

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN NEW YORK STATE**

**A Doctoral Research Project
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Abstract

This descriptive quantitative study investigated the mentoring experiences of African American school superintendents. Specifically, it looked at the mentoring of experiences of African Americans who served in the capacity of chief school administrators in school districts and BOCES in the state of New York. A review of the literature suggests that many professional institutions and organizations have used mentoring as a means of improving the increasing/improving the quantity and quality of their members and prospective members. The field of education is among those which have avails itself of the benefits of mentoring. In some states, not only is the mentoring experience widely employed, it is a requirement for individuals in order for them to acquire and maintain their certification as superintendents. In the State of New York, superintendents are mentored, but there is no mentoring requirement or mandatory professional development experience for current and aspiring superintendents. In the cases in which mentoring is employed as a means of professional development for superintendents, it has proven to be effective in advancing the careers of those involved. Although the literature does not provide much evidence that African-American superintendents are involved in the mentoring experience, the findings of this study suggest that the experiences of African American superintendents in New York are not consistent with much of the literature regarding the issue of the mentoring of superintendents.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

For many public school educators, ascendency to the position of superintendent of schools is the capstone of their educational career. The public school superintendent is not only the chief academic officer of his/her school district; he/she is also the person who is charged with providing the leadership that is required in order for the students in the school district to receive the high quality of education that they deserve. In their meta-analysis of school leadership and the factors which most impact the quality of schools, Marzano and Waters (2009) concluded that the quality of work of the school superintendent most significantly impacts the quality of student achievement on a district-wide basis. They further stated that, "Effective leadership at the district and school levels changes what occurs in the classrooms, and what happens in the classrooms has a direct effect on student achievement" (p.11).

The importance of the superintendency, and the multiple roles which are associated with the position, cannot be understated. In a paper presented to the West Virginia Superintendents' Institute, Björk (2009) stated that among other roles, the superintendent is expected to be: teacher-scholar, manager, democratic leader, applied social scientist (social and organizational justice), and communicator. In other words, the superintendent must be the instructional leader of the school district, while at the same time he/she must be responsible for the management of the affairs of the school district, while communicating the vision and goals to stake holders and other interested and

affected parties. He/she is expected to handle all of the above with grace and competence. This very important leadership position requires individuals who are well prepared to handle the rigors of the position.

Others (Petersen, 2002; Scott, 1980) have pointed to the challenges which superintendents face as they endeavor to perform the tasks which are associated with their position as chief executive officers (CEO) of their districts. Scott (1980) looked at the burdens which the superintendent has to bear as he/she endeavors to improve the lives of the children who are assigned to his/her school district. He reminds us that the expectations of the position are great, but that society does not always look kindly on the superintendent who fails to perform as expected. Such pressure requires individuals who are academically and psychologically prepared for success in the superintendency.

Unfortunately, for many individuals who are considered members of underrepresented (minority) groups, access and ascendency to the superintendency is most often a goal that is rarely achieved. According to Collins, Coleman, Harrison-Williams, and Sawyer (2009), African-American superintendents comprise less than three percent of the superintendents in this country. The numbers for New York State are not much better. There are 696 school districts in the State of New York (NYSED, 2010). In addition, there are 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES of New York State, 2010). Of the total 733 school districts in the state, there are 21 African-

American superintendents. This represents 2.86% of the total. This number is slightly lower than the 2.88% for the entire country.

The number of African-American superintendents in some states is much lower than the national average, with several states having no African American superintendents. According to the National Alliance of Black School Educators (2010), 18 states have no African-American superintendents. New York State, with 21 African-American superintendents, ranks 10th in the nation. This ranking has to be appreciated in the context in which the total number in the nation is less than 400 out of approximately 14,500 active superintendents.

Scholars and practitioners have expressed concern about the small number of African-American superintendents, especially in suburban school districts. Shakeshaft and Jackson (2003) questioned the absence of black superintendents in New York, and challenged the notion of the unqualified candidate. Among the responses to the concerns which are expressed about the underrepresentation of African-Americans in the superintendency, especially in suburban school districts, is the oft-repeated statement that qualified candidates are not readily available to fill the vacancies which materialize. This position is promulgated by no less than the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS, 2009). In its Snapshot of the Superintendency, NYSCOSS (2009) states that the pool of candidates is not as strong as in the past, and that responses to postings for vacancies are lower than in previous years.

This issue is not limited to African-Americans alone. Other ethnic groups and women are also underrepresented in the superintendency. In his seminal research on the condition of women superintendents, Glass (2000) found that women accounted for approximately 14 percent of the total number of superintendents. Collier (2009) called attention the very low number of African-American superintendents who accounted for one percent of the superintendents in our nation's school systems. Hall (2001) also looked at the number of school leaders relative to the number of female classroom teachers and found that although women made up the majority of teachers, principals, and central office employees, there was a great disparity between the number of women who serve as superintendents versus the number of men. Some have characterized the superintendency as the most (white) male-dominated executive position in the country (Jacobson, 1989; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2000).

Christie, Jackson, and Babo (2008) spoke to the challenges which face minority superintendents and their perspectives on issues of gender and race, as well as the difficulties which they encounter as they endeavor to gain entry into the profession. These issues are not limited to the superintendency. In the field of engineering, another male-dominated profession, Ingram, Bruning and Mikawoz (2009) found that for female engineers, mentoring and socialization were important in the nurturing of long-term career development.

Jackson's (2002) study of the suburban superintendents on Long Island lamented the fact there were very few African-American males in suburban school districts, and challenged the notion that qualified African-American candidates were not readily available to fill the vacancies which materialize. He argued that the candidates were available, but the school districts were not inclined to employ them. He explored the impact of search consultants and their role in determining which candidates were permitted to be interviewed by Boards of Education, and how they limited access to the superintendency for those who were perceived as not being part of the established and privileged networks. Not only are the numbers of African-American superintendents paltry, but other than a short lived effort in Nassau County (Kamler, 2006), there is little evidence of any concerted efforts at increasing the numbers of African-Americans in the superintendency.

Who determines whether or not aspirants are ready for the superintendency, and how are the aspirants prepared to assume and gain success in the superintendency? This study looks at one of the factors which influence the quality of the school system's leader and the manner in which he/she is prepared for the position of superintendent of schools. Specifically, it looks at one of the approaches employed among the efforts of improving the preparation and quality of aspiring and current superintendents. This is of particular importance given that many who are engaged in the process of identifying the next generation of superintendents often claim that the quality of the candidate pool is substandard. In his study of the superintendency,

Jackson (2002) expressed his concerns about the absence of African-American male superintendents in suburban school districts in New York State. His study suggested that one of the reasons offered for the situation is the claim that African-American candidates are not effectively prepared for the superintendency. In his study, Parker (2009) reported that several of the superintendents whom he interviewed cited the lack of mentors as one of the obstacles to access and success that are faced by African-American male superintendents in New York State.

Access to, and success in, most professions is contingent upon many factors. Among those factors is the preparation of the applicants for the positions which they seek, and the continuing education which the incumbents receive during their tenure in their position. The preparation and continuing education may take many forms; included among them is that of the mentoring experience and the role of the mentor or model professional in providing access, coaching and other means of support to the aspirants and incumbents. The American school superintendency is not unlike many professions in this regard. Most professions require their members to be engaged in continuing education and other forms of professional development in order for them to retain their licenses and/or certifications. Unfortunately, this is not a requirement for school superintendents in New York. As a result, other than the need for individuals to improve themselves and the quality of their work, there is no compelling reason for incumbent superintendents to engage in professional development activities. Ironically,

in the neighboring states of Massachusetts and New Jersey, superintendents of schools are required to participate in state mandated mentoring activities. Furthermore, superintendents are required to certify that the instructional staff in their school districts engages in, and receive the minimum number of hours of professional development.

The significance of the importance of the mentoring of African-American superintendents is not a concession to the idea that quality African-American candidates are not readily available to assume the mantle of leadership of our school districts. It is, however, recognition that when a particular sector of the population is underrepresented in a profession, there is reason to believe that the subgroup would not have the same access to the opportunities for advancement as their colleagues who are not similarly positioned.

According to the New York State Council of School Superintendents (2009), approximately 220 of New York's superintendents have retired in the previous three years, and nearly 300 current superintendents had fewer than four years of experience. These numbers suggest that approximately 40% of the superintendents can be classified as insufficiently experienced. This is of particular importance, especially during a period in which the demands on the school systems and their leaders are increasing in volume and complexity. As the job becomes more demanding, superintendents, especially the less experienced among them, will need more assistance in

being able to accomplish the tasks that are associated with their being successful as superintendents of schools.

This research project looks at the mentoring experiences of African-American school superintendents in the State of New York. Specifically, it explores the mentoring experiences of superintendents from the perspective of those who serve or have served as mentors, and also from the perspective of those who have been mentored. As an exploratory research project, it does not make assumptions about the experiences of superintendents nor does it seek to predict any causal relationships between the experiences of the superintendents and any other factor and/or variable. It merely states the facts and explains the findings of the research.

In many fields of employment, mentoring has proven to be an effective modality of professional development. In the field of law, the new or inexperienced lawyer is often apprenticed to, or clerks for, an experienced colleague. The medical doctor is required to perform many hours of supervised practice before he/she is allowed to work without supervision. The aircraft pilot has to log a minimum number of supervised flight hours before he/she is allowed to fly solo. After acquiring his/her pilot's license, the pilot is then required to continually upgrade his/her skills in order to retain their license.

Given the importance of the position of the school superintendent, one would reason that school leaders could benefit from similar requirements and experiences. The public school superintendent, however, is not subjected to

such degrees of professional scrutiny, and the requirements are less stringent.

Rogers (2005) wrote of the need to provide effective professional development opportunities to inexperienced superintendents. This need was occasioned by what he perceived as insufficient professional opportunities which were geared to the novice superintendent. Consequently he developed an online tool which was “intended to meet the needs of new superintendents by facilitating dialogue with experienced counterparts.”(p.13).

Although Rogers’ online professional learning community never materialized, the premise of the importance of mentoring was evident in the rationale and the attempt. His notion of a dialogue with experienced counterparts is part of the essence of the mentoring experience. The aspiring or inexperienced superintendent is expected to, among other things, engage in a dialogue with his/her experienced colleague. Knight (1993) concluded that mentoring provides an additional benefit to the mentee/protégé in that it allows access to situations where formal and traditional avenues may not be readily available. In other words, it exposes the mentee or protégé to some of the inside and privileged information to which he/she might not otherwise have access. This has tremendous importance for the African-American aspiring or practicing superintendent. As a member of an underrepresented group, he/she oftentimes does not have the access that may be readily available to his/her peers.

In addition to providing the mentee and protégé with the skills and tools of the trade, it is not uncommon for the mentor to assume the role of sponsor and/or advocate for the aspiring administrator. In this regard, as shown by Ceniga (2008), the mentor assists the protégé or mentee to overcome the infrastructural barriers by mentoring, developing sponsors, professional support and the superintendent skills needed to be successful.

Background of the Problem

In its Snapshot of the Superintendency, the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) expressed its concern that a large number of New York State superintendents had less than four years experience in the position of Superintendent of Schools, and that many incumbents were starting their careers in the superintendency at later stages in life than in earlier years (NYSCOSS, 2009). Several authors, Wyatt (2010), Rogers (2005) and Ellerbee (2002), among others have suggested that quality professional development is the best antidote to the problem of meeting the needs of the superintendent. Rogers (2005) stated that the literature of adult learning indicates that the skills which are necessary for the success of current and aspiring superintendents may best be learned by the linking of novices and veterans in communities of practice in which the learning is directly related to the learners' immediate problems. In other words, for the superintendency, one would posit that mentoring would be a viable and effective modality of instruction for the professional development of superintendents; yet as Ellerbee (2002), Jackson (2002) and Parker (2009)

have stated, African-American superintendents are the least likely beneficiaries of mentoring.

Among the reasons for this is the fact that in situations in which there are no requirements for mentoring, those who choose to mentor more than likely would mentor those with whom they are familiar and/or are part of the same social networks. The absence of large numbers of African-American school superintendents exacerbates that situation. Knight (1993), in her study of the mentoring relationships of school superintendents in Oklahoma, found that superintendents who mentor, tend to mentor along gender lines. In other words, men would mentor men, and women would mentor women. It could be expected, therefore, that similar patterns would exist for ethnicity. Given that African-Americans are disproportionately underrepresented in the superintendency, one would assume that there is an insufficient number of mentors for those current and aspiring superintendents who may wish to be mentored. This, however, is offset by the small number of incumbents, thus resulting in what would appear to be sufficient mentors for potential mentees/protégés.

Carter and Cunningham (1997) subtitled their study of the superintendency, "Leading in the Age of Pressure" not only as an acknowledgement of the importance of the position, but also as a recognition of the critical nature of the job. They tell us that the role of the superintendent has significantly changed since the origin of the public school superintendent in the 1800's, and that the incumbent is no longer a manager of agencies, but

a leader of people and programs. One would assume that such a critical position would require individuals who are properly and effectively prepared for the tasks which would confront them as they endeavor to lead our school systems. Unfortunately, superintendents for the most part, have to fend for themselves as there are few requirements for professional development for school superintendents. Superintendents are required to participate in many of the same educational preparation programs as are required for most public school administrative positions, but upon assumption of the position of Superintendent of Schools, there is no requirement for professional development and/or continuing education, as are required of teachers and leaders in other professions.

The American Nursing Association, for example, stresses the importance of professional development for nurses, and the state licensing agencies require for practicing nurses to engage in professional development in order to maintain their certification, (ANCC, 2010). A majority of states, including New York, have mandatory continuing education for nurses. Medicine, architecture, and law, among other fields, have similar requirements.

According to the New York State Education Department (2009), all teachers and first year building administrators must receive mentoring services. The NYSED's website states that, "The purpose of the mentoring requirement is to provide beginning educators in teaching or school building leadership service with support in order to gain skillfulness and more easily

make the transition to one's first professional experience under an Initial certificate”

(<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/mentoring.html>).

This requirement does not extend to superintendents. Although the Superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school district, and the one who is held accountable for the affairs of the school district, there is no evidence that tremendous importance is placed on the manner in which he/she is prepared, and there are no requirements for ensuring that he/she engages in any sort of professional development upon assuming the position.

The recent trend towards the non-traditional superintendent has to be factored into this equation. Several states, including New York, are granting waivers to individuals so that they may assume the position of Superintendent of Schools. Oftentimes, these individuals are credentialed in fields other than education, but the assumption that qualification in one field of work is sufficient for the leadership of school systems appears to be the underlying factor. Not only have these individuals not completed the rigorous preparation of the majority of school leaders, but upon assumption of their positions, they are expected to perform as well without the necessary support.

The importance of professional development in the field of education is widely acknowledged. One cannot receive and maintain a professional teaching certificate unless one engages in the prescribed minimum number of hours of professional development activities. Among the activities that are required of the professionals is the mentoring experience. In some cases, the

individuals are to be engaged in a continuous mentoring experience until they have demonstrated the competence and/or have acquired the experience that is considered sufficient for mastery.

Importance of Mentoring

Mentors are important to the success of individuals in many and varied professions. According to Wareing (2000), the mentor's role is to prompt the mentee to engage in a process of reflection and effective self-assessment, followed by professional growth, goal setting and planning. In addition, the mentor guides, suggests, teaches, challenges, and coaches by using the extent of their experience, expertise, and caring to influence the mentee's actions and growth (Wareing, 2002). Superintendents are not to be exempt from this process, yet there are very few structured programs in New York State that provide mentorships for aspiring and incumbent superintendents. Furthermore, there is no requirement for the aspiring superintendent to engage in a mentoring experience.

It is not uncommon for individuals to comment that they were confident that they were qualified for advertised positions, but for any number of reasons, they were not afforded the opportunity to demonstrate their readiness and suitability for these positions. Knight (1993) tells us that among other things, the mentoring experience enables the mentee to bridge the gap between qualification and opportunity. This benefit of mentoring addresses Jackson's (2002) concern that many qualified candidates oftentimes do not

have the opportunity to compete on an equal footing with their colleagues for the advertised positions.

Mentees /protégés benefit from the opportunity to observe veteran superintendents at work and to learn from their experiences. The first-year or inexperienced superintendent is also allowed the opportunity to interact with peers who are in similar situations and thus gain the opportunity for bonding and developing lasting relationships. Beem (2007) reports on the experiences gained by a rookie superintendent who participated in the Massachusetts Superintendents Association's mentoring program, and the successful implementation of superintendent mentoring programs in other states. In a study of African-American women superintendents, Collier (2009) reported that African-American women comprise less than one percent of the total number of superintendents in the country. Of equal importance was the finding that for new superintendents, mentoring was critical to their success.

Krebs (1987) found that women who became superintendents were career- oriented individuals who had both relational and career mentors. In other words, the mentor worked with the mentees on issues related to their careers, in addition to addressing issues of empathy, engagement, authenticity, and empowerment. While not specific to the superintendency, these issues were important to their preparation and the success of their careers.

Leaders of commerce and industry routinely avail themselves of the benefits of mentoring. The Birmingham Post (2010) reported on a program

that provided mentors to individuals so that they may gain access to the various professional opportunities that are available in the business community. The major benefit of this program was not merely skill development, but the provision of access to individuals who otherwise may not have had such access.

Another group that has demonstrated the benefits of mentoring is academic faculty. Spector, Mann, Anderson, Narayan, and McGregor (2010) report on the successes of a group of faculty and program directors in creating a peer mentoring program. It is not unreasonable for us to assume that the aspiring and new superintendent would benefit from the mentoring experience if they were able to avail themselves of the opportunities to be mentored by their experienced and competent colleagues. Hall and Sandler (1989) have demonstrated that women in higher education have particularly benefitted from the mentoring experience. An interesting twist in this area is the work of Wise and Leon (March 2009), who as university professors, spend time working in school districts where they coach and mentor principals and superintendents. They reported that they noticed that their time spent working in the school districts positively impacted their teaching at the college level.

Purpose Statement

This research project was designed in order to explore and study the mentoring experiences and relationships of African-American public school superintendents in the State of New York. Utilizing a descriptive statistical

study, the researcher looked at the mentoring experiences of current and former New York State superintendents. Specifically, the researcher sought to determine the respondents' knowledge of and appreciation for the mentoring experience. In addition we sought to learn whether or not the respondents were mentored, and if they subsequently served as mentors for aspiring and lesser experienced superintendents.

Conceptual Framework

There are 696 public school districts in New York State. In addition, there are 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, each of which is led by a superintendent. There are 21 African-American superintendents or 2.86% of the total number of superintendents in New York State. As part of the response to the claim that African-American aspiring superintendents are not properly prepared for the superintendency, this study endeavored to learn whether or not the African-American superintendents were mentored prior to, and/or after, having attained the superintendency; whether or not they mentored any aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents; and if so, who were mentored by whom, and the context in which the mentoring occurred. Given the complexity and demands of the position of the school superintendent, and the rigors that are associated with the position, it leads to reason that the quality of preparation of the incumbents, and the support which they receive would factor into their effectiveness.

According to Medland and Steinhauer (2009), leadership has emerged as the necessary ingredient for organizational success. Although most

organizations have comprehensive training curricula that serve as important part of the foundation for leadership development, new leaders often struggle with navigating the complex landscape of their organizations. Whether managers have been promoted from within or are new to the facility, it is apparent that organizations need to create bridges to leadership success. Executive coaching (mentoring) is identified by Medland and Steinhauer as one of the mechanisms that have proven to be effective bridges to organizational leadership success. They note its long tradition in the business sector and its relevance in the academic community. The school superintendent would most likely benefit from this modality, as have members of the business sector and other sectors of the academic community.

Marzano and Waters (2009) study of the impact of school leadership demonstrates that, apart from the impact of the teacher in the classroom, the superintendent has the greatest singular impact on the quality of schools in his/her school district. It tends to reason then, that the preparation of the superintendent and the support which he/she receives would be vital components of the ability of the school system leader's effectiveness. Speck (1996) reports that among the factors which motivate adult learners is the need to connect the professional development activities to the tasks which are associated with their work. This is consistent with the mentoring relationship in which the protégé learns from someone who has the practical experiences that are related to the work in which the protégé is involved or is pursuing. The experiences of the mentor, and those who are mentored, inform this

research project as we explore the relationships between the two groups of public school superintendents in New York State.

Research Questions

This research project explores the mentoring experiences and relationships of African-American public school superintendents in the State of New York. Specifically, it looks at the following:

1. Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?
2. Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?
3. Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?
4. Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?
5. Are there correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored?
6. Were there any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used repeatedly in this study. It is not uncommon for them to have different meanings to different people, however, for the purpose of this research project, the meanings are:

African-American: (also referred to as Black Americans or Afro-Americans, and formerly as American Negroes) are citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of the black populations of Africa. In the United States, the terms are generally used for Americans with at least partial Sub-Saharan African ancestry.

Mentee: One who is being mentored.

Mentor: A trusted and confidential advisor, coach or guide.

Professional Development: Activities and/or programs which are designed to improve the education, competencies, skills, and effectiveness of individuals upon their completion of the educational experiences which are required for entry into their chosen professions.

Protégé: One who is trained and coached by an expert or experienced person, and who is expected to emulate the practices of the expert.

School District: An independent education organization that is comprised of schools which are funded by the taxpayers of the municipality or region in which the entity is located.

Superintendent: The Chief Executive and Administrative Officer of the school district.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for the field in that it provides researchers, aspiring and current superintendents, as well as policy makers, with a perspective on one of the aspects of the preparation of superintendents. It

also informs the literature and practice of an element of the relationship which exists among some sectors of the superintendents in New York State.

Researchers have spoken to the importance of the impact of mentoring on the career advancement of aspiring superintendents. Ellerbee (2002) found that the lack of mentoring experiences was among the reasons why many African-American administrators in California did not pursue or ascend to the superintendency. This finding is consistent with Parker's (2009) finding that African-American male superintendents in New York State would have been better prepared and more successful if they were mentored during the earlier part of their careers. Furthermore, it addresses a concern of Boards of Education, policy makers, search consultants, and aspiring superintendents regarding the availability and preparation of aspiring African-American Superintendents.

Scope and Limitations

This research project looked at African-American superintendents in the State of New York. There are 696 school districts and 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services in New York State, of which only 21 superintendents are African-American. When one factors those who no longer work as superintendents in New York State, this number increases to approximately 60. The aggregate of which provides a sufficiently large population to inform this quantitative study. There are, however, a few limitations to the study:

1. The study is limited to New York State. Studies conducted elsewhere may reveal different outcomes. In the state of New Jersey for example, mentoring is required of all new superintendents. Thus, one would posit that the results of a similar study would be significantly different.
2. The population for this study is limited to African-Americans who have served as superintendents in the State of New York. Although there may be similar relations and experiences among and between other superintendents, this study looked at those relationships and experiences as they relate to African-American superintendents.
3. The researcher is a member of the population that was studied in the research project.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I presents an introduction to the study. It provides a synopsis of mentoring and the superintendency, the background about the superintendency in New York State and the number of African-American superintendents in the state. It also speaks to the precarious existence of the African-American superintendents and the difficulty which is encountered by aspiring African-American superintendents.

Chapter II presents a review of the literature deemed to be relevant to this study. Included are issues relative to the concept of the superintendency, the history and application of mentoring, and the state of African-Americans in the superintendency.

Chapter III outlines the methodology used in this study. It presents the methodology, a description of the population and sample, research design, method of data collection, data collected, analysis of the data collected, statistical analyses, demographics, validation analysis, and ethical concerns.

Chapter IV addresses the results of the study. These include the results of the online survey, the analysis of the data, and its relevance to issues which were raised during the earlier chapters.

Chapter V summarizes the research study and presents conclusions, implications and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

The leadership of our nation's schools has been an important and critical issue from the time that the first public school was built in this country. There is a large body of literature which speaks to the critical and important nature of the superintendency. Blanchard (2009) refers to the position of superintendent as a critical and influential one which creates the strategic goals for teaching and learning for school divisions throughout the United States. She further states that it serves as a role model for future school leaders. The former Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators opines that the 21st century superintendent responds to a calling because the position has changed so much that anyone who aspires to the position has to want to do so for deep and committed reasons (Houston, 2001). The calling to which the superintendent answers is consistent with the notion of superintendent as the servant leader. Greenleaf (1998) describes servant leadership as leadership that is predicated on assuring that the needs of others are met. According to Pekerti and Sendjaya (2010) the servant leader commits to the service of other people. In this regard, the superintendent places the interests of those whom he/she serves above all else. Ebener and O'Connell (2010) describe the servant leader as one who engages in the invitation, inspiration, and affection that evokes and nurtures the service of others.

Others outside of the field of education have commented on the quality of the leaders of the public school systems in the United States. Citing what he identifies as the crisis in American education, in 2002 entrepreneur and philanthropist, Eli Broad created the Broad Superintendents' Academy. According to its brochure, the Broad Superintendents' Academy is run like an executive training program. Participants attend extended weekend sessions over the course of 10 months while continuing to work in their current positions. In addition to attending sessions, fellows work with a faculty advisor who provides leadership development, coaching and support. According to graduates of the Academy, among the key components of the program is the coaching and support (mentoring) which they receive.

The public school superintendency has undergone significant changes from the time that the first state superintendent was appointed in 1812 in New York. Carter and Cunningham (1997) remind us that the position has changed from that of the custodian of the school district's resources to one in which the superintendent is the leader of the educational programs of the school district. In spite of the changes in, and evolution of the position, the superintendency remains the pinnacle of public school administration, and the position to which many administrators aspire.

The evolution of the superintendency is such that the incumbents and aspirants are expected to experience a certain amount of pressure and stress. According to Wyatt (2010), one of the ways in which this can be addressed is for the superintendent to work with an executive coach. Like the mentor, the

executive coach helps the individual to, among other things, cope with the stressors which accompany the job. Wyatt (2010) concluded that the coaching had a positive impact on the self-fulfillment levels of female public school superintendents and “a significant main effect of ethnicity among male public school superintendents” (p.v). The concept of the significant effect of ethnicity among superintendents partially informs this study, as we explored the mentoring experiences of African-American superintendents in New York. In her conclusion, Wyatt noted that despite the benefits of mentoring and the expansive use of executive coaching in corporate America, a limited number of superintendents have participated in executive coaching, formal mentoring, or informal mentoring. She recommended that all superintendents should participate in executive coaching programs.

The superintendent is first and foremost a leader. Effective leaders must develop the skills which are necessary in order for them to be successful. According to Bennis (2003), those who aspire to leadership must learn how to lead. One of the best and most effective ways of learning how to lead is for the prospective leader to observe and work with successful leaders.

In their meta-analysis of school leadership and the factors which most impact the quality of school districts, Marzano and Waters (2009) found that the quality of the superintendent is the most significant factor. Yet, for untold reasons, there is no consistent approach to the preparation of school district leaders.

According to the New York State Education Department (2009), all teachers and first year building administrators must receive mentoring services. NYSED further states that, “The purpose of the mentoring requirement is to provide beginning educators in teaching or school building leadership service with support in order to gain skillfulness and more easily make the transition to one’s first professional experience under an Initial Certificate” (NYSED, 2010). Unfortunately this requirement does not extend to superintendents. Although the Superintendent is the chief executive officer of the school district and the one who is held accountable for the affairs of the district, there is no evidence that tremendous importance is placed on the manner in which he/she is prepared, and there are no requirements for ensuring that he/she engages in any sort of professional development upon assuming the position.

Mentoring: A Definition

The term mentor first appeared in Greek mythology to identify the son of Alcumus and teacher to Telemachus, son of Odysseus, King of the Greeks. According to the legend, Mentor was supposed to have had a great influence on the development of Telemachus, the prince and future king (Milam, Miller and Frederickson, 2009). Merriam Webster’s online dictionary provides us with the following definition of mentor:

1, a: a friend of Odysseus entrusted with the education of Odysseus' son, Telemachus

2, a: a trusted counselor or guide; b: tutor, coach

George and Neale state that “mentoring is an interaction between a more experienced person and a less experienced person” (p.3). In addition, it provides guidance that motivates the mentored person to take action. It is, however, more than just an interaction between two or more individuals; it is a special type of relationship. It is one in which either the mentor or the individual who is being mentored seeks the other so that a relationship may be developed whereby the mentee or protégé learns from the mentor. Donaldson, Ensher, & Grant-Vallone (2000) report that traditionally we view mentoring as a didactic, face-to-face, long-term relationship between a supervisory adult and a novice student that fosters the mentee’s professional, academic or personal development. This relationship is not limited to supervisor and student. It can involve relationships between and/or among two or more individuals in which the less experienced individuals learn from the experience and expertise of the more experienced and more competent individuals.

Others (Busch, 1985) have posited that mentoring is not just beneficial to the protégé or mentee, but rather it is a two- way process in which both the mentor and the mentee benefit. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (2009) states that mentoring can be either a formal or an informal process in which the coach or guide works with the protégé. The relationship can be in a structured setting or one in which the participants meet via casual and non-structured arrangements. Roberts (2000) reported that that the concept of mentoring is not quite well defined and that there is a lack of

consensus regarding its meaning. At various times, all of the terms which we use to describe any instructional or professional development activity have been used to identify the mentoring process. Accordingly, he stated that the contingent attributes of the mentoring phenomenon appear as coaching, sponsoring, role modeling, assessing, and an informal process.

According to Wareing (2000), the mentor's role is to prompt the mentee to do a process of reflection and effective self- assessment, followed by professional growth, goal setting and planning. In addition, the mentor guides, suggests, teaches, challenges, and coaches using the power of experience, expertise, and caring to influence the mentee's actions and growth. Superintendents are not to be exempt from this process, yet there are few structured programs that provide mentorships for aspiring and incumbent superintendents. Parker (2009) cited a lack of mentors as one of the obstacles to access to, and success in, the superintendency as reported by African-American male superintendents in New York State. In his study of the mentoring experiences of school superintendents in Texas, McNulty (2002) was able to identify some of the areas in which first year superintendents felt the need for assistance and professional development. Those areas most often cited were knowledge and assistance with school finance, development of effective relationships with groups that have expectations of the superintendent while also improving student achievement, and working within the politics of the position.

Although the terms mentoring and coaching are sometimes used interchangeably, several authors have indicated that there are subtle differences between the two approaches to professional development. Several authors, Adams (2010), Deveau (2010) differentiate between the two by suggesting that the process of coaching is geared to elicit information from the individual, whereas mentoring is allows the individual to benefit from the experience of the mentor.

History of Mentoring

Although the term was not widely used to describe the process, mentoring as a form of teaching and professional development has a long history. Colley (2002) concluded that much of what has been written about the origins of mentoring is based on the myths that are associated with Homer's Odyssey because Mentor played a pivotal role in the unfolding of the Odyssey. In tracing the development and history of mentoring, Colley (2002) identifies four stages: the Homeric Stage, as presented in Greek mythology; she identifies the second as the Classical Stage, a period in which master craftsmen tutored their protégés and prepared them to follow in their traditions. Colley (2002) presents us with several examples of this: Socrates and Plato; Haydn and Beethoven. We are then presented with the third stage; the Victorian Stage. In this stage of mentoring, the mentors were seen as people who were assisting those who were unable to provide for themselves. It was more of a philanthropic, rather than a coaching and/or teaching activity. The fact that this type of activity is considered mentoring gives credence to

Roberts's (2000) argument that mentoring is not a solidly and consistently defined construct. The fourth stage in the history of the development of mentoring is the Modern Stage. This is typified by activities which occur in schools and other organizations in which experts work with individuals who are seeking to develop and hone their skills, etc. It is this form of activity which is the focus of this study as we explore the experiences of African-American superintendents in New York State.

Freedman's (1993) analysis presents us with a history of mentoring that is based on the concept of Friendly Visiting. This venture, which was developed in the latter part of the 19th century, and is consistent with Colley's (2002) Victorian Stage, was predicated on the desire of well intentioned individuals to form groups which would then visit less affluent communities and assign individuals to work with the lower class children. It was assumed that by providing poorer children with middle class role models, the lives and circumstances of the poorer children would or could improve. Whether or not one believes in the basis of the Friendly Visiting movement, it spawned a series of groups for which mentoring was a fundamental and integral component.

Value/Importance of Mentoring for Advancement

Darwin (2000) states that mentoring plays a critical role in strategies that are being employed to improve the performance of professionals. One would expect, therefore, that superintendents of schools would benefit from this approach to professional development. Yet Ellerbee (2002) and others

conclude that African-American male superintendents in New York State indicated that the lack of mentors was a liability as they prepared for and accessed the superintendency.

Goodyear (2006) demonstrates the ways in which the mentor advances the career of the protégé. By advocating for the protégé, the mentor opens doors that otherwise might have been closed. In addition, he/she creates vehicles that create exposure and visibility for the protégé, thus introducing him/her to those who have to make the decisions which potentially impact the career of the mentee. It is also not uncommon for the mentor to shield and protect the mentee from situations and/or individuals that may be injurious to his/her career aspirations. This is consistent with Knight's (1993) view that the mentor opens doors and provides access to those who would not ordinarily have such access.

As structured and rigid as the United States military may appear, the U.S. Army has recognized the benefits of mentoring. According to Cox (2009), the Army Leadership Regulation identifies mentoring as one of the ways in which Army leaders are to be developed. He cites many examples in which generals were mentored, who in turn, mentored others.

Kay and Wallace (2010) conducted a study of mentoring in the legal profession. They found that not only was mentoring beneficial, but the lawyers who had multiple mentors seemed to have performed better than those with single mentors.

Gender and ethnicity are often cited as two of the factors which impact the chances of individuals attaining the superintendency. Blanchard (2009) in her study of factors impacting the advancement of female leaders to the superintendency refers to the superintendency as a critical and important position, and that access is contingent upon a multiplicity of factors, mentoring being one of them. This is particularly important for groups which have historically been underrepresented in the profession.

Guptill (2003) and Hall (2001) among others, propose that mentoring is an effective strategy for addressing the low percentage of women school leaders. It is not enough that women are mentored, Hall (2001) cautions. She recommends for institutions and organizations to pay special attention to the nature of the mentoring activities so that the protégés are sure to gain the desired outcome. In her study of the role of mentoring in the career advancement of female school principals in Toronto, Canada, Edwards (1995) concluded that mentoring positively impacted the promotion of women administrators to positions which normally lead to the position of Superintendent of Schools. According to January (2006), African-American women who have served as superintendents found that the mentoring experience was rewarding and important in their careers as they attained the superintendency. In a study of the mentoring relationships of women superintendents in California, Lasher (1986) found that although mentoring was beneficial to women who wanted to become superintendent, most of those who were mentored, were mentored by men. A major reason for the

last finding was the fact the most of the superintendents in the state were men, thus, it would be logical that most of the mentoring which occurred was performed by men. Lasher (1986) recommended that those women who were superintendents ought to serve as mentors in order to further contribute to addressing the needs of their colleagues.

Another benefit of the mentoring experience is the role model effect. Booth and Perry (1995) found that there is the tendency for mentors to work with individuals who share similar characteristics with them, thus men tend to mentor men and women to mentor women. This is not exclusive, but it appears that mentoring tends to occur more along gender lines. They also found that the presence of role models have a great impact on the ability of women to move into senior administrative positions. They claim that the mentor as a positive role model also functions as sponsor for those who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to gain entry into the positions (Knight, 2003). Given that there are more men in the superintendency than women, it would tend to reason, therefore, that men are more likely to be mentored than women. The same can apply for the ethnic factor.

Although it may be logical to assume that the mentee/protégé benefits from the mentoring experience, it is not unexpected for the mentor to also benefit from the experience. In his study of professors of graduate education, Busch (1985) found that those who served as mentors reported that the mentoring experience was as important to them as it was to the mentees/protégés. Consistent with the belief that the teacher learns as

he/she teaches, has implications for public school system leaders in that it would provide incentives for experienced superintendents to be engaged in the mentoring process.

Whether they are state and/or district mandated professional development activities, university or consultant led courses; educators have a long tradition of helping each other to improve their craft. Many of the activities in which educators have been involved may not have occurred within the context of formal mentoring sessions, but close examination of these activities suggests that a significant amount of mentoring has been occurring.

Certain conditions must be present in order for the mentoring to be effective. Anderson and Shannon (1988) state that strong mentoring programs must include, among other things, clearly defined rules about the relationship between the mentor and the mentee as well as the activities in which they would be engaged. What are these rules? And how do we ensure that they are followed? Given that mentoring is often a voluntary relationship, one would expect that the participants – mentor and mentee – are individuals who are comfortable with each other, and that the choice to work with each other was based on a set of expectations which are consistent with the rules of mentoring.

Many areas within the field of education have recognized and embraced the value of mentoring for advancement and professional development. Cangro (2009) tells us that mentoring is employed as a means

by which music educators learn from each other, and thus become better educators. Similarly, nursing educators are employing mentoring as a critical component of their education and training. According to McCloughen, O'Brien, and Jackson (2009), by creating a mentoring program for emerging leaders, professionals in the field of nursing education in eastern Australia were able to determine that the mentors were able to make significant positive impacts on the careers of their mentees. One would venture to assume that the same could be said about mentoring for educational leaders. In a study of superintendents' perceptions of the items which influenced their tenure as superintendents, (Knight, 1993) found that mentoring and networking were among the variables that were widely reported as being of significant importance.

Mentoring and Diversity

Issues of ethnic and gender diversity impact the superintendency nationally and locally. The latest Snapshot (2009) of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, (Collins, et al., 2009), among others, have spoken to the lack of diversity or insufficient diversity in the superintendency. Glass (2000), in his study of the superintendency, inquired about the absence of women superintendents. He showed that although the majority of public school educators are women, the overwhelming majority of superintendents are men. In addition, although it has been established that mentoring is an effective strategy for advancing the careers of members of underrepresented

groups, it is not sufficiently employed (Blanchard, 2009; Parker, 2009; Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002).

Guptill (2003) speaks to the untapped potential that women possess and the importance of them becoming leaders of school systems. Among the strategies which she identifies for addressing this deficit is the support which is provided to women upon their assumption of the superintendency. The issues which the subjects mention as being critical and important are those which are effectively addressed as part of the mentoring process. In their study of mentorship experiences of school superintendents in Manitoba, Wallin and Crippen (2008) found that male superintendents were mentored at twice the rate of female superintendents. They also found that although men and women mentored each other, the rate at which women were mentored by men, and vice versa, was much lower than the rate at which men mentored each other. These findings reinforce the call by other researchers (Blanchard, 2009; Guptill, 2003; Ellerbee, 2002) that mentoring and collegial support are among the factors which lead to access and success in the superintendency. It further illustrates the importance of mentoring for diversity in that individuals seem more likely to mentor those who are most like themselves, thus suggesting that African-American superintendents and aspiring superintendents would be among those least likely to be mentored.

According to Management Mentors Inc. (2006) mentoring has the power to influence diversity in the workplace. They suggest that for agencies and organizations which are interested in fostering and improving diversity,

formal mentoring works better than informal mentoring. In addition they encourage the organizations to identify and pair the mentors with the protégés, instead of allowing them to engage in self-selection. The reason being that, according to Knight (1993) and others, most individuals who are involved in mentoring tend to connect with and seek out people who are similar to themselves, thus defeating the purpose of the mentoring initiative.

The field of athletics is an area in which mentoring has been effective in addressing issues of diversity. Avery, Tonidandel, and Phillips (2008) report that in a survey of head coaches in the women's division of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), it was determined that the individuals who were mentored by white males reported having received more career mentoring than the coaches who were not of the same sex. One must be reminded that many of the head coaches in the women's division of the NCAA are male; thus, more male coaches were available to mentor the protégés. The work by Avery, et al. has important implications for the superintendency given that most of the superintendents are white males, and thus, one would surmise that if most of the mentoring is performed in a sex-similar context then efforts are to be made in order to ensure that women and ethnic minorities are the recipients of this mentoring experience.

In their study of the mentoring of female administrators in school districts which were led by female and male superintendents, Booth and Perry (1995) reported that the respondents did not perceive any difference in the way in which they were mentored. This suggests that it may not necessarily

be who mentors whom, but the fact that individuals are afforded the opportunity to be mentored. According to Collins' (1998) study of 14 school districts in the Metro Atlanta area of Georgia, 15 of the 94 high schools were led by female principals. Given that most of the superintendents are male, and that the secondary school principalship is one of the most common paths through which one becomes a superintendent, the attention to the preparation and professional development of female administrators becomes that much more critical.

Farmer (2005), researched the career paths of superintendents in Texas and concluded that the most common career path was for the secondary teacher to become a secondary administrator (most often Assistant Principal then Principal) before moving to the Central Office as either an Assistant Superintendent or Superintendent. This gives credence to Collins' (1998) contention of the importance of addressing the professional needs of female administrators as part of the preparation for the superintendency.

Collier (2009) found that mentoring was critical to the success of African-American female superintendents and the race or ethnicity of the mentor was not important. More critical was whether or not the individual was mentored.

Potential Pitfalls of Mentoring

Not unlike other personal and social relationships, the success or failure quality of the mentoring process hinges on several factors, not least among them is the quality of the relationship between the participants. There

are times when the mentoring relationship is not of the quality that is desired by, or expected of, both parties. Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) remind us that mentoring is an intense interpersonal relationship and that unpleasant incidents are a common and often neglected aspect of relationships.

Among the negative aspects of mentoring is what is known as the “crown prince” syndrome. In such cases, the mentee or protégé is perceived by his/her peers as having been identified by the leadership of the organization as the next leader or the chosen one. This often leads to resentment from, and possible sabotage by, those who feel that they were overlooked. Jensen (2000) cautions organizations and mentors of the importance of avoiding this problem, through careful selection, and program development. Deer, Jones, and Toomey (1988) caution of the need to manage high potential employees. If programs and structures are not in place to address the potential consequences of the chosen prince syndrome, the benefits of the mentoring program will be eroded.

McCormick (1991) cites several challenges which are faced by organizations which endeavor to develop and implement mentoring programs. Among them is the failure of cross-race/cross-gender mentor-mentee relationships due to personal and organizational barriers. This challenge is of particular importance given the small number of African-American superintendents in New York State.

Lawson (1992) cautions that when mentoring is forced or required, the potential exists for the development of contrived or inauthentic collegially, thus leading to the undermining of the process.

Other challenges which face those who seek to mentor or to be mentored are issues of trust and confidentiality. The protégé has to be comfortable that the mentor does not betray the trust that is placed in him/her. In addition, confidentiality issues could potentially derail the mentoring relationship. Sometimes the mentor and/or the protégé may place unrealistic expectations on each other and on the mentoring experience. One or both may expect too much, and thus create undue stress. In addition to the above, in cases in which the protégé is from an underrepresented group, the chances of mismatch between the mentor and the protégé may increase.

Another problem of the mentoring experience is that of favoritism. Tenner (2004), addresses this issue by examining the work of British scholar, Sir John Plumb, and his relationship with his former students and colleagues. It is not uncommon for individuals and institutions to report that the mentor makes unfair demands on them as he/she endeavors to advance the cause and career of his/her protégé. It is also important for the mentor to guard against the perception that he/she is demonstrating favoritism to the mentee/protégé.

If the individuals who choose to engage in the mentoring experience are not equipped to do as Wareing (2000) states, then they may do more harm than good. Not only should they possess the experience and technical skills

which are necessary in order for them to be effective, but they ought to possess the ethical component that ensures that the protégé's interest is paramount to the relationship and experience.

The United States Army once embraced mentoring as a leadership development mechanism. They later concluded that the practice of mentoring was contradictory and inconsistent to its doctrine. Although the United States Army Leadership Regulation identifies mentoring as a positive activity, Cox (2009) reports that some in the Army felt that the sponsorship aspect of mentorship, where a mentor seeks to influence the career path of his protégé and to help the protégé obtain desirable assignments, seems to undermine Army values. This could apply to other fields as well, in that by sponsoring an individual, the mentor may do so at the expense of other potential and desiring candidates. Nevertheless, most scholars and practitioners suggest that the benefits of mentoring greatly outweigh its negative aspects.

Mentoring and the Superintendency

As much as it would appear that mentoring is a valuable and effective modality of professional development and career advancement, the literature suggests that it is not widely employed in the superintendency, especially in the State of New York. Studies indicate that other professions make greater use of mentoring than does the school superintendency. Kranz (2010) tells us that approximately 20% of companies in the United States planned to adopt and/or implement mentoring programs during 2010. Moen

and Allgood (2009) found that executive coaching (mentoring) had significant positive effects on the self-efficacy of participants in leadership development programs. It would seem to reason that the same would apply to superintendents and aspiring school leaders. The literature suggests that although the benefits of mentoring are well established, school leaders have not embraced the practice to the degree that it is embraced by their colleagues in other fields.

In a study of the mentoring experiences of African-American school administrators, Sloan (2008) concluded that mentoring was critical to career satisfaction in the early years of the administrators. She also noted that the mentoring which occurred, however, was informal and not particularly structured. Rogers' (2005) call for an online community of learners is one of many responses to the absence of organized mentoring and professional development programs for new superintendents.

The New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS, 2009-a) reported that approximately 40% of the State's superintendents retired during the past five years. They also reported that during that same period, approximately 68% of the respondents to the survey were in their first superintendency. The above suggests that there are a significant number of inexperienced superintendents in New York State. Given that much of the research (Marzano and Waters, 2009; Rallis, 1988) suggests that school leadership is of critical importance to the success of schools, it is reasonable to assume that the quality of the school districts would benefit from programs

that are geared towards improving the leadership and administrative skills of the superintendents. To this end, NYSCOSS has embarked on a program to provide professional development for new and aspiring superintendents (NYSCOSS, 2009-b). In addition, the former Executive Director of the organization, Thomas Rogers, proposed an online mentoring program for member superintendents (Rogers, 2003).

Parker (2009) in his study of African-American male superintendents in New York State indicated that the lack of mentoring opportunities was a major liability for the superintendents, and that they reported they believed that if they were afforded the opportunity to have been mentored, their careers might have been more effective and satisfying. Unfortunately, this topic was not explored in depth by Parker. Does the same apply to superintendents other than African-American male superintendents?

Today, coaching and mentoring are common and acceptable as modes of professional development. In the fields of law and medicine, one is required to engage in mandatory professional development. Unfortunately, superintendents are not required to do so, thus it is up to the individual superintendent to determine whether or not he/she wishes to engage in activities which would lead to the improvement of his/her competencies. This condition has many implications, not least among them that the professional development of the superintendent would be uneven.

In a study of the mentoring experiences of school leaders in Texas, Schneider (1991) found that gender was more critical than race and ethnicity.

Women were mentored less, and in most cases, were mentored by men rather than by women. In Parker's study (2009), the male superintendents indicated that they were not sufficiently mentored. Given the small number of African-American superintendents in New York, it is hoped that an equal number of women will be interviewed, thus allowing us to determine if the experiences of New York superintendents mirror those of the Texas school administrators. Although not much seems to be done in terms of mentoring superintendents in New York State, it does not mean that superintendents are not being mentored. McNulty (2002) has shown that in Texas, superintendents are fortunate to have been the recipients of a quality mentoring program. Looking at the experiences of first-year superintendents in Texas public schools, the author found that the mentors actively and frequently initiated contact with the new superintendents; the mentors and the mentees engaged in a free exchange of ideas such that the mentees developed tremendous comfort in working with their mentors; the mentees were able to identify the areas in which they felt deficient, thus enabling the mentors to focus their efforts on assisting with the improvement of those areas.

The African-American School Superintendent

Unfortunately for many individuals who are considered members of underrepresented (minority) groups, access to the superintendency is most often a goal that is rarely achieved (Tallerico, 2000). The path towards the superintendency is seen as being more complicated and involved than any other process, in terms of educational employment. For the members of

these groups, the hurdles and barriers are higher and harder than they are for other groups. According to Collins, Harrison-Williams, Coleman and Sawyer (2009), African-American superintendents comprise less than three percent of the superintendents in this country. The numbers for New York State are not much better. There are 696 instructional school districts in the State of New York (NYSED, 2010). In addition, there are 37 Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES of New York State, 2010). Of the total 733 school districts in New York State, there are only 21 African-American superintendents. This represents 2.86% of the total. This number is slightly lower than the 2.88% for the entire country.

This statistic, although lower, is not inconsistent with those for many of the major professions in which African-Americans work. Rao and Flores (2007) found that African-Americans comprised approximately 4% of the total number of physicians in the United States. A year later, Black Enterprise Magazine (2008), suggested that the number was slightly higher at 5.6%. In either case, the numbers are much lower than the ratio of African-Americans in the national population. According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2006), the number of African-Americans receiving doctoral degrees has steadily risen during the past decade; up 9% in 2004 from the previous year. This is still below the approximate 15% of African-Americans in the national population. Ironically, of the number of African-Americans who earn doctoral degrees, approximately 40% are in the field of education, which makes up the largest area. Even so, African-Americans comprise less than

three percent of the leadership of our nation's school systems. What are some of the factors which contribute to this condition, and how can we effectively address this condition?

Jackson (2002) stated that a major factor in the scarcity of African-Americans in the leadership of our nation's school districts is the perceived lack of qualified candidates. This misperception persists in spite of the statistics which show that many African-American individuals are just as qualified and prepared as their counterparts. Scott (1980) posits another theory. He suggests that even when the candidates are able to demonstrate that they are qualified for the positions, the governance bodies of school districts are in the main, reluctant to employ African-American candidates, except in those cases when no one else is willing to accept the position. In those cases the expectations are unrealistic in that the African-American superintendents are expected to be miracle workers. If they fail to deliver (in situations which are stacked against them), they become the scapegoats.

As we examine the careers of African-American superintendents and those who aspire to the position of Superintendent of Schools, we learn that although preparation and opportunity are critical components in their access to the positions, success on the other hand is contingent on several factors - preparation and support, not the least among them. What kind of support is provided to incumbent and aspiring superintendents, and how do we ensure that those who are most likely to gain access to these positions receive such support?

In his study of the careers of African-American male superintendents in New York State, Parker (2009) reported that a majority of the superintendents who were interviewed indicated that the lack of mentors was a major negative factor in their careers. It was felt that the presence of mentors would have made it much easier for them to be effective in their careers. Ironically, there was no evidence that those who decry the lack of mentors were themselves, involved in mentoring the next generation of school leaders. Is this finding consistent with the experiences of African-American female superintendents of schools? Others (Rogers, 2003; Alsbury, Thomas, Hackmann and Donald, 2006) have spoken to the importance of mentoring in the success of school administrators. Reflecting the importance and effectiveness of mentoring, several states Departments of Education require for their superintendents to engage in a mentoring process in order for them to receive and maintain their certification (Burns, 2005; Beem, 2007).

Many have expressed concern about the conditions under which African-American superintendents work. Scott (1980) reported that African-American superintendents often work in school districts that other potential candidates perceive as undesirable. This is further compounded by the inordinate expectations which African-American administrators experience when placed in those positions. Henderson (2008) states that African-American principals who lead urban schools are expected to conduct themselves in a certain way, and others perceive their actions as ethnically based. As a result, the African-American administrator feels that he is always

under scrutiny in ways in which his counterparts are not. This is consistent with Parker's (2009) finding in which the African-American male superintendent feels that he is perceived as less capable than his counterparts. According to Henderson (2008), African-American male principals were perceived as followers under the tutelage of European American principals, and for decades their talents were measured as subpar.

Parker (2009) reports the finding that African-American male superintendents state that they sometimes feel they have to straddle two worlds, the institution setting in which they work and the world from which they come. Community residents expect them to be representatives of the (African-American) community, while they see themselves as representing all children. This added pressure, they claim, is not placed on other superintendents.

According to the Council of Great City Schools (2009), the average tenure of an urban superintendent is approximately three and one-half years. In New York, 16 of the 21 superintendents are either in urban districts or suburban districts with urban characteristics. Their average tenure of approximately four years is slightly greater than the national average. Scott (1980), in his seminal study of the African-American superintendent, suggested that the black school superintendent is often hired in districts that most others do not desire or in places that are so troubled and difficult to lead that they ultimately fail.

Professional Positioning and Socialization of African-American Superintendents

Celestin (2003) studied the role of professional positioning and professional socialization in the career path of African-American female superintendents. She concluded that among the reasons for the low number of African-American women in the superintendency was that African-American women educators are among those who are most likely not placed in professional paths that normally lead to the superintendency. Glass, (2000) and Shakeshaft, (1987) among others, have pointed out that the career paths for the superintendency have been dominated by the positions in which males (white) have been most present – secondary school principal, head coach, etc.

According to Celestin (2003) professional socialization is the process by which individuals are provided opportunities to be mentored, engage in networking and other activities that may assist in their upward mobility within their organization. It would appear that this would be an effective strategy for the preparation of members of underrepresented groups, as they would most likely be in need of its benefits, were they to avail themselves of the opportunities which this provides.

In her study of the mentoring experiences of female superintendents in Pennsylvania, Cornelious (2002) found that the protégés valued early role modeling and situational mentoring. In other words, the protégés felt that they benefited most when their mentors provided guidance about specific

challenges. They also reported that although close professional relationships developed in the cases in which there were cross-gender mentoring relationships, close friendships did not develop. One may posit that similarities would exist in cases of cross-cultural and cross-ethnic mentoring experiences. It is important to note, however, that the absence of a close friendship did not diminish the quality of the mentoring experience and the resultant benefits.

Summary

For many public school administrators, the superintendency is the capstone position to which many aspire. Unfortunately, the position is such that only a “select few” are afforded the opportunity to serve in this very important and critical position. A review of the literature tells us that for women and ethnic minorities, the chances of becoming superintendents of schools are low. Unfortunately, not a lot of work has been done to effectively change this situation. Although the numbers for women have increased, those for ethnic minority groups have actually declined despite the increase in the pool of qualified minority candidates.

Many professional institutions and organizations have used mentoring as a means of improving the increasing/improving the quantity and quality of their members and prospective members. The field of education is among those which have availed itself of the benefits of mentoring. In the superintendency, however, there is not much evidence that mentoring is as formalized an approach to professional development and career

advancement as it is in other sectors of the field. This is more so for African-American superintendents and aspiring superintendents.

In some states, not only is the mentoring experience widely employed, it is a requirement for individuals in order for them to acquire and maintain their certification as superintendents. In the State of New York, superintendents are mentored, but there is no mentoring requirement or mandatory professional development experience for current and aspiring superintendents.

In the cases in which mentoring is employed as a means of professional development for superintendents, it has proven to be effective in advancing the careers of those involved. The literature does not provide much evidence that African-American superintendents are involved in the mentoring experience. It is hoped that this research project would shed light on this important aspect of the professional needs of those who serve in the superintendency.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The increasing complexity of, and demands on, public school superintendents suggest that there is a need for candidates and incumbents who are very well prepared to handle the rigorous demands of this position. In the State of New York, the rate of turnover is such that approximately 40% of the incumbents have less than four years of experience in the position of school superintendent (NYSCOSS, 2009). The former Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents, Thomas Rogers tells us that,

“The school superintendency in New York State is on the brink of a major demographic trend that will be characterized by an unusually high rate of retirement among sitting superintendents.... At least one consequence of this trend will be the loss of considerable amount experience, expertise, and institutional memory among the superintendent corps, which heretofore has served as a socializing and support system for new superintendents” (Rogers, 2005, p. 12).

This observation by Rogers that the veteran superintendents served as a socializing and support system for new superintendents is consistent with the literature on the role of the mentor in the life of professionals (Speizer, 1981; Wright and Wright, 1987).

For African-American superintendents, the situation is even more critical. The number of African-Americans who currently work as superintendents of schools account for less than three percent of the total, and the rate of turnover in that group is comparable with the aggregate of superintendents in New York State. As such, the condition of the African-American superintendent in New York State is even more perilous and critical than is suggested for the superintendency as a profession.

Purpose of the Study

By examining the mentoring experiences of African-American public school superintendents in the State of New York, this research study sought to fill in the gaps in the literature about this important aspect of the lives and experiences of public school superintendents.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to inform this descriptive research project:

1. Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?
2. Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?
3. Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?
4. Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?

5. Are there correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored?
6. Were there any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes?

Design of the Study

In seeking to answer the research questions which are posed at the beginning of this project, a quantitative research design was utilized. Specifically, a descriptive research survey questionnaire was administered to African-Americans who currently serve or had previously served as superintendents in New York State. It was the position of the researcher that in light of the problem of practice that was being explored, and the nature of the research questions, the goal of the research project would be most effectively served via the utilization of this research method. According to Key (1997), descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The methods involved range from the survey which describes the status quo, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, to developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time. Leedy and Ormrod (2010), state that this type of research involves either identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena. In every case, descriptive research examines a situation as it is. It does not involve changing or modifying the situation under investigation,

nor is it intended to detect cause–effect relationships. As pointed out by Knight (1993), examples of descriptive research that yields quantitative data are correlation studies, developmental designs, observation studies, and survey research. The emphasis is on survey research.

Leary, (2007) tells us that descriptive research is designed to, among other things, describe the characteristics or behaviors of a particular population in a systematic and accurate fashion; research which uses questionnaires and interviews in order to gather information about attitudes, beliefs, feelings, behaviors, etc.

Descriptive statistics do not attempt to tell us why events occur or why phenomena exists. Instead they tell us what is. In seeking to learn of the mentoring experiences of the participants, the utilization of the descriptive approach enables us to learn of the particular experiences. This information is then used to draw inferences and arrive at conclusions about the experiences of the research participants.

This research project, which was conducted in order to gather information about the mentoring experiences of African-American superintendents, is an application of the features and characteristics of the descriptive research method.

The survey research approach was selected because, in the opinion of this researcher, the approach enabled the researcher to obtain the information informed the study without encountering any of the risks which are associated with several of the other forms of study. Such potential risks

included the identification of the respondents who may have made controversial statements, the exposure of respondents to negative reactions to their responses, etc. are avoided by the utilization of this approach.

Participants in anonymous survey/ questionnaire research projects tend to be more forthcoming with their answers than are the participants in focus group and other type of qualitative studies in which the identity of the participants were known.

Instrumentation

The survey (Appendix F) was initially developed by the researcher. It was subsequently augmented by the use of sections of a survey instrument that was published by the Leadership Technologies, LLC (2002). The survey which requires approximately 12 minutes to be completed, is divided into four sections:

1. The first section was designed to gather basic demographic information about the participants. The ten questions in this section relate to issues such as gender, educational background, age of participants' location, etc.
2. The second section sought to gain information about the participants' knowledge of mentoring from their perspective.
3. Using a Likert type scale, the third section is designed to permit the participants to share their perspective on mentoring. The questions asked the respondents to respond to several questions

which allow them to express their views regarding the mentoring process and its implications.

4. The final section asked the participants to provide information about their mentoring experiences. It is this section which provided the information which the researcher used in order to answer most of the research questions which are listed at the beginning of this report.

Research Participants

The participants in this study were drawn from the roster of African-Americans who currently serve or have previously served as Superintendent of Schools in the State of New York. Some school administrators in New York City and the other four large urban school districts (Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers, and Syracuse) are sometimes referred to as Superintendents. For the purpose of this study, only those individuals who were the chief school officers were considered.

One of challenges with which researchers have to deal is the issue of sample size. At the time that the survey was conducted there were 21 African-American superintendents in New York State. Given this relatively small number, and the fact that the researcher knew all of them, it was not difficult for the researcher to contact them. In addition to the 21 individuals who were incumbent superintendents at the time of the survey, this researcher was able to identify 51 African-American individuals who had previously worked as superintendents in New York State. Given the size of the population, the

researcher opted to utilize the census approach to sampling. According to Israel (2009) the census is a suitable and effective approach for gathering information when the population is sufficiently small to allow the researcher to survey or interview all of the subjects. The census approach allows the researcher to reach the entire population under study, and removes the chances of sampling errors that might otherwise have occurred.

Attempts were made to contact every member of the population, but unfortunately some were unable to be reached. As part of the effort of identifying and locating the superintendents, the researcher consulted the annual directory of African American superintendents which is published by the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). The researcher is a member of the Executive Board and chairman of the Superintendents Commission of NABSE, and in those capacities, has access to information about the African American superintendents. Ultimately, of the total population of 72 individuals, the questionnaire was administered to 64 individuals (48 of which were returned). This resulted in a response rate of 75% which is an acceptable number for a single-stage sampling procedure. Creswell (2009) tells us that the single-stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to population, and thus can determine the participants in the sample. In this case, the researcher chose to include the entire population.

Procedure

Using the research questions as a guide, a survey was designed to gather the information that would inform the study. Several researchers (Sloan, 2008; Cornelious, 2002; Knight, 1993) looked at other aspects of the mentoring of superintendents, and their work provided examples of surveys which were used to gather information such as that used in this project. In addition, the researcher sought and received permission to utilize elements of a mentoring survey that was developed by Rita Boags of the Leadership Technologies, Inc. (Appendix C).

The initial draft of the survey instrument was piloted with a group of superintendents other than those to whom the final instrument was administered. The test group consisted of seven superintendents from the states of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The purpose of the pilot was to enable those tested to provide feedback to the researcher. The feedback addressed issues of design format, relevance, clarity and consistency of the question, ease of use of the online survey questionnaire, comfort of the users regarding the questions asked, and any suggestions for improvement that those who were tested made to the researcher. Upon completion of the piloting of the survey, the instrument was finalized and administered to all of the members of the surveyed population.

Three of the subjects of the research did not use e-mail, so hard copies of the questionnaire were mailed to them. Upon receipt of the responses, the sealed envelopes were given to a research assistant who entered the data into

an Excel spreadsheet. Those answers were then incorporated into the responses of the other respondents. This ensured the anonymity of the respondents, and avoided compromising the process.

Data Collection

The researcher sent a letter to each superintendent requesting for him/her to participate in the survey. Each superintendent was permitted to respond to the online survey which, upon completion, sent an anonymous response to the researcher. The responses were then imported into an Excel spreadsheet.

Approximately one week after the mailing of the letters, follow up correspondence was made via e-mail to each person on the distribution list. The email repeated the request which was initially sent, and directed the individuals to a website at which the survey was posted. Participants had the choice of accepting or rejecting the request to participate in the survey.

Upon accepting the terms of the request, the participants were taken to the survey, which required approximately 10 minutes to be completed. Of the 64 individuals who were contacted, 48 responses were returned. Although survey subjects appear to be less willing to respond to e-mail surveys than in the past, (Sheehan, 2001), a 75% return rate was within the range of acceptability in order to allow the researcher to arrive at certain conclusions as a result of the responses which were received. Rubin and Babbie (2009) suggest that a response rate of 50% is acceptable, thus the researcher is

confident that the number of responses is sufficient for the purposes of this study.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Data

Summary of Results

This study sought to learn of the mentoring experiences of African American superintendents in the state of New York State. A survey questionnaire was used in order to obtain the self reported experiences of African Americans who served in the position of superintendents of schools in New York. Even though many individuals in New York City and the Big Four school districts of Buffalo, Rochester, Yonkers, and Syracuse often use the title of superintendent, the research population was limited to those individuals who functioned as chief of schools and were the chief executive officers of their school districts or BOCES. For the purpose of this study, the term former superintendent refers to anyone who has previously worked as a superintendent in New York. One does not have to be a retiree in order to be classified as a former superintendent. Several of the individuals in this category currently work as superintendents in other states, while some work in other areas of education.

The data for this research project were based on information which was provided in response to the following research questions:

1. Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?
2. Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?

3. Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?
4. Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?
5. Are there correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored?
6. Were there any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes?

The survey was administered to all current and approximately 90% of the former superintendents. Given that there are less than 100 African Americans who have served in the position of school superintendent in New York, it was relatively easy to identify and locate the individuals for this study. A total of 64 surveys were administered. Forty eight completed questionnaires were returned for a return rate of 75%. Of the surveys which were returned, 20 were from current superintendents, and 28 were former superintendents. Of that number, 32 were men and 16 were women. These statistics are consistent with information published by the New York State Council of School Superintendents. (NYSCOSS, 2009b).

Fifty eight percent of the respondents earned a terminal degree, and all had earned the masters degree, which is required for certification for the position of superintendent of schools. Of the 20 current superintendents who responded, two worked in rural school districts, twelve identified themselves as suburban superintendents, and six were in urban districts. The gender

distribution was even, except in urban districts where men outnumbered women by a ratio of 5:1.

Scott (1980), among others has argued that except for some rural areas in the southern regions of the United States, in which African Americans comprise the majority of the population, most African American superintendents work in urban school districts. These superintendents are predominantly male. Jackson (2002) reported that African American superintendents are significantly underrepresented in suburban school district in New York, except for those districts which, although classified as suburban, had many of the characteristics of urban districts. The findings of this study are consistent with the work of both Scott and Jackson in this regard. Table one shows the employment status of the respondents at the time of the survey.

Table 1.

Participants Employment Status at Time of Survey

Gender	<u>Urban</u>		<u>Suburban</u>		<u>Rural</u>		<u>Retired</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	5	10	6	13	1	2	20	42	32	67
Female	1	2	6	13	1	2	8	17	16	33
Total	6	13	12	25	2	4	28	58	48	100

More than half of the respondents earned the doctoral degree. This is consistent with previously reported statistics by the Journal of Blacks in

Higher Education (2008) which has reported that advanced degrees in education tend to be among the highest numbers awarded annually, and that African Americans received doctorates in education at more than one third of the rate in which they earn doctoral degrees in all other fields. Table two shows the distribution of degrees which were earned by the respondents at the time that the survey was administered.

Table 2.
Distribution of Degrees

Degree	Number	%
Masters	19	40
JD	1	2
Psy. D.	1	2
Ed.D.	18	38
Ph.D.	8	17
Other	1	2
Total	48	100

The other characteristics of the respondents varied in terms of experience, age, positions held prior to assuming the superintendency, and the degrees earned. These characteristics were also distributed by gender. Table three shows the ages of the respondents at the time of their first superintendency. According to the results of the study, men begin the superintendency at much younger ages than do women. Seventeen percent of the male respondents first assumed the superintendency by age 40, while

one female or 0.2% of the respondents was appointed to the superintendency by age 40.

Consistent with current trends, most of the respondents (81%) entered the superintendency after their 41st birthday. This finding is juxtaposed with information which shows that many of the respondents obtained their first administrative position prior to their 36th birthday, with 37% before the age of thirty years. Table three shows the ages at which the respondents first ascended to the superintendency.

Table 3.

Age of First Superintendency

Gender	Age Range												Total
	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	
	25 – 30	31 – 35	36 – 40	41 - 45	46 - 50	50+							
Male	3	6%	2	4%	3	6%	4	8%	9	19%	9	9%	30
Female	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	4	8%	3	6%	10	21%	8
Total	3	2	4	8	2	9							8

Although the reasons were not stated, the African American superintendents spent considerable time in administrative positions before attaining their first superintendencies. Given the volatility of the position, and the short tenure of superintendents, one would posit that whether by accident or by design, this serves the individuals well, in terms of career security.

In terms of longevity in the superintendency, and the number of districts in which the respondents served, the results of the study show that men are more mobile, and have worked in the profession for longer periods than women. This is not surprising, in that other researchers (Sharp, Malone, Walter & Supley, 2000) have shown that the field is male dominated, and the statistics for African American superintendents are consistent with previous findings. Consistent with the work of NYSCOSS (2009) and the Council of Great City Schools (2009), the data show that the longevity of the respondents are less than five years, and that the superintendents who have worked for more than five years have served in more than one school district.

According to table four, 48% of the respondents have less than six years of experience in the superintendency and 27% have between six and ten years of superintendency experience. Seventy five percent of the respondents have worked in the superintendency between one and ten years, with males being twice the number as females. Four percent of the total has more than 20 years of experience, and no female superintendent has worked more than 15 years as a school superintendent.

The data show that African Americans are not only underrepresented in the superintendency, but in the cases in which they are employed, their tenure is for relatively short period of times compared to the state averages (NYSCOSS, 2009).

Table 4.

Number of Years in the Superintendency

Number of Years in the Superintendency											
	1-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		21-25		31-35
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Male	12	25%	9	19%	5	10%	2	4%	1	2%	1
Female	11	23%	4	8%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0
	23	48%	13	27%	8	17%	2	4%	1	2%	1

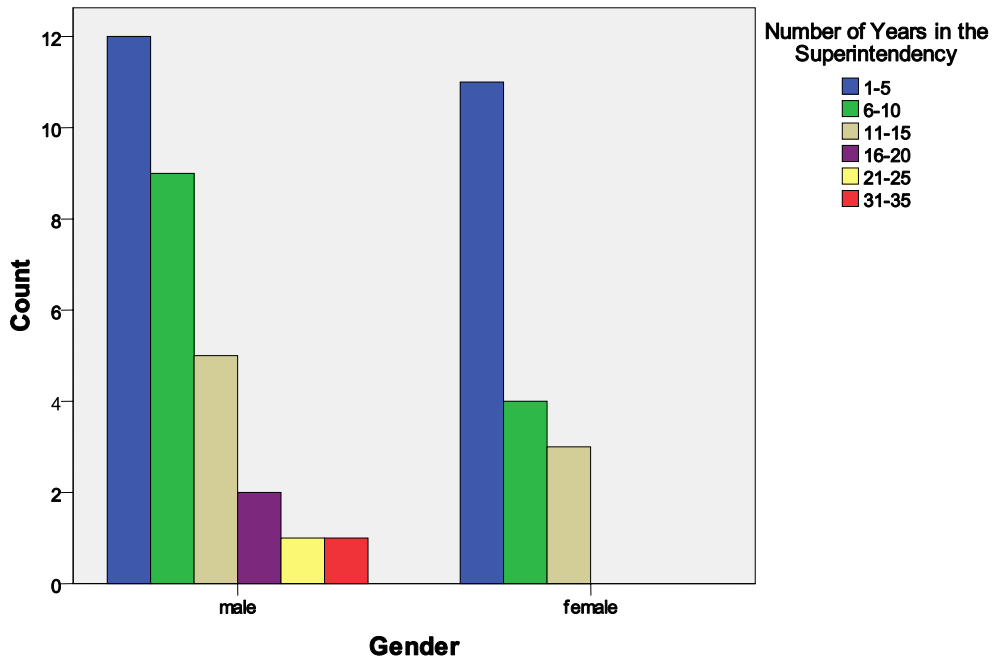


Chart 1

Number of Years in the Superintendency

Knowledge of Mentoring

Most of the 48 respondents rated their knowledge of mentoring as good to excellent. Fifteen percent rated their knowledge as poor to moderate, while 85% rated their knowledge as good to excellent, with most stating that their knowledge was very good. Table five shows the distribution of the respondents self rating of their knowledge of mentoring.

Table 5

Knowledge of Mentoring

	Knowledge of Mentoring									
	Poor		Moderate		Good		Very Good		Excellent	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	6	13%	1	2%	2	4%	10	21%	11	23%
Female	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	11	23%	7	15%
Total	6	13%	1	2%	2	4%	21	44%	18	38%

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	.288	.090	2.036	.047 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	.186	.130	1.282	.206 ^c
N of Valid Cases		48			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Based on normal approximation.

The respondents self reported knowledge of mentoring and their responses to the questions about their mentoring experiences suggest that the

more knowledgeable one is about mentoring, the more likely it is that one would mentor. According to table six, those who rated their knowledge as very good to excellent also reported more experiences with mentoring. This finding is not unexpected, in that educators are more apt to be involved in activities in which they are conversant and knowledgeable, thus the more one knows of a subject, the more likely that one would be involved in activities related to it. If the respondents had reported negative opinions of the mentoring process, then the results could have been reversed, in that the more knowledgeable one was of the process, the less likely that one would be involved in the process.

Table 6

Knowledge of Mentoring and Number of Individuals Mentored

Knowledge of Mentoring	Number of Individuals Mentored											
	0		1-5		6-10		16-20		NA		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Poor	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	13%	6	13%
Moderate	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Good	0	0%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	4%
Very Good	2	4%	14	29%	5	10%	0	0%	0	0%	21	44%
Excellent	1	2%	9	19%	5	10%	2	4%	1	2%	18	38%
Total	3	6%	26		10	20%	2	4%	7	15%	48	100%

Research Question I

Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?

A frequency distribution and cross tabulation were used to interpret the data which were obtained from the following survey questions: Part IV, questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 18, and 22.

- Were you mentored prior to obtaining your first school superintendency?
- Were you mentored during your first school superintendency?
- Were you mentored at any time beyond your first school superintendency?
- Do you have a formal in-district mentoring program in place for aspiring administrators?
- As an aspiring school superintendent were you encouraged to develop skills outside your area of expertise?

When asked about their experience as mentees, most of the superintendents (73%) indicated that they were mentored prior to having attained the superintendency. Table seven shows the number of the respondents who reported that they were mentored and those who reported that they were not mentored.

Table 7

Relationship between gender and mentoring experiences

Gender	Mentored Prior to Assuming the Superintendency				Total	
	Yes		No		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
male	22	46%	8	17%	30	63%
female	13	27%	5	10%	18	38%
Total	35	73%	13	27%	48	100%

Frequency of Mentoring Activities

The frequency with which the mentors met their mentees varied. There was no evidence that the times of the meetings were tied to any characteristic of the mentors or the mentees. Giving the multiplicity of issues to which the superintendents have to attend, and the scope of the responsibility of the position, it is fair to assume that the frequency of mentoring activities may very well be based on the availability of the mentors and the mentees, and time constraints which they face. When one considers the busy schedules of superintendents, frequency rate of the mentoring activities is reasonable.

Table eight shows the frequency with which the mentors and the mentees met each other.

Table 8

Frequency of Mentoring Activities

Frequency of Mentoring Activities	Respondents	
	Number	%
Weekly	15	31%
More Than Weekly	7	15%
Monthly	5	10%
Less Than Monthly	7	15%
NA	14	29%
Total	48	100.0

Research Question 1 was designed to determine whether or not the African-American superintendents were mentored prior to them having been appointed to the position of superintendent. Parker (2009) reported that one of the findings of his study of male school superintendents in New York was that the subjects of his study stated that they did not receive sufficient and effective mentoring prior to having assumed the position of superintendent. Others (Ellerbe, 2002; Jackson, 2001) have suggested that although educators stand to benefit from the mentoring experience, African-Americans were the least likely beneficiaries because of lack of sufficient access to the process.

The findings suggest that African American superintendents in New York have been mentored more frequently than the literature and previous research have suggested.

Research Question II

Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?

A frequency distribution and cross tabulation were used to interpret the data which were obtained from the following survey questions: Part IV, questions 1, 5, 17, 23, 25.

- Have you mentored an educator who has had aspirations of becoming a school superintendent?
- Do you have a formal in-district mentoring program in place for aspiring administrators?
- Have you played a role in obtaining a position for those who you have mentored?
- My staff has an open invitation to see me about career advice.
- How often do you meet with your mentee?

Ninety percent of the respondents stated that they mentored others during the time that they worked as superintendents. The data show that those individuals who were mentored were more likely to mentor others. Seventy three percent of the respondents stated that they were mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency. Eighty nine percent of this

group or 65% of the total respondents stated that they mentored others. This might suggest that superintendents who were mentored had a greater appreciation for the process and thus were better prepared to mentor others or that they felt a sense of obligation to contribute to the development of others in ways that were done to them. Interestingly, the more experienced the superintendent, the less that they mentored. Any number of factors may have contributed to this trend: as they gained more experience, the superintendents were engaged in additional activities, thus they had less time to mentor; the longer that one serves in the superintendency, one is further removed from the mentoring process, and is less likely to mentor others; after the initial foray into mentoring, one loses interest. Irrespective of the reasons, the data is clear; the longer the period of time that one is mentored, the more likely one is to mentor. Table nine shows the relationship between the superintendents' experiences as mentors and as mentees.

Table 9

Relationship between having been mentored and having mentored others

		Mentored Prior to Having Assumed the Superintendency?				Total	
		Yes		No			
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Mentored Others?	Yes	31		12		43	
	No	4		1		5	
Total		35		13		48	

The same respondents reported that upon assuming the superintendency, they received less mentoring. At the same time, they mentored fewer individuals. This suggests that as the individuals become more experienced, they sought and receive less mentoring. At the same time, with experience, the individuals became busier, and thus were not available to mentor as perhaps, earlier in their tenure as superintendents. Another interpretation could be that with more experience, one is further removed from the less experienced individuals, and is less inclined to mentor.

Research Question III

Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?

A frequency distribution was utilized as part of the analysis of the responses to the following questions which were used by the researcher in an effort to arrive at an answer to the aforementioned research question: Part IV, questions 26, 27, 28, and 29.

- Identify the Ethnicity of the individuals whom you have mentored.
- Identify the Ethnicity of the individuals who have mentored you.
- Identify the Gender of the individuals whom you have mentored.
- Identify the Gender of the individuals who have mentored you.

When asked of the ethnicity of their mentors, 61% of those who were mentored responded that their mentors were white and 39% responded that their mentors were African American. Of this group, men mentored at twice the rate of women. This finding is not surprising given that the

superintendency is dominated by men, thus making them more available to be engaged in the mentoring process.

The same group was asked of their experience as mentors, specifically, they were asked to report about the identity of those whom they have mentored. According to the responses, African American superintendents reported that they mentored other ethnic groups as much as they mentored African Americans. When the issue of ethnicity was removed, the data show that men mentored other men at twice the rate that they mentored women, while women mentored other women at three times the rate that they mentored men. This is consistent with the previously stated premise that mentoring tends to occur along gender lines. There was one caveat; however, twice as many men reported that they were mentored by both men and women as did women who reported that they were mentored by both men and women. The population for this study was comprised of twice as many men as it was of women, thus this finding is not contradictory to the statement that mentoring occurs along gender lines. It suggests that African American superintendents are mentored by both male and female mentors, but that each gender group spends more time with its own group than it does with others.

When asked to report on their experiences as mentors, men were apt to mentor women as much as they mentored other men. Thirty five percent of the male respondents reported that they mentored both men and women. Another 16% of the men reported that they only mentored men, while four

percent reported that they mentored women, exclusively. The numbers for female mentors were higher than they were for female mentees, but still lower than their male counterparts. Fourteen percent of the female mentors reported that they mentored both men and women, with 10% mentoring men only, and an additional six percent mentoring women, exclusively.

Table ten shows the relationship between the gender of those who were mentored and those who mentored others.

Table 10a

Relationship between the Gender of the Respondents and the Gender of those whom they mentored.

		Gender of Respondents								Total	
		Male		Female		Both		NA			
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Gender of Male Mentees	Male	17	35%	1	2%	9	19%	3	6%	30	63%
	Female	8	17%	3	6%	4	8%	3	6%	18	38%
Total		25	52%	4	8%	13	27%	6	13%	48	100%

Table 10 b

Relationship Between Gender of the Respondents and the Gender of Those Who Mentored Them

		Gender of Respondents' Mentors									
		Male		Female		Both		NA		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Gender of Respondents	Male	8		4		17		1		30	
	Female	5		3		7		3		18	
Total		13		7		24		4		48	

An examination of the mentoring relationships of the respondents relative to ethnicity and gender revealed that African American superintendents reported that they mentored white aspiring superintendents with the same frequency with which they mentored African Americans. Males reported that they mentored at twice the rate of females, irrespective of the ethnicity of the mentees. An examination of the ethnicity of the mentors show 42% of the African American superintendents were mentored by whites, while 27% were mentored by other African Americans. Given that African Americans comprise less than three percent of the superintendents in New York, and that white superintendents comprise more than 90% of the total, these figure are encouraging in that they show that African Americans are willing to assist their colleagues in their efforts to access the superintendency.

Tables eleven a & b show the relationship between the gender of the respondents and the ethnicity of their mentors and their mentees.

Table 11a

Gender of Respondents and the Ethnicity of Their Mentees

Gender of Respondents	Ethnicity of Mentees									
	White		African American		Hispanic		NA		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	10	21%	9	19%	1	2%	1	2%	30	63%
Female	6	13%	2	4%	0	0%	3	6%	18	38%
Total	16	33%	11	23%	1	2%	4	8%	48	100%

Table 11b

Gender of Respondents and the Ethnicity of Their Mentors

Gender of Respondents	Ethnicity of Mentors							
	White		African American		NA		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Male	13	27%	9	19%	4	8%	30	63%
Female	7	15%	4	8%	3	6%	18	38%
Total	20	42%	13	27%	7	15%	48	100%

Several researchers (Knight, 1993; Booth and Berry, 1995) have indicated that, for the most part, individuals who mentored tend to work with individuals who share many characteristics with them, especially those of gender and ethnicity. The researcher sought to, among other things to learn

whether the African American superintendents were mentored by individuals who belonged to other ethnic groups. Given that African American comprise less than three percent of the superintendents in this country, it reasonable to expect that if they were mentored, it was very likely for them to have been mentored by individuals of other ethnic groups.

Some researchers (McCormick, 1991; Knight, 1993; Booth and Perry, 1995) have suggested that most mentoring occurs along gender lines with males mentoring males, and female mentoring females. Given that most of the superintendents are males one might assume that when mentoring occurs, and if women were to be mentored, they would most likely be mentored by men. According to the results of this study, men were more likely to have been mentored by other men. 35% of the men reported that they were mentored exclusively by men. At the same time, 16% of the women reported that they were mentored by men. The study did not reveal much mentoring activity on the part of women. Only eight percent of the respondents reported that they were mentored by women. Given the historically low number of women in the superintendency, this finding is reasonable and not unexpected.

These findings suggest that in the earlier part of their careers when the numbers of African American superintendents were lower than they currently are, and men were predominant in the superintendency, most of the mentoring was performed by those who comprised the membership of the

profession. Later on, however, as the number of women in the profession increased, the mentoring was more evenly distributed.

Research Question IV

Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?

By utilizing a regression analysis the researcher was able to provide an analysis of the responses to the following survey questions which were used as part of the process of arriving at an answer to the aforementioned research question: Part IV, questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

- Have you played a role in obtaining a position for those who you have mentored?
- To your knowledge, did your mentor play a role in obtaining a position for you?
- Have you encouraged your mentees to get acquainted with the search consultants?
- Did your mentor encourage you to get acquainted with the search consultants?
- Is it a practice of yours to forward your mentee's name and/or recommendation to the search consultants?
- To the best of your knowledge, did your mentor forward your name and/or recommendation to the local search consultants?

The dependent variable was the respondents' role in obtaining positions for the mentees. The independent variables were whether the respondents' mentor forwarded their names to search consultants; whether

their mentors encouraged them to contact search consultants, and whether their mentors played any role in them obtaining positions as superintendents. In other words, were the superintendents who were helped by their mentors to obtain employment likely to do the same for their mentees?

Figure 1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.630 ^a	.397	.356	.341

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentor forwarded my name, Mentored encouraged search consultants, Mentor's role in obtaining positions

Figure 2

ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	3.368	3	1.123	9.666	.000 ^a
Residual	5.111	44	.116		
Total	8.479	47			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Mentor forwarded my name, Mentored encouraged search consultants, Mentor's role in obtaining positions

b. Dependent Variable: Your Role in Obtaining Positions

Table 12

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	.642	.132		4.875	.000
Mentor's role in obtaining positions	-.067	.119	-.116	-.566	.574
Mentored encouraged search consultants	.315	.113	.543	2.799	.008
Mentor forwarded my name	.118	.152	.197	.775	.442

a. Dependent Variable: Your Role in Obtaining Positions

Figures 1 and 2 present the two primary parts of regression output: model summary, ANOVA table. The model summary and the ANOVA summary indicate that the overall model of the three independent variables significantly predicts the role of the mentors to obtain positions for the mentees, $R^2 = 39.7\%$, $R^2_{adj} = 35.6\%$, with a significance level of $p < .001$. Further, review of the beta weights in Table 12 specify that three variables, the mentors' role in obtaining jobs; the mentors having encouraged the mentees to contact search consultants; mentors forwarding the names of the mentees, significantly contributed to the model.

There is a general belief that mentoring is one of the ways in which professionals improve their competencies. The literature is replete with examples of the benefits of mentoring (Booth and Perry, 1995; Ellerbee, 2002; Burns, 2005; Beem, 2007). The review also speaks to the lack of mentoring experiences for African American superintendents. According to the findings

of this research project, 73% of the African American superintendents in New York reported that they were mentored at some period during their career. This is much higher than was expected, given the research of others (Ellerbe, 2002; Jackson, 2002; Parker, 2009) which suggested that the mentoring experiences of African American superintendents were relatively low.

Several questions were asked as part of the efforts of this researcher to determine how the mentoring experience impacted the careers of those who were mentored and the perspective of the mentors on the careers of those whom they mentored.

When asked if mentoring made a difference in their careers, 87% of respondents reported that it did. Thirteen percent stated that mentoring made no differences in their careers. The high number of positive responses is consistent with the basic premise of mentoring as used for professional development in that it is contributing factor in the career satisfaction of the participants.

When asked about the impact of the mentoring experience on the careers of those whom they mentored, thirty seven (77%) respondents reported that they were instrumental in assisting their mentees/protégés in obtaining administrative positions. On the other hand, fifty percent of the respondents reported that their mentors assisted them in securing the position of superintendent. These findings are consistent with the work of Knight, 1993, Goodyear (2006), and Ceniga (2008) among others, who have

argued that one of the roles the mentor is the advocating for, and assisting the mentees in availing themselves of employment opportunities to which they otherwise might not have access.

The percentage of respondents (50%) whose mentors were instrumental in assisting them in securing administrative positions is lower than that of those (77%) who were instrumental in securing administrative positions for their mentees. This statistic may be informed by the fact of the increase in the number of opportunities for African Americans to access the superintendency. The increase in the opportunities means more individuals are available to mentor and consequently, the greater the potential for the positive impact of the mentoring process.

Table twelve a shows the frequency with which the respondents reported on whether they were influential in their mentees receiving administrative positions and whether their access to administrative positions was influenced by their mentors. Table twelve b shows the frequency with which the respondents reported that their mentors were influential in them receiving administrative positions. A comparison of both tables shows that the respondents reported that they were more influential in assisting their mentees than their mentors were in assisting them.

Table 12a

Respondents' Role in obtaining positions for Mentees

Did Respondent Assist Mentee in Obtaining Positions?		
	Number	%
Yes	37	77%

No	11	23%
Total	48	100%

Table 12b

Mentors' role in obtaining positions for Respondents

Did Mentor Assist Respondent in Obtaining Positions?		
	Number	%
Yes	24	50%
No	17	35%
NA	7	15%
Total	48	100.0

Research Question V

This research question was designed to determine whether or not there was a relationship between the rate at which African American superintendents were mentored, and the rates which they mentored others.

By utilizing a regression analysis the researcher was able to provide an analysis of the responses to the following survey questions which were used as part of the process of arriving at an answer to the aforementioned research question: Part IV, questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

- Have you mentored an educator who has had aspirations of becoming a school superintendent?
- Were you mentored prior to obtaining your first school superintendency?
- Were you mentored during your first school superintendency?

- Were you mentored at any time beyond your first school superintendency?
- Do you have a formal in-district mentoring program in place for aspiring administrators?

The aphorism “One good turn deserves another” is frequently used in situations which require goodwill. Some individuals see the mentoring experience as a goodwill experience, and thus there are the expectations that individuals who are the beneficiaries of mentoring would likely choose to mentor others. An analysis of the data shows that of 90% of the respondents mentored others and 73% were mentored. Sixty five percent of the respondents reported that they were mentored and that they also mentored others. Twenty five percent reported that although they were not mentored prior to assuming the superintendency, they mentored others. Two percent of the respondents reported that they were not mentored, and they did not mentor others.

Given the small number of African American superintendents in the state, this researcher was interested in learning whether those superintendents who were assisted in the job search likely to do the same for those whom they mentored. A standard single regression was conducted in order to determine the accuracy of the independent variables, with the dependent variable being the whether the respondents mentored aspiring superintendents, and the independent variables being whether they were mentored prior to obtaining their first superintendencies (MP); whether they

were mentored during their first years as superintendent (MFY); whether they were mentored at any time beyond the first year (MBFY).

An analysis of the MP, MFY, and MBFY was conducted in order to arrive at a prediction of the mentors' motivation involvement. No cases were eliminated during the data screening. Regression results indicated that the overall model significantly predicts mentor involvement, $R^2 = .312$, $R^2_{adj} = .265$, $p < .000$. A summary of regression coefficients is presented in Table 13c and indicates having been mentored prior to obtaining the superintendency significantly contributed to the respondents mentoring others. An explanation of this could be that those who were mentored prior to having obtained the superintendency had a greater appreciation for the mentoring process, and felt that it positively impacted their chances of obtaining the superintendency.

Table 13 a

Model Summary^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.558 ^a	.312	.265	.265

a. Predictors: (Constant), Were You Mentored Beyond 1st Year, Were You Mentored Prior, Were You Mentored during the first

b. Dependent Variable: Have You Mentored

Table 13 b

ANOVA^b						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.396	3	.465	6.642	.001 ^a
	Residual	3.083	44	.070		
	Total	4.479	47			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Were You Mentored Beyond The First Year? Were You Mentored Prior To The Superintendency? Were You Mentored During The First Year?

b. Dependent Variable: Have You Mentored Aspiring Superintendents?

Table 13 c

Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	.770	.160		4.799	.000
	Were Your Mentored Prior	-.312	.107	-.454	-2.907	.006
	Were You Mentored 1s year	.370	.098	.601	3.773	.000
	Were You Mentored Beyond 1st Year	.124	.082	.198	1.519	.136

a. Dependent Variable: Have You Mentored

The information suggests that having been mentored was a factor in the superintendents' willingness and/or ability to mentor. An earlier finding showed that there was a positive correlation between the respondents' knowledge of mentoring and their experiences as mentors. Given that one's

experience as learning could inform one's knowledge of and appreciation for the, it is not unexpected that those who were mentored would most likely have mentored others.

Research Question VI

Were there any negative or dysfunctional experiences and/or relationships during the mentoring process?

An analysis of the frequency distribution of the responses to the following survey questions was used in order to determine if there were any negative or dysfunctional experiences and/or relationships during the mentoring process. Survey questions Part IV, questions 32 and 33.

1. As a mentee have you had a negative or dysfunctional mentoring experience?
2. As a mentor have you had a negative or dysfunctional mentoring experience?

Some authors have suggested that if not handled properly, the mentoring process can result in negative outcomes (McCormick, 1991; Deer, Jones, and Toomey, 1988; Jensen, 2000). In response to the questions which seek to determine whether the respondents had any negative mentoring experiences, a majority of the respondents (77%) indicated that they had no negative mentoring experiences. Seventeen percent responded that they had negative mentoring experiences, with six percent provided no response. This statistic gives credence to the argument of several researchers that mentoring is often a positive experience for the mentor as well as the mentee.

That 17% of the respondents reported that they had some form of negative experiences is a cause for concern. Although the respondents were not asked to describe the nature of the dysfunctional mentoring relationship, the fact that they reported that the relationship was dysfunctional requires for mentors and those who organize mentoring activities to be cognizant of what may occur during the course of a mentoring relationship, and to try to develop processes and procedures to ameliorate them.

Table fourteen shows the frequency rate of the reported dysfunctional mentoring experiences.

Table 14

Dysfunctional Mentor Relationships

Frequency of Dysfunctional Mentor Relationship

Yes		No		No Response		Total	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
8	16.7	37	77.1	3	6.3	48	100.0

Chapter V

Summary Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This quantitative research study was designed to learn of the mentoring experiences of African American school superintendents in the state of New York.

The following research questions were developed as part of this researcher's attempt to obtain the information which informed this study:

1. Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?
2. Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?
3. Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?
4. Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?
5. Are there correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored?
6. Were there any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes?

The participants in the study were chosen from among African Americans who have served in the position of superintendent in the state of New York. A quantitative research project was conducted, and an online survey was administered to all current and 43 of approximately 70 former

superintendents. Forty eight responses were received from the 64 individuals to whom the survey was administered.

The survey (Appendix F) was divided into the following four sections:

Part I: Demographic Information. This section was designed to elicit information about the individual respondent. Included in this section were questions of gender, administrative experience, educational preparation, etc.

Part II: Knowledge of Mentoring. This section was designed to gather information about the respondents' knowledge of the mentoring process, and how they rated themselves in that area.

Part III: Perspectives on Mentoring. This section was designed to learn of the respondents' perspectives on the mentoring process. It sought to learn how they viewed mentoring, whether or not they felt that mentoring was beneficial, etc. This section consisted of 24 Likert-type scale questions in which the respondents rated statements on a 1 – 5 scale.

Part IV. Mentoring Experiences. This final section was designed to learn of the mentoring experiences of the respondents. It is in this section that the critical information about the research questions was obtained.

Summary of Findings

A review of the literature suggested that although mentoring was acknowledged as an effective modality for training and professional

development, superintendents have not been afforded the opportunity to avail themselves of the opportunity to engage in mentoring to the degree that their colleagues in other professions do. African American and women superintendents and aspiring superintendents appeared to have fewer opportunities for mentoring than others.

The results of this research project belie the premise that African American superintendents in New York are not mentored. Seventy three percent of the respondents reported that they engaged in some sort of mentoring prior to having assumed the superintendency, and 90% reported that they have mentored aspiring and first year superintendents. When one considers that the mentoring of new superintendents is not a requirement in New York, these findings are very encouraging.

Although they comprise a very small percentage of the population, African American superintendents are as well prepared for the position as is any other group. All of the members of the research group possessed the minimum qualifications for the position, and a majority of them had earned a doctoral degree. In addition, most of them (81%) had earned significant administrative experience prior to assuming the superintendency.

Many African American superintendents began their administrative careers at a relative early age – before 30 years of age, but most of them did not enter the superintendency until after their 46th birthday. Several factors may account for this. Either the individuals are exercising caution in moving to the final rung of the public school administrative ladder or they find that

braking into this are to be much more difficult than getting to other administrative positions. This research project did not seek to learn of the reasons for this trend.

Although they comprise a significant minority of the superintendents and African American superintendents have been able to avail themselves of the opportunity to be mentored, and they in turn, have mentored others. The mentoring does not appear to be the result of any requirements or institutional initiatives. For the most part, the respondents sought out their mentors for assistance.

The following are the specific findings of each research question:

1. Were African-American superintendents mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency?
 - a. The findings suggest that African American superintendents in New York have been mentored more frequently than the literature and previous research have suggested.
 - b. Seventy three percent of the respondents reported that they were mentored prior to having attained the superintendency.
2. Have African-American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents?
 - a. Ninety percent of the respondents stated that they mentored others during the time that they worked as superintendents. The data show that those individuals who were mentored were more likely to mentor others. Seventy three percent of

the respondents stated that they were mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency. Eighty nine percent of this group or 65% of the total respondents stated that they mentored others.

3. Were gender and race determinants regarding who mentored whom?
 - a. When asked of the ethnicity of their mentors, 61% of those who were mentored responded that their mentors were white and 39% responded that their mentors were African American. Of this group, men mentored at twice the rate of women.
 - b. When asked to report on their experiences as mentors, men were apt to mentor women as much as they mentored other men. Thirty five percent of the male respondents reported that they mentored both men and women. Another 16% of the men reported that they only mentored men, while four percent reported that they mentored women, exclusively. The numbers for female mentors were higher than they were for female mentees, but still lower than their male counterparts. Fourteen percent of the female mentors reported that they mentored both men and women, with 10% mentoring men only, and an additional six percent mentoring women, exclusively.

4. Did the mentees benefit from the mentoring experiences?
 - a. When asked if mentoring made a difference in their careers, 87% of respondents reported that it did. Thirteen percent stated that mentoring made no differences in their careers. The high number of positive responses is consistent with the basic premise of mentoring as used for professional development in that it is contributing factor in the career satisfaction of the participants.
 - b. Fifty percent of the respondents reported that their mentors assisted them in securing the position of superintendent.
5. Are there correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored?
 - a. An analysis of the data shows that of 90% of the respondents mentored others and 73% were mentored. Sixty five percent of the respondents reported that they were mentored and that they also mentored others.
 - b. Twenty five percent reported that although they were not mentored prior to assuming the superintendency, they mentored others.
 - c. Two percent of the respondents reported that they were not mentored, and they did not mentor others.
6. Were there any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes?

- a. In response to the questions which seek to determine whether the respondents had any negative mentoring experiences, a majority of the respondents (77%) indicated that they had no negative mentoring experiences.
- b. Seventeen percent responded that they had negative mentoring experiences, with six percent provided no response. This statistic gives credence to the argument of several researchers that mentoring is often a positive experience for the mentor as well as the mentee.

Conclusions

The findings of the research project belied the belief that African Americans are not mentored prior to assuming the position of superintendent of schools. Several authors and researchers (Knight, 1993; Ellerbee, 2002; Jackson, 2002; Rogers, 2003; Parker, 2009) have made the case for the mentoring of school superintendents. Some among them (Ellerbee, 2002; Parker, 2009) have suggested that the African American superintendent has missed out on the opportunity to be mentored.

The results of this project indicate that the majority of African American superintendents in New York State have been engaged in some form of mentoring, and that most of them have reported that the experiences have been positive. It is the opinion of this researcher that this study will help to dispel the myth of the under prepared African American superintendent and the underprepared aspiring superintendent.

The first research question sought to determine whether or not African American superintendents were mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency. The responses to the survey questions which are associated with this research question indicated that African American superintendents are mentored prior to having assumed the superintendency.

The second research question sought to determine whether or not African American superintendents mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents. The responses to the survey questions which are associated with this research question indicated that African American superintendents have mentored aspiring and/or inexperienced superintendents.

The third research question sought to learn whether gender and race were factors in the mentoring experiences and relationships of African American superintendents. Several researchers (Knight, 1993; Booth and Perry; 1995; Schneider, 1991, among others) have suggested that race and gender are determinants of the mentoring experience because individuals then to mentor those with whom they share characteristics. Collier (2009) on the hand, suggest that race and gender are not factors in determining who mentors whom.

The responses to the survey questions which are associated with the third research question suggest that race and gender were not determinant factors regarding the mentoring of African American Superintendents in the state of New York. The data showed that males mentored at twice the rate of females, but they mentored females and much as they mentored males. More

respondents were mentored by white mentors than they were mentored by other African Americans, but when one considers that African Americans comprise less than three percent of the number of superintendents in the state, the differences do not suggest that race was a determinant.

The fourth research question endeavored to determine if the mentees benefited from the mentoring experiences. Specifically this research question sought to determine whether the mentors engaged in specific activities which materially benefitted the mentees.

An analysis of the data indicates that the respondents engaged in activities that provided material benefits to those whom they mentored. In addition, they also felt that their mentors did the same for them. In their roles as mentors and mentees, the superintendents were engaged in activities which contributed to, and resulted in the acquisition of specific skills, knowledge, and in some cases employment.

The fifth research question sought to determine if there are any correlations between the rate at which superintendents mentored and the rate which they were mentored. Folklore speaks to the maxim of one good turn deserving another, and that we ought to do unto others as we expect of them. With this in mind, the research asked the participants to respond to questions which sort to elicit responses to the rate at which the mentored aspiring and inexperienced superintendents. The findings suggested that the superintendents who were mentored were likely to mentor others.

The sixth and final research question sought to learn if there were any dysfunctional experiences during the mentoring processes. Several researchers (McCormick, 1991; Lawson, 1992; Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell, 2000; Jensen, 2000) have cautioned about the pitfalls that could be encountered if the mentoring process is not handled properly. With this in mind, and the researcher asked the participant to report of any negative or dysfunctional experiences which they encountered during the mentoring process. Seventeen percent of the respondents indicated that they experiences which they considered to have been negative and/or dysfunctional. Although the respondents did not specify the nature of the dysfunctional experiences, and given that 17% may not be considered statistically significant, a number, this finding is educationally and socially significant in that it reminds of the care that has to be employed as we endeavor to developing mentoring programs for aspiring superintendents.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, this researcher makes the following recommendations, in the hope that implementation would contribute the profession while improving the condition of individuals who are members of the underrepresented constituencies in the superintendency:

1. Given the underrepresentation of certain groups in the superintendency, and given the crisis of leadership that is often decried by many policy makers, it would serve the profession well, if the professional and constituent organizations such as the New

York State School Boards Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, the New York State Association for Women in Administration (NYSAWA), and the New York State Association of School Business Officials (NYASBO) would work collectively in their attempts to address this issue. Each group would bring its individual interests and expertise to the process which could result in the improvement of the process by which potential superintendents are indentified and employed. An outcome of the joint venture would be programs for training and professional development for current and aspiring African American superintendents.

2. Programs in educational leadership which are housed in the nation's universities and colleges should consider the creation and funding of positions of superintendents in residence. These superintendents in residence would provide the students with information about the practical aspects of the superintendency, including case studies, simulations, advice on pressing issues, etc. This would be a mandatory requirement of the program, but there will be not a grading component, thus relieving the students of the pressure and anxiety which often accompany grades, but at the same time affording them the opportunity to engage in a process which will greatly enhance the graduate experience. This experience provide

some of the benefits that the students would ordinarily received were they to be mentored

3. Although the results of the research project indicate that African American superintendents are mentored, such mentoring is the result of the initiatives of the mentees and their mentors. The preparation of superintendents is too important to be left to chance. Therefore, it is recommended that the New York State Education Department (NYSED) consider the requirement of a mentoring experience for all new superintendents. This is a requirement in several states, and superintendents in those states have reported on the value of the experience. The superintendents will be permitted to select their mentors from a roster of NYSED approved candidates. As demonstrated in other states, the mentoring experience ought to improve the competence of the new superintendents. If this were to be a requirement for all new superintendents, then the African American Superintendents would automatically benefit from it.
4. Superintendents and Boards of Education should give thought to the development of additional in-district mentoring programs so that the districts' pipelines of senior level administrators could be enriched. This would allow for the aspiring superintendents to gain valuable on the job experiences, and at the same time learn from the veteran superintendents.

5. Search consultants and boards of education ought to make concerted efforts to diversify the superintendency by employing individuals who are members of underrepresented groups. Care must be taken to ensure that in each case the candidate is highly qualified, and that he or she is the best person for the position. In implementing this practice, the decision makers must make special efforts to avoid the appearance of tokenism and quotas. The effort would not only add greater diversity to the profession, it would enrich the superintendency, and ultimately benefit the children who are served.
6. Institutions and organizations which implement and administer mentoring programs should make concerted efforts to put measures in place which would reduce the occurrence of dysfunctional and/or negative incidents during the mentoring process. In addition, individuals who opt to engage in the mentoring process ought to be sure that they are sufficiently conversant in the process before embarking on the activities which are associated with it.

Considerations for Further Study

Based on the results of this research project, this researcher would recommend the following for further exploration and study:

1. In some states, the mentoring experience is a requirement for the superintendency. Every superintendent is required to work with a mentor for a period of time. In addition, some states mandate for

their superintendents to engage in required professional development. This is not a requirement in New York and some other states. Consideration ought to be given to a study which examines requirements for the continuing education and professional development of superintendents in different states in this country. This will provide information which informs issues systems leadership as various States' and Federal agencies contemplate policies for the effective leadership of our school systems.

2. Several authors (Knight 1993; Ellerbee, 2002; Parker, 2009) have commented that superintendents have reported on the importance of mentoring in their careers. Consideration should be given to a study which compares the success and career satisfaction of superintendents who have been mentored and those who have not been mentored. This would add to the literature about the impact of mentoring as a contributing factor on the careers of school superintendents.
3. The New York State Council of School Superintendents administers a Future Superintendents Academy, a program designed to prepare aspiring superintendents for the superintendency. Consideration should be given to a research project which compares the rate at which graduates of the academy obtain positions of superintendents of schools against the rates of those

individuals who did not participate in the academy. I would recommend that mentoring become an integral component of the academy, and that a mentor/coach is assigned to each participant.

4. This study examined the mentoring experiences of a particular population of superintendents in a single state. Consideration should be given to a replicate of this study with a sampling of all superintendents in the same state. This will provide useful comparative data about the mentoring experiences of all superintendents.
5. Some researchers (Scott, 1980; Jackson, 2002, among others) have reported that even though qualified candidates are present, search consultants often report that qualified African American candidates are not available to fill the vacancies which materialize. Consideration should be given to a study of aspiring superintendents in which information will be gathered regarding their qualification, preparedness or lack thereof, and their experiences as they pursue the superintendency. Such a study will provide data which address the issue of the preparation and availability qualified African American candidates for the position of superintendent of schools.
6. Issues of race and gender often permeate discussions about the under representation in the superintendency. Some authors have concluded that attempts to ameliorate these conditions occur along

gender and racial lines. Consideration ought to be given to a study which looks at the issues of race and gender in the preparation and hiring of superintendents, and whether or not factors of race and gender influence who is mentored, and by whom.

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Appendix A

Approval from the Institutional Review Board



Office of the Dean

SAGE GRADUATE SCHOOL
A member of THE SAGE COLLEGES

January 13, 2010

Fadhilika Atiba-Weza
[REDACTED]
Brunswick, NY 12180

IRB PROPOSAL # 09-10-080
Reviewer: Samuel W. Hill, Chair

Dear Mr. Atiba-Weza:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application and has approved your project entitled "How does mentoring impact the careers of superintendents." Good luck with your research.

Please refer to your IRB Proposal number whenever corresponding with us whether by mail or in person.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Samuel Hill".

Samuel W. Hill, PhD
Chair, IRB

SWH/nan

Cc. Daniel Alemu

Appendix B

FINAL REPORT OR ANNUAL REPORT
THE SAGE COLLEGES INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
2010-2011

If you have any questions about completing this report, contact the chair Dr. Susan C. Cl
at sageirb@sage.edu or at 518-244-2071

IRB APPLICATION NUMBER 09-10-080

FINAL REPORT xx ANNUAL REPORT _____

DATE REPORT SUBMITTED December 16, 2010

1. Title of Project: An Exploration of the Mentoring Experiences of African American Public School Superintendents in New York State
2. Starting Date: February 15, 2010
3. Ending Date (if Final Report): December 6, 2010
4. Expected Ending Date (if Annual Report):
5. Researchers conducting this study include:
 - a. Principal Investigator(s):
Daniel S. Alemu (Ph.D.)
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership, School of Education
The Sage Colleges Graduate School
West Hall # 201
Campus box 62
Albany, NY 12208
(518) 292-1720
alemud@sage.edu
 - b. Student Investigator(s) if this is a student project:
Fadhilika Atiba-Weza
25 East Road
Brunswick, New York 12180
atiba@dynateck.com
(518) 326-2493
 - c. All other involved in collecting data or working with confidential data
6. Name, address, email address and telephone number(s) of person(s) to contact if additional information is required.
 - a. Daniel S. Alemu (Ph.D.)
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership, School of Education
The Sage Colleges Graduate School

West Hall # 201
Campus box 62
Albany, NY 12208
(518) 292-1720
alemud@sage.edu

b. Fadhilika Atiba-Weza
Box 0176
Brunswick, New York 12181
atiba@dynateck.com
(518) 326-2493

7. Describe any issues or questions that arose during each of the following aspects of the research process. Also indicate the source of the issue. Was it raised by the participants, was it an observation of the researcher, etc.?

No

- a. Recruitment
- b. Consent Form
- c. Data Collection

8. Were any participants dropped from the study or did any withdraw from the study?

No

9. Did any harm come to the participants that was not anticipated or was greater than anticipated? Explain.

No

10. Were there any issues related to the anonymity or confidentiality of the data?

No

11. If deception was involved in the study, identify any problems that arose from it.

NA

12. Describe any other issues that arose not covered in the items above.

None

In addition to answering the questions above, those filing an Annual Report must answer the following questions.

13. What has been accomplished since the start of the project or since the last annual report?

14. What remains to be done?

I (we) certify that the information provided for this project is accurate.

David Fleming
Signature of Principal Investigator/Faculty Advisor

12/16/10
Date

A. D. Ba-Wler
Signature of Student (if student project)

12-15-2010
Date

Send an electronic copy to sageirb@sage.edu with the IRB Number and the Title of the Report in the subject heading.

Revised July 2010

Appendix C

Request for Permission to Use Survey Instrument



P. O. Box 0176
Phone: 518/326-2493

Troy ♦ New York 12181
atiba@dynateck.com

March 12, 2010

Dr. Rita Boags
Leadership Technologies
P.O. Box 2329
Canyon Country, CA 91386

Dear Dr. Boags:

Thanks for your generosity in allowing me to incorporate elements of your sample survey (Mentoring Interest Survey for Prospective Participants) in my survey of schools superintendents in New York. I have attached a copy of my survey in order for you to see which questions I will be using.

Please advise regarding this.

Best Regards


A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fadhilika Atiba-Weza".

Fadhilika Atiba-Weza


Enc.

Appendix D

Consent to use Elements of Survey Instrument



Leadership
Technologies, LLC



PO Box 2329 Canyon Country, CA 91386
T. 661-360-9209
DrRBoags@aol.com

Dr. Rita Boags, Principal

March 15, 2010

Fadhilika Atiba-Weza
Dr. John Tribble, Dean
Sage Graduate School
45 Ferry Street
Troy, NY 12180

Dear Sage Graduate Program:

A request has been made to use parts of the Mentoring Assessment Questionnaire which is posted online at MentoringAnalysis.com. I gladly grant permission to use any part of the Questionnaire in your Survey of School Superintendents. If possible I would like to see results of your survey.

Great Job. Regards



Rita S. Boags, Ph.D.

Appendix E

Letter Sent with Field Test of Survey



P. O. Box 0176
Phone: 518/326-2493

Troy ♦ New York 12181
atiba@dynateck.com

March 15, 2010

Dear Colleague:

As a doctoral student at the Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York, I am conducting a study that will examine the role of the mentor or lack thereof in the preparation and success of school superintendents in New York. The study will seek to determine the ways in which mentors work with aspiring and incumbent superintendents?

As a former superintendent of schools and colleague I am requesting your assistance in the field testing of attached questionnaire which I plan to administer to a sample of current and former superintendents of schools.

Should you consent to participate in the field testing of the survey, please complete the attached questionnaire and submit as directed. Also, kindly let me know how of any suggesting that you have that would improve the survey. In addition please let me know how long it took for you to complete the survey.

Should you have any questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fadhilika Atiba-Weza". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Fadhilika Atiba-Weza

Enc.

Appendix F

Letter to Accompany Survey



P. O. Box 0176
Phone: 518/326-2493

Troy ♦ New York 12181
atiba@dynateck.com

March 20, 2010

Dear Colleague:

As a doctoral student at the Sage Graduate School in Albany, New York, I am conducting a study that will examine the role of the mentor or lack thereof in the preparation and success of school superintendents in New York. The study will seek to determine the ways in which mentors work with aspiring and incumbent superintendents?

Because you are a current superintendent, I am inviting you to participate in this important research study. Your participation will only take 10-15 minutes and is limited to completing a web-based survey at www.dynateck.com/suptsurvey. Once you get to the website you will read an introductory letter and then proceed to a description of participants' rights. If you are willing to participate, simply indicate so by clicking "accept" and the survey will appear on your screen. You will be able to complete the survey on-line and then submit it upon completion.

Anonymity

The nature of the online survey tool is such that the research does not have access to the identity of the respondents. This ensures that the information which is received is anonymous.

Risks/Discomforts

This study poses no risk to you, if however, there are questions with which you are uncomfortable, you may choose not to answer them.

Benefits

While there are no material benefits to participants, it is expected that your participation will contribute to the literature and research associated with this important educational issue and thereby assist your colleagues and others in the field regarding issues of preparation and professional development of aspiring and incumbent superintendents.

Compensation

Participants will not receive any compensation for assisting the study except for the altruistic appeal of contributing to the advancement of research directed at an issue of importance to colleagues in other school communities.

Participation

Participation in the study is voluntary.

Questions Regarding the Research

Please contact the principal researcher.

Fadhilika Atiba-Weza

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Questions Involving Rights of Research Participants

If you have questions that you would rather not ask the researcher, you are free to contact

Dr. John Tribble

Dean, Sage Graduate School.

45 Ferry Street. Troy, New York 12180.

(518) 244-2264.

tribbj@sage.edu

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards



Fadhilika Atiba-Weza

Appendix G

Survey Questionnaire

Part I. Demographic Information

1. Gender 1.
2. Highest Degree Earned 2.
3. How old were you when you obtained your first administrative position? 3.
4. How old were you when you obtained your first superintendency? 4.
5. I am currently: 5.
6. In how many different districts have you served as a superintendent? 6.
7. How many total years have you served as a superintendent? 7.
8. What was your position prior to assuming your first superintendency? 8.
9. Did you serve in a cabinet level position prior to assuming the superintendency? 9.
10. If so, did you attend executive sessions of the Board of Education? 10.

Part II. Knowledge of Mentoring

1. I would rate my knowledge of mentoring as: 1.
2. My knowledge of mentoring is based upon the following sources of information:
(Please check all that apply. If selecting more than one, please hold the CTRL key while clicking) 2.
3. My general attitude towards mentoring is: 3.

Part III. Perspectives on Mentoring

1. Do you think that mentoring has any bearing on you obtaining employment as an administrator? 1
- 2.. Do you think that mentoring has any bearing on your success as a school administrator? 2.
3. Do you think that the quality of mentoring a mentee receives will have any bearing on obtaining employment for the next generation of school superintendents? 3.
4. Do you believe that the support from a mentor during an individual's first administrative position improves his or her performance as an administrator? 4.
5. Mentoring is only for the High Potential employee. 5.
6. Mentoring is for those employees who have not made the grade. 6.
7. Mentoring is an effective method of developing your potential. 7.
8. Mentoring can only be effective when one's boss is involved. 8.
9. Mentoring enables mentees to learn how to balance work and life. 9.
10. Mentoring enables mentees to expand their knowledge of career path and options. 10.
11. Mentoring enables mentees to develop their interpersonal and communication skills. 11.
12. Mentoring enables mentees to expand their knowledge of the profession. 12.
13. Mentoring enables mentees to gain knowledge of a different function. 13.
14. Mentoring enables mentees to improve their networking capability. 14.
15. Mentoring enables mentees to develop their teaming capabilities. 15.
16. Mentoring provides mentees with the capacity to 16.

- improve job satisfaction and morale.
17. Mentoring enables mentors to foster inclusion.
18. Mentoring enables mentors to enhance awareness of diversity issues.
19. Mentoring enables mentors to develop the next generation of leaders.
20. Mentoring enables mentors to encourage organizational and professional savvy.
21. Mentoring enables mentors to transfer professional knowledge and values.
22. Mentoring enables mentors to provide an alternative source of feedback to mentees.
23. Mentoring enables mentors to improve their teaching and coaching skills.
24. Mentoring enables mentors to utilize their wealth of professional expertise and experience.

Part IV. Mentoring Experiences

1. Have you mentored an educator who has had aspirations of becoming a school superintendent?
2. Were you mentored prior to obtaining your first school superintendency?
3. Were you mentored during your first school superintendency?
4. Were you mentored at any time beyond your first school superintendency?
5. Do you have a formal in-district mentoring program in place for aspiring administrators?
6. As an aspiring school superintendent were you encouraged to develop skills outside your area of expertise?

7. As an aspiring school superintendent were you encouraged to develop expertise in Contract Negotiations? 7.
8. As an aspiring school superintendent were you encouraged to develop expertise in School Finance? 8.
9. As an aspiring school superintendent were you encouraged to develop expertise in Facilities Management? 9.
10. Do you belong to a network of superintendents who meet regularly? 10.
11. My mentee/protégé accompanies me to these affairs. 11.
- 12.. My relationship with my mentee(s) is: 12.
13. Do you recommend to prospective superintendents that he/she attend a particular university? 13.
14. Do you recommend to prospective superintendents that he/she join a particular professional association? 14.
15. Do you recommend to prospective school superintendents that he/she obtain a doctoral degree? 15.
16. Do you recommend to prospective school superintendents that they seek membership in any service organizations such as fraternities and sororities, the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and the Lions Clubs? 16.
17. Have you played a role in obtaining a position for those who you have mentored? 17.
18. To your knowledge, did your mentor play a role in obtaining a position for you? 18.
19. Have you encouraged your mentees to get acquainted with the search consultants? 19.
20. Did your mentor encourage you to get acquainted with the search consultants? 20.
21. Is it a practice of yours to forward your mentee's name and/or recommendation to the search consultants? 21.
22. To the best of your knowledge, did your mentor forward your name and/or recommendation to the local search consultants? 22.

23. My staff have an open invitation to see me about career advice. 23.
24. Where do you meet with your mentee?
(Please check all that apply. If selecting more than one, please hold the CTRL key while clicking) 24.
25. How often do you meet with your mentee?
(Please check all that apply. If selecting more than one, please hold the CTRL key while clicking) 25.
26. Identify the Ethnicity of the individuals whom you have mentored.
(Please check all that apply. If selecting more than one, please hold the CTRL key while clicking) 26.
27. Identify the Ethnicity of the individuals who have mentored you.
(Please check all that apply. If selecting more than one, please hold the CTRL key while clicking) 27.
28. Identify the Gender of the individuals whom you have mentored. 28.
29. Identify the Gender of the individuals who have mentored you. 29.
30. How did your meet your mentee? 30.
31. The number of administrative/superintendent aspirants that I have mentored is. 31.
32. As a mentor have you had a negative or dysfunctional mentoring experience? 32.
33. As a mentee have you had a negative or dysfunctional mentoring experience? 33.
34. Do you think that having a mentor makes a difference in the success of a superintendent? 34.