudice or bias. Each one spoke positively about past experiences and with optimism about his future.

It was beneficial to hear these superintendents talk about their experiences and their perceptions, and consider that although all of them are African American men, they differ in personalities, strengths and weaknesses, work experiences, the racial and other demographics of the districts, and more. While they are all African American male superintendents, no two of them or their stations of work is alike. Does race matter? It did not matter enough to

hinder these African American males from being hired as superintendents and performing their duties well.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Research Question 1: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?

Related Interview Questions

1.1 Describe the process that the Board of Education used to select a superintendent when you were selected.

1.2 What was the racial composition of the Board of Education which hired you? How do you think that composition impacted your selection of superintendent?

1.3 What do you think or know are the reasons the Board selected you to be superintendent?

1.4 Why did you think you were a good fit for superintendent of this school system?

Research Question 2: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?

Related Interview Questions

2.1 Discuss the degree of latitude which you have to make decisions for the school system.

2.2 Describe the working relationship which exists between you and the members of your Board of Education.

2.3 What have been your greatest challenges to achieving your goals for the school system?

2.4 Do you feel any added pressure to being a superintendent because you are African American? How do you respond to those feelings?

Research Question 3: Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Related Interview Questions

3.1 What is your perception of how African American parents and community people feel about having an African American superintendent?

3.2 What is your perception of how Caucasian parents and community people feel about having an African American superintendent?

3.3 Share your perception about your relationship with your employees and whether race has impacted those relationships.

3.4 Discuss whether you perceive that your work with Business and Industry leaders has been affected by your race.

Concluding Interview Question

What advice would you give an African American male who aspires to be or is contemplating becoming a local school superintendent?

Appendix B

Basic Assumptions of the Perceptual Tradition

1. There may be a preexistent reality, but an individual can only know that part which comprises his or her perceptual world, the world of awareness.
2. Perceptions at any given moment exist at countless levels of awareness, from the vaguest to the sharpest.
3. Because people are limited in what they can perceive, they are highly selective in what they choose to perceive.
4. All experiences are phenomenal in character: The fact that two individuals share the same physical environment does not mean that they will have the same experiences.
5. What individuals choose to perceive is determined by past experiences as mediated by present purposes, perceptions, and expectations.
6. Individuals tend to perceive only that which is relevant to their purposes and make their choices accordingly.
7. Choices are determined by perceptions, not facts. How a person behaves is a function of his or her perceptual field at the moment of acting.
8. No perception can ever be fully shared or totally communicated because it is embedded in the life of the individual.

9. “Phenomenal absolutism” means that people tend to assume that other observers perceive as they do. If others perceive differently, it is often thought to be because others are mistaken or because they lie.
10. The perceptual field, including the perceived self, is internally organized and personally meaningful. When this organization and meaning are threatened, emotional problems are likely to result.
11. Communication depends on the process of acquiring greater mutual understanding of one another’s phenomenal fields.
12. People not only perceive the world of the present but they also reflect on past experiences and imagine future ones to guide their behavior.
13. Beliefs can and do create their own social reality. People respond with feelings not to “reality” but to their perceptions of reality.
14. Reality can exist for an individual only when he or she is conscious of it and has some relationship with it (Purkey and Schmidt, 1987, p. 30).

Appendix C

North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date Submitted: _____
1a. Revised Date: _____
2. Title of Project: Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies
3. Principal Investigator: <u>Dorwin L. Howard, Sr.</u>
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6. Email:
7. Phone Number:
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9. Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission: <u>Dr. Lance Fusarelli</u> <u>lance_fusarelli@ncsu.edu</u> <u>and Dr. Paul Bitting</u> <u>paul_bitting@ncsu.edu</u>
10. Source of Funding? (required information): <u>Personal</u>
11. Is this research receiving federal funding?: <u>No</u>
12. If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number: <u>Not Applicable</u>
13. RANK: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Student: <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate; <input type="checkbox"/> Masters; or <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Dorwin L. Howard, Sr.
(typed/printed name)

Dorwin L. Howard, Sr.
(signature)

(date)

**North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

The purpose of this research on *Perceptions of African American Male Public School Superintendents in North Carolina on the Impact of Race on Their Superintendencies* is to examine the experiences of African American male school superintendents and learn whether they perceive that others treated them as competent and capable leaders; whether they perceived that they were treated differently than their White counterparts, and if so, how they responded; and whether they overcame any prejudicial obstacles they may have faced. The central question of this research is: Does “race” matter in the superintendency in the 21st century?

Hopefully, information and results from this study will foster open and honest conversations about the African American superintendents’ experiences and perceptions as well as other minorities in a variety of occupations. Clearly and succinctly stated, the researcher believes there is a need for people of minority races who work in educational leadership positions, particularly school superintendents, to openly articulate their experiences and to make known whether they experienced differential treatment in their professions. The researcher hopes to encourage members of the White majority race to become cognitively aware that such perceptions of mistreatment exists and intends to create a platform from which both minority and majority members of the educational profession and community at large can and hopefully will work to eradicate even the appearance of racial improprieties.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

Dissertation

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?
Estimates or ranges are acceptable. Please be aware that if you recruit over 10% more participants than originally requested, you will need to submit a request to modify your recruitment numbers.

This research will employ the use of in-depth interviews with six or more of the 10 African American men who are presently serving as superintendents in North Carolina. The potential participant pool will include all 10 African American male s superintendents.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

The researcher will contact each potential participant from the sample pool by written letter. The letter will include a brief introduction of who the researcher is, along with a description of the research which he will be conducting as part of his dissertation requirements. In the letter, he will ask potential participants to participate in the study by allowing him to conduct at least one face-to-face interview with each of them. The potential interviewee will also receive a Consent-to-Participate form.

If the researcher does not receive at least six confirmations to participate in the study within two weeks after the letters are mailed to potential participants, he will follow-up the letters with phone calls to those persons who do not respond, and ask each person to participate in the study.

He will then email persons who agree to be participants to thank them and to schedule interviews. He will follow with a second email to confirm the scheduled date and time.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

The criteria established to be a participant in this study is that the person must be an African American male who is a local school district superintendent in North Carolina.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

The reason the researcher has specified male superintendents rather than both males and females is that he predicts that the inclusion of females as participants in the research will give rise to research questions that would broaden the focus of the study to include the impact of gender in addition to race. While gender equity of the superintendency is certainly important, the researcher believes it can best be studied in a separate research study where the subject of gender will receive the full attention that it rightly deserves.

In addition, since only two of the African American superintendents in North Carolina are women, it would be necessary to include women of races other than African American to generate an acceptable sample size of participants for a gender focused research study.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

No relationships exist between researcher and subjects which would jeopardize this research. The researcher is an educator in North Carolina, but does not nor has he worked in any of the school districts where the potential participants work or live, nor has he ever been coworkers with or employed by any of the potential research participants.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- fetuses
- pregnant women
- persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- persons with physical disabilities
- economically or educationally disadvantaged
- prisoners
- elderly
- students from a class taught by principal investigator
- other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

Not Applicable

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

The data collected during this research will be used to document and describe the nature of each participant's work, his challenges, and his relationships in the workplace. It will give insight into the social and political arena in which he works and the impact, if any, that being African American had on him and his productivity as a public school district superintendent.

Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher will collect background information about each school district in which the superintendent is employed. The information will include, but will not be limited to, whether the school district is located in a rural, suburban, or urban community; the economic condition of the community; demographic information such as race, gender, and age of both the general population as well as the school system population of students and staff; and the number of schools and the number of students enrolled in the district will also be collected. Information about the school system's academic achievements will be collected from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Annual Report Card. It is vitally important that the researcher possess this kind of information prior to conducting interviews so he can have a contextual backdrop of the community where each superintendent works.

The most key pieces of information for this research will be collected by conducting a face-to-face interview with each superintendent participant. If in some cases, it is not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews, the researcher will conduct interviews by telephone. He will interview each participant in a one-on-one setting.

The researcher will ensure that what is communicated during the interviews will be treated with strict confidentiality. The interviewer will ask several open-ended questions about the superintendent's work and about the uniqueness of and the criticality of issues related to being an African American serving as a superintendent in the public school system. My research questions are:

1. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that they were treated fairly and equitably, in terms of race, when they were candidates for superintendent positions?
2. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that race has effected whether they have been treated with respect and given the autonomy to lead their school systems?
3. Do the African American male superintendents perceive that it matters to the persons in their school district and community at-large that the superintendent is African American?

Each interview question will align with one of the three research questions.

The researcher is interested in acquiring information that may give insight into the individual's personality, philosophy, and future pursuits. He wants to know why each participant chose to enter the field of education for a career, how each moved through the ranks of teacher and administrator to become a superintendent, or how they became superintendent by some nontraditional path. He wants to be able to view the superintendency from each interviewee's perspective. He hopes to learn about each person's circle of concerns as well as his circle of influence.

Questions will be designed to guide the interviewee to do more than present quantitative facts or to respond with simple "yes" or "no" responses. The interviewer will ask guiding questions that are designed to lead each participant to speak openly

about his experiences. Whenever the opportunity presents itself, the interviewer will give the interviewee the latitude to articulate his story with more breadth and depth. The researcher will be observing and documenting facial expressions, body language, and voice tones as well as listening to the content of the information. He will document the interviews by using an audio recorder to help assure authenticity and accuracy.

The researcher will listen carefully as participants recall their career experiences and during his review of audio recordings of the interviews in an effort to truly understand each person's experiences accurately in and gain an understanding of what is shared. When appropriate, he will follow-up responses with probing questions such as, "What do you mean?" "I'm not sure that I follow you." "Would you explain that?" "What did you say then?" "Take me through the experience".

The researcher will seek to learn what each participant's career experiences were and what those experiences mean to him. He will ask questions that he hopes will enable him to connect to each person's innermost thoughts about how they saw themselves, how they view their experiences as superintendents, and how they believe others view them. He is interested in whether they perceive that their constituents and those they interact with are colorblind to race and just see a school system leader.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

Approximately 1 hour.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (psychological, social, physical, financial, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

The participants will not be exposed to risks which could be damaging to their careers or to their character. Adequate provisions will be made to protect the subject's privacy and maintain the confidentiality of data. Audio recordings of the interviews will be conducted only with the written consent of the interviewee. A written summary of the interview will be submitted to each participant documenting only his interview. He will be given the opportunity to refuse the inclusion of any part of the interview which he deems not suitable for publication and to ensure that information which will be included is accurate. All precautions will be taken to assure anonymity of the subjects, including the use of fictitious names in all information from transcripts that will be included in Chapters 4 and 5 of the dissertation.

3. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

No

- a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

Not Applicable

3. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

No

4. How will data be recorded and stored?

Each interview will be audio recorded, then transcribed. The audio recording will be collected on a digital recorder. The transcription will be stored on a computer flash drive. Both will be secured under lock and key in a safe owned by the researcher.

- a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Subjects of the study will be referred to by alias names. Names will be assigned alphabetically in the order that interviews are conducted. There will be no obvious correlation between the alias names and actual names of the subjects. Actual names of schools districts, schools, employees or other persons will be omitted or given alias names.

- b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

When appropriate individual responses to interview questions will be described or quoted, but if patterns are identified in participants' responses to questions they will be presented in aggregate terms. Much of the researcher's interests lie in whether commonalities will exist in responses by the various superintendents.

5. If audio or video recordings are collected, will you retain or destroy the recordings? How will recordings be stored during the project and after, as per your destruction/retention plans?

During the research study, the audio recording will be stored under lock and key in a safe owned by the researcher. They will be destroyed twelve months after the research is completed and the dissertation is approved.

6. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

None

F. COMPENSATION

Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

1. Describe compensation

Each participant who completed the interview will be given a gift card valued at \$20.00.

2. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

Compensation will only be given to participants who complete the interview process.

3. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

Not Applicable

G COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on **Cover Page**) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

Not Applicable

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

No

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project?
No

2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? Not Applicable

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.
2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.
3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING

*Please consider taking the [Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative](#) (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.