A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF BLACK PARENT EXPECTATIONS FOR BLACK SUPERINTENDENTS

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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF BLACK PARENT EXPECTATIONS

FOR BLACK SUPERINTENDENTS

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Dissertation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Black parents' expectations for superintendents with a specific focus on their expectations for Black superintendents. Limited research explores expectations of Black superintendents. No research was found that explicitly explored Black parent expectations for Black superintendents. Two questions guided this descriptive study: (1) How do Black parents describe what they are looking for in a superintendent; and (2) What are the ways in which their descriptions differ for a Black superintendent. Eleven Black parents in an urban district participated in multiple one-on-one interviews. Their responses provided an overall description of expectations for a superintendent and more specifically for a Black superintendent. Moreover, analysis of the interviews yielded insights into the type of leadership that might be required of a superintendent in an urban district as well as how leadership might be different for a Black superintendent.

The analysis of data revealed two themes. The first theme was Community Engagement: Visibility, Vision, and Voice. The parents in this study expected a superintendent to be visible and involved in the community; to cultivate and maintain relationships with students, parents, and community; to value the voices of people in the community; and to use his/ her own voice to act heroically for the children and the community. The second theme was Race: Acknowledgement and Importance. The responses of parents revealed influences of race as related to fulfilling the role of

superintendent; acknowledging race-based views; understanding the needs and values of Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; serving as a role model to the same; and acting on behalf of Black children and the Black community. Likewise, the parents described ways that race identity is a component of leadership.

Contextual factors, the complexity of needs, the desire for change, the desire for a voice in the education of their children, and race-related expectations influenced the views of parents in this study. Taken together, the expectations of the parents in this study provided insight into characteristics and qualities that Black parents sought in a superintendent, and an understanding of expectations for superintendents in general and Black superintendents specifically.

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I believe that God has special plans for my life that are yet untapped. The completion of this dissertation was just one part of the plan. I hope that the people that I encounter in my lifetime are positively touched through our meeting. I look forward to God continuing to use my gifts and talents to make life better for the young people I encounter as an educator. I do want to be that educator who makes a difference for children.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my family members who instilled in me the value of education, a strong work ethic, and a desire to achieve excellence. It is also dedicated to all of my family who I know love and support me unconditionally.

In memory of my grandmother, Florence Chiles, who as a teacher in a two-room school house laid the foundation for my path in education.

In memory of my parents, Dorsey and Alice Houchins, who expected the best from me in all I did and who made it clear that failure to obtain a college degree was not an option.

In memory of my brother, Dorsey Houchins, Jr., who always believed in me and what I could accomplish even when I did not believe in myself.

To my family, my sister, Yolanda Houchins-Lawson, my brother, Kevin Houchins, and my cousin, Duane Miller, you have stood by me, prayed for me, and uplifted me through all of life's challenges. To my aunt, Elizabeth Miller, as the matriarch of our family and loving aunt, I thank God that you were able to share in the achievement of my dream.

To my nieces and nephews, Renishia, Van, Natalie, DeMarcus, Dominic, Kevin Jr., C. J., Kameron, and Jordan, I hope that I have been a positive role model to you. I pray that my completion of this dissertation and degree inspires you to reach all of your

goals and to dream BIG, because I know that “I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME” (Phil.4:13, NKJV).

I love all of you more than these words could ever convey.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the quest for education has been viewed as a source of freedom, power, and equality in the lives of Blacks in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000; Savage, 2001). Black schools were an important institution in the Black community as schools were seen by Blacks as a way for upward mobility (Carter, Jones-Wilson, & Arnez, 1989; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Gordon, 2000). Thus, Blacks fought to obtain even the most rudimentary of education for Black children. Even when confronted with schools obviously lacking in resources, education was still valued and schools supported (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004; Ravitch 2000/2001; Siddle Walker, 2000). Importantly, a turning point in the education for Blacks was the landmark decision of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) that found "separate but equal" schools were inherently unequal (Dawkins, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Jackson, 1995) and mandated the integration of public schools. The *Brown* decision was expected to positively impact (1) educational access, (2) quality of learning outcomes, and (3) increased possibilities and opportunities for academic learning and social success. This key decision provided hope for Blacks that discriminatory practices and inequities in educational quality Black children received would be eradicated (Gadsden, Smith, & Jordan, 1996). Fifty-three years have passed since the *Brown v. Topeka Board of*

Education (1954) decision was considered a turning point in education for Blacks. What difference has the *Brown* decision actually made for the education Blacks receive?

The marking of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown* decision heightened interest in assessing its impact on the quality of education that Black children have received and continue to receive in America's public schools (Brown, 2004; Cook, 2005; Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Willie & Willie, 2005). In a study conducted after the 40th anniversary, a participant remarked, "People believed that integrated schools would result in equality for Black children. . . . We didn't keep our promise to Black children; we told them they would have a better education and that theirs would be a better world" (Gadsden et al., 1996, p. 398). Black parents expected that their children would receive a better education than they themselves had. Yet, today there are still inequalities in public schools (Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Many public schools, particularly those serving high minority, low income populations have failed to meet the educational needs of Black children (Gadsden et al., 1996; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Evidence exists that too many Black students are still found in public school districts, particularly urban districts, plagued with economic problems and social issues, differences in access to quality education, gaps in academic achievement of Black students in comparison to White peers, Black students who perform less well on statewide achievement tests, ACT and SAT tests, and attend schools with limited resources and less modern and technologically advanced facilities in comparison to schools their peers attend in more affluent suburban schools districts (Ferguson, 2000; Gadsden et al., 1996; Gardner & Miranda, 2001). Thus, Black parents remain frustrated with the quality of education Black children receive in today's public schools (Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Who do these Black

parents turn to to have their voices heard when they have concerns about their own children's performance, the resources available in their children's schools, and the quality of education in the public schools their children attend? In the past, it has been Black leaders in the Black community, which included Black school administrators, who have supported or spearheaded efforts to address inequities in the education Black children receive (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Gordon, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Black principals were the community leaders in schools to whom Black parents turned for their voices to be heard in the pre-*Brown* era, particularly when they felt unable to make a difference personally (Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000). Black parents viewed these leaders as voices for the Black community who understood the needs and culture of Black children (Edwards, 1993; Lomotey, 1989; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003); hence, prior to the *Brown* decision, Black parents felt that their voices were heard, if not directly, then through the voices of Black principals who shared their conviction that Black children needed a quality education (Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2005). These Black principals worked collaboratively with Black parents, regardless of that parents' level of education or socioeconomic status, to achieve a better education for Black children (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003).

The history of Blacks' educational experiences has been shown to impact the expectations that Black parents and the larger Black community have for public schools (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 2000). The *Brown* decision itself represented an instance where Black parents' voices and expectations were heard in the legal and

political arenas through the voices of those who were advocating for equality in education for Black children (Edwards, 1993). Since that landmark decision in 1954, the educational systems that Black children attend have changed appreciably (Clotfelter, 2004; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Willie & Willie, 2005. Comparatively, more Blacks graduate high school, attend college, and hold a wider range of professional positions than in 1954 (Willie & Willie, 2005); however, achievement of equity in education has not yet been fully attained so Black parents are still looking for their voices to be heard, their concerns to be addressed, and for equity in education for Black children (Brown, 2004; Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Morris, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Willie & Willie, 2005).

Since the *Brown* decision many Black parents have felt their voices have gone unheard or were met with resistance, and exclusion or rejection, especially when their views were not in line with those of educators (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Initially, the *Brown* decision resulted in the loss of positions for Black principals who were trusted voices in the Black community (Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000). Again, the questions become to whom Black parents turn for their voices to be heard and why this is important. A few Blacks obtained positions as superintendents in the late 1950s; however, the Civil Rights movement resulted in more Blacks obtaining educational leadership positions as superintendents (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980, 1990). Now that Blacks were found at the superintendent's level, Blacks looked to Black superintendents as sources of hope and to be the voices of Black parents in their continued quest for quality education for Black children. Some 50 years after the *Brown* decision, suspension rates, higher incidence of placement in special

education, higher failure and dropout rates, continued gaps in academic achievement, and poorer performance of Black students on state achievement tests in comparison to their children's White peers are still concerns of Black parents (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Edwards, 1993; Gadsden et al., 1996; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Morris, 2004). Their continued concerns about quality of education that Black children receive are reflective of a long history of concern for the education of Black children (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 2000). In the past, Black parents had expectations that Black principals would be committed to addressing their concerns about Black children's education (Lomotey, 1989; Morris, 1999; Savage, 2001). The question today is whether or not Black parents today want Black superintendents to do the same? The limited research about expectations for Black superintendents suggests they do (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980).

The question of what people expect from schools has been raised before in research about academic achievement and parent involvement (Gutman & McLoyd, 2000; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Descriptions of expectations for Black principals and other school administrators has provided some understanding of expectations that Blacks held for Black school leadership (Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Thompson, 2003a) Although limited, some research has even described expectations Blacks held for Black superintendents (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990), yet no one has asked Black parents themselves what do they expect of superintendents. Given that Black superintendents are most likely to be found in districts with majority Black or other minority populations (Glass, 2000; Robinson, Gault &

Lloyd, 2004), it is imperative that Black parents' voices be included in the discussions about expectations of Black superintendents. Therefore, I believe it is important to ask questions about what Black parents expect of superintendents in general and Black superintendents specifically.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to describe the expectations that Black parents hold for Black superintendents. As a Black principal who aspires to be a superintendent, my research sought to provide some understanding of the qualities and characteristics that Black parents sought in a superintendent, and the expectations that they have for superintendents, with a specific focus on their expectations for Black superintendents.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided my study were:

1. How do Black parents describe what they are looking for in a superintendent?
2. What are the ways in which their descriptions differ for a Black superintendent?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the historical, cultural, and educational foundations of education for Blacks and includes the study of goals of education, community involvement in education, and racial identity as related to education. Issues of equity, family/community disengagement and detachment, and discrepancies in values alignment were studied as influences on Black principals' expectational experiences. There was limited research on Black superintendents, and less specifically on expectations; therefore, Black principals' experiences served as a lens for

understanding the experiences of Blacks in school leadership. As such, research that explored leadership within and of the Black community, relationships with Black parents, and the advancement of and commitment to the Black community were used to understand expectations for Black superintendents. Finally, Black superintendents' expectational experiences were explored. Research was found that explored Black superintendents as symbolic role models and heroes. Additionally, the contextual influences that impacted the conditions facing Black superintendents were discussed. The next section provides a short overview of the literature that provided my foundational background for the theoretical framework used to analyze this study.

Goals of Education

Education for Blacks has been viewed as a way to improve the status of Blacks (Anderson, 1988; Baker, 2001; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000; Savage, 2001). Historic evidence of inequities in the educational experiences for Blacks was well documented (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 2000; 2003; 2005; Willie & Willie, 2005). The importance of education to Blacks was evident in the efforts Blacks made to provide for the education of Black children. Continued evidence of inequities remained an influence on the experiences and expectations of Black parents and the greater Black community.

Black Community Involvement in Education

The Black community was the conduit for the quest for equity and quality in education for Black children (Bauman, 1998; Edwards, 1993). Historically, Black parents and the larger Black community supported Black schools through labor, time, and financial support; therefore, they took ownership in these schools (Anderson, 1988;

Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003, 2005). Evidence supported that Blacks have remained involved in what was seen as a collective struggle for equality in education (Anderson, 1988; Bauman, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2003, 2005; Willie & Willie, 2005).

Racial Identity as Related to Education

A traditional African view is "I am because we are; and because we are, therefore, I am" (Mbiti, as cited in Boyd-Franklin, 2003); I use this quote to describe the concept of collective identity among Blacks that was based on the historical context of the experiences of Blacks with slavery, Jim Crow, and civil rights (Ogbu, 2004). A network of kinship relationships among Blacks and collective identity focused on the interdependent relationship among Blacks (Dilworth-Anderson, 1992; Martin & Martin, 1985; Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu concluded that collective identity impacted attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors; thereby, suggesting that racial identity has some influence on Black parents' expectations.

Issues of Equity

Prior to *Brown*, Black parents fought for equity in facilities, teaching materials and other resources, transportation, and qualified teachers in segregated Black schools (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Franklin & Moss, 2000). Importantly, these parents felt their efforts made a difference for their children. Today, some of the same issues still exist in schools, but many parents do not feel their efforts are making the same difference. As a result, many Black parents have felt a sense of powerlessness to change their schools, have felt they were not welcome in schools, and that their views were not important to schools (Boyd-Franklin, 2003).

Family/Community Disengagement and Detachment

Some research about Black parents has explored race and class as it affected student achievement and interactions with school personnel (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Utilizing parent involvement as a barometer, some researchers have concluded that Black parents do care about the education of their children and do have specific expectations for schools and certain school personnel, such as teachers and principals (Anderson, 1988; Boyd & Correa, 2005; Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). No research was found that specifically addressed the expectations that Black parents have for White or Black superintendents; thus, my study explored research about the value Black parents place on education and home-school relationships.

Black Principals' Expectational Experiences

Three primary qualities and traits were exhibited by Black principals who made efforts to improve the quality of education received by Black children (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999; Randolph, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000). They included community leader and role model, positive relationships with Black parents, and a focus on the advancement of education for Blacks. Research revealed the value of one-on-one relationships with parents and the emergence of the Black principal as a leader in the community and advocate for Black children's education (Morris, 2004; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003; Tillman, 2004).

Black Superintendents' Expectational Experiences

The Robinson, Gault, and Lloyd study (2004) found that only 2% of superintendents were Black. Further, Black superintendents were most likely to be found in districts characterized as having financial problems, low academic achievement, and high populations of Black students. The contextual influences impacted the expectations that were held for Black superintendents. The scholarship revealed three expectations for Black superintendents. The research suggested that role modeling, hero making, and the advancement of education for Black children were expected of Black superintendents. These expectations are explored in Chapter II in the literature review through a discussion of symbolic leadership, expectations related to culture and history, and the importance of addressing the needs of the Black community based on contextual influences (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Edwards & Willie, 1998; Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999; Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000).

Significance of the Study

Some researchers have reported that Black superintendents are faced with additional expectations, particularly from other Blacks (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990). They concluded that these additional expectations make the experience of the superintendency more difficult for Blacks. Any exploration of Black parents' expectations was only a derivative of these studies and from the superintendents' perspective. Since earlier research did not explore the views of Black parents, I sought to describe expectations from the perspectives of Black parents.

Previous research has studied the relationship between parents and teachers or principals as reasons for student success or failure, with race or socioeconomic status as variables. Superintendents were not included in these studies. My study is important to gain the perspective of a specific population of parents (Black parents) who more than likely will have children in a school system led by a Black superintendent. This is an area that has not been addressed in the literature.

Census projections suggest that the number of Black students will continue to grow (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Black superintendents are most likely to be found in districts with minority student populations of at least 50% (Dawkins, 2004; Robinson et al., 2004). Black superintendents need to understand the views of Black parents. It is a generally accepted assumption in the Black community, of which I am a part, that there are expectations that other Blacks hold for Blacks in leadership positions; however, research has not substantiated these expectations from the perspective of Black parents. My research provided insight into the actual expectations Black parents held for Black superintendents rather than generalizations or perceived expectations. Further, it can be useful to other Blacks who aspire to superintendencies, to current Black superintendents, and to higher education programs that prepare school leaders for the superintendency. Understanding these actual expectations can be useful to Black superintendents and aspiring Black superintendents, such as myself, to understanding the qualities and characteristics desired in Black superintendents and to gain a better understanding of the expectations that might influence experiences in the superintendency.

Research Design

Descriptive research was used to explore what Black parents expressed as their expectations for superintendents in general and Black superintendents specifically. The use of an interview format allowed for more in-depth responses from each parent and for me to use their own words which was important to me. Utilizing interview protocols permitted me to describe the meanings that Black parents brought to this phenomenon of expectations for Black superintendents (Yin, 2003).

The site for this study was a large urban school district where there has been more than one Black superintendent. The school district was in a city with a high poverty rate and had a student population exceeding 25,000 students and low academic performance on state assessments. The participants were current or former officers in a building-level parent organization in the designated district. The total sample included 11 participants who represented 11 different neighborhoods within that district. Six parents were officers in a Pre-K-8 setting and five parents were officers in a 9-12 setting.

The data collection and data analysis process contained several overlapping, iterative stages that included data collection, coding, data reduction, looking for patterns and relationships, using data displays, and drawing conclusions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The primary data collection method was interviews of Black parents from a single district. One face-to-face interview and one follow-up telephone interview were conducted.

Data analysis followed prescribed processes for qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2003; Gall et al., 2003; Kane & O'Reilly de Brun, 2001; Merriam, 1998). Data were collected then transcribed. Initial coding was a combination of emergent codes from the

data and a priori codes based on the theoretical framework and research questions. The analysis process continued iterative cycles of reviewing the data, recoding, reducing data, and looking for patterns. Data displays were created to further delineate patterns (Drew, Hardman, & Weaver Hart, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As patterns became more evident, coding categories were collapsed until the major themes for the study were discerned. This analysis process led to the thematic reporting of the findings and implications that reflected a synthesis of the themes (Gall et al., 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study were as follows:

1. I assumed that the views presented by the parents were their true views on the topic.
2. I assumed I would have easier access to the participants and more open communications because of similarity in race.
3. I did not seek to evaluate the performance of the superintendent.
4. I assumed the parents would have expectations for superintendents and Black superintendents.

Limitations

The following limitations applied to my study:

1. My study was limited to one school district that was led by a Black superintendent and my participant sample was limited to 11 Black parents in the same district. Therefore, my study might not be generalizable to different superintendents or different groups of Black parents.

2. Because of the limited number of Black superintendents in the Midwestern state being studied, identification of the state could be compromising to the integrity of the information and confidentiality of the participants; thus, the state, school district, and participants were not identified.

Definition of Terms

Black community - A specific type of group of people with two key qualities having common interests and goals and having a common identity as in race (Franklin & Moss, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Lusane, 1994; Walters & Smith, 1999).

Black leader - One who is racially Black in a leadership role (Hamilton as cited in Gordon, 2000)

Black leadership - One who is racially Black in a leadership role who exercises some influence on the definition of the interests and objectives of concern to Black people, but not necessarily exclusively so, and on the means or strategies used to pursue those goals (Smith, 2003)

Black parents - Parents, including grandparents, other relatives, or guardians who self-identify as Black/African American and who have/had a child (ren) or guardianship of a child (ren) in the public school system.

Black superintendent - A Black individual who is in the position of chief executive officer or top educational leader of a K-12 public school district/system.

Expectations - A concept that is held about "a behavior likely to be exhibited by a person" (Biddle & Thomas, 1979, p. 10).

Semi-structured interview - **"**Interviews in which the same general questions or topics are brought up to each of the subjects included" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 261)

Superintendent - The chief executive officer or top level position within a K-12 school district.

Black vs. African American

The nomenclature used to describe the racial identity for individuals of African descent in America has gone through a number of changes (Henig et al., 1999; Niven & Zilber, 2000; Sigelman, Tuch, & Martin, 2005; "Why Black", 1994; Zilber & Niven, 1995). The Black community itself is not in agreement in its preference (Henig et al., 1999; Sigelman et al., 2005; "Why Black", 1994). Arguments were found in support or opposition of both terms. A number of scholarly and popular journals still use terms other than African American ("Why Black", 1994) and some researchers still use both terms interchangeably (Henig et al., 1999). In the 1960s, the name "Black" became the term used and was most often associated with the Civil Rights movement. It is also associated with "Black Power" and "Black is Beautiful", which for some people of color gave a sense of collectivity and value to those in the struggle for civil rights (Niven & Zilber, 2000; Sigelman et al., 2005). During the 1980s, the term "African American" was coined by Jesse Jackson to link both the country of lineage and citizen status together (Niven & Zilber, 2000).

A recent study concluded that Americans of African descent were almost equally divided on which is the term of preference (Sigelman et al., 2005). The factors that influenced the respondents' preferences the most were age, city size, and region. The findings also suggested that the younger the person was the more likely the person was to prefer "African American" to "Black". Furthermore, for those whose racial identity was more important "Black" was the preferred term. The majority of the parents in my study

preferred the term African American to Black, with some not having a preference at all. Thus, the debate remains as to which term is best, but either is acceptable for scholarly and popular uses.

For the purposes of my research study, I have chosen to use the term “Black” in lieu of “African American”. Both terms refer to those individuals of African descent; however, Black is the term that for me personally is associated with cultural identity, Black pride, and the Black is Beautiful movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s of which I am a product.

Researcher’s Interest

While completing a study about gender and career paths of female superintendents, I interviewed a Black female superintendent. She felt expectations and challenges related to race superceded gender issues. She identified expectations such as questioning of ability, expectations of commitment to the Black community and Black children, and expected visibility in the Black community as race-related expectations. I was already interested in understanding more about the superintendency because of my aspirations to be a superintendent; however, the conversation with that superintendent piqued my interest in looking at research that presented Black parent perspectives on the subject of expectations for Black superintendents. I wanted to know if there was research that supported these perceptions that included the actual views of parents. None of the research reviewed on Black superintendents or Black parents focused explicitly on the expectations Black parents held for Black superintendents, nor did any research report expectations for Black superintendents directly from the perspectives of Black parents.

As a Black principal who aspires to the superintendency, understanding the expectations of Black parents can be useful to me personally. As a researcher, my study gave me the opportunity to step back from my personal perspectives to obtain an understanding of how Black parents themselves feel and to contribute to the scholarship on Black superintendents and Black parents. I recognize that my own experiences as a Black person and principal could have created some bias, but as a qualitative researcher I maintained an awareness of this potential bias so that the voices of the participants not the researcher resonated. The use of specific protocols for collecting and analyzing the data were other measures in place to reduce bias.

Summary

The current status of Black children's education remains of critical importance to Black parents. Black parents are looking to leadership to address their concerns. Black superintendents are more than likely to be found in districts with higher populations of Black students, therefore, their parents are looking for Black superintendents to hear their voices and address their concerns.

Some research suggested that expectations exist for Black superintendents. Yet none of it has reflected the actual views of Black parents. My study has given Black parents a voice that has been neglected in the literature about Black superintendents.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature that offers a theoretical framework for describing Black parents' expectations for Black superintendents. Educational, cultural, and historical foundations of Blacks' experiences as related to education have been analyzed. Studies on the Black principal's role as it relates to Black parents' expectations have been investigated as a lens for Black superintendents. Lastly, research on Black superintendents was reviewed to generate an understanding of any contextual expectations a Black superintendent might encounter. The theoretical framework for this study has been developed according to these topics.

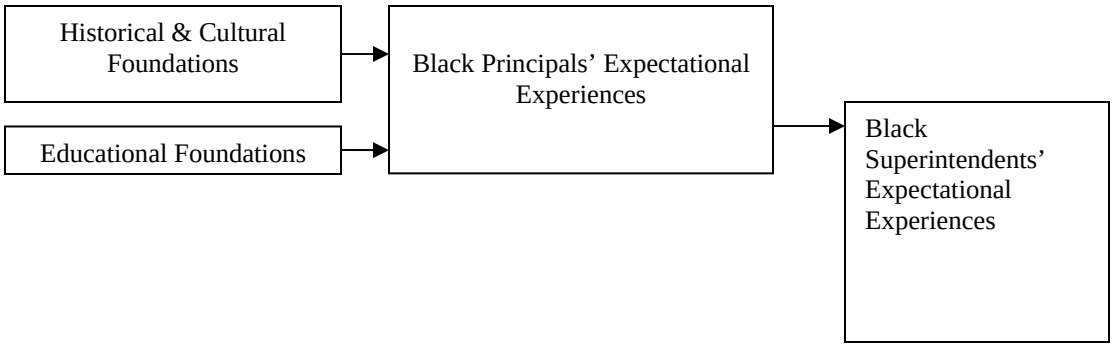

Figure 1. Theoretical framework skeleton.

The theoretical framework utilized in this study had several components (Figure 1). First, the historical and cultural foundations of education for Blacks were explored through a review of the literature on Blacks' goals for education, community involvement in education, and racial identity as related to education (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004; Franklin, 2004; Ogbu, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003, 2005). Second, educational foundations were investigated by addressing issues of equity, family/community disengagement and detachment, and discrepancies in values alignment (Anderson, 1988; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Fields-Smith, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). These components comprised the major influences on Black principals and Black superintendents' expectational experiences.

Third, given the limited research on Black superintendents, literature on Black principals' expectational experiences was studied as a lens for comparing Black superintendents' expectational experiences. As such, analysis of research on Black principals' leadership within and of the Black community, relationships with Black parents, and the advancement of and commitment to the Black community helped to explain expectations for Black superintendents (Edwards, 1993; Edwards & Willie, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003).

Finally, the literature that explored Black superintendents' expectational experience was explored. Literature on Black superintendents as symbolic role models and heroes was reviewed. Additionally, the contextual influences that impacted the conditions facing Black superintendents were discussed (Alston, 2000; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000; Edwards & Willie, 1998; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980; Tillman &

Cochran, 2000). Once fully developed, the theoretical framework is a way to understand Black parental expectations of Black superintendents. The first section explored the historical foundations of education and its impact on Blacks' education (Figure 2).

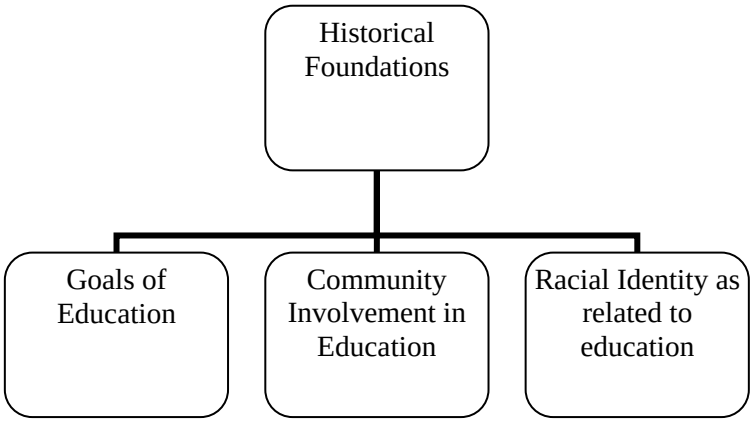

Figure 2. Theoretical framework: Overlay 1.

It was conjectured that historical foundations might have an impact on the expectations that Black parents held for Black superintendents (Figure 2). As such, the historical foundations section described the historical basis for Blacks goals as related to the education of Blacks. Next, it explored the Black community's involvement in education. Then it concluded with an analysis of the role of racial identity as it intersects with the education of Blacks.

Historical Foundations

Blacks have struggled through a long history of institutional racism, legal discrimination, and inequality, which has forced them to fight for various rights (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000). One focus of Blacks' quest for equality has been education. Historically, Black schools were an important institution in the Black community (Gordon, 2000; Morris, 1999, 2004; Tillman, 2004). Education was

valued and equated with power, freedom, and the means to advance the status of and improve conditions for Blacks in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Baker, 2001; Carter et al., 1989; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000; Savage, 2001). Throughout slavery and beyond, Blacks developed strong values for education, self-help, and self-determination to overcome oppression and racism (Anderson, 1988; Siddle-Walker, 2000).

Goals of Education

During slavery, laws were established in the South that prohibited Blacks from being taught to read and to write (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000). Nevertheless, Blacks were willing to risk severe punishment and even death to do so (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000; Prater, 2002). The ending of the Civil War sparked growth in education as newly freed Blacks in the South were for the first time permitted to attend public schools (Brown, 2004; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000). Emergent Black leadership recognized the importance of establishing and supporting schools that provided education to Black children (Anderson, 1988; Brown, 2004; Ravitch, 2000/2001). Nevertheless, Black children often did not receive adequate education.

The *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954) legal finding ignited a shift in Black education. The segregationist policy of "separate but equal" was found to be unconstitutional and schools were ordered to integrate (Brown, 2004; Cook 2005; Dawkins, 2004; Jackson, 1995; Smith, 2005). While the *Brown* finding was considered a victory for Blacks' social standing, it led initially to the loss of jobs through transfer, demotion, or firing of many Black teachers and administrators throughout the 1950s and

1960s (Brown, 2004; Edwards, 1993; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Irvine, 1988; Moody, 1971; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shircliffe, 2002; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003; Tillman, 2004). Importantly, many Black parents began to feel a loss of power in making decisions about their children's education. This feeling was significant because before the *Brown* decision, some researchers have argued that Black parents felt a sense of power to influence their condition through education and were supported in this effort by Black teachers and Black principals (Anderson, 1988; Siddle Walker, 2003, 2005; Tillman, 2004).

The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s into the 1970s resulted in gains for Blacks' education and for the employment of Black principals and superintendents (Lomotey, 1989; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980), but gaps in the academic achievement between Blacks and Whites continued to widen. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the authors of a variety of reports and research articles concluded that Blacks students were still falling behind their peers academically. More Black students were found in special education than in honors and gifted classes, and Black students received more suspensions than non-Black students (Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Prater, 2002). For these reasons and others, school reform efforts have begun to address these achievement gaps. As a result of more widespread public knowledge of school performance, more Black parents are aware of the quality of the schools their children attend and are addressing these concerns with school personnel (Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

Decidedly, Blacks have made significant gains that were connected to the *Brown* decision as well as prior and subsequent legislation, lobbying, boycotting, and advocacy efforts (Anderson, 1988; Bauman, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2003, 2005; Willie & Willie,

2005). Over the last 50 years educational systems have changed appreciably, but the quality of education received by Blacks continues to be a major concern (Clotfelter, 2004; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Kershaw, 1992; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Trotman, 2001; Willie & Willie, 2005). Historic inequities in educational experiences and outcomes for Blacks remain important issues to Black parents and strongly affect their views and expectations for the education of their children in public schools today.

Community Involvement in Education

The existence of the Black community as an entity is the topic of extensive research in history, politics, education, psychology, and sociology (Anderson, 1988; Cole & Omari, 2003; Franklin, 2004; Gaines, 1996; Gordon, 2000; Walters & Smith, 1999; West, 2001). The Black community is more than a geographically defined community (Cole & Omari, 2003; Gordon, 2000). Definitions of the Black community encompassed two key qualities: having common interests and goals and having a common racial identity (Franklin, 2004; Gordon, 2000; Lusane, 1994; Walters & Smith, 1999).

Since Blacks first had the opportunity to obtain an education, the Black community has established the standard for educational achievement of Blacks (Bauman, 1998; Edwards, 1993). Throughout American history, the Black community has recognized that their advancement as a race was contingent on helping each other to advance, resulting in the development of a self-help or uplift ideology (Cole & Omari, 2003; Gaines, 1996). A key part of this self-help ideology, regardless of one's stance in the ideology, was the recognition that education was the best approach to achieving equality and advancing individually and collectively. Inasmuch as the pursuit of education of Black youth has been a binding factor in the Black community, the self-help

philosophy provided a common purpose between some Black educators and Black parents (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). Thus, to explore the expectations that Black parents hold for superintendents, it was necessary to understand the role the Black community has played in the lives of Blacks.

Racial Identity as Related to Education

Researchers have prescribed racial identity theories to conceptualize the influence of race on the everyday lives of Blacks (Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Durant & Sparrow, 1997; Ogbu, 2004; Sanders-Thompson, 2001; Sanders-Thompson & Akbar, 2003). Importantly, these researchers have recognized the varying degrees to which racial identity has influenced Blacks' lives.

Ogbu (2004) and Morris (2004) argued that the concept of collective identity developed among Blacks because of their history of oppression, beginning with slavery through segregation, Jim Crow laws, and continuing today through racism and discrimination. For these reasons, each individual's achievement is still seen as part of the collective struggle of Blacks (Morris, 2004; Ogbu, 2004; Savage, 2001). Although Martin and Martin (1985) did not use the term collective identity, these researchers described a fictive kinship relationship among Blacks that suggested the existence of a supportive relationship among non-related Blacks in the community, because of commonality in history, ancestry, and social situation. Both fictive kinship relationships and collective identity arose from the interdependent relationship among Blacks. Therefore, Ogbu (2004) argued, the idea of collective identity affected the relationships between Blacks because of its impact on attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. Black

parents who have accepted the idea of collective identity and fictive kinship relationships might have expectations for Black superintendents that are linked to this belief that Blacks must help other Blacks to succeed.

Because of commonality in race, Ogbu (2004) asserted that sanctions from the Black community were imminent if a Black person in a leadership position was not involved in fighting for the causes of Black people. As an example, Laval Wilson, the first Black superintendent in Boston, desired to be known as "a superintendent who happened to be Black," so he did not build strong alliances within the Black community (Edwards & Willie, 1998). The actual motivation for not aligning with the Black community was not specified, but the outcome was clear. Key Black leaders had played an important role in his hiring, but when his leadership came under fire, he had lost the support of the Black community (Edwards & Willie, 1998). The Wilson case demonstrated an instance of incongruence between Black community expectations and the superintendent's focus; Edwards and Willie contended his failure to recognize the Black community as a power source was to his detriment and cost him an important base of support when he needed it. This example points to the importance of school leadership understanding the needs of the Black community, which is explored in the next section (Figure 3).

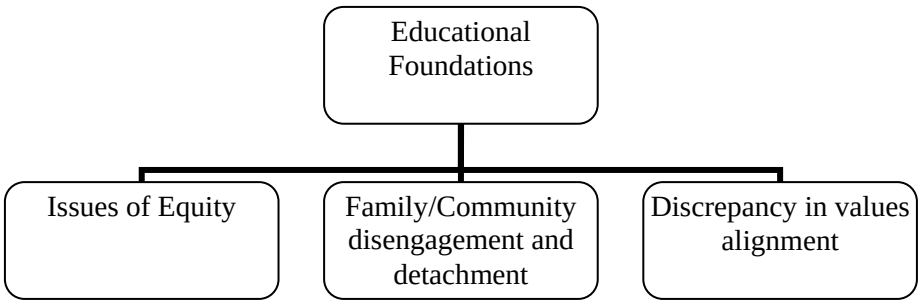

Figure 3. Theoretical framework: Overlay 2.

As Figure 3 displays, the educational foundations section explored issues that impacted the views of Blacks towards education. The subsections of issues of equity, family/community disengagement and detachment, and discrepancy in values synthesized research about Blacks' concerns about the education that Black children receive in schools and Black parents' relationships with schools and school personnel.

Educational Foundations

Some researchers suggested that Blacks do not value education (Koonce & Harper, 2005; Prater, 2002); however, historical and current research refuted this view (Anderson, 1988; Bauman, 1998; Edwards, 1993; Hill, 2001; Kershaw, 1992; Siddle Walker, 2000; Trotman, 2001). The studies analyzed herein show that Blacks have been supportive of schools and continued to be, but not in ways that have always been positively recognized by school personnel (Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

Issues of Equity

The inequities in facilities, teaching materials and other resources, transportation, and qualified teachers in Black schools have been substantially documented (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Ravitch, 2000/2001; Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker

& Archung, 2003; Waite & Crocco, 2004). Yet Blacks so valued education that the entire Black community, not just parents, made sacrifices to ensure opportunities for Blacks to get an education (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Ravitch, 2000/2001; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000; Waite & Crocco, 2004). For instance, when parents and the community were not given equal financial support or resources, Black parents, and the Black community in general, banded together to provide financial support, labor and materials, first to build schools then to maintain them (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000). Despite an obvious lack of resources, Blacks were able to "do more with less." Even in the poorest of communities, researchers noted, Blacks were willing to make sacrifices because of a community commitment to Black children (Gill, 2002; Prater, 2002; Savage, 2001; Trotman, 2001). Beyond those contributions, Black parents showed how much they valued education by teaching their children about its importance (Fields-Smith, 2005; Gill, 2002; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003).

Several current researchers asserted Black parents' involvement has been presented negatively in the research, with Black parents being seen as uninvolved, uncaring, and uninterested in their children's education, especially parents in poor and urban school districts (Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Yet these same researchers provided evidence for the inaccuracy of this belief. As noted, Blacks have a history of being very concerned with education as they have fought for their children's educational opportunities, desiring more for their children than they had themselves (Anderson, 1988; Baker, 2001, Fields-Smith, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2000). In actuality, since the elimination of legalized segregated schools, Black parents'

involvement has been expressed differently than the way school officials and personnel expected; thus many Black parents in the current research felt disconnected from schools (Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Changing family structures and other commitments have prevented some parents from being as actively involved within schools in ways that earlier research described (Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000), but as Trotman (2001) clearly stated, this did not mean that Black parents did not care or were not involved in their children's education as lack of physical presence implied to some educators.

In the pre-*Brown* era, researchers suggested, Black parents were more adept at navigating the school system because of their relationships with Black teachers and principals (Edwards, 1993; Irvine, 1988; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker 2000). More recently, Gutman and McLoyd (2000), in a study of parent involvement of high-achieving and low-achieving Black students, found that Black parents still emphasized the importance of education. The key difference in this study was that the parents of higher achievers were found to be more assertive in their relationships with the schools and had more supportive conversations with school personnel; the parents of the low-achieving students, though just as interested in their children's achievement, did not have the same supportive relationship with schools. The researchers suggested that differences lie in the reasons the parents were interacting with the schools. The researchers concluded that negative interactions have lessened the likelihood that parents wanted to be involved with school personnel. These studies emphasized the importance that Black parents historically placed on equity in education even if they were not equipped with the financial means or skills to navigate the system.

Family/Community Disengagement and Detachment

More of the research about the relationship between Black parents and Black schools prior to the *Brown* decision suggested a supportive relationship between Black parents and Black teachers and Black principals (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000). Other researchers, however, suggested that this relationship was romanticized; therefore, it was important to acknowledge that part of the impetus to desegregation was dissatisfaction with the quality of education that Black children were receiving in Black schools (Baker, 2001; Nelson, 1987). The overwhelmingly supportive relationship described in some of the research was not necessarily indicative of how all Blacks felt (Baker, 2001; Nelson, 1987). Some researchers contended that prior to desegregation Black parents trusted schools more and relied on Black teachers and principals to make the best decisions regarding the education of their children (Fields-Smith, 2005; Irvine, 1988; Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000). Researchers asserted that Black parents felt more respected by school personnel and that their views were important (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999, 2004). As a whole, however, mutual respect was said to have characterized the relationships between Black parents and schools in segregated schools (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004). A supportive relationship reflected interdependence between Black parents and Black school personnel regarding the education of Black children. They were working together in this quest for quality education.

Edwards (1993) and Morris (1999, 2004) described a climate of collaboration and cooperation in segregated Black schools. These researchers argued that Black parents and the community expected accountability from school personnel because the Black teachers

and Black principals were also part of the Black community in terms of proximity and values. This relationship was symbiotic between Black parents, the Black community, and Black educators. It was evident to these Black parents that the Black teachers and Black principals cared about their children and valued the parents (Edwards, 1993; Irvine, 1988, 1989). Recent research supported the argument that these attributes were still important to Black parents (Morris, 1999, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

Some researchers suggested that desegregation initiated the loss of the supportive attitude that Black parents once held toward schools and school personnel (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000; Tillman, 2004). Several reasons for this change have been advanced. Black parents became more dissatisfied with schools when they found their children were resegregated within White schools; White teachers had lower expectations for Black students; Black parents and children both experienced more negative interactions with school personnel; Black children were not afforded opportunities in magnet schools, gifted and talented and honors programs at the same degree as White students; and the number of Black students in special education and receiving suspensions increased (Bainbridge, Lasley, & Sundre, 2003; Edwards, 1993; Fields Smith, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2000). Moreover, Black parents expressed concern that more Black students were bussed to unfamiliar areas than White students, creating a barrier for parent involvement as it became more difficult for them to visit the schools and participate in school activities and programs, and the parents felt unwelcome in the new school and neighborhood (Siddle Walker, 2000). Some Black parents lamented the loss of the community and cultural links that characterized Black schools prior to desegregation (Irvine, 1988; Morris, 1999; Tillman, 2004)

Numerous studies on parent involvement have concluded that parent involvement positively impacts student achievement (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Fields-Smith, 2005; Overstreet, Devine, Bevans, & Effreom, 2005; Smalley & Reye-Blanes, 2001; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Trotman, 2001). *The No Child Left Behind Act* requires schools to involve parents in the educational process, and parents have more choice about the schools their children attend (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Yet, research that addressed Black parents' involvement and relationship with school personnel found that many Black parents today feel disconnected from schools and school personnel so it has been more difficult to get parents involved in the schools (Beebe-Frankenberger, Lane, Bocian, Gresham, & MacMillan, 2005; Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lott, 2001; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

One reason suggested for this disconnect was that significant differences were found in how school personnel treated Black parents based on socioeconomic status (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Some researchers found that teachers and administrators held stereotypical and negative perceptions about the interest minority parents have in their children's education (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lott, 2001). These perceptions led to feelings of alienation among parents. Four issues crystallized the feelings of alienation among the parents in the Calabrese (1990) study. First, minority parents felt they were not invited to school as often as they should have been. Second, they felt school policies changed so frequently that they could not depend on the district or school authorities for reliable information. Third, they believed teachers were unfriendly. Finally, they were frustrated with school

policies and procedures. Two other studies addressed the opinion that Black parents do not care about their children's education. These researchers suggested that lower-class or working-class parents were treated in stereotypical ways that reflected negative perceptions based on socioeconomic status (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lott, 2001). These examples illustrated how a dissonance in expectations might exist between some Black parents and school officials.

The literature explored a second reason for Black parents' disengagement: cultural differences (Foster, 1993; Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Hale Benson, 1986; Irvine, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Prater, 2002). Some Blacks wanted to have Black teachers and administrators in the schools their children attended because of cultural similarity. A few researchers have studied how conflicting cultural values between the teacher and Black parents led to a mismatch in expectations between these parents and schools (Beebe-Frankenberger, Lane, Bocian, Gresham, & MacMillan, 2005; Hale Benson, 1986; Prater, 2002; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Bryant (1998) established a different argument. Bryant (1998) concluded that similarity in race and culture should create a positive relationship; however, the principal's background and style can affect this relationship. The findings in that study related to other research that suggested the importance of knowing the community, building alliances in the community and understanding what was important to that particular community (Edwards & Willie, 1998; Henig et al., 1999).

Additional reasons for detachment between schools and Black parents related to the efforts schools made to connect with Black parents, regardless of the parents' background or educational level. Black parents felt disconnected from schools and school

personnel because of negative experiences during the parent's own time in school, feeling intimidated by school personnel, not realizing how important involvement is, perceptions of his or her role in schools, and conflicts with schedules (Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001; Trotman, 2001). Despite these problems, several researchers emphasized the desire of Black parents to have their voices heard and valued (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Morris, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c).

Discrepancy in Values Alignment

Differing values and a general lack of agreement about education have added to the disconnect between schools and Black parents. Social class was identified as a factor that impacted how schools treat parents, but it also affected how Black parents viewed schools (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Morris, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Differences were found in how school officials interacted with parents of lower social classes regardless of race (Calabrese, 1990; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lott, 2001). Low-income parents had more difficulty in getting school officials to listen to their views and concerns, which provided some insight into why some Black parents viewed school negatively (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lott, 2001).

Treatment affected by cultural and socioeconomic differences has contributed to strained relationships between many Black parents and school officials. More suspensions, higher numbers in special education, fewer in gifted programs, and tracking practices have led Black parents, especially lower class Black parents, to distrust that schools placed the best interests of their children first (Boyd & Correa, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Morris, 2004; Ravitch, 2000/2001). Consequently, some Black parents have felt it was necessary to criticize educators, and these educators were not very

receptive to this criticism. The reaction by school personnel to the Black parents' views led to more mistrust (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Other researchers suggested that Black parents had a "confrontational approach" in their interactions with schools, but this research mainly analyzed the perspectives of teachers (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). As a result of these conflicts, Black parents took stances they felt necessary to obtain quality educational opportunities for their children (Diamond & Gomez, 2004).

A few studies addressed Black parents' satisfaction with schools (Carter et al., 1989; Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Although these studies did not expressly address expectations, they identified key variables leading to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with schools. As an example, Farkas and Johnson's (1998) study of 800 Black parents reported a proportion of eight to one were most concerned with the academic achievement of their children. A second study reported perceived teacher quality impacted satisfaction with teachers and the school system (Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). In all, these studies presented perspectives on how Black parents' expectations and views might be affected by both social class and experiences that revealed the receptiveness of school personnel to Black parents.

The first two sections explored the historical, cultural and educational foundations that might influence Black parents' views, attitudes, and expectations. These components were used to identify influences on Black principals and Black superintendents' expectational experiences. The next section explored the expectational experiences of Black principals as a comparison for Black superintendents expectational experiences (Figure 4).

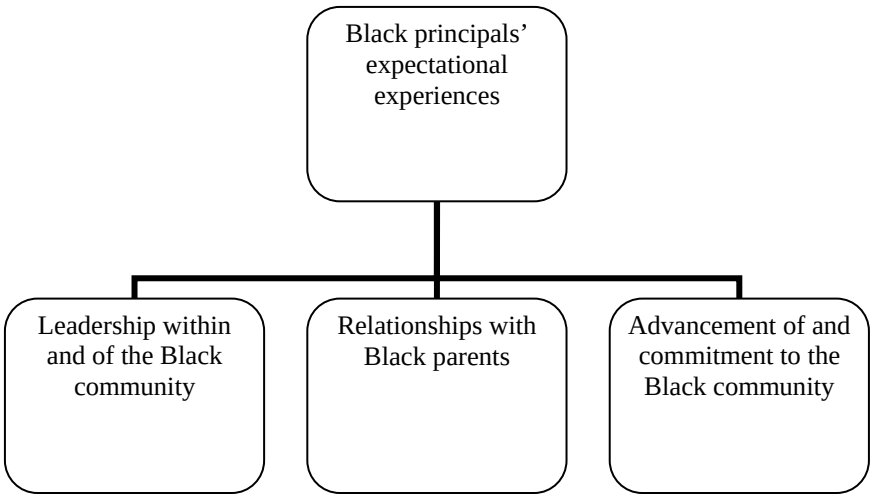

Figure 4. Theoretical framework: Overlay 3.

Black principals' expectational experiences were found to consist of three major components as outlined in Figure 4. The scholarship explored Black principals' leadership within and of the Black community, relationships with Black parents, and their role and accompanying expectations in the advancement and commitment to the Black community. These topics provide a general understanding of expectations for Black school leaders, which might then in turn apply to the expectational experiences of Black superintendents.

Black Principals' Expectational Experiences

Research is lacking that describes the desirable characteristics of Black superintendents; hence what the research revealed as valued characteristics of Black principals was analyzed. Several researchers described cases involving individual Black principals and their role in the education of Black children, including the obstacles faced, how the principals addressed those obstacles, and their relationship with Black parents and the Black community (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999; Randolph, 2004; Siddle

Walker, 2000). Much of the research on this subject was case studies of the recollections of Black parents, teachers, principals and students, and archival records. The focus was on Black principals prior to the end of segregation. Recently, the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954*)* decision has led researchers to look at the current status between Blacks and Black parents (Brown, 2004; Cook, 2005; Smith, 2005). These cases presented a representative picture of what characteristics were valued in Black principals and collectively provided some understanding of the qualities Black parents and the Black community desire from Black superintendents. The literature identified three primary qualities found in Black principals: their position as community leader and role model, their positive relationships with Black parents, and their focus on the advancement of education for Blacks.

Leadership Within and of the Black Community

Black principals were portrayed in the literature as being more than a principal of the school because of their level of involvement within the Black community (Morris, 2004; Savage, 2001). Black principals were presented as important leaders in the local Black community (Edwards, 1993; Gill, 2002; Henig et al., 1999; Irvine, 1989; Loder, 2005; Morris, 1999; Randolph, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003; Tillman, 2004). As a community leader, the Black principal was expected to focus on what the community perceived as needed for the Black children in that particular community. Siddle Walker (2000) indicated that Black principals had interactions with parents and the community in formal and informal settings such as gas stations, neighborhood stores, and churches that positively impacted their relationships with Black parents. Furthermore, Black principals were actively involved in churches and civic organizations within the community, which

provided additional opportunities for personal interactions with Black parents. This personal knowledge of the principal's background helped to establish rapport, credibility, and support from the Black community (Edwards, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003). The expectations described might also apply to other leaders; however in this case, they provided a general understanding of what the Black community expects of Black school leaders.

Relationship(s) With Black Parents

Black principals' regular and open communication with Black parents enhanced the relationship with Black parents. Black principals have even altered the language used and avoided physical barriers as ways to avoid a communication disconnection with Black parents and to establish a sense of equality in relationship between principal and parents (Siddle Walker, 2003). Additionally, some researchers suggested that Black principals and superintendents needed the support of Black parents and the Black community if they were to be successful; therefore, it was mandatory that Black administrators be very visible and involved throughout the Black community (Edwards & Willie, 1998; Scott, 1980; Siddle Walker, 2003; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). Consequently, a Black principal's close relationship with the Black community was said to have provided the principal with the knowledge and understanding of the Black community's needs necessary for the establishment of an educational agenda that aligned with the values and goals of the Black community (Bryant, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003).

Advancement of and Commitment to the Black Community

Research showed that Black principals were expected to work to improve the education of Black children. Commitment to the education of Black children was seen as essential to the success of Black principals (Irvine, 1989; Jones, 2002; Siddle Walker, 2003). Recognizing that all administrators should be a part of the community where they work, Black parents, in particular, expected Black principals to be a part of the community due to having a racial connection that should give them better understanding of the specific needs and values of the Black community (Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Morris, 1999, 2004). For example, Siddle Walker (2003) described a Black principal who found ways to work with and around the superintendent while working with the Black community in order to secure the best education possible for his students. This focus on the needs of Black children brings forth significance because it provided insight into why some Black parents described having higher levels of trust of Black principals (Edwards, 1993; Gill, 2002; Lomotey, 1987, 1989). As was suggested, Black educators were expected to be more committed to the concerns of Black students, but similarity in race did not guarantee that it will be so (Morris, 2004). This research on Black principals was used to provide a means for understanding possible expectations that Black superintendents might also face. The next section explores what the research has found about the expectational experiences of Black superintendents (Figure 5).

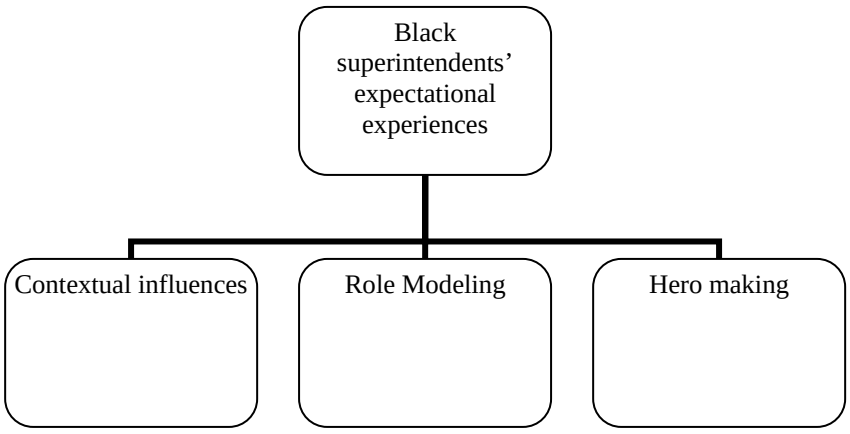

Figure 5. Theoretical framework: Overlay 4.

As Figure 5 shows, Black superintendents' expectational experiences focused on three components. There was limited research that addressed the expectations of Black superintendents. As the display shows the scholarship that revealed, Black superintendents as role models and heroes as well as the contextual influences that impacted the expectational experiences of Black superintendents were explored. Together, these components provided an understanding of the expectations that Black parents might have for current Black superintendents.

Black Superintendents' Expectational Experiences

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA), a prominent educational organization for school administrators, has sponsored research to study the role of the American school superintendent each decade since 1920, except during WWII. Continuously changing social, economic, political, and legal dynamics have influenced the role of and expectations for a superintendent. The AASA studies and other research have traced this development of the position from clerk to CEO (Dawkins, 2004; Glass, 2000; Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2005; Jackson, 1995; Owen & Ovando, 2000;

Revere, 1985). This research made it clear that the superintendent's position is multifaceted; however, the research has not been as exact in defining expectations of a superintendent because of contextual influences on the role. Black parents' expectations of Black superintendents were the focus of this study. In order to analyze the Black parents' expectations, it was important to understand the context of the superintendency for Blacks in that role. Research about Black superintendents was limited; however, some of that research did focus on expectations that Blacks had for a Black superintendent, but only from the perspective of Black superintendents, not from parents' perspective (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980).

Contextual Influences

Revere (1987) and Scott (1980) stated that Blacks did not become superintendents before 1956, explaining the lack of earlier discussion of Black superintendents. Current research that specifically focused on Black superintendents remains sparse in comparison to research about superintendents (Alston, 2000, 2005; Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Jackson, 1995, 1999; Dawkins, 2004). Researchers who have studied Black superintendents have found limitations existed as to where Blacks were hired, which were most likely to be in urban districts with high minority populations (Alston, 2000; Bjork, 2000; Brunner, 2000; Kowalski, 1995; Moody, 1971; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980; Sizemore, 1986). Black superintendents were overwhelmingly found in districts with financial problems, low parent involvement, decaying buildings, and low academic achievement (Moody, 1971; Revere, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tallerico, 1999). A recent study by the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) and Education Trust (Robinson et al., 2004) reached similar results. Their data were based on responses of

Black superintendents who were also members of NABSE. Fifty-five percent of Black superintendents were found in the deep South. Black superintendents held positions in 32 states. Mississippi had the largest number of Black superintendents and Michigan the second-largest. One hundred thirty-three of the superintendents were in urban settings and 74 were in rural school systems. The student populations in their districts varied from small, with less than 200 students, to very large, with more than 100,000 students. Overall, 54% of the students were Black (Robinson et al., 2004).

Expectations of Black Superintendents

As has been previously described, the type of leadership needed was affected by context. Expectations are also both contextual and situational (Biddle & Thomas, 1979). An expectation is defined as a belief held about the behavior appropriate or expected of a person in a particular position (Biddle & Thomas, 1979; Glass, Arnkoff, & Shapiro, 2001; Normore, 2004). Further, expectations are both self-produced and produced in conjunction with the views of others (Stryker, 2001). Given that Black superintendents are typically found in districts with a myriad of problems, the effectiveness of a superintendent may depend on the congruence between the expectations the individual holds in comparison to parents.

Researchers have found that Black leaders are held to different standards than their White counterparts (Jackson, 1995; Walters & Smith, 1999). Several researchers agreed that Black superintendents, as one of many types of Black leaders, had expectations and responsibilities that were unique to their status as "Black superintendents" (Dawkins, 2004; Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Henig et al.'s (1999) school reform study addressed the role race

played in the enactment of the superintendency, finding that race did matter and did affect expectations. Similarly, some researchers suggested that Blacks, situated as superintendents, have exceedingly difficult expectations requiring them to be "super" and "extraordinary" (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000; Tucker, 1980).

A few researchers focused on expectations of Black superintendents, but none of this research has directly asked Black parents for their views. Scott (1980) appeared to have carried out the only study that specifically names expectations that Black parents and the Black community have for Black superintendents. One of the superintendents in that study listed several special demands. Black superintendents were expected to be highly accessible; were expected to be more available and visible because of race; and were expected to respond to the Black community's "demands and petitions," unlike what had been expected of previous White superintendents. Furthermore, Scott (1980) described a lack of trust in the Black superintendent's ability to perform the tasks, with the assumption the Black superintendent would respond differently than the White superintendent. Kowalski (1995) also described this lack of trust. He said that Black superintendents felt their authority was questioned more frequently. This lack of trust between Black superintendents and other Blacks contradicted the literature but coincided with studies showing that Black parents feel more of a need to question and monitor their children's school experiences because of problems encountered. This suggested that trust was an issue for Black superintendents and that race was not the only mediating factor in perceptions and expectations that Black parents have for a Black superintendent.

Scott's (1980) study, taken together with other research, established three expectations for Black superintendents. The expectations were that Black superintendents will serve as symbolic leaders, that they demonstrate sensitivity to Black to culture and history, and that they address the needs of the Black community.

Role Modeling

Jackson (1995) suggested that Black superintendents were viewed as "symbolic leaders" and were seen as representing their entire race, which corresponded to the expectation that the Black superintendent serve as a role model. Black superintendents themselves and researchers have documented that many superintendents and other constituents viewed Black superintendents as role models, not only to the students in their schools, but also for the Black community in general (Scott, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Tillman and Cochran (2000) stated Black superintendents saw themselves as "sources of pride in their community" and felt that their success or failure affected opportunities for other "persons of color." Some research about Black principals as role models concluded that the Black community expected Black principals to be advocates for Black children, too (Edwards, 1993; Lomotey, 1987; Morris, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003). Townsel and Banks (1975) discussed this expectation, finding that some people expected special concessions to Black students because the administrator was Black.

Hero Making

A second expectation related to symbolic leadership was "superhero or superheroine," who was expected to eradicate all of the wrongs in society that have affected the academic achievement of Black students (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005;

Kowalski, 1995; Revere. 1985; Scott, 1980, 1990). Scott (1980) described this expectation as the demand to "walk on water" and bring order to difficult situations. Scott (1990) suggested that Blacks were expected to perform "miracles" and eliminate problems that have existed for years. Black superintendents faced expectations that the needs of the Black community and Black students will be addressed in ways that White superintendents would not or could not achieve. Black superintendents who maintained the status quo were seen as failing to address the educational concerns of Black parents and the Black community at large, and most importantly as failing Black students (Scott, 1980, 1990). Scott (1990) suggested that although Black superintendents had some obligation to the Black community, as a professional the Black superintendent had to remain focused on education, even if subjected to criticism.

Race, culture, and history all impact expectations (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Henig et al., 1999; Scott, 1990; Townsel & Banks, 1975). Townsel and Banks (1975) described how Black administrators were expected to advocate for Black students because of the historical treatment of Blacks and were expected to have an understanding of that experience because of race. Similarly, Scott (1990) explained that Black superintendents were expected to recognize the Black experience as being unique. Since the Black experience has been immersed in unequal treatment, an integral part of the Black superintendent's role was to work to eliminate inequities in education. These race-related expectations can lead to role conflicts. As Scott (1990) asserted, Black superintendents struggled to maintain a balance between "Black consciousness" and "professionalism." This created a "double bind" in which a Black superintendent can be viewed as "too Black" by many Whites and "not Black enough" by other Blacks.

However, some superintendents wanted to be viewed as superintendents, not as Black superintendents. The Edwards and Willie (1998) study of the first Black superintendent of Boston schools illustrated how such a stance can negatively impact the relationship with other Blacks. That Black superintendent's experience was indicative of what others have described as the integral need of Black superintendents to build relationships with the Black community and address their concerns or risk the loss of support from the Black community (Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990).

As the number of Black superintendents has increased, so have the expectations that the needs and requests of the Black community will be addressed. A challenge to fulfilling the expectations of Blacks is that the demands within the Black community might not be the same. A challenge for the Black superintendent is to meet the various demands of various groups where everyone wants allegiance (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Scott, 1980). Black superintendents must juggle the expectation from the Black community that they will address the educational concerns of Black parents and the Black community at large, while doing what is necessary for all students in the district (Scott, 1990).

In addition, Revere (1987) argued that Black female superintendents experience unique expectations. Revere (1985, 1987) found that Black women experienced more difficulties with other Blacks than they did with Whites, concluding that Black board members, staff, and community members showed their dissatisfaction and challenged Black female superintendents more openly. In fact, some of these individuals candidly questioned why a school district needed a Black woman in the first place. Revere's (1987) conclusions suggested that gender role expectations might further complicate a

Black female's enactment of the role. Peyton-Caire (2000) suggested that gender role expectations stemmed from marginalization (Brunner & Peyton-Caire, describing Blacks as being outsiders, or in Brunner's words (2000) "outsiders within.") The combination of race and gender added to the exclusion of Black women unlike what was experienced by Whites or even Black men (Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000).

Summary

The history of Blacks has been beset with inequality, especially in schools, resulting in the need to fight for a quality education. The history of Blacks in America provided a backdrop for explaining the stances taken by many Black parents in regards to their children's treatment in schools and their perceptions of school personnel. Yet Black parents were very clear about what they desired from schools, a quality education for their children. This desire significantly impacted their relationships, their expectations for school leaders, and their views of Black teachers, Black principals, and Black superintendents. As this literature review has explored, several pertinent conclusions might be drawn that relate to describing the expectations that Black parents have for Black superintendents.

Education is valued in the Black community. Black parents are part of a larger Black community that has as its common focus improvement of conditions for Blacks individually and collectively, with education being an important means to this end. Based on their history, the Black community has norms and expectations associated with the collective Black struggle and cultural affinity. Parent involvement has been established as an important factor in the educational success of Black children; however, the home-school relationship has been studied mostly in relation to the disconnect between Black

parents and schools. A small body of research has begun to show reasons why Black parents feel disconnected from schools and what schools can do to address this gulf.

The characteristics that Black parents desired Black principals to have are beginning to be outlined in the literature. As has been established here, Black superintendents were most likely to be found in school districts where Black students were the majority. These districts were plagued with financial troubles and academic issues and presented significant challenges to school leaders. Black parents had high expectations for the performance of Black superintendents because of the need to improve the quality of their children's education.

Many Black parents in the literature felt powerless to change their schools, felt they were not welcome in schools, and felt that their views were not important to school personnel, yet no research specifically addressed the expectations that Black parents have for White or Black superintendents. Together, these areas provided the theoretical framework for describing the expectations that Black parents in this study held for Black superintendents (Figure 6).

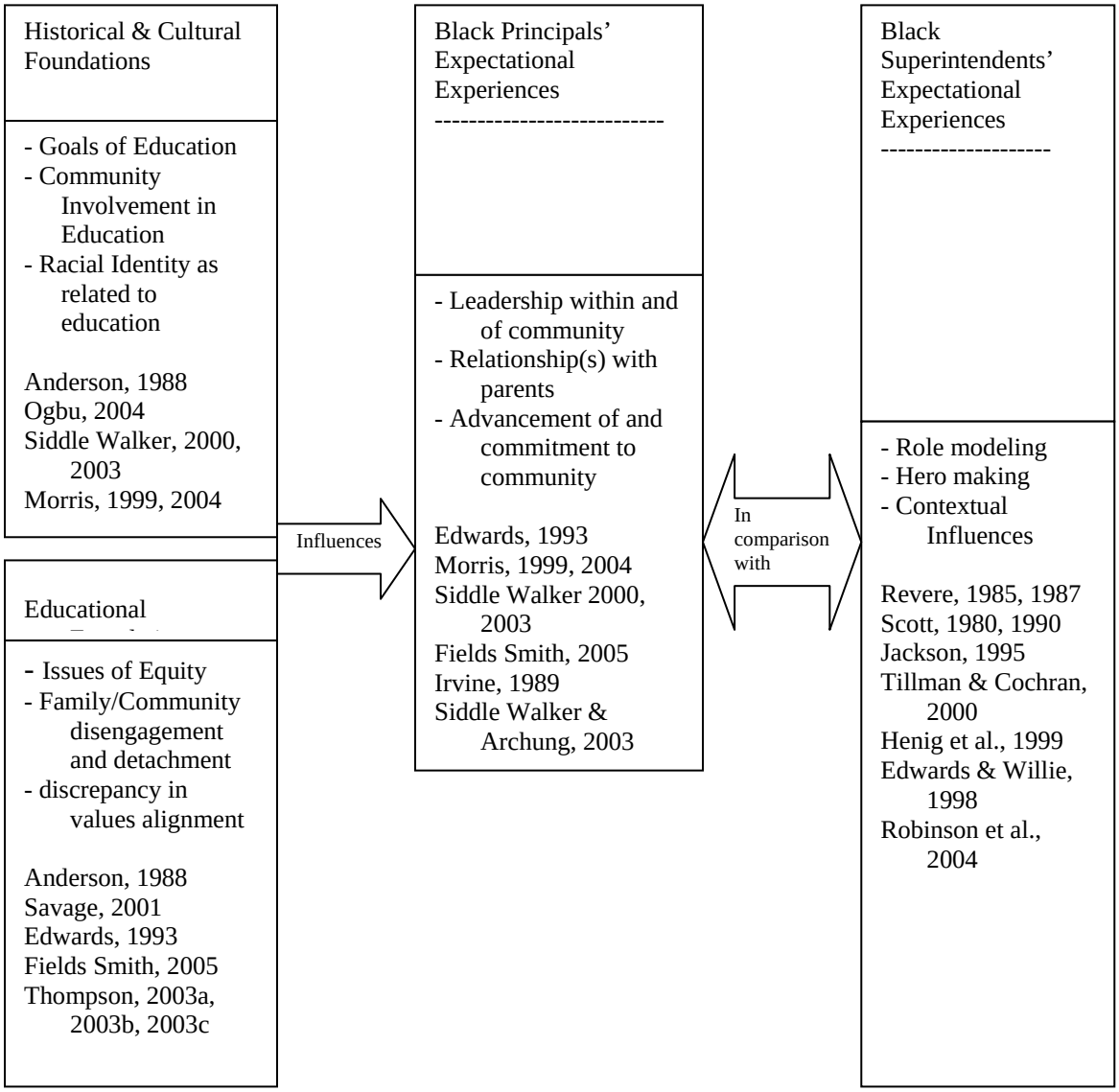

Figure 6. Theoretical framework: Black parental expectations of Black superintendents.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the expectations that Black parents have for Black superintendents. The research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do Black parents describe what they are looking for in a superintendent?
2. What are the ways in which their descriptions differ for a Black superintendent?

This chapter describes the methods used to address these research questions. The chapter is divided into major sections of research design, data collection, data management, data analysis, and validity, and reliability.

Research Design

To explore parents' views, I utilized a descriptive research design that was qualitative in nature. A characteristic of descriptive research is that it seeks to obtain information about the attitudes and views of a particular group of people (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Importantly, a key to descriptive research is to explore research questions of "What do people think" about a particular phenomenon (Kane & O'Reilley-De Brun, 2001) or "What is" (Gall et al., 2003). Using this approach, I sought to gain an understanding of Black parents' expectations for Black superintendents. I explored

exclusively the views of Black parents which I identified as a gap in the research on the subject of Black superintendents.

This descriptive research design employed interviews as the primary data collection method. The use of interviews in the research design allowed me to "explore, describe, and provide analysis of this phenomena as experienced by the study's population, in fine tuned detail, and in the study's participants' own terms" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 27). The focus on the words and thoughts of the parents and the use of their own words were essential to the descriptive research design (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Krathwohl, 1998). The accurate depiction of the thoughts of the parents was integral to describing the perspectives of the parents and to interpreting the data (Adams & Schaneveldt, 1991). The use of interviews allowed for multiple perspectives, which was important because each parent's perspectives represented that individual's reality, and coupled with the views of the other parents, it allowed for a rich description of the expectations that these parents held for superintendents in general and Black superintendents specifically. This study provided the views of a specific population (Black parents who were current or former officers in a parent organization) and might be generalized to parents of similar backgrounds at other sites. Finally, the use of a descriptive research design facilitated interpretation, contrast, classification, and integration of the findings (Adams & Schaneveldt).

The theoretical framework utilized for this study illustrated the connections between the existing literature on the topic of expectations for Black superintendents and this study (Holiday, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The literature review provided the overarching umbrella for understanding expectations of Black parents. The review of the

scholarship included a historical overview of education for Blacks, the Black community's views on education for Blacks, and research that identified expectations for Black administrators in general and Black superintendents specifically. Together, these topics informed the study and provided a research-based bridge for the exploration of the expectations Black parents have for Black superintendents.

Construct validity was established through the use of a chain of evidence during data collection. As suggested by Yin (2003), the chain of evidence included the use of interview protocols and maintenance of field notebooks. Validity and reliability are discussed in more detail in the data collection section.

Setting and Participants

This section describes the setting and participants in this study. A detailed description of both is provided to strengthen the validity of the research process. In addition, a subsection on access provides additional information about the process followed to gain access to the district and the participants in the study.

Setting

Only a few school districts in the selected Midwest state were led by Black superintendents, a fact that limited where data collection could occur. Of these districts, the site selected for the descriptive study was a large urban school district where there has been more than one Black superintendent. The American Association of School Administrators (Glass, 2000) survey categories provided summary information for school superintendents by type of district and total enrollment. All districts in this survey were public schools. That survey's categories were used for classifying the district in the study. The district in the study fit into Group A: Urban districts with enrollments greater than or

equal to 25,000. More than 50% of the student population was minority. The school district had a high poverty rate and a median income of less than $26,000 (“National Center”, 2006, “School Matters”, 2006). For the 2005-2006 school year, the district in the study earned one of the lower performance ratings by the state and also failed to meet the federal guidelines for adequate yearly progress (AYP). Yet, the district reported very high graduation and attendance rates. The school district involved in the investigation also reported financial issues similar to those of other districts of its size. Of the parents in this district, less than 30% reported having a college degree or higher. The school district had more than 50 schools representing elementary, middle, and high school. The school district also had several different parent organizations.

The school district in the study was divided into quadrants of Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest to determine the overall representation. The sample included in this study had representation from all of the quadrants. The heaviest concentrations were in the Northeast (n = 3, 27.27%) and Southeast (n = 6, 54.55%). The Northwest (n = 1, 9.09%) and Southwest (n = 1, 9.09%) had one participant each. This district also had several neighborhoods. Eleven different neighborhoods were represented within the sample. The participants in the study were Black parents who were current or former officers of a parent organization and represented elementary through high school levels. Reasons for selection of parent organization officers are enumerated in the subsection on participants.

Access

As part of the research design and preparatory work for the research, a location for the study had to be determined (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). The district used in

the study was selected because it corresponded to the characteristics of the types of districts Black superintendents lead. For instance, the Robinson et al. (2004) study concluded that 134 of 248 Black superintendents were located in urban districts. Additionally, the districts had at least 50 % minority populations. Other researchers suggested that Black superintendents lead districts that are plagued with low test scores, financial, and social issues that impact student achievement (Glass, 2000; Henig et al., 1999; Jackson, 1995; Scott, 1980; Revere, 1985). Accordingly, a district was sought that met the same criteria.

The preparatory work for establishing a research site and potential participants began with researching the districts in this state more extensively. I called and emailed the state department of education to obtain a list of Black superintendents in the selected state then checked the website of the federal department of education for the same. Neither one had a database with this information. As a Black administrator myself, I had some prior knowledge of the districts that had Black superintendents. A Black superintendent in one of those districts was contacted to help with the location of other Black superintendents. Once a preliminary location was selected, websites for the district, the department of education for the state, and the federal department of education were reviewed to gather background information about the potential site. The district selected was chosen for its fulfillment of the previously mentioned criteria and for its geographic accessibility.

The website for the selected district listed various parent organizations and included a telephone number for each organization. The PTA was selected originally

because it operates as a separate entity from the school district, thus eliminating the possibility of gate keeping from the district itself.

A telephone call was made to the number on the website to initiate contact with a person who could possibly assist with access. I explained to the person I spoke to that I was considering a study about the expectations that Black parents have for a superintendent, explained that I was a doctoral student from the local area, and a graduate of that school district. I asked if he would be willing to help gain contact with other PTA parents should I pursue this study. He indicated that he was the citywide head of the PTA and that he was willing to assist me. I stated I would contact him at a later date. In the intervening time, an Internet search of the national PTA website yielded the names of seven schools in the district that had PTAs listed. These sources provided the list to begin the search for potential participants. In September 2006, while attending a professional meeting, I met another contact person who worked in a capacity within the district where she worked directly with parents from all over the city. This person indicated that she would be willing to assist in getting access to potential participants who were in a second parent organization. With the capacity to reach parents from two parent organizations, I expanded the IRB application to include parents from both organizations.

I received IRB approval in October 2006. Upon approval from the IRB, I contacted the PTA contact and was informed that he was no longer the head of city-wide PTA. He gave me the contact information for the new person in this role. The new PTA coordinator identified two schools that had Black PTA presidents. I called both schools. Neither school had a PTA president; instead both now participated in a second parent organization. Since directory information is accessible to the public, I obtained a list of

all of the schools in the district and began cold-calling schools to see if I could find any Black PTA presidents. After numerous calls and being told repeatedly that the schools had the other parent organization but not PTA, I determined that a PTA sample would not be possible for this study. The closest to finding any PTA presidents was the former president of the PTA whom I did include in the sample since PTA presidents were the original targeted population for the study.

Initially, I contacted potential participants through cold calls. These telephone calls were made to potential participants who were located by calling the directory number for the various schools in the district. It took several attempts to reach some of the potential participants. When I reached a potential participant, I explained the purpose of the study and ascertained if the person had interest in participating. A telephone protocol was utilized to ensure that the potential participants were only asked questions for the purposes of introducing myself, explaining the study, and seeking their participation. The secondary purpose of the more personal contact rather than a letter was to provide motivation for participating and to be able to explain why that parent was important to my understanding Black parents' expectations (Feldman et al., 2003). If interested, I established an interview time and place that met both the parent's schedule as well as my own. A dissertation meeting schedule was recorded for documentation purposes. Second, after telephone calls did not yield enough parents for the study, I made another contact to the district contact person for additional names. Utilizing the list of names she provided, more telephone calls were made and a few more parents agreed to participate. The last parents were obtained through face-to-face contact. I attended a school board meeting where all of the presidents of the parent organization were in

attendance. The contact person introduced me to several parents. After explaining the research to these parents, I obtained enough names to complete the sample.

Participants

The research questions required that two specific parameters be met for participation. The participants had to self-identify as Black and they had to be parents who have or had students who attended this school district. The demographics of the selected district suggested the need for a general definition of parents. Parents, hereafter identified as parents, included both parents and guardians who could range from the birth parents to foster parents to grandparents or others who were guardians to children in the selected district.

Identifying potential participants was part of the pre-data collection preparations as was explained in more detail in the subsection on access. Furthermore, I assumed the officers of a parent organization had at least some background knowledge of the school and perhaps the district. Finally, I assumed the parent organization leaders might be more comfortable in talking with others about their views because of the child advocacy roles they already held in the schools.

The participants were current or past officers of a parent organization, were from the designated district, were Black, and have or had children in the district. Although there were more than 50 schools in this system, two other factors impacted the sample. First, originally current PTA presidents exclusively were sought for the study because of the history of PTAs having involvement in schools; however, no current PTA presidents who met the qualifying conditions were located. After making several contacts in the district, I found that the PTA was a nonfunctioning organization and a second parent

organization was the active one in the district. As a result, a shift was made and parents from that organization were selected for the study. The parents selected were involved in the schools to a high degree also, thereby mitigating any compromises to the originally proposed sample. I made the decision to extend participant selection to vice presidents because as an officer in the organization these individuals were also very involved in the schools and were aware of the district overall, the reason for originally selecting officers in a parent organization. Second, geographically, the majority of the parents were found in the schools where the majority of students were Black. Thus, a purposive sample was used that ensured that the sample was more proportionate of the group (Kane & O'Reilly de Brun, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The strata in the sample included race and level of schools (Pre-K through high school).

A total of 11 Black parents were the participants in this study. All of the parents participated in one face-to-face interview and one follow-up telephone interview. Eight of the parents were current presidents of a parent organization. Two of the parents were vice presidents of a parent organization. One of the parents was a former president of a PTA. The parents in the study provided a wealth of information that reflected their personal expectations. Further, because of the nature of the positions they held, the parents indicated that in many cases, their views also reflected those of other parents who they have worked with in the schools and through their leadership of a parent organization. The parents were asked to self-report their choice of terms for racial identification. The majority of parents selected African American because it provided an identity connection to ancestral descent and heritage. But who were these parents? A description of the

parents provides a glimpse of who the parents were in the study and shows the individuality of each parent and the diversity in backgrounds.

Description of Participants

Aaliyah was the parent of two sons. One child was in a school in a Pre-K special education program, the other was not yet of school age. She was in her late 20s, was raised in this city, and was a college graduate who was currently in a master's program. Aaliyah, who was very Afrocentric in views, appearance, and values, was a parent who said she had distrust for Whites in general. Involved in community organizations that extended beyond the schools, she strongly believed that a Black superintendent was needed in this district and her remarks reflected this view. This parent indicated that she had limited resources, but she readily shared those resources with parents at the school where she was president.

Angel was married and a parent with two children. She was president of the parent organization in their school. One child was 8 years old, in the third grade and in a special needs class. Her second child was 12 years old and in the seventh grade. Angel, a high school graduate who graduated from this district, was in her 40s, and has lived in this district her entire life. She was very friendly and welcomed me into her home. She introduced me to her entire family including her dad and sister who live with her and were at home when I visited. Angel described herself as involved and trusted by parents. As a regular volunteer in the schools, she has had the opportunity to hear many different parents' views. Her involvement extended beyond the schools and included being an active member of a neighborhood street club. Angel was eager to share her views and stated she was happy that I took the time to listen to a parent.

Denise was a grandparent in her 50s with two adult children. She was raising an 8-year-old granddaughter who was in the third grade at the neighborhood elementary school where Denise was the president of the parent organization. A lifelong resident in this area, Denise was a graduate of the school system. She had completed some college coursework. Very candid in her responses, Denise was not afraid to share her views even if they could be linked back to her. Our interview was very relaxed and conversational, and she used voice inflections to emphasize points. Denise was another parent who stated she was happy that I listened to her views.

Gayle was a lifelong resident who was a graduate of this district. She listed her relationship to two children who live with her as other, but she did not explain why she selected other. One child was 10 years old and in the 5th grade, and the second child was 6 years old and in the first grade. In addition to her school leadership as president of the parent organization at a K-8 school, she was actively involved in several other community organizations. This parent was between the ages of 41-50 and had completed some college coursework. Gayle was very clear about what was important to her and articulated these views in detail.

John was both a parent and stepparent to children in the school district. His stepson was 17 and attended the high school where John was the president of the parent organization. His son was 9 and in the fourth grade in an elementary school. John has lived in this district all of his life and was a graduate of the school district. He had some college and was between 41-50 years old. Because of his long history in this district, he had specific views about the strengths and weaknesses of superintendents in this district reaching back more than 20 years. John was a parent who felt it was important for Blacks

to maintain an even level of relationships regardless of that person's role. John was the first parent I interviewed, and he gave useful advice when he told me it was important to talk with Black parents as if in a conversation not an interview if I really wanted to gain their trust.

Linda was a parent who had six children ranging from ages 12-23. All of her children have attended this school system. Currently, she has two children in the school system. One was 16 and in the 11th grade at the high school where she was a past president and current vice president of the parent organization at the school. Her second child was 12 years old and in the seventh grade in a K-8 school. She has been actively involved in the schools since her oldest children were in school. First she was part of PTA and now she is in the current parent organization. Another lifelong resident, she was a high school graduate with some college and was between the ages of 41-50. She had tremendous respect for educators. Her responses were very passionate and heart felt. Linda was savvy. Her passion for children exuded in her voice and the comments she made. Her passion could even be felt during the telephone interviews. Her voice inflections reflected her conviction for her views. She was pensive throughout the interviews as was reflected in the depth of her views articulated throughout both interviews. Linda was involved in several community organizations and worked for an organization that works with youth in this community and school.

Mary, a grandparent between the ages of 41-50, has worked and volunteered in this district in various capacities as an advocate for children and parents. A resident in this community for just under 30 years, she has adult children who attended schools in this district and currently has a 6-year-old grandchild in a neighborhood elementary

school. A former PTA president who served in that position for 7 years, she was a high school graduate with some college. She shared her very interesting personal journey and the influence of a principal that led to her return to college just a few years ago where she was close to completing her Bachelor's degree in education. Mary was Afrocentric and religious. Both were reflected in the views she presented in which she talked candidly about other personal experiences in her life that have shaped her views and values. Several of her responses were very anecdotal and some responses reflected historical perspectives related to race.

Michael was a parent who was actively involved in the schools and throughout the community. He was married and had two high school aged children who attended the school where he was the president of a parent organization. Michael did not list how long he lived in this district. One of two male parents in the study, Michael held a master's degree and was between ages 41-50. He has worked as an educator and was actively involved in several community organizations that focus on assisting youth. Based on his comments about some of the work that he does, it was evident that he advocated for children throughout the community.

Pam was a parent with four children in the district ranging from age 9-16. Her children were in grades 11, 9, 7, and 4 so she helps in both an elementary school and high school. Her daughter was involved in a special accelerated program in the high school where Pam was the president of the parent organization. She has lived in this district for 16 years. This parent was high school graduate with some college and she was between ages 31-40. She was very active in several political and civic organizations throughout the community. It was apparent that she was a parent who wanted to be a part of making

change. Pam was very clear about what she desired from a superintendent and saw that role as a critical part of the revitalization of the city not just the schools.

Paula, a parent in her mid to late20s , was the youngest person in this study. This was the only parent who did not believe that race should matter in any way in regards to the superintendent. The parent of three elementary school-aged children, she spends a lot of time volunteering in the school where she has a 9 year old in the fourth grade,11 year old in the fifth grade, and 6 year old in the first grade. A high school graduate who was a product of this district, she expressed her desire for her children to receive at least the same quality of education that she received when she attended this school system. Her interviews were the shortest, but her remarks clearly reflected what was important to her. Paula knew what she felt, stated it, and moved on.

Ramona was a parent with four children ranging in age from 8-15. Her children were 8 and in the third grade, 9 and in the fourth grade, 11 and in the fifth grade, and 15 and in the 10th grade. She was vice president of a parent organization in the school her younger children attended and was very concerned about the social issues in the Black community. Because she volunteered regularly in that school, she had a more comprehensive view of her school's and the surrounding community's needs based on her interactions with parents, teachers, and students. A graduate of this district, she returned to live in this district more than 10 years ago. She was a high school graduate with some college and was in the age range of 31-40. This parent had prepared some notes of some of the things that she wanted to make sure she shared with me. Ramona believed in the children in these schools and believes that parents just need help so they can help their children.

Summary of participants. As you can see from the above descriptions, there were some ways in which my participants were similar and others in which they varied. While all of the parents were Black, they varied in age, gender, social class, and personal belief systems. Race had varying degrees of influences on their views. They varied in the emphasis given to specific issues that concerned them and even in some of the qualities that each desired in a superintendent. Yet, all of the parents were very clear and articulate about what each personally desired in a superintendent and about what they expected from superintendents.

Data Collection

Instrumentation

The data collection method was interviews to gather the views of the parents from a single district. Interviews were used instead of surveys, questionnaires, or other quantitative measures because I was more concerned with delving into the parents' personal views using their descriptions and explanations for their expectations than in creating numeric representation of predefined questions and responses (Krathwohl, 1998). Individual face-to-face interviews and subsequent follow-up telephone interviews provided the opportunity to delve more deeply into the parents' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs than would have been possible if only utilizing quantitative measures or without including the parents' own words. The use of two interviews with each of the parents allowed for comparisons during analysis as well as for follow-up and member checking (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This use of personal views of several Black parents' expectations permitted me to gain a better understanding of what parents really want from school leaders in terms of the qualities they desire and what work they want them to

do, in ways that could not be accomplished through survey research, thus providing more in-depth, rich data for insightful analysis.

An interview guide provided the questions for the face-to-face interviews (Appendix B). The interview protocol addressed the two guiding research questions in more detail. A semi-structured interview format allowed me to ask a series of open-ended questions, specifically designed in advance, with the aim of eliciting responses that addressed the research questions. The face-to-face interview protocol was developed after exploration of literature and was rooted in the literature and was reviewed by a panel of parents and a superintendent, adding to the validity of the instrument. By using a semi-structured interview approach, I was able to explore other questions as they emerged from the parents' responses. Sometimes the parents' remarks warranted further explanation. Probing questions were asked to get a parent to expound on a response. Other times a parent's remarks generated a follow-up question that needed to be asked of all participants; therefore, the semi-structured interview approach allowed for the flexibility in questioning to do so and proved to be advantageous to improving the depth and quality of data gathered.

Likewise, for the follow-up telephone interviews, three broad questions were developed in advance. This approach allowed for standardization of the general questions asked of all parents but permitted follow-up questions in order to delve more deeply into a particular parent's responses or for clarification of points made (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). After rereading the transcripts, contact summary sheets, and reflective notes from the first round of interviews, I added additional questions to the general questions asked of all parents that were rooted in developing themes that emerged from the first

interviews. In addition, each participant was asked personalized questions that clarified or verified responses from their first interview (Appendix D).

My role as a researcher in these interviews was to act as a facilitator of a conversation about expectations, to establish a rapport that encouraged open discussion of the parents' views, and to act as the conduit through which their views could be described. As the interviewer, it was important that I maintained neutrality to keep from influencing parents' views (Fontana & Frey, 2000). This was accomplished through remaining conscious of the verbal and nonverbal cues that might influence the views of parents and the use of the interview protocols.

Interviews, as a data collection tool, had two key strengths. The strengths were that the interviews were targeted and focused specifically on the topic, which allowed for added discussion of specific aspects of a topic, and provided opportunities for clarification of any ideas that were unclear (Yin, 2003). Follow-up telephone interviews enhanced the validity of the study by providing me an opportunity to verify the consistency of responses by asking similar types of questions as in the first interview, by focusing on themes that the parents themselves discussed during the first interview, and by having the parents clarify any responses that remained unclear to me (Yin, 2003).

The two major potential weaknesses in data collection were addressed during the research design. One potential weakness related to poorly constructed questions. To address this concern about validity, during the developmental stage questions were developed from review of the literature. In order to obtain input about what questions were important to ask when trying to determine expectations for a superintendent, the interview questions were reviewed by an expert, a Black superintendent in a large urban

district, to ascertain if the questions were appropriate for the topic under consideration. I revised the interview protocol based on that expert's input. To further support that the questions were meaningful and worded in language that would be easily understood by parents, the questions were piloted with a group of parents from a large urban district to get their feedback. I revised the interview protocol again based on their input. Speaking with that group of parents assisted in making sure that the questions were worded in ways that were understandable to parents in order to yield more fruitful responses from parents in this study. Finally, my dissertation chairperson reviewed the questions to correct any questions that potentially could have hindered the collection of meaningful data. Changes were made again resulting in the final interview protocol. The interview protocol for the telephone interviews was initially developed for IRB. I developed a revised interview protocol for the telephone interview after reviewing the research questions, interview transcripts, the reflective notes, and contact summary sheets for each parent for the specific purpose of creating follow-up questions.

A second potential weakness was the inaccurate reporting of data due to poor recall. This weakness was eliminated by digitally recording each interview, transcribing the interviews verbatim within one week of each interview, retaining transcriptions, and through the use of verbatim data in the analysis.

Descriptive field notes from the interviews provided a supplemental data collection tool. The initial field notes consisted of notes that I scripted during the interviews directly on the interview protocol for that parent. During the first interview one of the parents seemed uneasy and less focused while I wrote notes. Also, the notetaking limited my eye contact with the parent and seemed to create a barrier, so I

limited my notes in this and subsequent interviews so as not to lose spontaneity or interrupt the flow of the parents' responses. In fact, this same parent commented at the end of his interview that I should make the data collection more like a conversation than interview. I heeded his advice. Thus, these field notes consisted of brief phrases or words to trigger my memory about responses to specific questions. More useful were the audiotaped reflective memos I recorded immediately following each interview. These notes consisted of the free flowing comments about the most salient points from each interview as I reflected on the interview. I talked about commonalities and differences among parents' responses. I talked about ways I believed their views tied to the literature. I also recorded questions that I had, commented on verbal and nonverbal cues of parents so I could capture the underlying tones of the words while I could still hear their voices in my mind, and made notes to myself about how to proceed with the interviews. I typed these notes within a day or two of each interview. Additionally, during the first interviews I recorded contact summary sheets within a day or two of the interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These contact summary sheets contained the handwritten comments that answered four questions: (1) What were the main issues or themes that this participant addressed; (2) Summarize the information received (or not included) for each of the interview questions; (3) Are there any particular points that were interesting, salient, illuminating or that received particular emphasis from this participant; and (4) Are there questions I need to revisit with this participant or are there questions that I need to add for all parents. The contact summary sheets for the second interviews were completed after I reviewed the reflective notes and interviews for each parent so these

notes were recorded within a week. Together, these field notes provided for preliminary analysis of the data.

Interview Process

Data were collected using a digital recorder. The use of a digital recorder allowed for more clarity of voices which assisted with transcribing the parents' remarks accurately. Data were transcribed utilizing a computer within one week of completing each interview. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. These transcribed interviews are maintained in a password protected file. The hard copies of transcripts are maintained in a secure location where they will remain for a period of 5 years. This information was not tagged to identifiable individuals in the findings. The face-to-face interviews were conducted during October and November 2006. Up to three interviews were completed in one day. I conducted interviews in locations most convenient and comfortable to the parent. I met one parent at a library, five parents at their respective schools, and five parents in their homes. Telephone confirmation was made the day before each meeting. The first parent scheduled for an interview called the day of the interview and chose not to participate. The person also worked in the district and just did not feel comfortable with participating. This was the only person who initially agreed to participate but did not do so.

The face-to-face interviews lasted from 20 minutes to over an hour. Before beginning each interview, a consent form that explained the parents' rights as a voluntary participant, how confidentiality is maintained, and their role in the study was explained. Confidentiality is maintained by reporting the findings using pseudonyms. The master lists of the names of the parents, their schools, and the district are secured in a locked file

cabinet. I reinforced the importance of each participant's views and explained their confidentiality would be maintained as best as possible. I explained that any ideas that have been shared publicly might be recognizable to those individuals. A signed consent form was secured from each parent participant at that time.

Each interview began with an introduction of my background and general conversation to create a comfort level between the parent and myself. Establishing a rapport with each parent was not only pivotal to access but was also needed to get truthful information. Gaining access was slightly more difficult than I expected. Several researchers have suggested that similarities in identity, for example in race, have established a common connection between interviewer and participant and opened the doors to communication (Feldman et al., 2003; Kane & O'Reilly de Brun, 2001). Daniel-Echols (2003), for instance, in her study of Black welfare recipients, found that because of race the Black women in her study were more receptive and felt important to be helping her with her education. This similarly in race did not prove to be an advantage when talking to potential participants on the telephone during the cold calls because they did not have any knowledge about who I was or my racial background. However, Echols' findings were true during the actual interviews in which I found the parents very receptive, which I believe was aided by similarity in race. Other factors included that I dressed in a manner that was comfortable yet professional; I met parents where they felt comfortable meeting with me; I spoke in a relaxed conversational manner during the interviews and I shared that I was from the inner city myself which I believe helped to create some commonality between myself and the parents in the study.

To insure that I had captured the participant's views accurately, telephone interviews were held after all of the first interviews were transcribed and some preliminary analysis was in process. The telephone interviews permitted clarification and follow-up on themes or ideas that arose in the first interviews. The second interviews also provided a means for member-checking. Further, I specifically asked very similar questions phrased differently to look for consistencies or discrepancies in their remarks and for comparisons among parents. I utilized a protocol that included general questions for all parents and specific questions that helped to clarify remarks from the first interviews or to ask a parent to elaborate on a previous response. The use of an interview protocol kept me focused on answering the research questions. I began these interviews by asking parents if they had information they would like to add to the information previously shared, thus giving parents an opportunity to add to or clarify anything that had been said before. Once again, I concluded the interviews by asking parents to tell me their top three expectations that they wanted to be sure that I shared, thus providing an opportunity for each parent to prioritize the ideas or issues that were most important to each parent personally.

I found this part of the research process to be fun and exciting. I completed as many as three interviews in one day, but it was exhilarating because of the conviction in their views, the wealth of information, the commitment to children, and the overwhelming kindness and receptiveness of the parents. I found the parents to be helpful, willing to share their time and knowledge, and at the same time very thankful that someone had taken the time to listen to their views. Each parent had their own unique personality that exuded in their responses with some being more talkative than

others, while others were very animated and demonstrative when sharing their responses; nonetheless, all of their responses were insightful. The parents were very dynamic and passionate about what they wanted for not only their children but all children and the superintendent's role in fulfilling those needs.

The value of this research experience is immeasurable. I learned about how to conduct interviews that respect the participant and their views. I learned the importance of taking notes in between each interview so I would not lose the nuances of the interview before going to the next one. I learned how to move beyond what I wanted to hear and to really listen to what parents were saying, and not saying, in order to gain a true understanding of parents' views. Importantly, I learned many things that will assist me in being a better principal, and hopefully, one day superintendent.

Rapport. During interviews, I spent a few minutes just having casual conversation with each parent, graciously thanking them for the opportunity to listen to their views, assuring them that their views were important, and that there was no right or wrong response. I made conscious efforts to create a relaxed atmosphere by asking the questions in a conversational manner. I utilized language and demeanor that conveyed equality in the power relationship between myself and the parents. The interview guide presented open-ended questions that were very broad at first in order to continue the establishment of a rapport, to add to the comfort level of each parent, and so that each parent gained confidence in being able to answer the questions. Questions generally asked parents' views about some aspect of expectations for superintendents in a general context before honing in on the expectations for Black superintendents. Follow-up questions were interspersed throughout the interview as appropriate. Several follow-up subquestions

asked if the parents' views would be the same regardless of race or gender. I was very cognizant of the views about race and took particular care not to lead parents to the views. Using the interview protocols reduced that potential for bias in the interviewing. To further ensure that bias was eliminated, at the conclusion of each interview I asked each parent if there were any remarks he/she would like to add to any of the topics or related topics not addressed.

Even though the interviews were part of a research study, it did not feel that way because I felt like I was a Black person having a conversation with another Black person about the education of Black children. I believe similarity in race and my personal background created a relaxed environment where honest conversations could occur. In addition, I believe by going into the homes and schools of the parents, it created a comfort level by showing my willingness to come into their world. I sat down at the dining room table, or on the couch, or next to the parent in the parent room in their school in order to make the interviews more relaxed. I responded positively as they talked about their children, or shared photos of their families, or introduced me to their families. During this experience, many times these interviews felt like just sitting down with someone I have known and having a conversation that in this instance just happened to focus on the subject of superintendents. I believed this comfort level was enhanced because as another Black person they seemed more willing to share their stories and their views with me. Specifically, it seemed that when I told the parents of my personal background and connection to this city and the district that they were even more relaxed and willing to share their views. Others specifically stated they were glad to help another Black person achieve a goal, because of the broader implications of my success as a

reflection on Blacks in general. The parents who expressed this view wanted to see me, as a Black professional woman, succeed. Regardless of their personal motivation for participation, I believe the parents expressed their true opinions and did not hold back in their responses.

Data Management

Data collection, data management, and data analysis were a series of collective processes performed concurrently (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Roberts & Wilson, 2002). The utilization of a data management system enhanced the validity and reliability of the study because it provided an audit trail of accountability for the decisions I made as to the research design, data collection, and data analysis processes.

Field notebooks were created that included the IRB approval, research questions, the theoretical framework, interview transcripts, interview protocols, signed informed consent forms, participant contact summary forms, interview schedule, lists of codes, a dissertation timeline, demographic questionnaires, handwritten field notes, and typed reflective field notes. Additionally transcript coding, QSR*_Nvivo7_* coding reports, and matrices that outline the phases of data analysis provided a view of decisions made during the completion of the study. Secured home office space was designated for the maintenance of these notebooks.

The use of QSR*_Nvivo7_*, a computer software program, facilitated the recording of data analysis processes used. The early codes used were individual codes pulled directly from the data. I did not attempt to connect these codes to theory, literature, research, or even to each other. Next, I was able to add a priori codes established from the

research questions and theoretical framework. These a priori codes began to establish categorization of data and reflected how individual coding evolved into codes grounded in the data and in the literature. Later, the creation of matrices provided additional documentation of the relationships among the data, theoretical framework, and research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The use of QSR**Nvivo7* software and the field notebooks permitted easy accessibility and eased retrieval of data and documentation that described the thought processes and procedures I employed during the study, thereby providing support that the assertions and findings were linked to the data, the theoretical framework, and the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Roberts & Wilson, 2002). Since all key decisions were logged, and each version or change recorded and kept, this will allow others to easily reproduce the steps of the study.

Data Analysis

The literature review elicited a theoretical framework for the study of Black parents' expectations for Black superintendents. The framework includes historical and cultural foundations, educational foundations, and how both have influenced Black principals' expectational experiences. Then, the expectational experiences of Black principals were compared to those of Black superintendents to create a description that guided the analysis of the data. This literature and the theoretical framework provided the links for the initial structure for analysis (Yin, 2003).

Data collection, data management, and data analysis were conducted simultaneously (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Creswell, 2003; Drew, Hardman, & Weaver Hart, 1996; Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Kane & Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Merriam,

1998). The data collection and data analysis processes contained several overlapping stages that included data collection, data management, data reduction, examination of patterns and relationships, and the creation of data displays (Gall et al., 2003; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). These steps resulted in the conclusions drawn about and from the data. I found that the study followed the data collection and data analysis processes described by Kane and O'Reilly-de Brun (2001) who stated the iterative nature of these stages is comparable to a board game where a person moves forward but along the way might have to backstep to earlier stages before reaching the final goal.

Stage one was data collection. The focused interviews were the data collection tool, and each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. Transcription of each interview occurred within one week of the interview. Written field notes composed during the interviews were maintained that contained words and phrases to trigger my memory about a parent's response. After each interview several processes occurred that aligned with previously established data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2003; Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, reflective memos were completed immediately following each interview. These notes were audiotaped then transcribed. The reflective notes recorded my initial thoughts about the interview and responses of the parents. This process allowed for free thinking about each interview. I discussed key ideas that stood out for me, questions and concerns that I had, and thoughts about the similarities and differences in the views parents shared. Second, a single-page contact summary sheet was completed after listening to both the interview and reflective memo of each interview (Drew et al., 1996; Gall et al., 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Information from the reflective memos and field notes taken during each interview were the main data recorded on each contact summary sheet. The contact summary sheet for each parent was completed for each interview that included the following guiding points: Who was interviewed and date of the interview, the main themes or issues discussed during the interviews, which research questions received emphasis from the individual participant, any new questions that arose from the interview, and insights or the most salient points (Gall et al. 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The notes included descriptive, analytic, and personal insights and reflections on similarities and differences in relation to the literature and the interviews of other parents (Drew et al., 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This began the initial process of data analysis.

The next stage was to establish a coding system to organize the data (Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). A master list of codes was maintained, including coding abbreviations. Subcodes were listed beneath each master code. Explanations of each code and subcode are included in the codebook in a QSR**Nvivo7* file, and hard copies are maintained in the coding notebook (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998). The use of the codebook facilitated easier reference as I coded the data. Two types of codes are incorporated into the coding process. They are descriptive codes and inferential codes or pattern codes.

The use of QSR**Nvivo* 7 assisted with the development of the code book. After each interview was transcribed, I reread the transcripts and added codes and comments to the data. Merriam (1998) described this level of coding as having a conversation with your data. As more of the interviews were completed, earlier transcripts were reviewed with the other levels of codes being integrated. As such, coding and recoding were an

ongoing part of the process. Codes were not static. The first codes were autocoded by interview question. Emergent free standing codes were pulled from the data; thus codes were added/deleted/revised through the review of each source (Glesne, 1999; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The initial codes led to new codes that moved from the broader categories to more specific themes that emerged directly from the data (Glesne, 1999; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some units of data overlapped into more than one category (Glesne, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The first codes were autocoded by interview questions. This permitted me to have a side-by-side view of how each parent answered each question and helped to organize my thinking about similarities and differences in how each parent responded to each question. Next, provisional codes that were free standing codes were extracted directly from the data. As data were viewed and reviewed, chunks of data were coded with descriptive codes that simply summarized segments of data with little or no inference at this juncture (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). One hundred forty free standing codes were created during this part of the coding process. The next level of coding was based on the use of inferential codes. These codes were broad categories based on the theoretical framework and the research questions (Glesne, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). Eighteen codes were created that began to group like ideas found in the data. The data were further divided into smaller, more meaningful units or patterns (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 1998). The free standing codes were merged into the categorized codes and initial

relationships between and among the free codes were identified. This type of coding was ongoing.

The next phase was theme searching to establish coding categories based on the recurring topics and words in the data (Glesne, 1999). QSR*_Nvivo7_ was utilized to extract data and sort the units of data into the coding categories (Drew et al., 1996; Gall et al., 2003; Merriam, 1998). Comments that reflected a specific theme or pattern were listed under assigned codes. The use of a QSR*_Nvivo7_ allowed me to move units of data around easily. As I reviewed the data, coding categories were collapsed, modified, or added (Drew et al., 1996; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes and patterns became clearer as categories were developed from discrete ideas to more overarching categories.

The next phase was to develop a data display. Matrices created visual representations in order to identify the connections and relationships among the data (Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Other researchers have addressed the use of data displays, and these researchers often refer to Miles and Huberman as providing clearer data displays (Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Kane & O'Reilly-de Brun, 2001). Therefore, Miles and Huberman's protocol was utilized in the study. Partially ordered display matrices were created. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested the use of this type of matrix when the area being explored was a new area of research such as in the study. Specifically, checklist matrices were utilized in which the columns and rows represented key components such as themes, examples from the actual interviews, and analytical remarks and columns for each interview. According to Miles and Huberman, a checklist matrix is

effective when there is a single variable, such as expectations in this study, and there are several components such as those identified through the theoretical framework. The use of matrices allowed me to ask the question, “What is going on here?” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). All of this information led to making comparisons and contrasts within the data.

Interpretation of the data followed and included defining themes and patterns. More in-depth analysis of the themes and patterns occurred as interpretation of the data was linked back to the research questions and theoretical framework. This advanced the study to the final phase prior to writing up the data. Verifiable conclusions were drawn. The clearest ways to ensure that conclusions were true was to note patterns and themes; make comparisons and contrasts; move from the particular interview to general, and to relate the research to prior research when interpreting the data. Another way that I verified data was through member-checking (Creswell, 2003; Gall et al., 2003; Glesne, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in which I received feedback from the parents through follow-up telephone interviews. This provided me with an opportunity to clarify any points that were unclear to me and to ask additional questions that arose after review of all interviews. A second way I verified conclusions and strengthened the validity of the study was to include multiple views, as in interviewing 11 different parents, and by employing interview protocols to ensure consistency between interviews.

An analytic structure was employed to report the data. Analytic reporting utilizes a more conventional approach to reporting of the data, which includes the introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and implications (Gall et al., 2003). Yin (2003) described this analytic approach more specifically as a linear-analytic structure. This

structural approach required that I describe the study from the development of research questions to conclusions and implications from the findings. The matrices that were developed during analysis helped to frame the presentation of the results (Gall et al., 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analytic reporting employed some elements of reflective reporting; therefore, the study is described with thick description and parents' comments creating a picture that depicted the similarities and differences in themes and patterns that were discovered through this study, which supported the voices of the parents and referred to the research questions and theoretical framework (Gall et al, 2003).

Validity and Reliability

Validity was strengthened by maintaining a chain of evidence, which linked the research questions, data collection, analysis, and findings (Yin, 2003). The interview protocols, documentation of time and place of interviews, and actual interview documents including transcripts were part of the chain of evidence. The use of semi-structured interview guides was evidence that the interviews were conducted with consistency in content and provided support of the construct validity. Validity was also established by having the questions linked to the literature and by having two types of experts on this topic (parents and a Black superintendent) review the questions for content, clarity, and completeness (Adams & Schanveldt, 1991). External validity was established by using a theoretical framework and by following established protocols. The links between the protocol and research questions provided another connection in the chain of evidence and support the reliability of the study.

More specifically, reliability was established during data collection through the use of interview protocols. The use of interview protocols that were linked to the research questions ensured that data collected remained aligned to the stated purpose. The second way reliability was established was through the development of a study database. Each transcribed interview was part of the study database. Documents such as notes, charts, tables, and models were developed to depict the progression of my thought processes throughout data collection and data analysis.

An issue for any qualitative researcher that must be addressed to substantiate the validity of the study is subjectivity and bias. My personal experiences as a Black female and professional experiences as a principal and my career goal of being a superintendent shaped my research interests, perspectives as well as my positioning as a researcher. I had to remain cognizant of my own personal perspectives throughout the research process so that the parents' views not my views were reflected in the findings. The use of the interview guides and the use of parents' actual words in the findings assisted with maintaining the objectivity needed to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. Some researchers have suggested that Black researchers studying Black populations are situated as both "insiders" and "outsiders" (Jordan, Bogat, & Smith, 2001; Serrant-Green, 2002). This situation created some unique methodological concerns that were addressed. Access issues included trust and rapport. As Serrant-Green suggested, I had to be aware of where I sat as a researcher. A question I asked myself was with the population was I was an "insider" or "outsider." Because of my background, I believe that I was both. How I came across as a researcher might have impacted whether I was viewed as an "insider" or "outsider," which in turn impacted the level of trust. To my benefit, I lived in

the city being studied for the majority of my life, so I had a good understanding of the general neighborhoods where Blacks were located within this city and had a mechanism for establishing a common ground. I made parents aware that I was a product of this school system and had ties in the community including where I grew up and where I attend church, which helped to create a common connection between myself and the parents since I was not just a researcher coming in to gather data but rather a Black person who could empathize with their situations and thereby their views. My values, communication style, and even my attire could have been problematic, too, if they had not been in congruence with the parents'; therefore, I maintained an awareness of these issues and I assume from the richness of the parents' responses that this barrier was eliminated (Gaglio, Nelson, & King, 2006; Jordan et al., 2001). I believe the ability to converse effectively with the parents in a way that equalized our relationship during the interviews occurred because, as a teacher and principal, I have worked with Black parents of various social classes, educational levels and backgrounds.

Another way that researchers can gain some "insider" status is by sharing with the participants areas they might have in common such as church affiliation (Serrant-Green, 2002). In order to establish trust and rapport, the initial contact needed to be well planned to build the foundation for rapport (Gaglio et al., 2006). Jordan et al. (2001) contended that despite racial and cultural similarities, social class, or the participants' knowledge of, or personal negative experiences with other researchers might preclude the gathering of solid data, unless efforts are made to establish a "temporary" relationship between researcher and participant. As a researcher, I needed to address those concerns if they surfaced; none did. Reservations were most likely to arise when the initial contact was

made, so I was prepared to respond to any concerns by making the purpose of the study clear. Importantly, I did not let “insider” or “outsider” status or my personal point of views get in the way of describing the views of the parents. This was best accomplished by having member-checking, and by coding and recoding the data repeatedly while constantly asking myself if the conclusions were led by the data, rather than personal interests (Jordan et al., 2001; Serrant-Green, 2002). Recognizing that I did have a particular positioning from which I see the world was important to eliminating bias in the research.

Another issue related to subjectivity and bias was that of preconceptions of parents’ views. This issue was addressed through the use of a research protocol that was grounded in the literature and that was reviewed by several individuals who were not participating in the study. This allowed me to check the appropriateness of the questions, to ascertain if any of the questions would lead the parents’ responses, and to determine whether the level of formality in question construction was appropriate for the participant population. Additionally, the interviews were digitally recorded, then transcribed verbatim; strengthening the validity and reliability of the study.

An aspect that has an underlying relationship to bias and subjectivity is reciprocity. I needed to make clear to the participants the reasons I was doing the study and how it would be used (Gaglio et al., 2006). Since I did not give any type of monetary reward to the parents, I needed to make sure that they understood why their views were important. People like to feel appreciated so a thank you note was sent to each parent. Moreover, I established reciprocity with them by indicating I would present their views honestly and accurately. The use of a research protocol, a theoretical framework, and

member checking contributed to seeing that the findings were their views and research substantiated, and not just my personal point of view, further supporting the validity and reliability of the study (Quimby, 2006). Additionally, the power relationship between researcher and participant was inherently unequal because I was the one who established the agenda for the study (Gaglio et al., 2006); however, there were things that I did as a researcher that equalized the relationship, such as using a conversational approach and focusing more on the parents' responses rather than on recording data during the actual interviews. Another way was to be flexible with the parents in terms of where and when they wanted to meet, and by asking at the end of each interview if the parent had other things he/she wanted to add to any topics addressed or issues that were not raised (Gaglio et al., 2006).

Even with this awareness of personal perspectives, the use of a sound research design, with clearly established procedures, and documentation of the research processes employed were critical to mitigating concerns about subjectivity and bias (Morris, 2004). To further alleviate concerns about bias and subjectivity, I maintained acuity to what the data were telling me and provided support for conclusions. Showing that the results were embedded in the data and linked to the research questions and theoretical framework, and supported with relevant quotes from the parents decreased opportunity for bias or subjectivity to taint the results. Specifically, the theoretical framework areas of racial identity as related to education, issues of equity, family/community disengagement and detachment, leadership within and of community, relationships with parents, advancement of and commitment to the community, role modeling, heromaking, and

contextual influences informed the analysis of the parents' responses and are reflected in the findings.

Finally, field notebooks included the research questions, the review of literature and the theoretical framework, and evidence from data collection. The interview questions were developed to get to the heart of the research questions. The field notes and reflective notes complement the interview data by including initial reactions. Combined, the study protocols, field notebooks, and study database provided the necessary audit trail to establish validity.

Summary

This chapter has described the setting, participants, and procedures used in this investigation of Black parents' expectations for Black superintendents. The use of a descriptive research design that utilized interviews as the primary data collection tool was employed. The district in this study has had more than one Black superintendent and was located in a large, urban school district where the majority population was Black students. The 11 parents in the study met the specific criteria for participation in the study. They were Black parents who have/had children in this school system and were officers in a parent organization. Each parent participated in one face-to-face interview and one telephone interview. Access to the majority of the parents was facilitated through the assistance of a contact person within the district and the remainder of participants was identified through cold calls to various schools in the district. Establishing a rapport with the parents was essential to obtaining honest responses. This chapter also outlined the steps taken to establish rapport with the parents in the study.

Data collection, data management, and data analysis were simultaneous processes. Interviews and reflective memos were transcribed. Data were managed through the use of a QSR**Nvivo7* qualitative software program. The use of this software program assisted with the analysis process which included several iterative stages of studying the data until patterns could be discerned. Data displays included matrices that provided visual depictions that assisted with seeing the connections between and among the data. These steps led to the identification of themes and the conclusions drawn.

Last, the processes used to ensure validity and reliability were also detailed. Field notebooks were maintained that included the research questions, the review of the literature and theoretical framework, evidence from data collection, coding and matrices. Interview questions, field notes, contact summary sheets and reflective notes were also maintained in the field notebook. Together, these documents provided evidence of the processes employed during the study and of the evolution of ideas about the data that eventually led to the conclusions. Reliability was enhanced through the use of the parents' own words in the analysis and the transcription of all interviews and reflective notes. In all, the processes described in Chapter III are written in such detail that would allow for replication of the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

Prior research has established that Black superintendents face additional and sometimes higher expectations than those of their White counterparts (Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990). Other research suggested that Black parents and the Black community expected Black superintendents to be symbolic leaders (Jackson, 1995; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). These studies reflected research with Black superintendents themselves not research with Black parents. Furthermore, educational research supported the idea that similarity in race evokes expectations of connection and understanding (Campbell Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000; Henig et al., 1999; Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Ogbu, 2004; Scott, 1990). Only a limited amount of research, however, explored the leadership of Black school administrators in relation to Black parents. Most of this research focused on leadership within and of the Black community, relationships between Black parents and school personnel, and expectations that a Black leader would be committed to the betterment of education for Black children (Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Morris, 1999, 2004; Randolph, 2004; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000). In the review of literature for this study, no research was found that investigated what Black parents themselves indicate are their expectations of Black superintendents.

This study sought the perspectives of Black parents themselves regarding their expectations for Black superintendents. Yet this study goes beyond just confirming what the literature generally described as expectations for Black superintendents; it adds to our understanding about Black parents' expectations for school leadership and the superintendent in particular and also contributes to our understanding of how in some ways these expectations might differ for Black superintendents. Importantly, this study identified characteristics that Black superintendents might need to have under similar circumstances. Altogether, the results lead to a fuller understanding of the leadership expectations any superintendent may face in an urban district with contextual and situational circumstances similar to those of the district in the study.

Two research questions guided this study.

1. How do Black parents describe what they are looking for in a superintendent?
2. What are the ways in which their descriptions differ for a Black superintendent?

These questions led to the identification of characteristics that parents in this study believed were important for a superintendent. In addition, some questions explored directly expectations that were specific to Black superintendents' leadership; therefore, some of the parents' comments about race were in response to these questions; nonetheless, their responses revealed what was expected of school superintendents and ways that expectations might differ for a school leader who is Black. This study's analysis of the views of parents focused on two major themes emerging from the data: (1) Community Engagement: Visibility, Vision, and Voice; and (2) Race: Acknowledgement and Importance. Not only did the parents want a superintendent who was going to do the

job well, they wanted a superintendent who had an understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of Black children and the Black community. They wanted a leader who would not let anything stand in the way of better education for children.

Overview of Themes

This chapter presents an analysis of the two major themes that emerged from the data and are tied directly to the theoretical framework. Each of the chapter's sections considers an aspect of leadership for a superintendent in general and for a Black superintendent in particular, framed in terms of parents' expectations as revealed in the study data. The first section discusses community engagement by exploring parents' expectations that a superintendent will be visible and involved in the community; will cultivate and maintain relationships with students, parents and community; will value the voices of people in the community; and will use his/her own voice to act heroically for the children and the community. The second section explores how Black parents in this study acknowledge race in regards to leadership of a superintendent and its importance to a Black superintendent's leadership. The responses of parents revealed influences of race as related to fulfilling the role of superintendent; acknowledging race-based views; understanding the needs and values of Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; serving as a role model to Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; and acting on behalf of Black children and the Black community. In all, these expectations provide an understanding of the type of leadership that may be needed to be an effective leader in an urban school district. These expectations also highlight differences in expectations that might impact the leadership experience for a Black superintendent.

Community Engagement: Visibility, Vision, and Voice

The superintendency has evolved tremendously since its inception. A large body of research has traced the development of the position from clerk to CEO (Glass, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Owen & Ovando, 2000). Additionally, recent research has characterized superintendents' roles variously as change agents, instructional leaders, managers, political leaders, educational leaders, and public officials (Glass, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Owen & Ovando, 2000). Parents in this study were concerned that the superintendency has become too bureaucratic, too political, and for self-aggrandizement. These leadership characteristics implied a shift from a focus on children, and this shift was not acceptable to them. All of the parents talked about wanting a superintendent who was a community leader. One parent described the role of the superintendent as "the designer of what our schools should be." Moreover, their descriptions emphasized that community engagement was a critical role for a superintendent in a district such as theirs. As was evident in the responses of these parents, a superintendent cannot create a vision for the schools in isolation; the superintendent must engage all who are touched by the schools in order to create a community focus on what is best for children's education. At the heart of their descriptions were four key expectations for a superintendent: (1) being visible and involved within the schools and throughout the community; (2) cultivating then maintaining relationships with students, parents, staff, and the community; (3) valuing the voices of others in creating a better education for children; and (4) using his/her own voice to act heroically for the children and the community. In addition, they conveyed ways that community engagement was more essential in Black communities.

Being Visible and Involved in the Community

As a community leader, these parents strongly believed that a superintendent needed to be invested in the community. A superintendent showed this investment by being very visible and involved, which they characterized as being accessible, approachable, and hands-on. All of the parents discussed one or more of these characteristics and for almost all of them (8 out of 11) being involved was a key expectation. Several studies about Black principals included similar characteristics in their descriptions of qualities found in Black principals (Gill, 2002; Morris, 1999, 2004; Randolph, 2004; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). In these studies, researchers addressed the interconnectedness between Black parents and Black principals, higher levels of trust between the two, and more supportive relationships between the same that occurred because Black principals were highly visible, involved, and actually a part of the communities they served by physical proximity, values, and their support of acquiring a better education for Black children.

Parents in this study contended an involved superintendent was more personally connected to people and their needs, with visibility being the first level of connection. In their descriptions of the superintendent's role in the community, parents emphasized how important it was to see the superintendent in schools, at events, and throughout the community.

> We want to see you. We want to know you're there. When a school opens we want you there. When this school does good, we want you there. If you got to fly here because they're presenting an award here, you got to fly here and then you got to fly over there. Acknowledge your students. Just let the children and the parents know that you are there because ultimately what you're working for—you're working for the students. (Pam, IQ4: p. 5)

In the above quote, Pam articulated the views of the majority of the parents who believed it was important for a superintendent to be visible in order to know and acknowledge the community they serve. Several researchers have suggested Black school leaders have been expected to be very visible in the Black community (Scott, 1990; Siddle Walker, 2003; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). Pam and other parents reinforced that this expectation still exists, but they also noted they would expect this of any superintendent regardless of race. A superintendent cannot connect with the community and students without being visible, but visibility alone was not enough to any of these parents. They also expected a superintendent to be accessible to the people who he/she serves.

Accessibility and approachability reflected a second level of connection. As several excerpts demonstrated, to the majority of these parents, a superintendent who was accessible and approachable desired to connect with the community and it showed that the superintendent was comfortable with the community and within the community.

> You can talk to them, a teacher can feel comfortable, a parent can feel comfortable, someone that is not untouchable or unreachable, not so high up the scale that they can't be reached by the common man that they really are servicing. (Gayle, IQ2a: p. 2)

> They need to be approachable. They can't be so standoffish that they're just like another job to them so you have to be able to be comfortable and to be able to know you can approach them with any issue and they should be obtainable. (Michael, IQ1: p. 1)

Other parents such as Denise expressed why creating a comfort level was even more important when a superintendent is interacting with Black parents.

> A lot of parents can't verbally express how they feel, and often I can't either, but at least if you make your presence known the people will feel like you're not so untouchable, that you're one of us, and that's important to poor-Black-people [each word emphasized].That you're one of us [voice goes up]. Even if you're not [chuckles]. <u>Even if you're not.</u> [emphasis in original]. (Denise, IQ9: p. 7)

Based on prior research, Black parents and children are most likely to be a major constituency in an urban district (Glass, 2000; Robinson et al., 2004). With this focus on visibility, accessibility, and approachability, these parents were beginning to paint a picture of a superintendent who is connected to the Black community. When a superintendent was visible, approachable, and accessible in and to the Black community, he/she demonstrated to the community that they are a priority. It also demonstrated that a superintendent had some connection to or understanding of the average Black citizen and not as one parent stated "off on an island" where the superintendent was not attuned to the real needs of Black children and Black parents.

According to the parents in this study, the credibility of a superintendent was enhanced through personal involvement that resulted in first hand knowledge of what was actually occurring throughout the district and the community, which in turn provided the superintendent with a better understanding of the community's needs.

> I see that person as very involved, very involved in the schools. Actually comes—you can sit behind the desk all you want to, but if you actually come to the schools and see what's going on and see sometimes how limited we are as far as our resources and stuff, and are concerned then you get a better understanding of where I'm coming from. So, I would like for the superintendent to kind of be hands-on. (Ramona, TI8: p. 4)

Like Ramona, Pam believed a superintendent should be more visible and hands-on. For example she detailed how a new superintendent might establish a grassroots connection, which she defined as working right with the community.

> You come in, you get your community together, you have your meetings, you listen to the suggestions that are coming from the parents, first and foremost. Second in line are your teachers, you listen to what your teachers are telling you. Third in line you listen to what your students are telling you. So, you have a meeting with your community, you have meetings with your principals, teaching staff, teachers' union, and then you sit down with your various schools, student

> council, you know, you have your student body come in- those who represent whatever schools and you come down and you talk to them. So you can get a full grasp of what's going on. (Pam, IQ3, pp. 2-3)

Their views coincided with the views of the majority of the parents who believed a more hands-on style of leadership was needed to be effective. This type of leadership demands that a superintendent be attuned to the needs of those they serve, which can be accomplished, according to these parents by looking, listening, and learning from those with intimate knowledge of the students' needs.

Several other parents portrayed being part of the community as being visible and involved in more informal ways: attending community events, shopping in the community, attending churches in the community, or going to the neighborhood recreation center. Prior research confirmed that other Black parents had many of these same desires for Black principals to be highly visible and involved in the schools and community (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999, 2004). Also, knowing a school leader on a more personal level or one-to-one level has been seen as advantageous to developing a positive relationship with the Black community (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003). In many instances, the parents in this study believed a Black superintendent would be more comfortable in their environments and in their relationships with the Black community than would a non-Black superintendent; nonetheless, they expected all superintendents to cultivate relationships with the Black community.

Connected to maintaining positive relationships, three parents believed the superintendent had to be physically part of the community by living in the community. In each instance, the parent was speaking specifically of a Black superintendent. Aaliyah

said, “I think the superintendent should be in the community, should be paying taxes . . . have some kind of investment in the community . . . because you have to give back to the community” (IQ2a: p. 3). John was even more specific about living in the community.

> It’s living in our neighborhood where people really do live, not in no condominium, not in no little village somewhere where it’s upscale, and they’re away from people, because too many of us are out of the system, and they’re living in other people’s system. . . . That’s not right. (John, TI13: p. 5)

For the parents who believed it was important for a Black superintendent to be living in the community, it was mainly to gain a true understanding of the Black community and Black children’s needs and to show a commitment to the Black community, which in turn made them more authentic and “like them.” Denise’s remarks encapsulated why this was important.

> You’re out here asking the community, trying to find out what’s going on in the community and that’s a great thing to do because, how do you know what they want, what they need if you’re not out there among us. Just like, the new young mayor that they have in New Jersey—He lives in public housing. He says he’s going to stay there. He lived there before he became mayor, and he found out what his-community-needs [each word emphasized]. . . . They respect and they love him. Some of them hate him. He’s gotten death threats—because you know police cars always going to be around the mayor no matter what, but he’s there. He’s finding out what-his-people-need [each word emphasized] and I think that’s an important role for anybody just to find out what your people need out there. (Denise, IQ10: p. 11)

Although Denise was specifically referring to a Black mayor and Black superintendents in her remarks, her final comment about understanding the needs of the people you serve showed that knowledge of the community’s needs is valuable to the leadership of any superintendent. These parents’ expectations demonstrated the importance of being a part of and visible in the community. This can be by living in the community, but at the very least, parents wanted to see a superintendent in and as part of the community, regardless

of that superintendent's race. Furthermore, underlying their comments revealed a challenge faced by superintendents who choose to live outside the district or to live in accommodations that a few of these parents would find to be too opulent. Superintendents must remain cognizant of what their actions and lifestyle choices imply to those they serve. The parents who broached this issue intimated that a superintendent who did not live in the community would not have a good understanding of the community. Clearly, there are benefits to living in the community you serve; however, on the other hand, should not that superintendent have the choice to live where he/she chooses? For Black superintendents, it appears even more difficult. The duality of similarity in race and collective identity perspectives can add to how Black superintendents are perceived by the Black community (Ogbu, 2004). These parents' remarks reflected a challenge that Ogbu (2004) described as particularly problematic for successful professional Blacks who move from the neighborhoods that are most familiar to many Blacks in districts such as the one in the study. As Revere (1985) and Ogbu (2004) contended, the Black professional faces challenges of not being viewed as "Black enough" to some Blacks, meaning that some Blacks saw the physical separation from Black neighborhoods or differences in the socioeconomics of Black professionals as an indication that the person had forgotten their roots and their culture, and thereby lost their understanding of the needs of Black people. Ogbu (2004) suggested that a Black professional person must find a way to juggle their professional and personal lives so that the person does not appear to be removed from Black culture or to be seen as "trying to betray the cause of Black people or trying to join the enemy" (p. 24).

Several researchers have explored how Black principals established trust with the Black community by being a part of the Black community through proximity and their participation within the community (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003). The parents in this study explored how being a part of the community was more than being seen at forums, board meetings in schools, or on the TV. By being part of the community a superintendent created a level of trust between them and the community. Through this active participation in the community, parents believed a superintendent could better understand the real needs of the students and community. These parents respected a superintendent who displayed a commitment to children and the community, and who showed authenticity in their leadership by truly being a part of the community in their professional and personal lives. By being visible and involved, a superintendent is more approachable, accessible, and hands-on which allowed a superintendent to cultivate relationships, another characteristic the parents in this study saw as important.

Cultivating Relationships

All of the parents in this study spoke about the importance of a superintendent cultivating relationships. What they described was contrary to the disconnected relationship between schools and Black parents that has been portrayed in some of the more recent parental involvement research (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Morris, 1999, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Instead, the type of relationship these parents desire reflected findings in some research about segregated schools that suggested a more supportive relationship once existed between Black parents and Black principals (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000). Cultivating rather than building was

used to describe the types of relationships these parents desired because it connotes a nurturing and attendance to people rather than a more mechanical type of relationship. Data from the parents in this study supported the importance of a superintendent who nurtured encouraging, interdependent and positive relationships with students, parents, and the greater community. Importantly, these parents wanted to see actions that showed that both they and their children were valued.

Relationship with students. The parents in this study shared specifics of the relationship they wanted a superintendent to have with the children in their district. Trusting, caring, and inspiring were three words that summarized this desired relationship. This type of relationship was created through visibility to and involvement with students which established opportunities for knowing the superintendent, interacting with the superintendent, and feeling comfortable with the superintendent.

The majority of the parents believed it was essential for a superintendent to maintain positive relationships with students. Several parents felt that maintaining regular interactions with students was a critical component of cultivating relationships. Gayle commented on this value of interactions with students.

> Make them see it as a two way street not that they're (the superintendent) so above, but saying okay what can you do to help me, not having the kids say, Well, you're in control, superintendent . . . and you do everything, make the kids see there's some responsibility that they need and that he needs from them or she needs from them to help better the schools. (Gayle, IQ9: p. 6)

As her remarks reflected, communications with students created more equality in the relationship between students and the superintendent. She felt that the superintendent's interactions with students helped students to feel they, too, contributed to creating the

vision for their own education. Further, it provided an opportunity for a superintendent and students to create a shared responsibility for students' education.

While what Gayle describes reflected what most parents' desired from a superintendent, several parents' responses indicated that superintendents' actions in the past have not fostered these types of relationships with students. From these parents' perspectives, a superintendent's actions would show whether he/she cares for and values students. As such, a fear of some of the parents was that the superintendent was no more than a figurehead who the students might not even know by name or face.

> Let them know who they are. . . . Explain to the kids what they do and what they stand for and their goals for these kids and that will also give these kids a positive input on them, because you can say to a lot of these kids the superintendent is such in such and they be like [shrugs shoulders and extends hands like I don't know], but they know who that principal is and I think they should have that same understanding with kids like the principal do. (Angel, IQ9: p. 6)

> I just believe the superintendent should be able to be reached and again be out in the schools. See what your students are doing. <u>Drop in</u> [emphasis in original] in the middle of the day. . . . Unannounced just stop in—so just being accessible and being on that one on one level. I think that would help out a lot. Students knowing--maybe a personal relationship with their superintendent may uplift them.—Well, I talked to my superintendent and he's telling me this, she's telling me this, it means something. Sometimes people get these positions and they're so out of reach—so just being accessible, I think would help a lot—a lot. (Pam, IQ9)

Both Angel's and Pam's views exemplified the views of several parents who feared that superintendents have become too isolated from the main population they serve, their students.

Besides knowing who the superintendent is, as the next excerpt shows, another concern of several parents was that too often the interactions with students were for superficial reasons and frequently only for public relations purposes. As Angel stated,

"I know they're busy [emphasizes with voice]. We all know that, but it would be nice if they could just come and see what's going on. . . . Don't just walk through a school or come and have a Board meeting there. See what's going on in that school." Because if the superintendent is regularly visiting schools and interacting with students, the superintendent will establish relationships with students. Or as Michael remarked,

> If a superintendent really has it in his heart that he loves and cares for students, our babies [emphasis in original], then it'll show and that means that when they come into a building they're not always surrounded by their entourage. They can be more approachable. The students will feel more comfortable around him and therefore the students will share things with him that they wouldn't ordinarily share with someone else. (Michael, IQ10: p. 6)

Like Michael, several parents felt that a superintendent will be able to lead more effectively if they take the time to cultivate relationships with students. Many of the parents in this study desired a superintendent to have a more personal relationship with students similar to what prior research has concluded existed between Black principals and Black students in segregated schools (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999, 2004)

Inasmuch that these parents desired positive relationships between students and the superintendent, the parents addressed several benefits of positive relationships with students. For instance, one of the parents attended a meeting where students talked directly to the superintendent. She found their remarks very insightful and important for the superintendent to know.

> I just feel they need to get in touch with these kids, because I was at [a]meeting and there was kids there and the ideas that was coming--you won't believe the ideas that they were coming up with, coming from a child—So, I really think they need to talk to these kids, because a lot of these kids they are very intelligent. And they have ideas out the wazoo. They just need somebody to talk to—Okay, I'm listening to you—saying give me your feedback. (Paula, IQ10: p. 4)

As Paula and other parents stated, a superintendent who listens to students is rooting a relationship with students where trust can be established and in which the superintendent can gain a better understanding of the needs of the students. When Mary discussed communications and interactions with students she said, “It’s very important that they have a forum or that their voices can be heard . . . to say these are my concerns and to have him or her sitting right there would be wonderful” (IQ9: p. 6). As elaborated on in the responses of many of the parents, these parents believed opportunities for students and the superintendent to interact more frequently and more personally with each other enhanced their relationship, but beyond that they hoped these interactions would lead to a superintendent being more responsive to the real needs of the students.

In addition to expressing the value of interactions and relationships with students, several parents provided specific ways that a superintendent could maintain a relationship with students. Two excerpts exemplified their views.

> A lot of times the superintendents are called in when it’s a bad situation, and I like the idea here that the schools are being visited and there’s nothing going on, just a regular day . . . walking in the halls and the kids will come to know that’s so and so from downtown and I think that’s important. (Mary, IQ10: p. 9)

> Just attending some of the special functions going on so that the students get to know you, I think that’s important too. I did not touch on that, but that’s very, very important-- That you’re able to touch and shake the hands and talk and dialogue with the Big Guy, you got your principal and they have a reverence for that person, but this person oversees everybody, but he’s willing to come and sit with me, read with me, perhaps help me with a math problem. That’s powerful. (Linda, IQ10, pp.10-11)

As their remarks conveyed, a superintendent has it within his or her power to make the choice whether or not to connect with students, and as Linda indicated the choice to do so can be powerful. Further as is evidenced in these remarks, a superintendent who is more

personable with students and a real person to students will be able to cultivate better relationships with students, inspire students, and have a more direct impact on students.

Like the aforementioned quotes, Pam also believed that a superintendent should not have a wall between him or her and the children and provided other ways that a superintendent can break down barriers between himself/herself and students.

> He can't necessarily have a one-on-one with each child but when a time comes along because I know a lot of kids that say that I would call the superintendent and I would ask them—to me, why not? Why can't you? You got a phone. He has a phone. It shouldn't be that a student calls over to the administration building and he can't speak to the superintendent, that's not good. Those types of things would definitely let the children know that I care--Giving special recognition, coming up with maybe an award with the superintendent's name on it. . . . It could be basketball, art, whatever, but an award coming from the superintendent presented to the children. (Pam, TI15: p. 5)

Along with Pam, Linda, and Mary, the majority of parents believed positive interactions would have many positive effects as more students came to believe that the superintendent truly cared for them and their education. In all, the parents suggested that if the superintendent built caring, supportive relationships with students, he or she would instill a sense of direction for their future in children and a sense of hope that education could help them to succeed.

> Try to help them see that education is a plus and let them know that how the world and the economy is going. You can't do it like your great grandparents may have done and you've heard that they've done or that your parents have done and maybe go out and get that factory job and it did carry the family over. . . . Support the children in trying to understand that the world is going to require you to get past what we're trying to give you, but you have to get this first and get this down good, and let them know, try not to drill it in them where it hurts but try to give it to them in a positive way. This is one of the very crucial times in your life and let them know that you need to get this above all else. (Gayle, IQ4: p. 3)

In turn, several parents believed that affirmative relationships will have more than just a positive impact on the education of children; it also has the possibility to get more

students to value their education. Historically, this emphasis on the value of an education has been something that many Black parents have tried to instill in their children (Anderson, 1988; Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003).

Relationships with parents. In addition to establishing relationships with children, these parents expected a superintendent to develop relationships with them, too. Black parents in some research about schools since the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision have felt there is a strained relationship between them and school personnel (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999, Lott, 2001). Like parents in some of the earlier research, the parents in this study desired to be treated as equals, with an interdependent relationship with the superintendent, and even one-to-one relationships. To achieve this type of relationship, a few parents specifically cited the importance of interacting with parents in less formal settings as a way to build relationships.

The deterioration of the relationships between Black parents and school officials has been well documented in research (Beebe-Frankenberger et. al., 2005; Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lott, 2001; Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001; Trotman, 2001). Several parents in this study perceived a failure to establish relationships with Black parents as ineffective leadership. Linda communicated this disappointment, "Oh that he never really took time to get to know parents. That would disappoint me; because I know that <u>there's no way</u> [emphasis in original] he can be effective if he doesn't" (IQ5: p. 6). Like Linda, several parents indicated that past failures of some superintendents occurred in part because of their failure to connect with parents or to get Black parents' perspectives on the needs of their children. To operate as

if Black parents cannot contribute to the betterment of the education of their children, regardless of that parent's background, was seen as clearly devaluing parents which in turn influenced how the parents viewed the effectiveness of a superintendent.

Failure to follow through on promises was also seen as detrimental to the relationship with parents. Denise reported this view without hesitation.

> For them to sit there and say everything that they're going to do and do nothing. That's the biggest disappointment that I have. You have a thousand meetings and you still do nothing. You just have the meetings. That disappoints me a lot because I see they'll have meetings and meetings and say I'm going to do this and this is going to be better then next thing you know it's a new levy. (Denise, IQ6: p. 4)

Many of the parents shared this view, believing that previous superintendents have promised to do more for Black children. However, they believed that Black children continue to perform the worst in this district, and in their view many Black students still lacked the necessary resources for success. So, if a superintendent wanted the trust of these parents, follow-through on their promises was essential. Another point about her statement was her comment on the levy which reflected a concern several parents expressed. Some parents felt that superintendents in the past only appeared to be interested in students and parents when it was monetary purposes or just public relations, which in their view severely damaged the superintendent's credibility and their relationship with parents.

Research on parental involvement has identified numerous positive benefits that occur when parents are involved in schools (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Fields-Smith, 2005; Thompson, 2003a; Trotman, 2001). According to several parents in this study, low parent involvement was an issue that plagued this district. Yet as Linda suggested, if a

superintendent truly valued parents and wanted their involvement, schools needed to establish formats that encouraged not discouraged parent involvement. Several parents discussed ways a superintendent might listen to the needs and concerns of parents and others. A number of parents mentioned a series of forums that the superintendent had held in order to hear what various communities within the district had to say about concerns regarding the performance of the schools and practices within the districts. Linda was one of those parents. She expressed hope that the superintendent would extend other opportunities for parents to share their views and participate in their children's schools.

> If you want parent involvement in your schools to increase which is a real problem, superintendents need to be sure that they can open these buildings when parents can be there. Parents can't be at Open Houses and PTA meetings during the day when they have to work. Come on now. You want parent involvement and then you open a building when parents can't be there. That's just lip service. That is all. (Linda, TIQ11: pp. 8-9)

These parents asserted that many of the issues of disconnection, lack of trust, and parent disengagement could be improved by a superintendent who genuinely listened to parents and who provided parents with the means to be involved or at least with actual opportunities to interact and be a part of decisions that affected their children. As parents conversed about their views on relationships with the superintendent, it was evident that they desired a trusting relationship of mutual respect, which is not unlike what prior research suggested of Pre-*Brown* relationships (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004). For parents in this study, like parents in some prior research that explored relationships between Black principals and Black parents, trust was an essential

element a superintendent needed for cultivating community (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004).

As has been discussed earlier, for parents in this study visibility and accessibility were both important ways for a superintendent to know the people he/she serves. One parent discussed the importance of developing partnerships with faith-based groups as another avenue for a superintendent to establish relationships with Black parents who might not be comfortable in school settings.

> I think that another way that the superintendent could be visible to the community is get on the agenda on Sunday morning at some of the area churches and I'm not just talking about some of the elite churches. . . . I'm talking about the store front church where you've got the pastor who is not educated and didn't go to seminary, but he or she is a pastor. I'm talking coming and talking to that audience, because that's where your underachieving students are a lot of times in those churches where they don't have the big name, so if the superintendent comes and speaks sometimes on a Sunday and get his message out there there's one way to get people on board and I think you will get people on board, and people will start working with you. . . . Because this is a stand up person here that's all about helping our kids because he or she is giving up some of his or her weekend time to go work with the community. (Mary, IQ10: pp. 11-12)

Her remarks revealed several positive relationship building aspects. By being more accessible to parents, the superintendent showed his or her commitment of personal time to the children and parents of the district. Parents saw the superintendent in a different nonthreatening environment and a superintendent was able to reach another segment of their constituency. Further, her observations concurred with more recent research that found that Black parents, especially parents of lower socioeconomic status, have typically been more disenfranchised in schools and were more frequently not positively received by school personnel (Calabrese, 1990; Edwards, 1993; Lott, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000), resulting in more of a need for superintendents to cultivate relationships with Black

parents. Denise gave a reason why cultivating a relationship with Black parents is needed. She said, “Our Black children are losing focus in schools and there’s no one to really help them get back on track so I believe more time should be spent focusing on kids and their education as far as getting more parent involvement” (TIQ1: p. 1). To complement this view, Linda stated Black parents are part of the equation needed to improve the education in the district. “It is absolutely crucial that he do that in the Black community.” She also touched on why a superintendent as a pivotal community leader should have supportive relationships with Black parents.

> He has a heart for hurting people . . . everyone goes through tough times, but you can have all the qualities, but if you don’t have real heart for people then I think the person that has that just supersedes in anything that they do . . . than people that don’t. Because it’s about people, it’s not about books. It’s not about ABC’s and 123’s. It’s about the soul and heart. . . . Parents need to be inspired and the better you are at that I think the better you are to really create something powerful and lasting. (Linda, TIQ11: p. 5)

A superintendent cannot inspire people who do not trust that the leader of schools has their best interests in mind. As Linda’s comments indicated a superintendent has to be about people first. If he/she does that, then the type of positive relationships needed to change the conditions of education for children in this district will be fostered and positive change inevitable.

Since relationships are needed to cultivate community and to establish cooperative and even collaborative relationships with parents and students, the ability to communicate effectively with all types of people is essential. Some research about Black principals’ relationships with Black parents has supported that regular and open communications with Black parents were an important part of relationship building (Edwards & Willie, 1998; Scott, 1980; Siddle Walker, 2003: Siddle Walker & Archung,

2003). These parents believed a superintendent must establish relationships with the Black community if he or she was going to be successful. Similar to prior research (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999), these parents expressed that regular, open, and honest communications were needed to build trust with the community. A sense of community would help to establish common focus and goals so that the district and the community were not fragmented into personal agendas. As evidenced in the following section, these parents wanted a superintendent who valued the voices of those within community.

Valuing Voices of the Community

Previous researchers have suggested that Black parents today are less supportive and more distrustful of school personnel than Black parents were in segregated schools (Edwards, 1993; Fields-Smith, 2005; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000). One reason for this disconnect with school personnel has been that Black parents have felt that their views were unimportant to school personnel and that Black parents, from lower socioeconomic status in particular, were not valued by school personnel (Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lott, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000). This disconnect was reflected in Michael's comments about a superintendent who did not give Black parents an opportunity to share their thoughts.

> Allow parents to have voice because what I've seen in the past is along with a lot of different forums, they bring their constituents with them and they have these notepads and they're writing, but as history has shown that they never really follow through with these things, so allow the constituents to have greater voice. (Michael, TIQ2: p. 1)

Above, Michael indicated that even though superintendents have listened to parents, they have not always acted on what they have heard. A few of the parents indicated that superintendents in the past have been insincere in actions that displayed valuing parents

and their views. Some researchers have found that administrators and teachers in the schools have treated Black parents negatively and even more so when the parent was of a lower socioeconomic status (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lott, 2001). Parents can develop a sense of powerlessness if they believe that by sharing their concerns that they will be chastised or ignored. In describing interactions at the building level, Michael continued,

> Parents feel they're locked out or can't express their voice or that they're going to be criticized or punished for having a voice then—this is the real reason that the school system is in the shape that it's in, because the parents feel they don't have a voice and they're trying to get information, it's like the doors are locked that they can't really relate to principals or anybody else without being scrutinized. (IQ4: p. 3)

When a superintendent listens to parents, it makes them feel valued and that their views are important. One-on-one relationships with these parents made them feel like they were significant enough that the superintendent took the time to hear their views and to perhaps even remember their name. Then, parents felt they had voice when decisions reflected their views. Mary explained what it meant for a superintendent to sincerely desire to give parents' voice.

> Most parents, we feel we go to things, we get to speak out, but a lot of times we feel the decision is already made before we get there and so from that standpoint, parents having a voice would be if I went to say they had a series of forums for something and I went and other parents went and we voiced how we felt, we even put it in writing formally, that to have voice means that there would be a panel that sits down and actually has someone that compiles the data from all of the forums and make a decision based on the parents' choice. That is having a voice. And I think to really have a voice, sometimes, parents need to be educated as to what the issue is first, so they can make an educated decision, but sometimes they don't always have all of the information. (Mary, TIQ19: p. 6)

All 11 parents discussed listening to parents and interacting with parents in order to cultivate positive, collaborative relationships. This was consistent with prior research that

has established how important it is to Black parents to have their voices heard and valued (Davenport & Bogan, 2005; Morris, 1999, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Importantly, many of the parents contended providing opportunities for parents, students, and community and school personnel to share their opinions and concerns were essential to cultivating a collaborative environment.

Many of these parents felt a superintendent who listened to them was taking the first steps to changing the district. The parents in this study were adamant that Black parents wanted to be heard and involved in the decisions that impacted their children's education. All of the parents shared ways that Black parents, Black students, and the Black community desired to have voice and why having a voice was important to them as well as essential to how they viewed a superintendent's effectiveness. Several parents believed that a superintendent's accessibility to parents and willingness to listen to their views as parents, regardless of the parents' socioeconomic status, created a sense of hope that their children's needs will be met and provided a sense of power to make a difference for their own children. Much of the research about the relationships with Black parents in the pre-*Brown* era suggested that Black parents felt Black principals, who were in the highest leadership positions at that time, cared for their children and their actions reflected a support for the best interests of Black children (Fields-Smith, 2005; Irvine, 1988; Lomotey, 1987, 1989; Morris, 1999, 2004; Randolph, 2004). As Mary's representative remarks reveal, the parents in this study desired this same type of relationship, but with any superintendent regardless of race.

> That makes the superintendent not be an island-- off on some distant planet and the superintendent then becomes more than just a name on a piece of paper, it's someone I feel like I know—Somebody's that's accessible to me. If I'm really

> having a major problem and it can't be handled at the school level . . . that whole feeling that my needs are going to be addressed, I think that's what's important--- But I think if it were somebody that I've never communicated with, never got a chance to talk to, and was not accessible to me then I think I would feel pretty defeated. I would feel like if they're not meeting my need at the school level then I'm just nowhere, and probably because of my economic situation, I'm just stuck accepting whatever is happening at the school level even if it doesn't work. But, with the superintendent that has made themselves accessible to the community that gives me hope that there can be real change and that I can be a part of it and that I can have a voice in what's happening and that somebody not just making decisions about my child without asking me and that's real important because to get—for a person to get up and say I think that-- that this is what the parents want. Well you can't say that if you never asked me so my having an opportunity to talk and to give feedback, it gives me hope. (Mary, IQ9a: p. 6)

As noted, Mary's response was not race specific, it was relationship specific. The importance of communicating directly with parents resonated throughout the parents' remarks. Paula said, "I feel if a parent comes to see you, see what it is that parent needs. Talk to the parent. Don't push it off to the principal. You're the superintendent. Talk to that parent, you're involved in the school system, too" (TIQ1: p. 1). A superintendent who does is able to develop a better relationship with parents. It sends the message that what the parents have to say is important to that superintendent.

Another parent's illustration showed a way a superintendent demonstrated concern for what parents had to say and that the superintendent took the parent seriously.

> When they have the board meetings and the parents are welcome to speak out if there's a problem and when they discussed the problem with the superintendent he had someone to call them to the side to try to get to the bottom of it to solve the problem. Now that's a good superintendent. Instead of saying would you write me a letter and mail it or leave a message on the phone, the superintendent when you're at the board meeting and a parent had a problem like for an example, the superintendent that we have now—a parent had a problem with her child with security. She was worried about someone hurting her child and he asked her to step to the side and he had someone to talk to her. Now that's a good superintendent. . . . I like that in him and he done that . . . they can listen to the parents, that's the main concern and show them that they're listening to us not just

> saying okay we'll do something about it and nothing is never done. (Angel, TIQ15: p. 5)

Angel felt a good superintendent is one who makes parents feel their concerns and views are important. Other parents felt it reflected the characteristics of a strong or excellent superintendent. Regardless of how parents categorized these actions in regards to a superintendent's effectiveness, it was important for a superintendent to give parents, students, and others greater voice. Gayle's comments summed up their views.

> Because people need to be heard. . . . To understand that somebody [emphasis in original] is listening to them. They come into school sometimes and they may fall into the trap of meeting maybe someone that's not so pleasant and their reaction to what they're trying to voice and they become withdrawn and they think everyone [emphasis in original] is like that and no one really wants to hear. . . . So, allowing the parents and the teachers and students to know their voice is really being heard and allow them to see and hear that someone is really listening to what you're trying to say, and that really helps ease some of the tension between the community and parents and the school and the board and the superintendent. It eases that because people are saying, Well somebody is listening to me, I did say something, and making parents feel comfortable to be able to say things that they may have been rejected on in saying out loud --Oh that was stupid like-- or from another parent or a teacher downplaying their concern so allowing that to be a forum that the superintendent can set up so parents and students— It's a lot times, students are not being heard (taps on table for emphasis). They see people doing things for them that they think that we would like for them and they're like "No" and teachers and parents are like why don't they like that, I would have liked that, but you didn't ask them first you just put that in place for them and then expect them to gravitate to them. Well, they'll gravitate more if you allow them to have an input to what is going on and then they will gravitate towards that that's positive, but as long as you do that they will rebel because they say that all you're doing is trying to tell me what to do and you're not trying to include me in it. (Gayle, IQ9a: p. 6)

That parents wanted to be equal partners in the improvement of education for their children was articulated repeatedly in the remarks of parents. Listening, hearing, and responding to the voices of others were the fulcrum for establishing relationships and partnerships that will get others to embrace needed changes. A superintendent, in their

estimation, has to recognize this and create an inclusive environment. In short, these parents hoped that a superintendent would embrace the opportunity to include the voices of a community that typically have not been heard while creating a better education for the children in this district.

The remarks of parents also indicated that Black parents not only wanted to be listened to, but to also be treated as equals. John's response to a question about the type of interactions he would like a superintendent to have with parents reflected this view.

> Only to treat people as equals and not just because an individual that stands out as far as let's say like a grain of rice. If you have a black grain of rice in all white ones, you stand out a little bit but when you speak up you can be heard and look like everybody else. You just want him to be cordial and to talk. (John, TIQ17: p. 7)

He desired a superintendent to treat all people the same even if the person stands out because of race, gender, or even socioeconomic status. One of the reasons found in the research for Black parents being detached and disengaged from schools was the unequal or different treatment of Black parents in comparison to non-Black parents (Calabrese, 1990; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lott, 2001; Trotman, 2001). This issue of equal treatment was reflected in a few parents' remarks about interactions with Black parents. A few parents felt it was important that a superintendent speak with parents in language they can understand and in a manner that was not derogatory or belittling. John was one such parent. He mentioned more than one time that it was important that the superintendent understand that "when you talk to people you talk to them not through them or above them." Aaliyah talked about it as "being real" or "being authentic." Similarly, other researchers have demonstrated ways in which Black principals created equal relationships through their choices of words, their demeanor, and

even in where they positioned themselves when talking to parents (Edwards & Willie, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2003; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). Some parents in this study expressed some of the same ways in their remarks. For instance, several parents discussed the value of informal conversations as opposed to formal speeches because it involved two-way communications.

> For one is try to get out in the neighborhood instead of having their entourage of a thousand people behind them and talk to the people go out and talk to the parents of different neighborhoods and all and try to get their understanding instead of just making forums and appearing somewhere and making a long speech that really goes over everyone's heads. (John, IQ4: p. 3)

Other parents also described meetings such as PTA meetings where there are potluck dinners and a more relaxed environment, or conversing with individuals at community events, or just speaking with people one on one in any environment as ways to make communications less formal so that for some parents the superintendent can become less intimidating and a less of a looming authority figure. These more informal communications, in their opinions, could remove barriers and allow both the superintendent and the parents to both get a better understanding of each other through more personal connections. As parents feel more comfortable with a superintendent, trust levels will increase. As already discussed, trust in a leader was for these parents essential to cultivating the collaborative relationships needed to change this district.

Using His/Her Voice to Act Heroically for Children and the Community

Financial problems, low parent involvement, decaying buildings, high minority populations and low academic achievement have been endemic of the districts that Black superintendents lead (Revere, 1987; Robinson et al., 2004; Scott, 1980, 1990). This district had a predominately Black student population and the academic performance of

Black children in this district lagged behind their non-Black peers in this district and behind that of their peers in suburban districts. Many social issues were present in the environment that these children had to navigate if they were to be successful. According to parents in this study, many parents in this district were working class or poor who were struggling to make it themselves, lacked education or resources, and often felt they were unable to help in their children's education. When a superintendent's tenure is over, Black parents were expecting the district to be in a better place than when the superintendent arrived. Kowalski (1995) and Jackson (1999) have indicated that conditions similar to these in other urban districts required a person of heroic stature. But what is a hero to these parents? Linda characterized a hero as one who is willing to do what it takes to create excellence for children.

> They're ready to literally to take on whatever the problems are. . . . A hero is willing to put themselves in the gap for those who are less fortunate, those who are less capable, not that that other person cannot become capable, but our children are here to gain strength, to gain knowledge, to prepare, so that superintendent is literally placing himself or herself in places, in initiatives, in roles to stand in the gap for that kid, that child and being able to identify what the real needs are then to seek out the resources to do that. (Linda, TIQ14: p. 7)

While she was the only parent to specifically say the district needed a hero, the parents shared many ways that a superintendent in an urban district such as theirs needed to be a hero to Black children, Black parents, and the Black community. Various parents' remarks underscored the desperate need for someone to be a strong voice for Black children and the Black community; therefore, this person must be willing to make extraordinary efforts to see that Black children receive the type of education that would prepare them for the future. These parents were looking for someone who could give hope to Black children and the Black community. The majority of the parents felt that a

Black superintendent should be more passionate and committed to helping Black children succeed than a superintendent who is not Black. The subthemes that best represented a superintendent using his/her own voice on behalf of children and the community were: (1) Tenaciously fighting for children's education; (2) leading with integrity and being of good character; and (3) unifying the diverse populations of the community to achieve a focus on children.

Tenaciously Fighting for Children's Education

Equity in education has been a problem confronted by Blacks since Blacks first were permitted to get a formal education (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Pinkney, 2000). Parents in this study expressed concerns about the educational resources, curriculum, instruction, facilities, class sizes, and opportunities afforded to children in this district. These concerns were similar to concerns that have been historically linked to education of Black children (Anderson, 1988; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Ravitch, 2000/2001; Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). As a result of their concerns, desires for a better education for the children in this district were prevalent in the responses of the parents. Importantly, they desired a superintendent who was willing to tenaciously fight for their children.

According to parents in this study, many students in this district come from lower income families who often did not have exposure to life outside the area where they reside. One result is that they felt it was important for a superintendent to provide students with a broader view of the world through exposure to activities, programs, and the arts outside their community. For example, Ramona stated,

> I think he should have more programs to get them out of the schools and get them into the communities and . . . I always tell them outside of their 16 blocks. He needs to get them out of there [taps on the table for emphasis] and see-Oh, this is going on over here. I could be doing this, because it's a lot of stuff out there that they don't know about and once you take them and remove them then they'll see, Oh, look they're going to college . . . so he needs get them out of those 16 blocks and take them and do different things. . . . I always say this is the in your face generation you have to put stuff in their face for them to believe it and see it. (IQ9: p. 8)

Many other parents' remarks showed agreement with Ramona. For example, Linda talked about the advantages of exposing students to the arts or Mary, who when talking about the most positive thing a superintendent can do for children, remarked, "Set aside funds to do some extra things with students to further broaden their horizons that may or may not necessarily have anything to do with proficiency testing" (Mary, TIQ2, p. 1). She continued to describe why it would be important for a Black or non-Black superintendent to extend opportunities for Black students.

> On the one hand for an African American superintendent who probably has shared some of the same experiences as African American students have if he's working in an urban setting, then I would expect him to definitely do that particularly because he knows how limited those opportunities are. It's a chance for our students to get to see something other than just the neighborhood where they've grown up. If it were a person who is not African American, I probably would expect them to do it as well for maybe some of the same reasons, but more so because they are putting the same value on our students that they would put on students of their own race. I know that in predominantly suburban White communities that it's a lot of value put on their students in making sure that they have appropriate experiences that will serve them later in life not just trying to pass the test or whatever. (Mary, TIQ2, p. 1)

The majority of parents expressed in some way that Black children needed to see that the superintendent cared about them, so if that superintendent truly valued the children in this district he or she would work to see that their education was beyond just minimal standards.

A superintendent who is acting heroically for students is not going to let problems remain that hinder their students from receiving a high quality education. Linda detailed emphatically the urgency of the superintendent personally addressing these issues and other issues that impact academic performance.

> When he hears that there's no books here, or he hears that a certain number of students are being suspended or that violence is on the rise in this building—Go see about it [pointing her finger as speaks for added emphasis]. Don't just send somebody. Go See About It and let those parents and those teachers know and the students especially know that I got my eye on you. That this is the requirement and these are the consequences. (Linda, IQ6: p. 6)

As has been discussed earlier, being visible and involved were important to these parents. Furthermore, the parents believed that a superintendent who has a passion and commitment to their children's success will go above and beyond to see that their students' educational needs are met.

As noted, Linda described a hero as one who is willing to stand in the gap for those in need. In addition to the aforementioned issues, a few parents felt social issues in the Black community have had a pervasively negative impact on the education of many Black youth.

> The social issues—school has taken a back seat to all the social issues. It has, and if you see all the stuff that's going on because I always tell them behind every child acting out, there's a story. Every child has a story behind that and if he [the superintendent] don't address those social issues then school will suffer. It will become unimportant and as you can see now, it has taken a back seat to some of the social issues that the children have. (Ramona, TIQ18: p. 7)

Many parents expected any superintendent, but a Black superintendent in particular, to intervene in issues external to schools that impeded learning for children in the district. Denise and other parents were distressed that far too many Black children have lost focus on their education. Denise articulated the views of several parents.

> Our kids are not focused on what a good education or a—what else should I say—our kids don't have dreams any more of going maybe further than maybe to Iraq and back home. They don't think they have a future. The job market has gone down and declined . . . especially the Black young men they have no focus as to where they are going and we need a stronger leader to focus them in the right direction and to sense that you do have a future, you do have goals that you can set and most of these goals will be met. The kids don't feel as though they have a future and a strong Black leader will give them the equipment that they need to work with to have a future. (Denise, TIQ4a: pp. 2-3)

Many parents in this study expected any superintendent, but a Black superintendent in particular, to intervene in issues external to schools that impeded learning for children in the district. To these parents, being a hero to students and parents required a superintendent to not only be concerned with are there enough books, are class sizes small enough, or even the quality of education itself; instead, it required a superintendent who recognized Black students and parents have extensive needs with issues that are obviously beyond the educational milieu that must be addressed or they will continue to handicap a struggling district.

Leading With Integrity and Being of Good Character

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that the character and values of the superintendent were important to parents in this study. The parents believed this district needed a superintendent who displayed leadership of heroic stature by leading with integrity and being of good character. To eight of these parents, these were the essential traits of a strong leader.

More than half of the parents addressed the importance of a superintendent leading with integrity. Several parents believed a superintendent needed to do what is right for children no matter what. Such a superintendent would display this trait by making decisions as Mary said, "Based on what the children need as opposed to what

might be popular." One way that a superintendent led with integrity was by leading by example. Linda's views encapsulated those of other parents who believed a superintendent's actions would speak louder than words.

> You've set a pace and a tone for achievement and success and you've laid, even if you're not in that role next year, you've laid the groundwork for someone else to step in your shoes and keep running with the ball so to speak. Your graduation rates are higher. You have to inspire students to be able to do that. You've handled some of the needs of that district whereas if you had problems with books last year, you're not going into the next year with having problems with having books in the classroom . . . you're not going into that next year with that problem, you're going to another problem. You just chip away at—eliminate. So I'm looking for real progress people—We're not just going to spin our wheels year after year with the same problems [emphasis in the original].(Linda, TIQ5, pp.3-4)

Other parents stated directly that follow through and evidence of progress were necessary for a superintendent to garner support of the community. Many parents expected that a superintendent would behave in ways that reflected a focus on children, not their paycheck.

Other parents felt it was important for a superintendent to vocally stand up for what is right for children. As Pam expressed,

> For me, it would mean someone outspoken, who no matter who it offends, because ultimately your job is for the children. If you're on that right track and you're not hurting anyone, for me, that would be a big thing—outspoken on things that are not right. When you say leadership you have to have a strong team behind you also. That's important. But again, for me the main thing is being out there, and being outspoken, and doing what's right for the children. (Pam, TIQ3, p. 1)

Ramona's remarks concurred with Pam's views. She said, "They're somebody who's not afraid to step outside the box, and say hey this is wrong I don't care if you all don't like it, because this is what's best for the children" (TIQ3a: p. 2). The parents desired this type of unwavering leadership to give to voice to what has been wrong in the past or

continues to be wrong, challenge it, and stop further wrongs from similar offenses from occurring.

Another way that a superintendent led by example was to set high expectations. As Angel commented the superintendent sets the standard for quality and Denise considered leading the way as setting the standard. She said, “Lead the parents in the right direction that they can help their children. A lot of times parents are stuck in a position where they want to help their children but they just don’t know how and a good leader will teach these parents the right direction to go” (Denise, TIQ2: p. 2). Denise and some other parents expected a Black superintendent to be more committed to leading and teaching the Black community how to better support the education of Black children.

Several parents remarked about how a superintendent’s values and character impact their leadership. Aaliyah said, “Character lasts a lifetime that’s just what’s important to me” (IQ9, p. 8). In an earlier response she remarked, “You really are a real person. . . . That would probably be more important than any academics, any letters outside. You can have the academics in the world, but what is your character, who are you. That’s more important to me” (Aaliyah, IQ3a, p. 5). Aaliyah was not alone in addressing the importance of character. Four other parents also talked about the value of being of good character. Most frequently, the characteristics they discussed were having a strong work ethic, being open and honest, being moral and ethical, having strong family and spiritual values, and being compassionate and fair-minded.

As a public figure, these parents desired a superintendent who showed decorum in their personal lives as well as strong spiritual and family values.

> One of the things is they value the child. I think that's one of the things is that having some standards that they know the world is changing but values really haven't. I would love a person that has strong spiritual values. I would like a person that has strong family values. A person that had good ethics. . . . I don't believe a superintendent has--a sense of that people think they can do anything they want---this is my life but when you become a political figure or community figure, you're going to be able to wait until your term is over to be able to do, I guess I'm thinking of the word carouse around or what you probably did before or maybe not or possibly going out partying, drinking with your friends all in the community and things like that. You have to have a sense of yourself to know that you're a representative of the community. . . . I would like someone that can really handle themselves in public. (Gayle, TIQ17, pp. 7-8)

> It always pays to be a praying superintendent because there's no weaning to God's power. There is no limit to His resources. He opens doors and He shuts doors. . . . So if you have a praying superintendent who is able to see God first . . . then they won't get burned out because that's a big job and they won't be so overwhelmed by the past or by the problems, because it's a lot of problems particularly when you're dealing with a struggling district….God will be this superintendent's partner, because these children belong to God first and so he's able to do as God says above exceedingly above all that we are going to ask. (Linda, TIQ14, p. 7)

The aforementioned quotes demonstrated that a superintendent who leads with these tenets in mind will be respected more, found to be more trustworthy, and their authenticity will assist with gaining support towards the desired goals; thus, it appeared that integrity and good character were necessary leadership traits for a community leader to act heroically on behalf of children, especially one who needed to unify a district towards a common focus.

Unifying the Diverse Perspectives of the Community to Achieve a Focus on Children

Many of the parents conveyed simply that parents wanted to contribute to their children's education, children wanted to contribute to their own education, and the community wanted to contribute the education of the community's children. As has been evidenced throughout this study and in prior research, in practice, it is not quite that

simplistic. One of the critical roles of the superintendent as a community leader is community engagement in order to bring the community together with a common purpose of children.

A few parents specifically addressed how a strong leader is needed to create a sense of unity of purpose. Denise expressly felt a Black superintendent could do this better than someone who is not Black because,

> Black people are a little harder to reach to me and a lot of times they have a little more confidence in a Black person speaking to them. Definitely that would be very important to me that we have a strong leader in the community that can pull the people together. (Denise, TIQ3: p. 1)

She added in separate response, "They [superintendents] have the ability to have people focusing on the real needs of the problem at hand instead of focusing on ways to be separated. They'll focus on ways to keep us together." The need for a superintendent to unify this district was communicated throughout the interviews. Parents discussed the importance of the superintendent listening to others, working with other community leaders, drawing in parents throughout the district, and continually seeking ways to unify a splintered district.

While only a few parents explicitly addressed the need to unify the district, many other parents' remarks inferred this need and provided insight into the actions needed to unify all in the district to the common purpose of better education for children. As Paula stated, "I would say we really have to partnership both of the two, the community and schools . . . so we can build our schools back up" (TIQ4a, p. 3), or as Gayle contended,

> Offer the community some assistance on how to connect and help their own community grow and letting them know that yes, he's the superintendent but at the same time, the community, really the people run the community, run the school district and he needs to give them a sense of empowerment around that.

> Letting them know that it's not just [the superintendent's job], but it's going to take the community to help him develop a productive school district. (Gayle, TIQ4, pp. 2-3)

These parents recognized that a superintendent leads the way to change the district. Several parents believed that by letting people know their opinions count it would draw parents towards the vision for the district.

> How often, you can almost count it on your hand the number of times you have that group of people [parents, teachers, administrators] who are all invested in education, sitting in one room talking about how to make it better. Not very often, so it was very, very powerful. (Linda, TIQ13, p. 8)

Unifying the diverse views towards a common focus was a role of the superintendent and necessary for lasting change to occur. These parents just asked that their voices be included in the transformation of the district. A superintendent can hear voice through surveys, meetings, and one-on-one interactions with stakeholders. Further, recognition of the contributions and accomplishments of others showed that a superintendent valued others and would help to meld the community.

In order to lead the community, a few parents felt a superintendent needed to be inspirational and charismatic. Denise said a charismatic leader will be able to "pull people often without trying" (TIQ14). Mary also characterized a charismatic superintendent who inspires.

> You know being a superintendent is kind of like being a preacher or a pastor. When the parishioners are down and out and are feeling sad and at their low point, then the pastor has to stand up and pump everybody up and I think that the superintendent needs to do that. It has to be a person who is able to speak in such a way that people can think they can do anything, sort of like Martin Luther King, he was such a great speaker that he caused all of these people to march on Washington just at his word, so I think that some of those creative juices need to be flowing in the life of the superintendent. . . . The community has to see you as an ethical moral person who is not about the paycheck and about how many

> thousands I can make but about what can I do for these children. (Mary, IQ3: pp. 3-4)

Ultimately, many of the parents' remarks reflected a desire to have more control over the education their children were receiving. A few researchers have contended that Black parents feel their opinions are disregarded and that they are outsiders when it comes to the education of their own children (Morris, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Thus, helping Black parents to feel powerful through engagement was a key part of the unification process. As the reference to Martin Luther King inferred, a superintendent who can get people to believe in a dream, develop a sense of hope, and work together for a common purpose is leading with the collective power that will help them to act heroically on behalf of those they serve.

Summary

These parents illustrated ways that community engagement was essential to effective community leadership. Being involved in the community, cultivating and maintaining relationships, valuing the input of the community, and using his/her own voice to act heroically for students and the community were shown to be necessary elements of any superintendent's leadership. These parents wanted a superintendent to recognize parents as true partners in the education of their children. Superintendents who lead with these ideas in mind were visible and involved in the community. Because they were visible and involved, they would be able to better understand the needs of the district, which was critical to creating a vision for the district. Yet, their leadership in the community would not be complete if the superintendent has not listened to and included the voices of the community. Superintendents who incorporated these characteristics into

their leadership were better able to use their voices to act heroically for the children and the district. Finding that community engagement was essential to the leadership of any superintendent, the ways that Black parents discussed race and its importance in the leadership of a Black superintendent are considered in the next section.

Race: Acknowledgment and Importance

This study was about the views and perspectives of Black parents, and thus it was linked to race in many ways. In addition, it sought to uncover if there were different ways that these Black parents thought about the leadership of a Black superintendent. Research demonstrates that race often impacts the expectations that other Blacks hold for Black superintendents (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Jackson, 1999; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Given that prior research described expectations Black superintendents believe other Blacks hold for them, this research sought to ascertain the expectations of Black parents directly. Generally Black parents are the major population in districts where Black superintendents lead (Glass, 2000; Robinson et al., 2004), hence their expectations can illuminate factors that impact a Black superintendent's leadership.

Findings of this study demonstrated that role expectations, along with racial and cultural expectations, were important expectations for a Black superintendent. While there were many ways in which parents in this study articulated that race mattered, some parents also struggled with acknowledging that personal position. There was a tension about whether race mattered or not. The following themes emerged out of the parents' voices in their expressions about race and its relationship to school leadership. The following expectations of a Black superintendent emerged in the voices of Black parents

in this study: (1) Fulfilling performance expectations; (2) acknowledging race-based expectations in the Black community; (3) understanding the needs and values of Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; (4) serving as a role model to Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; and (5) acting on behalf of Black children and the Black community. Various researchers of racial identity have concluded that racial identity has varying degrees of influence in the lives of Blacks (Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Durant & Sparrow, 1997; Ogbu, 2004; Sanders-Thompson, 2001; Sanders-Thompson & Akbar, 2003). While specific expectations regarding a Black superintendent were expressed, for most of the parents, qualifications were more important than race when selecting a superintendent. Likewise, effective performance was expected in the execution of the role. Yet, while many parents said they did not have additional expectations for a Black superintendent, their responses indicated otherwise, with 10 of 11 parents articulating ways in which they did in fact expect more of a Black superintendent.

Fulfilling Performance Expectations: *Race Does Not Matter*

Recent research demonstrates a variety of factors that influence why Black parents might prefer a Black superintendent. These included: a feeling of disconnection on the part of Black parents, a feeling of powerlessness in making decisions that impact their children, and a history of Black support for Black school leadership (Anderson, 1988; Diamond & Gomez, 2004; Fields-Smith, 2005; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2003, 2005; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Tillman, 2004). Nevertheless all of the parents in this study were concerned that a superintendent, regardless of race, was going to address the issues in this district so that their children could receive a better education.

For the majority of the parents in this study, race was not the primary characteristic that was desired in a superintendent. Like many of the parents, John expressed the view that it was more about the needs of the students in the district than the race or ethnicity of the superintendent. John explained,

> Well, the right one is the one that is going to do the correct thing for the people of that district. 'Cause we have a big district. We have a lot of kids of different races and just being Black or White it just don't make a difference. He could be Hispanic. He could be Latino. He could be anything but if he is going to get in there and he's going to do the right job then put him in. (IQ6: p. 6)

Linda echoed these sentiments,

> Education is education. We have to turn out students who are capable and competitive. It really doesn't matter what that gender or race is as long as you care, as long as <u>you</u> are capable, as long as you're willing to bring your best to the table and get out of the box [voice goes up in pitch slightly]. You know, be willing <u>to get creative</u> [emphasis heard in voice inflection], seek out the research about what has worked across other schools districts and bring that to [District X] or to whatever, I know that this just doesn't apply to [our city]. But, I'm just saying do what it takes. <u>Have a whatever it takes attitude--that failure is not an option attitude</u> [spoken with passion in her voice] to create success. (IQ3: p. 5)

For the majority of the parents, performance transcended race of a superintendent except in very specific ways that are discussed later in the next subsection. One parent, the youngest in the study, was most steadfast in her assertion that race did not matter. Paula's view of a superintendent was, "Basically, I feel that the superintendent should be based on his qualities, his expectations, not the race" (IQ7: p. 3). Paula's remarks summarized the views of the majority of the parents in regards to selection of a superintendent. She said, "I mean a superintendent is important period, not just the race. I mean it could be a White superintendent, a Mexican, a Puerto Rican so—[just one who] who can get the job done" (IQ8: p. 3). Most of these parents liked that their own district had a Black superintendent, but even for them, the qualifications of the superintendent were as

important if not more important than his/her race. Pam, a parent who preferred a Black superintendent, aptly described the feelings of these parents. She said, “I don’t want to be a stickler on [having a Black superintendent], but whatever color they might be, you still have a job to do and if you’re qualified, you’re qualified” (Pam, TIQ6: p. 3). Getting the job done received a strong level of agreement among parents, with all 11 parents citing this descriptor as a criterion for a good superintendent regardless of race.

This district was struggling academically and economically, therefore, concerns about hiring a quality leader to change these conditions took precedence over concern about hiring a Black superintendent. This group of parents mirrored earlier findings of Farkas and Johnson (1998) in which 75% of the 800 Black parents in their study felt race should not be a factor in hiring a superintendent. Eight parents in this study did not believe that the superintendent had to be Black; their primary concern was whether the person was qualified to do the job. Even though this study did not have hiring practices as a main focus, it was clear that parents’ expectations about the qualities desired in a superintendent were based on desiring a superintendent who was best qualified to meet the challenges of this district.

Various parents also addressed other reasons that there should not be a focus on hiring a Black superintendent. While Paula firmly believed that race should not be a factor in the selection of a superintendent, Gayle was more conflicted because she actually desired a Black superintendent. However, she expressed concern that a person with the wrong motives was the wrong person regardless of that person’s race. Gayle said, “Well, I’m torn with that because individuals no matter what skin they are, if they’re not—if they’re just for the job so to speak to have the title then I don’t care what color,

what sex, what gender whatever you are—you will not be profitable to the school"(IQ7: p.4). Other parents expressed apprehension about the idea that having a Black superintendent was mandatory, recognizing its broader implications. For example, Michael said,

> On one hand then you have to say if just the reverse, if it's predominantly White, will they just want a White superintendent. So, it depends on the individual. A lot of superintendents that are White can deal with the Black population because they were probably raised in that population or vice versa. (IQ7: p. 4)

Michael was more focused on having a superintendent who could work well with students. Importantly, his hesitation reflected a concern that discriminatory practices could arise if districts or communities only believe that a superintendent who reflects the race of the majority population could effectively lead that district. Further his hesitation reflected the posture that many of the parents took initially; race did not or should not matter.

A few parents also stated that race alone was not a guarantee that the person was qualified for the position. Denise said,

> Color don't mean a lot to me [laughs]. I mean really truly it doesn't. What means something to me is the person that's going to do the job. If you're Black, White, purple or whatever—if you—just because you're Black and I'm Black that don't make you fulfill the role as you should—so I mean I don't just look at it—I'm looking at the person that is qualified for the role more or less. (IQ2b: p. 2)

She went on to describe what she meant by "fulfill the role," which meant "make your district the best it can be and that means . . . whatever means necessary to make it <u>a great place for kids to be</u>" [emphasis in original] (IQ2c: p. 3). Parents' commentary revealed that to be considered a good superintendent at the very least the superintendent must make some improvement in the quality of education. Further it revealed that these parents

were more concerned about what a superintendent can and will do to improve the quality of education for children in this district. If that superintendent can perform effectively in their role, then it does not matter if he/she is Black or White or any other race or ethnicity.

Acknowledging Race-based Views: Race Does Matter

As demonstrated above, most parents in this study believed performance was more important than the race of a superintendent and frequently in their responses indicated that race did not influence their expectations. In their initial interviews only three parents directly discussed without probing what they deemed as additional expectations for a Black superintendent. A follow-up question in the second interviews asked all parents if they felt Blacks in general held race-based expectations for Black superintendents. In response to that question, 10 of 11 parents responded that race-based expectations do exist. What's more, a deeper analysis of the parents' responses from both interviews revealed that the parents in actuality did describe race-based expectations that they either chose not to acknowledge as such or did not realize that they were race-based expectations. Even when questions were directly querying about Black superintendents, some parents initially indicated they did not have race-based expectations; but when given the opportunity to expound on their responses, they revealed race-related expectations and provided details about these expectations and why they were appropriate and important. Their combined responses presented a representation of how race did matter to them, despite their initial reaction that it did not.

As a researcher, efforts were made to create a comfort level so that parents could openly discuss their views and expectations. Even though some researchers have found

that similarity in race creates an "insider" role and higher degree of openness between participant and researcher (Jordan et al., 2001; Serrant-Green, 2002; Tillman, 2006), it is also noted that the same researcher can have outsider status, too (Serrant-Green, 2002; Tillman, 2006), particularly if broaching a topic where the participants might feel that their responses, such as when race is a topic, could be portrayed negatively or misrepresented (Milner, 2006). Thus, controversial or sensitive topics, such as race, can make people uncomfortable with discussing the topic (Boyd, 2000) and require a special rapport or prodding to obtain information. In this instance, although there was a favorable rapport established between myself and the parents, still I was a researcher so perhaps this fact tempered some of the parents' statements of their personal expectations that were race-based, but made it easier for them to indicate that others do have race-based views. However, because a conversational tone was used in the interviews, it allowed for more of a free flow of ideas which enriched the content of the parents' responses and uncovered their true expectations. In all, their perspectives clearly articulated the acknowledgement of race-based views and elucidated expectations that some Black parents had about and for Black superintendents.

Ogbu (2004) contended that if a Black leader does not fight for the causes of Blacks, sanctions were imminent. Support from the Black community could be given or withheld depending on the stance a Black superintendent takes in regards to issues that concern the Black community (Edwards & Willie, 1998: Ogbu, 2004; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990). In alignment with this view, several parents in this study asserted that race is a confounding factor to a Black superintendent because of expectations that he/she would focus more on Black children, would sacrifice in ways

that a White superintendent was not expected to, and would develop relationships with the Black community that were not expected of White superintendents. Similar expectations were found in the limited research that explored expectations of a Black superintendent (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990). Michael presented a reason why some Blacks might have higher expectations for a Black superintendent. He said,

> The reason probably being is that they are kind of showing a comparison like would a White as opposed to Black superintendent be better. They're being put on front street and they're being scrutinized even more so than a White superintendent I feel and I guess as history shows when a Black superintendent does come in there and they don' do so well of a job and if the next one comes in they have to clean up the baggage that the past superintendent did so they're expected to do more, which I think is unfair. (Michael, TIQ6: p. 3)

This unfair comparison, as he described it, reflected the "superhero or superheroine" expectation that other researchers have suggested existed for a Black superintendent (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005; Kowalski, 1995; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980, 1990). Several parents in this study also believed a Black superintendent was expected to eliminate serious problems that existed prior to their appointment to the superintendency.

Mary also shared why she believed that unfair expectations were placed on Black superintendents,

> Sometimes we can expect our own to do more than we would somebody White. It's almost like we're always looking for the next Martin Luther King, whether it's in education or whether it's in whatever. It could be in car selling. . . . We're expecting self-sacrifice. We're expecting sometimes our professional people to do it for nothing just because they're Black. We're expecting them to not demand the rewards that they should be getting for their money, but sometimes when you bring in a White person, it's like oh yeah, the only way we're going to get them is if we make this lucrative for them and we're okay with that. (Mary, TIQ6: p. 4)

What she addressed in her remarks begins to outline another difficulty for a Black superintendent. Her explanation showed two conflicts for a Black superintendent. One was the double bind of professionalism and Black consciousness or commitment to race (Ogbu, 2004; Scott, 1990). Scott (1990) described this double bind as a tension that existed for a Black superintendent who must fulfill the role expectations that are associated with their position and manage those expectations with expectations from other Blacks that he/she will remain true to their race and cultural identity. Scott (1990) suggested this double bind makes leadership more difficult for a Black superintendent. Another conflict was class related. It appeared that parents in this study deemed it more acceptable for a White superintendent than a Black superintendent to reap the monetary and fringe benefits of their position, given similar credentials and professional experiences. Similar to parents in the Diamond and Gomez (2004) study, social class seemed to influence some of the expectations of parents in this study. During their interviews several parents alluded to the salary of a former Black superintendent that troubled some Black parents in this district. Other concerns that were possibly class-related were lifestyle choices such as where the superintendent chooses to live or their clothes, jewelry, cars, or other things that some parents' viewed as symbols of a lifestyle that separated a Black superintendent from the average Black person in the community they served. As a Black superintendent gains education and experience, he/she does move up the social class ladder, sometimes creating a social disconnect from the urban community he/she may eventually lead. Ogbu (2004) found this to be a problem for professional Blacks. He contended that for Black professionals a sense of equality must be maintained between them and Blacks of all socioeconomic statuses or sanctions would

result. Parents in this study wanted to be seen as equals and as valuable contributors in the education of their children, as evidenced in the discussion of the first theme in this chapter. This notion of equality played out again in their discussion about race and the superintendency, and class differences were a poignant issue for them, too. Parents' perceptions of these differences had implications for levels of trust and acceptance, which would clearly complicate leadership, especially for a Black superintendent.

Several parents detailed additional or higher expectations for a Black superintendent. For a few parents the historical treatment of Blacks played a role in their ideas about leadership. Aaliyah, who stated all of her remarks reflected expectations for a Black superintendent, hoped that a Black superintendent would lead with integrity that represented their ancestry.

> I would just really hope a Black superintendent would be comfortable with being themselves. I don't know often you find that people in high post positions like that they just forget who they are, where they come from and what they're about. It's stuff that our ancestors in America died and fought for to have. (Aaliyah, IQ10: pp. 8-9)

She was concerned that a Black superintendent might deny his or her links to the Black community. Resounding in a separate comment about higher expectations for a Black superintendent was her belief that a Black superintendent needs to be true to their race. Aaliyah said, "Being an African American parent myself, you would hope that superintendent won't quote unquote sell out their people." As Aaliyah explained later in this comment she was referencing an incident in which a Black person was thought to have shared information that was negative and potentially detrimental to another Black person. When a Black person appeared to have taken a position that supported Whites or White establishment over a Black person, that person was thought to be a "sellout." This

concept is not a new one in the Black community and can be traced back to the historical treatment of Blacks that led to a need for solidarity between and among Blacks (Durant & Sparrow, 1997; Ogbu, 2004).

Pam also discussed the importance of integrity and being conscious of race as she spoke about the need for a Black superintendent to address issues that plague the Black community.

> We lose track so many times us Black people when we get into positions of power . . . if you're going to represent a school district--you represent the whole school district, whatever color that may be. I don't want to say that the White superintendent should be more geared towards the White children, I just want to elaborate on when you are in a predominantly Black area—you know the difficulties . . . just hoping that Black person would come in and represent like they should. We need help as a race in so many things—so just coming in and doing what you're supposed to be doing and standing by your word. Not just coming in to make money or have a position, to actually do something. (Pam, IQ10, p. 7)

Because of the extensive needs of Black children in this district, Pam desired a Black superintendent who would recognize their role as a representative of Blacks and continue to work to eliminate deficiencies in the education Black children in this district receive. Several other parents also discussed the importance of a Black superintendent helping to improve the conditions for Black children.

> I do expect another level of caring and compassion coming from someone that's African American. I do expect to see extra diligence because the people they're serving look like them and I think we do as African Americans have a responsibility of trying to leave the next generation better off than we are, as we're on this climb to be equal, which may or may not ever happen, but I think that we should at least make the effort. (Mary, TIQ6: p. 4)

Her remarks very much reflected the racial uplift philosophy where a Black person in a position of power is expected to help fellow Blacks move up too because of having a

common history and purpose (Cole & Omari, 2003; Gaines, 1996; Fields-Smith, 2005; Savage, 2001).

Mary was another parent who believed that race still matters significantly in America. Mary discussed how race not only has implications for what Blacks expect of a superintendent, but it also reflected assumptions others have about Blacks. She said,

> One of the things we can't hide is the color of the skin. It is evident when people see you and unfortunately in this country if you're Black and you're professional for whatever reason for those people who have never interacted with Blacks, you represent the Black race . . . your actions can hinder someone else of color from having an opportunity to do something because the person who is sitting in the position of power saw you act a fool. So he or she has decided, see everything that I have ever heard about those people is true based on that one interaction. It is a heavy cross to bear. . . . It's unfortunate, but these are the cards we're dealt and we don't get a choice but to play the hand. So, I think we should be mindful of that wherever we go and the superintendents as well . . . and whoever they interact with that fair or not . . . people are going to make it a Black thing when actuality it could just be that the person is crazy not a Black thing. (Mary, TIQ6: p. 7)

Whereas Denise explained,

> I believe that Black people as a whole have stronger expectations for most of their leaders. . . . Black people seem to be more critical of their own than they are of others. So therefore, they would have higher expectations for their own leaders than they would have for a person of another race. So our Black leaders have to be a strong individual just to get in the doorway to be able to respond and speak to Black people because they do have much more higher expectations and they're much more critical of their people than they are of any other. (Denise, IQ9b, p. 7)

Together their comments substantiated the view that race still makes a Black person representative and why Blacks in leadership must be mindful of their role of representing their race because they are under the microscope, or so it appears, more so than their White counterparts.

The expectations presented related to race and culture provided some understanding of added expectations a Black superintendent faces. While these parents

initially spoke about how race did not matter, a closer examination of their responses indicated quite clearly that race did matter in many ways. Henig, Hula, and Pedescleaux (1999) made similar assertions, although they also asserted that the impact of race on school reform efforts was either ignored or downplayed in educational settings. Several of the lead questions in the interviews had follow-up questions that queried if any of their views were influenced by race. Interestingly, more than half of the parents indicated consistently that they did not have additional expectations for a Black superintendent; yet, their extended responses reflected otherwise. The three key ways that parents discussed race were: understanding the needs and values of Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; serving as a role model to Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; and acting on behalf of Black children and the Black community. These views are explored in the remaining subsections.

Understanding the Needs and Values of Blacks in the Community

Many parents in this study saw an advantage in having a Black superintendent in an urban district like theirs, especially in consideration of the specific needs of Black children. The personal background of the superintendent was important to more than half of the parents in this study. While race is one aspect of a person's personal background so are other characteristics such as family background, education, and personal values. The majority of Black parents who discussed personal background conjectured that similarity in race was related to positive racial/cultural connections. Aaliyah described one advantage of a background that was linked by commonality in race.

> Hopefully, they're like me. I would really hope to have a superintendent that really, not saying that they necessarily even had to come from the ghetto, from the hood, or whatever because it's some good people in the suburbs, but if you're

> going to teach in an urban area you got to have some kind of connection with it-- Be it even if you taught there for 10 years or whatever, have some kind of connection with the environment, with the population that you're going into. I think that's very important to have someone that looks like me. (TIQ8: pp.3-4)

Racial and cultural connections were seen as advantageous to some parents only if the Black superintendent had a background similar to the district. Most parents who spoke about this topic believed that more often than not another Black person was going to have a similar background. Mary described the benefits of a Black superintendent in this environment.

> For obvious reasons, the Black superintendent has been a Black teenager, has been a Black elementary school student and more often than not possibly have shared some of the same struggles that our kids have and I know that's not everybody, I know that there are some Blacks that come from privileged homes but for the most part most of us have to work hard at everything we get and I think that's going to make a difference. (Mary, IQ7: p. 5)

Mary, like several other parents, believed that a Black superintendent more than likely brings a background that facilitated a better understanding of Black children's needs. In response to a question that asked if race influenced the type of interactions and communications she expected a Black superintendent to have students and parents, Linda remarked,

> It's only natural that if you came from a family that struggled then you have in your tool chest knowledge that you can draw on to help another person in a struggle and I think to that extent . . . you draw on the knowledge you bring to the table. You can't split yourself in two and say that doesn't matter to me anymore. (Linda, IQ9b: p. 10)

She believed that the superintendent's upbringing as a Black person would impact their views, attitudes, and values. Like Aaliyah, Mary and Linda believed it is more likely that a Black superintendent would have had similar experiences or challenges growing up that would give them a better understanding of challenges facing Black children. In Linda's

view, a similarity in background was a positive asset for a Black superintendent in an urban setting since a superintendent cannot separate himself or herself from who he or she is.

While several parents recognized that race alone was not a guarantee that a person would have more understanding of Black students or their needs, most felt that more than likely it would be a positive connector. Mary explained,

> Let's face it in this country race is important and it does matter. I don't think it matters in terms of necessarily level of caring because people are individuals and I don't think that anyone should be just lumped into a group and decided how they're going to feel about something just based on that, but I think that if you're working in an all Black district, you need to have at some point interacted with Black folk in order to understand what we're about. So, if you're someone who grew up and didn't go to school with African Americans and basically knows nothing about African Americans then you would be a poor choice and it wouldn't just be because you're White. I could say that if you were coming from an African country where even though you share the same color of skin, you still don't know anything about Blacks in America so you would still be a poor choice so in that respect, race does make a difference, but other than that I don't think that race is important. (Mary, IQ2b: p. 2)

Although her comment seems contradictory, her point is that many Blacks in America are bonded through a common history and culture and this is why race does matter and supports why having a Black superintendent was important to these parents. Her views coincided with collective identity research that has described race and culture as providing a link between Black leaders to the Black community (Franklin, 2004; Gordon, 2000; Ogbu, 2004). Ogbu and others have discussed the bonds that existed because of this commonality. In Mary's estimation, these bonds created a comfort level to open the communications with Blacks in the community, which in turn has a positive effect on the relationships with Black students and Black parents.

Mary expanding on her ideas above about collective identity links of Blacks to other Blacks.

> I'm not saying that someone White can't learn that, but it's going to be learned behavior and it will take years I really feel for them to really understand us--it takes years so the only way that I would want one that wasn't African American would be someone White who grew up in an African American community. That would be the next best thing. To really get a feel for the parents, because it's going to make a difference for some reason we just—Our history has caused us to be so mistrustful of people who don't look like us because every time we've trusted White people we've gotten screwed. It's like every time. So, it's like the devil I know is better than the devil I don't know [chuckles]. (IQ7: p. 5)

A benefit of the cultural link was evident throughout the data as exhibited by Mary's comments. She concurred that a person who is not Black could also have an understanding of the Black community, but it would take time to develop that understanding. Parents in this study believed, because of its present academic condition, that one thing this particular district did not have right now is time, so her preference was a Black superintendent. Her remarks having underlying implications that commonality in racial identity has more significant positive effects than not because the history of Blacks in America has led to the development of a special type of understanding and connectedness among Blacks. Ogbu (2004), Lomotey, (1987, 1989), and Morris (1999, 2004) have all explored the importance of having Black administrators because of their understanding the specific needs of the Black community that they bring to their leadership.

A person's background can also influence the person's understanding of the dynamics of a community and its needs (Scott, 1990; Townsel & Banks, 1975). A lack of exposure to a district with a similar context could make leading the district more difficult. Understanding the background of the community and needs of Black children, and the

dynamics of the Black community specifically was significant to parents in this study. Consequently, many of these parents believed a Black superintendent was needed for this reason.

> I would expect them to be out there more because they were a product more than likely of a public school system and they know the things that it takes and they know what's out there and they know the background of families. They know, ok, John Doe don't come to school because his mother's a crack head. They can just see the signs of what's going on and they can get in there and help that child. (Denise IQ9b: p. 7)

> I really hope---that they have experience and that they really have a firm understanding of what's it like to be in this area where we live, our struggles, our needs, our wants. I don't know I just—just really have an understanding for the people who you're representing. (Aaliyah, IQ2: p. 2)

The above remarks reflected a recurring theme in the discussions of parents in that many parents felt a Black superintendent should have an understanding of the unique needs of Black students and the Black community because of racial and cultural connections. These views resulted in descriptions of expectations that exceeded what was expected of a superintendent who was not Black. As Angel explained, "I have higher [expectations] because I feel he should understand and that he's an African American and it wasn't easy for him so he knows that it's definitely not easy for the African American kid. It's even harder now and it's getting harder and harder" (TIQ6: p. 3). Linda described this expectation as having more sensitivity because of being of the same race, she said, "I think they [Blacks] expect a little more sensitivity from that Black superintendent because we're the same race, because we somewhat come from the same background, you should have a drive and a heart a little more pressing for our students than someone's whose not" (TIQ6: p. 4). Many parents expected a Black superintendent to have more sensitivity and compassion because of understanding Blacks' plight which became an

important reason that many parents felt a Black superintendent's leadership would be more effective in a district like theirs.

Understanding the needs was one aspect of having a concern for the needs of Black children, but actually addressing those needs was another. Scott (1990) discussed how having the expectation that a Black superintendent will act on all of the needs of the Black community was a complex issue for a Black superintendent. Gayle commented on this challenge. On the one hand she saw the benefits of understanding the needs, but on the other hand as these expectations can be unrealistic she said,

> But in the same token it might because of race that we put a higher expectation on that individual and we think our needs are going to be so taken care of because they're Black. That we get that in the way and when they don't we think that they are against us when we don't get our needs met. So at the same token that may be against that person because a higher expectation is sometimes—and that's fine we should have an expectation no matter what who they are, but sometimes we get into the mode that just because they are of our race and our color we think that we should get some privilege because we thought in retrospect when we did have a White superintendent, they had better things, you know, we didn't see the community help them, but we just took it that that superintendent helped those people more so--. (IQ7: pp. 4-5)

She, like other parents in this study, recognized that the same standards should exist, but know it is not so. As her explanation described, she believed that some Blacks believe that White superintendents helped White children more, so a Black superintendent should help Black students more. Several of the parents said this was not fair, but also recognized the reality is that a Black superintendent has to be the superintendent of all children, but with just more caring and compassion for the unique needs of Black children.

Serving as a Role Model to Blacks in the Community

Only a few researchers have investigated Black superintendents as role models for Black children and the greater Black community (Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990) and some researchers have discussed Black principals specifically as role models for Black students and the Black community in segregated Black schools (Morris, 1999, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2003; Tillman, 2004). The parents' views described here provided specific details of why some Black parents believed it was important for a Black superintendent to be a role model to Black children and the Black community.

Symbolic leadership suggests that a person represents something larger than himself or herself. Further, symbolic leadership has accompanying expectations that the views and actions of that person will represent that entity that he or she represents. Therefore, a superintendent is expected to represent the views and values of the community he/she serves. A Black superintendent may have added expectations of symbolic leadership because he or she is viewed as representing the entire race (Jackson, 1995; Scott, 1980, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Prior research suggested that Black superintendents recognized that as role models to the students in their district and the Black community in general that they were symbolic leaders (Jackson, 1995; Scott, 1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). This research aligned with fictive kinship and collective identity scholarship that suggested a Black person in a position of authority was representative of all Blacks; that person's success or failure was believed to reflect not just the individual but also Black people as a race (Morris, 2004; Ogbu, 2004; Savage, 2001). Consequently, a Black superintendent was expected to be a role model for their students but also for the Black community in general (Revere, 1985, 1987: Scott, 1980,

1990; Tillman & Cochran, 2000). Black parents in this study discussed ways that a Black superintendent should be a role model to Black students and the Black community, and why these roles are important for a Black superintendent.

Several parents strongly believed that a Black superintendent was needed in this district and felt this need should be considered as a factor when selecting a superintendent, which contradicted the views of others in the study. Aaliyah and Mary most emphatically believed that a Black superintendent was needed in predominantly Black school districts. As Aaliyah said, "That's just the way it needs to be. We need more of us in charge, again so that our children can see [an African American person in charge]" (IQ7: p. 6). Several parents saw role modeling as an advantage to having a Black superintendent in a district like theirs. Both Mary and Aaliyah specifically stated they wanted a superintendent who is African American. Aaliyah preferred a Black woman and Mary preferred a Black man. Aaliyah believed a Black female superintendent was needed to be a role model for women and girls like her. Mary believed a Black male superintendent was needed in this community. Contextual influences, including social issues in the community influenced her view. She explained,

> It's extremely important and more importantly that it's a Black male—and I think that's needed for many of our students who don't have the male figure and many of our parents who didn't have that male figure in their lives. I think a strong, Black man, no nonsense kind of person is going to make the difference . . . just by being a strong Black male that people can—for some reason, I can be in a room and while I respect my sisters there's nothing like seeing a successful, strong Black man. (Mary, IQ8: p. 5)

The need for a Black male as a role model takes on added significance when examined in conjunction with the contextual issues in Black districts. Numerous social issues can be roadblocks for these Black children, making it even more important for Black youth to

see successful Blacks. Mary explained more about this need for Black role models male or female.

> We're losing so many to the prison system or botched up and in the ground from drug dealing and it's—we're losing a whole generation so having an African American male at the helm is so important and I also think having a Black person just period male or female does a lot for our students self-esteem because when they look at that Black person and say you know what he or she is Black and they made it and they're a success. For those students who are borderline to making the right or wrong decision, it could go either way, I think this could make a difference to see somebody that looks like them--And even to hear their story for the person to say this is what I went through to get where I am. I think is important. (Mary, IQ8: pp. 5-6)

Her remarks indicated that there is concern about the plight of Black youth in American indicating the need for positive Black role models, particularly for Black males. From social conversations to discourse among scholars, a common topic in the Black community is the state of Black America, particularly Black males. Mary's remarks have more merit when viewed in light of statistics showing that in 2005 approximately 10% of Black men between 18-29 are in prison in comparison to White and Hispanic males whose percentages were less than 4% (Coleman, 2006).

Other parents gave other reasons Black superintendents are needed as role models for Black students. Gayle said,

> I think our youth need to see more Black leaders in our lives. The media would make you think it's only a handful of us and it's a lot. But our kids only focus on what the media allows us to see and I think that would be the positive role that they need to see that there are people of our color and our race that are in charge [inflection of voice goes up a little higher on "that are in charge"]. (IQ8: p. 5)

Michael and Linda expressed similar sentiments, Linda said,

> I think it has its place when students see someone who reflects them, it carries a different weight. That was really politically correct [laughs]. . . . When students see themselves or they see a person in a role where they want to be that becomes a vision. That they see the value in—this person represents—hmm, if I do this then

> I can attain these levels. He did it. I can do it. That type of thing. Those are the messages that person of color for children of color—the weight that he carries. And I'll leave it at that—I think that sums it up more than anything—they see themselves in that person. (IQ8: p. 9)

Many Black children in this district were struggling and several parents in this study felt that a Black superintendent was needed as a role model for that reason. For instance, John believed that a Black superintendent sharing his/her background with Black children can help them to see potential in themselves. Aaliyah added, "Children would be able to see firsthand that this person came from where I came from. I can do something good in my life." As demonstrated in the remarks of parents in this study at least some of these parents believed that a Black superintendent should be a role model to Black children because of racial and cultural connection to Black children and the Black community.

Acting on Behalf of Black Children and the Black Community

The parents in this study were very clear that without a focus on children the superintendent was not valuable to the district. John who said, "Our kids are our future and if they don't have their future in the best of hands, then there's nothing there." When asked to describe an excellent superintendent, Michael stated explicitly the superintendent's priority must be children. He said, "Make sure that our babies are first; our children are first and foremost." Even though both parents expected all superintendents to care about and act on behalf of Black children, remarks throughout the interviews demonstrated this was not just an expectation but an obligation for a Black superintendent. Their feelings paralleled the overall views of the parents in the study. It appeared that the majority of the parents believed a Black superintendent had even more of an obligation to help other Blacks because of the history of Blacks in America. This

view was reflective of prior research that found the race created commonality in history and treatment that bounded Blacks to helping each other through the struggle of being Black in America (Ogbu, 2004; Scott, 1980, 1990; Townsel & Banks, 1975). Mary said, "It's even more important because in the Black community you're dealing with people that have been disenfranchised for years. Their kids are in the same boat with them so it's vital" (Mary, TIQ4a: p. 2). Again, as found in earlier research, the importance Black parents placed on the education of Black children was reiterated in this study (Anderson, 1988; Edwards, 1993; Hill, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000; Trotman, 2001). Pam described the importance of addressing the unique needs of Black children. She hoped that the racial/cultural awareness of a Black superintendent would permit that superintendent to better meet the needs of Black children.

> You would hope that a Black superintendent coming in would not focus, but pay attention to the Black community and the issues that are facing Black people in general. Because if you can get that—if you got that, then it shouldn't be hard here. You can understand why some of the test scores are low. You can understand the tardiness. It's not an excuse, but you can understand what's going on. Where—you probably won't have the same problems coming out a White household or a Latino household, you won't have the same kind of problems—just feeling that a Black superintendent should know a little bit more, and then you hate to say that because you don't have all Black people that grew up in the inner city, just because they're Black so that's [gestures with hands a toss up]. (Pam, IQ3b: p. 4)

Her remarks reflected the expectation that a Black superintendent would have an insider type of understanding of Black children's needs; yet, at the same time she recognized that not all Blacks are raised the same. Research supported the observation that some Blacks believe a Black superintendent's personal experiences as a Black person in America should give them more insight into the needs of Black children and more of a desire to fight for Black children's education (Ogbu, 2004; Scott, 1980, 1990; Townsel & Banks,

1975). This is problematic for Black superintendents who may or may not have this type of insider experience and insight and adds another layer of expectations for the leadership of a Black superintendent. Is it fair for a Black superintendent who looks like the parents and children, but who may not have this insider understanding of the needs of inner city youth, to have race-based expectations placed upon them? Even though Pam's remarks suggested she was undecided, other comments she made were more clearly reflective of having expectations that a Black superintendent would act on behalf of Black children. From the majority of the parents' perspectives, the focus on Black children was expected to be a priority for a Black superintendent. The majority of the parents felt that a Black superintendent should understand the urgency of the need for education for Blacks and should not only understand the barriers to success that Black children in this district encounter within the schools and throughout the community, but also want to do something to eliminate the barriers.

Summary

The parents in this study presented ways that race did not matter to the leadership of a superintendent. Most prominently these comments were in regards to qualifications for the role and performance of the role. On the other hand, comments throughout the interviews reflected many ways that race did matter in the leadership of a Black superintendent. Even though almost half of the parents in this study said that personally they did not believe race should make a difference in the expectations that are held for a Black superintendent, as has been described here, 10 of 11 described additional expectations for Black superintendents. These expectations included challenges of symbolic leadership including race-based expectations of understanding the needs and

values of Black students, Black parents and the Black community; serving as a role model to Blacks in the community; and acting on behalf of Black children's education. Collective identity and fictive kinship research provided a nexus for understanding why these expectations exist. Consciously recognized or not, there were Black parents who described expectations that were race-based and these race-based expectations affected how the effectiveness of a Black superintendent's leadership would be perceived. Therein lies the dilemma, how is a Black superintendent to achieve a level of effectiveness that would satisfy the majority of parents and role expectations.

Chapter Summary

The Black parents included in this study completed multiple individual interviews in which they responded to questions that answered what Black parents desired in a superintendent and any differences in what they desired in a Black superintendent. Their discussions provided insight into the type of leadership that might be required of a superintendent in an urban district as well as how leadership might be different for a Black superintendent. Two major themes emerged from the data.

The first theme discussed was Community Engagement: Visibility, Vision, and Voice. The superintendent as a community leader was seen as visible and involved. From their perspective that superintendent was accessible, approachable, and hands-on. Through their discussions, it was ascertained that these parents wanted a superintendent who was going to make the necessary changes in order to better the quality of education that children were receiving in this district, which requires vision. The parents in this study were very adamant about their desire to be valued as partners in the education of children. As such, they discussed ways that a superintendent cultivated and maintained

relationships with parents and children. Further, they wanted to not just be heard but for a superintendent to show he included their views. To do so for these parents indicated that the superintendent valued the voices of people in the community. Voice was also presented in regards to the superintendent. These parents desired a superintendent who would be a voice for students and parents. Therefore, they expected a superintendent to fight tenaciously for the education of all children in the district. They expected the superintendent to be of good character and to lead with integrity. Then, the parents wanted a superintendent who could take the diverse desires and needs of the community and find a way to unify these divergent views to a focus on the education of the children in the district. Ultimately as a community leader who practiced these characteristics and community engagement that superintendent became a hero for the students and the community.

The second theme was Race: Acknowledgement and Importance. The ways that Black parents acknowledged race in relation to the leadership of a Black superintendent and its importance to a Black superintendent's leadership were explored. Race did not matter when related to the performance expectations for a Black superintendent. These parents had particular concern for the plight of Black children who were performing the worst in the district so it was more important to them that a superintendent was in place who was qualified and capable of making the changes needed to improve the quality of education. Initially, the majority of the parents indicated that race did not influence any of their expectations for Black superintendents; yet, through the analysis of their responses it was ascertained that race really did matter in many ways. Upon unfolding their responses, it was observed that they expected a Black superintendent to have an

understanding of the unique needs of Black children, and all of the parents except one believed that a Black superintendent because of their own background as a Black person in America should have a better understanding of these needs, be more attuned to how to address these needs, and more willing to address the same. Further, they described specific ways that they felt a Black superintendent needed to be a role model to Black students, Black parents, and the Black community. Finally, their continued concern for the quality of education of Black children, in particular, yielded expectations that a Black superintendent in particular act on behalf of Black children and the Black community.

Originally, I believed that Black parents would openly acknowledge and discuss race-based expectations, but they did not. The majority of these parents did not initially describe expectations specifically for Black superintendents; instead taking precedence in their views was their concern about having a superintendent who was going to improve the quality of education for all children in this district, with a particular focus on Black children who they believed were in more of a dire need for a better education. On the other hand, based on the responses of the majority of the parents, it appears there were specific ways that race mattered to them; yet, it remained unclear as to if or how these race-based expectations might actually impact the leadership of a Black superintendent. Thus, it appears that further study is needed to establish conclusively if, in fact, there are ways that race-based expectations impact the leadership experiences for Black superintendents. That has been part of the dilemma for Black leaders who surmise that there are underlying expectations that go unspoken yet exist; how do these expectations, as the parents' remarks here began to describe, impact if at all the leadership experiences for a Black school leader. That is the question that still remains unanswered. Ultimately,

the responses of parents in this study did provide insight into the type of leadership they felt a superintendent needed to perform effectively in an urban setting.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter begins with a synopsis of the study, including a brief statement of the purpose of the study, the methodology employed, and the research questions. The second section begins with an overview of the major findings of the research then elaborates on these findings and their implications. Finally, the third section provides recommendations for further study.

Summary of This Study

Research has indicated that concerns for equity in education has been and remains important to Black parents (Anderson, 1988; Fields-Smith, 2005; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000; Trotman, 2001). Many Black parents have expressed discontent with the quality of the schools that their children attend and have felt a loss of power in the decisions affecting their children because of a lack of acceptance of their views and exclusionary practices (Calabrese, 1990; Carter et al., 1989; Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Morris, 1999; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Prior to the *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decision, many Black parents felt an interdependent relationship with Black principals because they believed they were as one in the struggle for a better education for Black children (Edwards, 1993; Morris, 1999, 2004). As in the past, Black parents continue to look to school and district leadership within school systems to improve the

quality of education and schooling experiences for Black children. Typically, Black superintendents are found in districts with numerous issues and high Black student populations (Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990); therefore, as evidenced by the parents in this study, Black parents believe that superintendents should improve the quality of education and schooling experiences for their children.

This study investigated two research questions. The first question sought to describe what Black parents looked for in a superintendent. The second question asked how their descriptions differed for a Black superintendent. These questions led to an understanding of the expectations that Black parents held for superintendents in general and for Black superintendents in particular. It also led to an understanding of the qualities and characteristics that Black parents sought in a superintendent and more specifically a Black superintendent.

The research design employed consisted of a descriptive research approach which included multiple interviews with 11 Black parents in the selected district. This study employed descriptive research approaches because of the limited research about the expectations of Black superintendents with none that included the perspectives of Black parents themselves. The site for this study was categorized as a large urban district with a high poverty rate, low academic performance, and a student population of more than 25,000 students. The majority of these students were Black and other students of color. Data collection and data analysis were simultaneous and overlapping (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Creswell, 2003; Drew et al., 1996; Gall et al., 2003; Merriam, 1998). The analysis of the data consisted of several iterative cycles that led to the identification of the themes reported in the findings and discussion. The trustworthiness of the analysis

was assured through methodological approaches that involved using the parents' actual words and linking the data to prior research and the theoretical framework developed for this study.

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn in the study emerged from the descriptive data and were presented as evidence in the major findings of this study. This study produced two major findings that complemented current research. The first theme was Community Engagement: Visibility, Vision, and Voice. All of the parents addressed the importance of community engagement. The parents in this study expected a superintendent to be visible and involved in the community; to cultivate and maintain relationships with students, parents, and community; to value the voices of people in the community; and to use his/her own voice to act heroically for the children and the community. The contextual factors of this district, such as being in a city plagued with various socioeconomic and social issues, paired with poor performance of its schools led to ascribing qualities indicative of heroic leadership. All of the parents were adamant that a superintendent must clearly be focused on improving the education for all children in this district. Some parents also addressed the importance of being of good character and showing integrity because they believed this affected the decision-making, credibility, and focus of a superintendent. Lastly, many parents discussed the need for a superintendent, regardless of race, who could unify a fragmented district by establishing a vision and common purpose. To do so that superintendent must value the voices of others and create an inclusive environment where all who are impacted by the district can feel a part of the betterment of the school district.

The second theme Race: Acknowledgement and Importance explored parents' expectations concerning race and leadership. It explored how Black parents in this study acknowledged race in regards to leadership of a Black superintendent and its importance to a Black superintendent's leadership. The responses of parents revealed influences of race as related to fulfilling the role of superintendent; acknowledging race-based views; understanding the needs and values of Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; serving as a role model to Black students, Black parents, and the Black community; and acting on behalf of Black children and the Black community. All except one parent discussed ways that reflected that some of their expectations were influenced by race often without recognizing that they were in actuality describing expectations that were race-based. Likewise, the parents in this study described ways that race identity is a component of leadership.

These parents articulated a litany of expectations that a superintendent must meet that in many ways were seemingly unattainable levels of character and action. For a Black superintendent these expectations seemed even more monumental because of additional race-based expectations. One parent even referred to the need for the next Martin Luther King being needed to take the helm of leadership in urban districts. With that being said, the understandings gained of these expectations do provide some meter for a superintendent's leadership in an urban district and more specifically for a Black superintendent. In the end the question becomes what type of leader can possibly meet the challenges and expectations that these parents have discussed.

The two questions that guided this study begin to answer that question. The first question queried what characteristics parents were looking for in a superintendent. The

majority of the parents in this study reported that the quality of the superintendent (i.e. professional experiences, education, and record of success) was more important than race when selecting a superintendent. Several qualities and expectations reflecting the importance of effective performance were expressed. Through their responses, the parents also differentiated what constituted a good, excellent, and strong superintendent to them. Additionally, race did matter in several ways. The parents described specific benefits of racial and cultural connections that the majority of parents hoped a Black superintendent would bring to their relationships and understandings of the contextual and situational influences in the lives of Black students and the Black community, and the associated impact on the education of Black students. These racial and cultural connections led to expectations of role modeling and hero making not just for Black children, but for the Black community overall.

Limited prior research has asked Black parents to identify variables that lead to their satisfaction with schools and school personnel (Carter et al., 1989; Farkas & Johnson, 1998; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Recent research has still focused on teachers and more generally school administrators; none was found that specifically identified qualities or expectations that would lead to Black parents' satisfaction with a superintendent (Morris, 1999, 2004; Thompson, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). This study sought to understand what Black parents want in a superintendent. Numerous qualities and traits were described throughout the interviews including a superintendent being highly educated, caring, compassionate, hard-working, honest, ethical, involved, determined, and committed. In addition to these characteristics. parents discussed other qualities that were important to them such as being accountable, being more involved with students

and parents, maintaining positive relationships with parents, students, and the community, and unifying the community towards a common purpose. Three points most prominent in the remarks of the parents were the good superintendent will get the job done; an excellent superintendent will get the job done plus show a clear focus on children; whereas, the strong superintendent displays principled leadership. In total, these characteristics were reflected in the overarching themes in this study.

All 11 parents cited as a quality of a good superintendent being able to make improvement. Performance of a superintendent was important to the parents. In general, the parents expected to see growth. Several parents also recognized that you cannot look at just one aspect of the work that the superintendent has done when judging the superintendent's success, so success of a good superintendent for Michael was "holistic" and as one parent explained,

> I don't care whoever walks in those shoes I have the same expectations for you. I want success for my children, not just mine, when I say mine I'm talking about all of the children in our school district. I want that they have really, really made some sincere progress so that they are inspired to come back to school next year or to go on to higher education. The atmosphere and the tone has changed because that superintendent has made that part of their initiative is to build strong and inspired students. (Linda, TIQ6, p. 4)

Her remarks about improvement and inspiring children coincided with what previous research has suggested as an area of importance to Black parents, a focus on the advancement of education for Black children (Anderson, 1988; Edwards, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2000; Fields Smith, 2005). The question becomes what qualities would make parents view a superintendent as an excellent one. It was interesting that neither of the male participants felt that there could be an excellent superintendent. Their feelings might be indicative of a distrust of leadership because the district has not excelled over the last

several years and previous superintendents have taken at least some of the blame for the district's poor performance. It could also be related to what other researchers have described as distrust that Black superintendents will respond any differently than White superintendents have (Scott, 1980). Seeing that this district has had more than one Black superintendent in its recent history and yet this district remains in a dire condition, this supposition could be true. Even though the male parents did not believe that an excellent superintendent could exist, they did describe what all of the parents desired. All 11 parents addressed the importance of a superintendent having a focus on children. For six of the parents this quality was a hallmark of an excellent superintendent. In their view that children were the main priority should stream through the words and actions of a superintendent. This perspective was not surprising considering research in the areas of education of Blacks, Black principals, Black superintendents, and Black parents have pointed to the value that Black parents place on the education of their children and an emphasis on the relationships that Black principals in the past have had with Black children (Anderson, 1988; Edwards, 1993; Lomotey, 1989; Morris, 1999; Siddle Walker, 2000). Numerous examples provided evidence that supported this mantra of children must be the top priority of any superintendent, but even more significantly for a Black superintendent in a district with challenges such as this district had and where Black children fared the worst.

Some of the parents believed a superintendent must take actions that would demonstrate strength of character, which was another important leadership trait. In their view, a superintendent who had a positive character also had integrity. Due to limited resources in this district, many parents looked to the superintendent to find ways to

support all children. The superintendent needed to be discerning in order to weigh the validity of these numerous petitions, and even individuals themselves rendering the petitions, so that he or she makes judgments as several parents' responses intimated implicitly and explicitly with a focus on what is best for the children in this district. Further, these parents still felt there were inequities in the treatment and quality of education for Black children in this district; therefore, a strong leader who was of good character, ethics, and integrity was essential to several parents.

Last, the majority of the parents discussed the professional experiences of a superintendent as being an important quality. Several mentioned the importance of having worked in an urban environment as one of the professional qualities that was important in a superintendent. Experience in an urban environment was preferred regardless of the superintendent's race. Social issues were also challenges for many children in this district. According to parents in this study, single parent households, grandparents raising children, and other non-parental caregivers raising children, and increased teen pregnancy were all found in this district and impacted the educational success of children. As pointed out in the literature, changing family structures have affected the ability of parents to be as involved in the education of their children in ways that they might have been in the past (Jackson, 1995; Trotman, 2001). This was a concern that was of vital importance to a few parents and their expectation was that a superintendent addressed these issues. In sum, many parents felt a strong, principled leader was needed to keep everyone focused on children's education, and as a community leader the superintendent's words and actions should indicate that is was a matter of

principle for them to have that focus on children and for the quality of education for all children to improve.

The second guiding question of this study was to explore how Black parents' expectations differ for a Black superintendent. Some prior researchers have suggested that Blacks expect other Blacks to be more focused on the needs of Black children, to be advocates and even warriors for Black children, to give privileges or special concessions to other Blacks, to serve as role models for Black children, and to be symbolic leaders for the Black community (Jackson, 1995, 1999; Revere, 1985, 1987; Scott, 1980, 1990). All of the same expectations resonated as true from the parents in this study. While race did not matter to most in the selection of a superintendent, it absolutely mattered in the execution of leadership.

Besides providing confirmation that additional or even higher expectations do exist for Black superintendents, the parents' views solidify that a Black superintendent has an added challenge to their leadership. Several parents discussed additional expectations for Black superintendents during their first interviews. As a result, in a follow-up question, parents were asked directly if they believed that Blacks have additional or higher expectations for a Black superintendent. The most salient points were all of the parents except one concur that Black people in general have higher expectations for Black leaders, with Black superintendents being one of those leaders. Interestingly, when it extended to whether the parents personally had higher or additional expectations for a Black superintendent, the parents were almost evenly split. Six parents indicated that they did have expectations that were race-based even though some of them did not believe these were additional expectations. The other five parents said they did not have

higher or additional expectations, but four of the five described additional expectations in their responses to other questions. For those parents who did share additional expectations, they related to the context of the superintendency and a belief that a Black superintendent should have more understanding and be more compassionate to the needs of Black children and the Black community. Thus, a Black superintendent who unwittingly enters a position in a similar type of district without recognizing that additional expectations do exist is missing a critical piece to understanding leadership in that district. Race alone was not a guarantee of success, the importance of relationships and understanding the needs of Black students and the Black community was integral to a Black superintendent's success. Further, as evident from the parents in this study, Black parents do not have just one set of expectations. For instance, the two males in the study were the only ones to state that they did not believe there could be an excellent superintendent whereas other parents gave a number of expectations that in their view reflected an excellent superintendent. As this example illustrated and many others presented in this analysis, age of parents, social class, gender, and personal background of parents influenced their views but not in the same ways. A superintendent's position is already multifaceted, but it appears that race adds another layer to what impacts a Black superintendent's leadership.

As noted understanding more about and addressing the specific needs of Black children and the Black community and having more compassion for Black children were key expectations for the majority of the parents. Serving as a role model to all students, and especially Black students was important. Black superintendents were still seen as representing all Blacks and were expected to be role models to the Black community, too.

Even though several parents believed it was unfair to have higher expectations and that some expectations were even unrealistic, they conceded that they exist and any Black superintendent in a similar situation has to recognize that these expectations exist so the person can be mindful that these expectations might impact their leadership. Ogbu (2004) asserted that collective identity impacts attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of Blacks. The content of the majority of the parents' remarks suggested that they would be considered proponents of collective identity aspects of (1) there is a unique history for Blacks in America; (2) expectations exist that Blacks in positions of power should uplift other Blacks; and (3) Blacks in leadership need to fight for the causes of the Black community. Almost all of the parents saw that race was a factor in understanding the needs of Black students and the Black community. Further, a Black superintendent must be more than a symbolic leader but must also be an active, principled community leader who advocates for children.

Generally, the parents assumed that Black superintendents would have a better understanding of the needs of all children, but Black children in particular, and they hoped that a Black superintendent would have a stronger desire to improve the quality of education for Black children based on an understanding of the challenges faced by Blacks in America.

Implications

Looking back historically, the *Brown* decision was thought to be the panacea to all of the inequalities in the education that Black children received in America's public schools. Yes, some positive effects have occurred, but as Willie and Willie (2005) contended *Brown* is a "work in progress" as there remains much work to be done. Today,

many Black students still attend schools that are resource poor, have distinct achievement gaps between Black students and non-Black peers, and are taught by teachers with the least experience (Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Willie & Willie, 2005). Further, many Black students are in poor urban communities and schools that are predominately, if not exclusively Black (Hudson & Holmes, 1994). Who is to do the work needed to address these continued issues of inequity and the overall quality of education that Black children receive? As research has shown, Black leaders have been expected to make changes that improve the status of Blacks in America not just for themselves but for Blacks in general (Franklin & Moss, 2000; Gordon, 2000; Pinkney, 2000). Pre-*Brown* Black teachers and Black principals worked with the Black community to educate Black children (Siddle Walker, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003). Based on what the research has shown, it will more likely be Black superintendents who are called to fulfill the promises of *Brown* today (Glass, 2000; Robinson et al, 2004). The parents in this study described numerous ways that they expected all superintendents to address the inequities that remain in the public schools their children attend, but the majority of the parents held very specific expectations that specifically related to race. Some researchers have concluded that Black leaders were expected to be a "superhero" who would rectify the hundreds of years of discrimination and racism Blacks have endured (Henig et al., 1999). Similarly, a few researchers have found that the expectations of Black superintendents are also that they, too, will eradicate the wrongs in the educational systems that Black children attend (Jackson, 1995; Revere, 1985; Scott, 1980). Based on the current conditions and status of Black children in public schools today (Gardner & Miranda, 2001; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Willie & Willie, 2005), combined with the comments of

parents in this study, it appears that the expectations of Black superintendents will be extremely difficult to fulfill if not unobtainable; thereby, leading to the need to look further at how the leadership of Black superintendents is impacted by race and contextual factors.

Thus, this study raises important issues regarding pre-service and professional development programs for administrators, in particular for principals and superintendents of color. First, more must be done to recruit more Black teachers for administrative programs if there is to be a continued pipeline for Blacks superintendents. Because of the challenges that are faced in urban settings where Black principals and Black superintendents are most likely to be found, more must be done to attract Blacks to pursue administrative credentials and positions. I have personal knowledge of Blacks who have shied away from administration because of the challenges and perceived limitations as to where Blacks will be hired. Therefore, upon completion of a program, with the assistance of university career offices, additional support is needed to assist Blacks in attaining positions. Beyond that, post graduate professional development opportunities should be available that provide novice Black administrators with support once they are in various administrative positions in what could possibly be very difficult situations.

Further, census data supports that the numbers of Black students in public schools will continue to increase. The parents in this study described specific ways that it would be beneficial to have more Black superintendents because of the important role they play in educating Black youth. Several researchers have recognized that race does impact life experiences (Cole & Omari, 2003; Durant & Sparrow, 1997; Ostrove & Cole, 2003); yet,

we study the leadership of schools as if that leadership will be experienced the same by all leaders. As evidenced in this study, clearly it will not. I question if the current programs in place realistically prepare Black principals and superintendents, and others of color for the challenges and expectations they will find in their experiences. I believe that during pre-service administrative programs more attention needs to be given to the issues faced in urban districts, and other districts that Blacks lead. My own training programs for both the principalship and the superintendency focused on the history of education, learning processes, program development and review, supervision, facilities, finances, and leadership theories and models. Even the courses that I took on multiculturalism focused on the importance of understanding diverse cultures and having an appreciation for the same, not the role race plays in leadership. My course in community relations explored the politics of leadership, and importance of community relations, but it did not broach how race of the superintendent and the context of the superintendency influence both. None of these courses prepared me for the unique experiences related to race that I have had in practice as a Black principal or for the valuable knowledge I gained from conducting this study. Many pre-service programs for teachers now include, at the very least, a field experience that is conducted in an urban setting so that these pre-service teachers get a better view of the realities of teaching in an urban setting. This begs the question. Should not the same be done in superintendent preparation programs? Courses and experiences need to be more encompassing so that Black principals and Black superintendents enter positions with a knowledge base that extends beyond theory. Just like teachers, all pre-service administrators would benefit from practical experiences in leadership situations in which they might find themselves.

Another benefit of this study is that it highlighted the voices of Black parents who as a group are not frequently the primary voice in research. I wanted to explore race as it affects expectations for Black superintendents so I, as a Black female and aspiring superintendent, could have a better understanding of what might be expected of me in a superintendency, but I found that only a limited amount of research addressed expectations for Black superintendents and none from the perspectives of Black parents. Some researchers have referred to Blacks as being "other" in that these voices are not seen as the main voice or important voices to be heard (Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000: Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998). My study shows that Black parents have a voice that they want to be heard, and they clearly have something of value to be heard in regards to knowing what they want for their children's education and what they desire and expect from the leadership of a superintendent. Voices like theirs need further attention in the scholarship.

This study had a focus that raised issues of race. Some researchers have found that race is still a topic that some people feel uncomfortable discussing (Arber, 2006; Henig et al., 1999; Salinas, 2006). As Arber (2006) stated, race is such a sensitive topic that it is at times almost impossible to speak about or as Salinas (2006) stated, "Some people don't like talking about race and racism, so they unwillingly contribute to the silence on racial matters" (p. 14). In their work about school reform, Henig et al. (1999) commented on a reluctance to discuss or a minimizing of the role of race in discussions about school reform. I expected that the parents in this study would be more open in discussing racial issues with me because of similarity in race. Some researchers have noted that class divisions have caused some schism in the Black community, yet they

found that most Blacks still identify with race as the primary factor in the lives of Blacks (Cole & Omari, 2003; Ogbu, 2004). Parents looked at me and saw someone that looked like them. But as a Black professional, I had to make sure that any class differences that existed were suppressed by racial similarity. I accomplished this by sharing things about myself with the parents that in essence showed that I was "one of them" as one of the parents noted. I also maintained a more conversational tone in the interviews, which I believe contributed to the parents feeling more comfortable in sharing their overall views. As one parent in this study stated, the interviews had to be more of a conversation because as he said, "Black people are still leery of 'The Man'." Even with these benefits, I still found that some parents were hesitant to identify race-based expectations. On the one level, I attribute some of the hesitation to some parents not wanting to appear discriminatory or polarizing; others were being politically correct. Yet, researchers have found that race does impact attitudes, views, and beliefs (Ogbu, 2004), so I had to listen very carefully to the responses of the parents in the study. Beneath their stated expectations were race-based expectations that contradicted their surface responses that they did not have race-based expectations. Furthermore, several parents indicated they had race-based expectations but did not recognize these expectations as being additional expectations even though they unquestionably were. Clearly, these expectations have implications for the leadership of Black superintendents. Researchers and practitioners alike must come to terms with the idea that race does impact the experiences of Black superintendents and begin to have more conversations about the reality of being Black in a leadership position, and include the voices of Black parents and even Black children.

To do so will provide a richer understanding of leadership as experienced by Black superintendents.

Having heard these parents' voices then drawing parallels to prior research, it appears that a superintendent in an urban district faces daunting leadership challenges. Yet, these parents' perspectives provided some insight into the type of leadership needed in an urban district. As more researchers recognize that leadership is both contextual and situational, it has also been recognized that both can impact a leader's effectiveness (Hamilton & Bean, 2005; Humphreys, 2005; Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2005). If troubled school districts, such as the district in this study, are to be reformed the type of leadership needed must reflect the specific needs associated with the situations in that particular district. The parents in this study desired a superintendent who was involved and committed to not only the betterment of education for children in the district, but also for the improvement of conditions for the Black community. Their expectations reflected the need for a superintendent who was relational and outcomes-based simultaneously, plus one who was personally led by convictions, who inspired a sense of hope through shared vision, had a passion for those in need, valued others, and was able to unify diverse populations to a common purpose.

Visibility, Vision, and Voice were important themes resonating through the voices of parents in this study. Visibility suggested a leader would be involved in the district and throughout the community. How and where a superintendent spends time infers what he/she values. These parents desired a leader who spends time with those he/she serves. By being visible the superintendent's leadership becomes more focused because the

superintendent is able to observe first-hand and listen to others when establishing the vision, and thereby the priorities of the superintendent and the district.

Visibility created the conditions so that a superintendent could develop a vision that reflected the voices of those he/she served. Further, these same ideas supported a shared voice. Valuing the voices of others was not about making decisions for the superintendent, instead it meant providing opportunities for input, listening to voices intently, and considering their views. Ultimately because of visibility and valuing the voices of others, trust can be built and a common focus can be created; thus, when the superintendent speaks, he or she would be able to present the voice of the people as a collective voice not just his/her personal voice.

The parents in this study desired a superintendent who serves then leads. Their passion for improving the education for all children in their district was evident in their words and actions. These also expected a superintendent to cultivate and nurture relationships with Black parents, Black children, and the Black community. The need for a relational approach to leadership resonated through the voices of the parents in this study. Their desire for a leader who valued people and who led with integrity were apparent. Although the parents did not have a full understanding of the role of the superintendent, listening to the parents' voices provided insight into characteristics and qualities that they believed were needed in a district such as theirs and have implications of the type of leadership needed in a district similar to theirs.

Contextual factors, the complexity of needs, the desire for change, the desire for a voice in the education of their children, and race-related expectations influenced the views of parents in this study. A superintendent who was willing to do what was

necessary to improve the education for all children in this district was important to the parents in the study. In the end parents suggested a superintendent in this setting needed to “serve to lead”; have a clear focus on children; develop positive relationships that are interdependent and reciprocal; lead with high standards of ethics, character, and conduct; inspires others; and generate a focus on a common goal of creating excellence for education for all children in the district. A relational approach to leadership was absolutely necessary for a superintendent to be successful in this district. Leadership that reflected a strong character and ethical standards for leadership was also important. These characteristics described ways that might enhance the leadership of a superintendent and a Black superintendent in particular. Finally, an understanding of the real needs of the students and the Black community must be a priority in this district. In that a Black superintendent is more likely to be found in a district with similar circumstances, a Black superintendent must be cognizant and prepared to contend with the additional expectations related to race and the multitude of issues faced within the districts they lead. Together, these parents’ expectations of a Black superintendent magnify a need for a superhero, so is there any superintendent who can possibly fulfill the expectations of these parents?

The parents in this study articulated very specific individual expectations. Even though there was often overlap in expectations, variances were found in how an expectation was expected to be executed. These variances in expectations are significant because they demonstrate how complex the leadership of an urban district is, particularly for Black superintendents. Whose expectations are the general standard for effectiveness and success? The lack of a definitive standard is one reason why leadership at the

superintendent's level is problematic; however taken together, all of the qualities and expectations illustrated different types of leadership characteristics and qualities that could potentially lead to a superintendent in a setting such as this one being viewed as effective. Importantly, regardless of how parents packaged their expectations, these parents' views reflected a slice of the diversity in expectations a superintendent in general and a Black superintendent in particular encounters in their leadership of an urban district. It would be prudent for superintendents, and particularly Black superintendents, to understand what these parents ultimately want is a superintendent who values children first, develops relationships, produces results, and who involves parents in improving the quality of education their children receive. What these parents desire is not much different than what historically Black parents have desired from education for Black children. Can a Black superintendent be that superhero and meet all of these expectations? Most likely not, but like Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, they can be a leader who makes a difference for Black children, and in the end that is what these parents desired the most.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study directs attention to an important but neglected area in the research about educational leadership and parent involvement. Why is it important to learn more about Black parents' expectations of a Black superintendent? Black superintendents, though still small in number, are more frequently the superintendents of districts with predominantly Black student populations; thus, in that leadership is both contextual and situational, it is important to understand the expectations of what is most likely to be the majority parent population in a district that a Black superintendent leads.

The district in this study has had more than one Black superintendent. Howell and Perry (2004) studied Black mayors and concluded that when the novelty of race is no longer a factor other factors such as performance take precedence. Other researchers have concluded that racial identity has differing levels of salience in the lives of Blacks contingent on many factors including context (Durant & Sparrow, 1997). Taking into consideration that the majority of the parents in this study like having a Black superintendent for racial and cultural reasons, it was also evident in this study that the parents were most concerned about the performance of the superintendent more so than that the superintendent was Black. Having said this, a question for future study is does race lose its salience in the expectations of Black parents when a district has had more than one Black superintendent?

This study was limited to a sample that included 11 parents. Even though this sample was diverse in age and gender, additional samples and larger samples should be sought to ascertain if expectations remain as consistent as they were with these participants. Further, there is a need to continue to explore the voices of Black parents as they have not been the main focus in the scholarship related to the leadership of a superintendent. Additionally, Black superintendents are typically found in urban settings or settings where minority students are the majority population. Future studies should obtain an understanding of Black parents' views in other settings with large Black student populations.

To study these areas will only add to the fruitfulness of research in the areas of educational leadership and educational leadership for Black superintendents in particular,

and the parent involvement literature that includes the views of parents, but also more specifically Black parents.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Participant Name_____ Date_____

Thank you for participating in this research project. This questionnaire will only take a few minutes but will provide valuable information to help me design a collective view of the participants in this study. Your responses will be viewed by the researcher only. Confidentiality will be maintained in the report of this information.

_____

1. What is/are the age(s) and grade level(s) of your child(ren)? Eg. Age 16/10th grade

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

2. What best describes your relationship to the children listed above?

_____parent _____ stepparent _____grandparent _____ guardian _____other

3. How many years have you lived in this school district?_____

4. Are you involved in any other committees or organizations within the school district or in the community? _____

b. If yes, would you list them and describe your involvement in those groups?

5. Which of the following best describes your age?

_____20-30

_____31-40

_____41-50

_____51-60

_____61+

(over)

6. Which of the following best describes the highest level of education you completed?

_____Some high school
_____High school graduate
_____Some college
_____College graduate
_____Post Graduate

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Now I'd like to ask you some questions that relate specifically to superintendents. Given your experience with this school system, what roles do you think a superintendent needs to play?

2. If you were asked to be on the selection committee for a new superintendent, what would you look for in an applicant?
    b. Would you share with me your reasons for choosing the qualities that you described?
    c. Are there any differences in what qualities you would look for based on the applicant's race or gender?

3. Once a superintendent is in place, what kinds of things do you think he/she should do?
    b. Why are these things important to you?
    c. Are there any differences in what you would expect from a superintendent based on race or gender?

4. What do you want a superintendent to do for children?

5. What would disappoint you in a superintendent?

6. Given that you are in a district which has had a Black superintendent, are there particular things you think are important for him/her to concentrate on?

7. Do you think districts that have large Black student populations should have a Black superintendent? Why or why not?

8. How important is it to you that this district has a Black superintendent?
    b. Would you share with me your reasons for your response.

9. What types of communications and interactions should a superintendent have with students and parents?
    b. Why are the types of communications and interactions you described important to you?
    c. Would you expect anything different from a superintendent based on race or gender?

10. Are there any things that you would like to add about any of the topics we have covered today?

APPENDIX C

INTRODUCTORY TELEPHONE PROTOCOL (POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS)

Good _____. May I speak to _____?

Introduction: My name is Deborah Houchins and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Foundations and Leadership department at the University of Akron. I am currently conducting research on the topic of Black parents' expectations of a Black superintendent, and you are listed as the PTA/SPO president for _____. Is this information still correct? (if no, ask if can direct me to the correct person?

If yes, continue:

Do you have a few minutes to speak with me about my research? If no, may I call you back? What would be a convenient time to call you again?

If not interested, mark in my log and close this contact. If yes, continue with:

As part of my research, I am conducting interviews with PTA and SPO presidents who are Black to discover your perspectives on the qualities you look for in a superintendent and your expectations of a superintendent in general and a Black superintendent specifically. As an active member of PTA or SPO and a parent/guardian, you are being invited to take part in this research project because you have perspectives that I would like to share with others about the qualities you look for in a superintendent and your expectations of a superintendent in general and a Black superintendent

specifically. Also, as a SPO or PTA president, you have a key role working with the schools and other parents that will make your input very valuable.

I will be completing interviews starting in October 2006 through December 2006. If you choose to participate, your commitment would require one individual face to face interview that will last about one hour and would be arranged for a time that is convenient to your schedule. You will be asked to complete a six-question demographic questionnaire so that I can develop an overall picture of all of the participants. Lastly, there will be a follow-up interview of approximately 30 minutes in order to make sure you have the opportunity to share your views completely. The follow up interview will be completed by the end of January 2007. Involvement in these interviews is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time with penalty, prejudice or explanation.

Would you be willing to be a participant in this study? If no, thank person for their time and record that the person is not interested. If yes, set up interview, date, time, and location. Conclude with

I will call you to confirm our meeting a day or two before our scheduled interview. I'd like to give you a contact number where you can reach me if you have any questions or need to change our interview. My name is Deborah Houchins and I may be reached at (216) 319-0579. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Spickard Prettyman of the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department at the University of Akron at (330) 972-8164 with any questions. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your

rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666 or 1-888-232-8790.

Thank you for time and I look forward to meeting with you.

APPENDIX D

FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Now that some time has passed since our interview, are there any other things you would like to share about your expectations for a superintendent or a Black superintendent?
2. I would like to ask you to explain a little bit more about your response to one of the questions from our first interview. (This will be followed with a prompt from the first interview. These questions are listed under each participant).
3. Of all the information you have shared, what are the three most important points that you want shared with others about expectations for a superintendent? Why?

General Questions for All Participants

1. What do you think is the most positive thing that a superintendent can do for the children of the district? Would your response be the same based on the superintendent's race?
2. Several parents have suggested that the superintendent needs strong leadership qualities or needs to be a leader. Could you describe what those qualities might be for you? Can you give any examples of strong leadership or make a person a leader?
3. What do you believe is the superintendent's role in the community? In the Black community? Is the role the same based on the superintendent's race?

4. At the end of a superintendent's term, what would cause you to believe a superintendent was a good one or not?
5. Several of the participants have suggested that the Black community has higher or specific expectations for Black superintendents. What are your thoughts on this topic? Could you describe what those expectations might be? Or, Could you give examples of what those expectations might be?
6. Do you have a preference for the use of Black or African American?
7. When you describe your expectations for a superintendent what picture is in your mind regarding that superintendent? Are you thinking of a particular race or background? Could you explain why you have that particular picture in your mind?
8. Could you describe for me what an excellent superintendent to you is?

Additional Follow-up Questions for Paula

1. Could you explain a little more about what you meant when you said you would want to know more about a superintendent's career goals and qualities?
2. In one of your responses you said you'd like to know what the superintendent wants to change. What would you like to see the superintendent change? Why?
3. Could you give an example of how the superintendent would show that he/she has the best interests of students in mind?
4. You said a superintendent should have expectations. What types of expectations do you think he/she should have? Why these expectations?

Additional Follow-up Questions for John

1. During the first interview you said the superintendent should be more like a parent. Could you explain to me what you meant by that statement? Can you give any examples of how a superintendent would be more parent-like?
2. Could you explain more about what you meant when you said the superintendent needs to be a part of the community? (Might be answered with general question)
3. How would a superintendent show you that he/she has the future of children in the best of hands? (focus on children)
4. Could you explain or give an example of what you meant by the statement that the superintendent "should be more into the system than just part of the—political wise"?
5. One of the questions I asked was could you describe any qualities or characteristics you would look for in a superintendent. In your response you stated you would look for that person's understanding. Could you explain more or give an example about what you meant by "that person's understanding".
6. In one of your responses you said a Black superintendent should be more like a neighbor. Could you define what being like a neighbor means to you in relation to the superintendent? (Might be answered with community questions)
7. In another response you said you like to see this district have a Black superintendent. Could you give reasons why you feel this way?

Additional Questions for Angel

1. You talked about students knowing the superintendent. Why is that important to you?
2. In what ways would a superintendent show you that he/she is making a difference?
3. You talked about a superintendent making parents feel like he/she cares? Could you give an example or describe how the superintendent shows he/she cares?

Additional Questions for Gayle

1. Could you explain what you think of when you say a superintendent should almost be "in the role of a parent"?
2. You talked about wanting to see the superintendent communicate their values to the community. What type of values would you look for?

Additional Questions for Ramona

1. In one your responses you said the superintendent wears a lot of hats. Could you give examples of "the hats" you were talking about?
2. You talked about a superintendent addressing the social issues in the community. Could you describe the social issues that the superintendent needs to address? In your opinion, why is important that the superintendent address the social issues?

Additional Questions for Linda

1. A couple of times during our conversation you talked about the superintendent having a heart. Could you describe how you would know that the superintendent has a heart for parent involvement or a heart for children?

2. You talked about it being important for a superintendent to get to know parents. In your opinion, how does a superintendent get to know parents?

Additional Questions for Michael

1. When I asked about what you would look for in a superintendent applicant you indicated that you wanted the superintendent to be direct in their wording. Could you give an example of what you mean by that?
2. You talked about a superintendent making parents and students feel like he/she cares? Could you give an example or describe how the superintendent shows he/she cares?
3. You talked about an expectation that a Black superintendent would be more comfortable than a White superintendent in visiting the schools and with children. Could you explain more about that expectation and why you feel as you do?

Additional Questions for Denise

1. In one of your responses, you indicated that the superintendent needs to focus on ways for the school to get money to help themselves. Could you explain more about what you meant?
2. When I asked what you would look for in a superintendent, you stated that the superintendent should be an educator because he can see things through the teachers' eyes and the parents' eyes. Could you explain that point a little more?
3. Could you describe for me what an excellent superintendent to you is?

Additional Questions for Aaliyah

1. In one of your responses you talked about a superintendent taking an active role? Could you share how a superintendent takes an active role?

2. You emphasized knowing the superintendent, their character, and their values. What specifically are you looking for in that superintendent? How will you know if a superintendent has the character and values you desire?
3. You talked about a superintendent needing to make parent feel welcome. Could you explain more about what that means (why that's needed)?
4. You also talked about a superintendent being charismatic. How do you define charisma or being charismatic or can you give an example?

Additional Questions for Pam

1. You talked about their being unique issues that Black children face. Could you describe what types of issues you are talking about?
2. You talked about a superintendent needing to have leadership qualities. Could you describe specific leadership qualities that you were thinking of?
3. You also indicated that the superintendent needs to be involved in the community. How do you see that involvement being?
4. When you said you'd like a superintendent to be a grassroots person, could you explain more about what that means?

Additional Questions for Mary

1. Several of the parents have talked about the superintendent being part of the community. Could you explain what that means to you?
2. Could you give any examples of how a superintendent would show he or she has the best interests of students in mind?

3. A couple of times you talked about the superintendent's character and values. In essence, how it that communicated to you? How will you be able to tell their values and their character?
4. In one of your responses, you posed the question of do parents really have a voice. How would that be evidenced to you that parents have a voice? In other words, explain what you mean by parents having a voice?
5. Could you explain what you meant when you said a Black superintendent should represent?
6. You talked a few times about the superintendent being accessible. Why is it important to you that the superintendent is accessible?

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
College of Education
Akron, OH 44325-4208
(330) 972-7773 Office
(330) 972-7770 Office
(330) 972-2452 Fax

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Title of Study: A descriptive study of Black parents' expectations of a Black superintendent

Introduction: You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Deborah Houchins, a doctoral student, in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department, at the University of Akron in the Educational Foundations and Leadership department.

Purpose: This is a study of Black parents' expectations of a Black superintendent. There will be nine to ten Black parents who are presidents of a building-level parent organization in the selected district participating in this study. This research seeks to describe the qualities that you believe a superintendent should have and seeks to describe your expectations for a superintendent in general and a Black superintendent specifically. This study is significant because neither Black parents nor Black superintendents have been the primary focus of research about expectations of a superintendent. This study seeks to add to the research about Black parents and Black superintendents.

Procedures: There will be one individual face-to-face interview and a follow-up telephone interview with Deborah Houchins about the qualities you believe a superintendent should have and your expectations for a superintendent in general and a Black superintendent specifically. The interview will be digitally recorded to make possible accurate recording of the information provided. The face-to-face interview will be approximately one (1) hour in length. You will be asked to complete a six question demographic questionnaire at the conclusion of the face-to-face interview. This information is being compiled to create an overall composite of the participants collectively. A follow-up telephone interview of approximately thirty minutes will occur to verify, clarify, or gather additional information in December 2006 or January 2007. The telephone interview will be digitally recorded. The data collection portion of this study will conclude no later than the end of January 2007, which would end your formal participation in this study.

Exclusion: This study is restricted to parents or guardians who self-identify as Black and who are presidents of a building-level parent organization in the selected district.

Risks and Discomforts: There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. All results will be reported using pseudonyms. There are no foreseeable repercussions from participation; however, should you present an issue or concern that you have shared with others, those remarks might be recognizable to others.

Benefits: The benefits to you for participating in this study may be that you contribute to the understanding of Black superintendents and their roles in schools. Additionally, you have the opportunity to express your views about the qualities you believe a superintendent should have and your views about the superintendent's role in general and your expectations of, specifically, a

Black superintendent. Your views will add to the research that includes Black parents. However, you may receive no direct individual benefit from participating in this study.

Right to refuse or withdraw: Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions without penalty or prejudice. You have the right to withdraw from this project at any time without penalty, prejudice or explanation.

Confidentiality of records: Any identifying information collected will be kept in a secure location and only the researcher, my advisor and dissertation committee will have access to the data. Your signed consent form will be kept in a locked file cabinet separate from your data. The demographic information collected will be used to describe collectively characteristics of the participants in this study. The digitally recorded interviews will be transferred to a computer program and transcribed and the original interviews will be erased after a period of five years in accordance with established rules for the conduct of research. Written transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet. The written copies of the transcripts, researcher notes and codes that include identifying information, the completed demographic questionnaire, and the signed informed consent form will be maintained in a locked file cabinet for a period of five years after which time this raw data will be destroyed by shredding the documents. Participants will not be individually identified in any publication or presentation of the research results. In order to provide for confidentiality and to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used for your name, any other names voiced during the interviews, and the name of the school district. Your school's name and the organization you represent will be shared with my advisor and dissertation committee because of their direct involvement in this research process. Transcriptions that include your actual remarks may also be shared in coded form with my advisor and dissertation committee. Only aggregate data will be reported in the findings and presentations. Any remarks reported using your own words will be shared in coded form; however, should you discuss an issue or concern that you have already shared with others, it might be possible that someone will recognize that those particular remarks were from you.

Who to contact with questions: If you have any questions about this study, you may call Deborah Houchins at (216) 319-0579 or Dr. Spickard Prettyman of the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department at the University of Akron at (330) 972-8164. This project has been reviewed and approved by The University of Akron Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the IRB at (330) 972-7666 or 1-888-232-8790.

Acceptance and signature

I have read the information provided above and all of my questions have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this consent form for my information.

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD LETTER

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
(330) 972-7666 Office
(330) 972-6281 Fax

October 23, 2006

Deborah A. Houchins
133 Quaker Ridge Drive
Akron, Ohio 44313

Ms. Houchins:

The University of Akron's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of the protocol entitled "*A Descriptive Study of Black Parents' Expectations of a Black Superintendent*". The IRB application number assigned to this project is **20060904.**

The protocol was reviewed on October 20, 2006 and qualified for exemption from continuing IRB review. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

> *(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information is recorded in such a manner that subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to subjects; AND (ii) any disclosure of responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of civil or criminal liability or be damaging to subjects' financial standing, employability or reputation*

Enclosed is a copy of the informed consent document, which the IRB has approved for your use in this research.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make any changes or modifications to the study's design or procedures that either increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within one of the categories exempted from the regulations, please contact the IRB first, to discuss whether or not a request for change must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to their implementation.

You are required to submit a Final Report to the IRB, upon completion of this research.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter
Interim Director

Cc: Sandra Spickard Prettyman, Advisor
Rosalie Hall, IRB Chair