

Winter 2013

# Perceptions Of Mentoring: Examining the Experiences of Women Superintendents in Georgia

Scarlett Copeland  
*Georgia Southern University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Elementary and Middle and Secondary Education Administration Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Copeland, Scarlett, "Perceptions Of Mentoring: Examining the Experiences of Women Superintendents in Georgia" (2013). *Electronic Theses & Dissertations*. 882.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/882>

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING:  
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS IN  
GEORGIA

by

SCARLETT MILES COPELAND

(Under the Direction of Daniel Calhoun)

ABSTRACT

The number of women superintendents working in Georgia public schools exceeds the national average, but unfortunately, when compared to the number of men in the same position, women are not as well represented. This gap between female and male superintendents, and the reasons why this disparity exist, has been the subject of many research studies. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is a lack of mentoring for women superintendents.

This descriptive mixed methods study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. The quantitative participants in this study included 39 women superintendent in Georgia. In addition, for the qualitative portion of the study, eight female superintendents were purposefully selected from the group to take part in individual interviews.

Overall findings revealed women superintendents in Georgia had positive mentoring experiences that benefitted them in their role. Positive mentoring experiences included establishing a good relationship and support system, having a female mentor, and employing both formal and informal mentoring. The majority of the participants served in small, rural school districts and their mentors were from similar demographics.

Surveyed participants indicated most of them had a male mentor and the interviewed candidates reflected four had male mentors and four had female. Interviews further concluded women superintendents in Georgia benefitted from male mentors; however, they preferred females that could relate to their identities and specific gender challenges.

The top three effective knowledge-based elements noted as important from both the survey and interviews were developing school board relations, personnel, and budget. Findings from the interviews revealed social-emotional based effective elements for female superintendents included a mentor who listens and supports. Data obtained also indicated that mentoring could encourage other females to enter the superintendency by building the mentees confidence and increasing their success.

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING:  
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS IN  
GEORGIA

by

SCARLETT MILES COPELAND

Doctoral in Educational Leadership, Georgia Southern University, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2013

© 2013

SCARLETT MILES COPELAND

All Rights Reserved

PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING:  
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS IN  
GEORGIA

by

SCARLETT MILES COPELAND

Major Professor: Daniel Calhoun  
Committee: James Green  
Brenda Marina

Electronic Version Approved:

November 2013

## DEDICATION

To my family

Moma (Jimmie Ree Miles), Daddy (Henry Grady Miles, Jr.),  
Tim (Husband), Alexandria (Daughter), and Synclair (Daughter)  
Steve, Debbie, Victoria, Miles, Jarrod, and Braedon Eason  
Grady, Natalie, H. G., Chip, and Skipper Miles

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the supportive people who have served as a strong foundation to enable this dissertation to come to fruition. My earliest recollections of educational promoters were my parents, Henry Grady Miles, Jr. and Jimmie Ree. The words of college and degree lingered in my ears throughout my K-12 years; therefore, there were no thoughts of graduating from high school and not transitioning to a college or university. They have always believed in me and my abilities to excel to any height chosen. They empowered me to always believe that I could succeed in any area I chose to pursue. They have served as the best “mentor” parents a child could have with endless unconditional love and I am ever grateful. After graduation and marriage, they have continued to encourage me to soar to new heights. During this dissertation preparation, they have spoken words of encouragement, prepared meals, filled in at home, and traveled with me to class so I would not ride alone, they are the greatest. I hope I have instilled these strong characteristics in my two girls as they did for me.

I would also like to highlight my encouraging family. I remember our initial conversation as a family when we discussed the idea of pursuing a doctoral degree. I recall us expressing this endeavor would require much time, sacrifice, and support. Their pledge was, “Yes we want you to pursue this and we will support you”. Their unflinching support, love, and compassion throughout this journey were a source of constant inspiration. At my weakest points, I could always count on Alexandria and Synclair to say, “Moma you can do it!” These were such small words, but they were filled with



powerful meaning that allowed me to realign my focus. The additional chores, errands, patience, and most of all love you both have provided are appreciated beyond belief. I desire this journey to serve as an example to my two daughters that you can set your goals and achieve anything you desire. Tim, you have been their throughout this endeavor and assisted me with numerous task along the way. I could not have done this without you and I am forever grateful for your love and support. One of the greatest verses from the bible that you all encouraged me with is, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. The strength from Christ and each of you have seen me through this educational journey. All acts of love and kindness from all of you are forever etched in my memory and I love you deeply.

My professors at Georgia Southern University have made this experience possible too. Their wisdom, knowledge, and expertise have served as a source of light and each one has truly impacted my career. I specifically recall Dr. James Green encouraging me to remain on the doctoral path when I assumed my new position as superintendent. Without his encouragement, I would not be at this point in my life.

I am truly indebted to my committee members, Dr. Dan Calhoun, Dr. James Green, and Dr. Brenda Marina. Their guidance and insight have been instrumental in assisting me with this endeavor. Dr. Calhoun, committee chair has assisted me in crafting a plan of action and has been there at each turn to support the next steps, as well as help me visualize the positive image of the finish line. For this and more, I am extremely grateful. Dr. Green, methodologist has supported me with his expertise and wisdom. Prior to this, he served as a professor of three classes I was enrolled in required

for the doctoral program. He amazed me with his knowledge and proficiency in all areas covered. Despite the fact he moved to Ireland, he has been constantly available by email and actually returned for my final defense. Dr. Marina, committee member has inspired me to continue to pursue my topic in person and through her works. She paved the way by studying women in leadership and her work in this area was phenomenal. Examining her research assisted me with expanding my knowledge in the area of women in leadership.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |      |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                           | vii  |
| LIST OF TABLES .....                             | xiii |
| LIST OF FIGURES .....                            | xv   |
| CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....                     | 1    |
| Problem Statement .....                          | 3    |
| Conceptual Framework .....                       | 4    |
| Research Questions .....                         | 5    |
| Significance of Study .....                      | 6    |
| Procedures .....                                 | 6    |
| Limitations and Delimitations.....               | 10   |
| Definition of Terms.....                         | 10   |
| Summary .....                                    | 13   |
| CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....        | 14   |
| Women in the Superintendency: Recent Trends..... | 14   |
| Challenges Women Superintendents Face.....       | 22   |
| Gender Related Issues.....                       | 24   |
| Work Family Balance .....                        | 29   |
| Mentoring and Role Models .....                  | 30   |
| Support Systems for Women Superintendents .....  | 32   |
| Gaps in Services.....                            | 35   |
| Mentoring Women Superintendents .....            | 36   |
| Conclusion .....                                 | 46   |
| Summary .....                                    | 47   |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 3. METHODS .....                              | 49  |
| Researcher's Personal Narrative and Assumptions ..... | 49  |
| Research Methods .....                                | 51  |
| Research Questions .....                              | 51  |
| Research Design.....                                  | 52  |
| Participants.....                                     | 56  |
| Data Sources .....                                    | 56  |
| Data Collection Procedures.....                       | 61  |
| Data Analysis .....                                   | 62  |
| Reporting the Data .....                              | 64  |
| Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations .....      | 64  |
| Validity and Trustworthiness .....                    | 65  |
| Summary .....   | 66  |
| CHAPTER 4. RESULTS .....                              | 68  |
| Participants.....                                     | 68  |
| Quantitative Results .....                            | 69  |
| Qualitative Interview Results.....                    | 85  |
| Overarching Research Question .....                   | 107 |
| Summary .....   | 119 |
| CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....               | 122 |
| Research Sub-Question 1 .....                         | 123 |
| Research Sub-Question 2 .....                         | 127 |
| Research Sub-Question 3 .....                         | 133 |
| Research Sub-Question 4.....                          | 134 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Recommendations for Future Research .....                | 136 |
| Implications for Educational Leaders .....               | 137 |
| Limitations .....  | 140 |
| Conclusions.....   | 141 |
| REFERENCES .....   | 145 |
| APPENDICES   |     |
| APPENDIX A WOMEN SUPERINTENDENT LETTER .....             | 153 |
| APPENDIX B WOMEN SUPERINTENDENT'S MENTORING SURVEY ..... | 154 |
| APPENDIX C INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....                      | 159 |
| APPENDIX D REMINDER EMAIL FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION ..... | 160 |
| APPENDIX E FINAL REMINDER EMAIL .....                    | 161 |
| APPENDIX F THIRD PARTY CONFIDENTIALITY FORM.....         | 162 |
| APPENDIX G IRB APPROVAL LETTER .....                     | 163 |

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Current Age of Superintendent.....                                  | 70 |
| Table 2: Ethnicity of Superintendent .....                                   | 71 |
| Table 3: Highest Degree Obtained.....  | 71 |
| Table 4: Highest/Educational Degree .....                                    | 72 |
| Table 5: Years of Experience as Administrator prior to Superintendency ..... | 72 |
| Table 6: Year of Experience in Superintendency .....                         | 73 |
| Table 7: District Type Served .....  | 73 |
| Table 8: District Student Population.....                                    | 74 |
| Table 9: Position Prior to Superintendency .....                             | 75 |
| Table 10: Mentor or not .....  | 76 |
| Table 11: Length of Mentorship .....   | 76 |
| Table 12: Male or Female Mentor .....  | 77 |
| Table 13: Mentor Gender .....  | 77 |
| Table 14: Type of Mentorship .....   | 78 |
| Table 15: District Size .....  | 79 |
| Table 16: Similar District Size .....  | 79 |
| Table 17: Frequency of Mentoring Sessions .....                              | 80 |
| Table 18: Duration of Sessions .....   | 80 |
| Table 19: Was Mentoring Beneficial .....                                     | 86 |
| Table 20: Benefits of Mentoring.....   | 82 |
| Table 21: Effective Elements of Mentoring Programs .....                     | 84 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 22: Characteristics of Interviewees ..... | 86 |
| Table 23: Three Levels of Data Analysis .....   | 88 |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework .....5

Figure 2: Sequential Descriptive Design .....54



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Historically women have held the majority of positions in the educational teaching field; however, they hold the smallest percentages of leadership positions, especially the position of superintendent (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). According to Katz (2006), if 75% of women occupy teaching positions, expectations would be that more would obtain the role of superintendent. Contrarily, women in the superintendency have not increased in number at the same rate as their male counterparts; in fact, they remain disproportionate compared to males. Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) reported women make up approximately 24% of superintendents across the nation, while men account for nearly 86%.

The disproportionate number of women in the superintendency could possibly be linked to challenges they face on the road to advancement. Gender bias, work family balance, and a lack of mentors and role models have been noted as specific challenges of women superintendents. Glass and Franceschini (2007) indicated that there were few women in the superintendency due to board gender discrimination and the presence of a glass ceiling. Balancing work and family was also noted as a challenge specific to women superintendents according to Darrington and Sharrett (2008). Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) indicated a lack of mentors and role models exist as a challenge for women as well.

As an aging population of baby boomers prepares to retire, a crisis will loom in Georgia's K-12 leadership ranks. Kinsella and Richards (2004) reported there would be a shortage of school leaders in the near future, and Glass and Franceschini (2007) stated

that by 2015 several vacancies could exist, specifically in the superintendency. Within the next five years, approximately 39 percent of superintendents plan to either leave their position, or retire (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010). In a preliminary effort to meet the demands, a closer look at the role of mentoring would be appropriate in order to encourage women to enter and remain in the field of superintendency in Georgia.

Programs of support for superintendents have been developed by professional organizations including the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA), Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA), Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL), Regional Educational Services Agencies (RESA), and Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI). All of these programs could be cited as helpful in terms of supporting superintendents in general, but none of these programs offered anything specifically for women and nothing on mentoring women superintendents.

If support is lacking for women attempting to gain and maintain the superintendency, it is likely the disproportionate numbers compared to men will continue. In order to gain increased numbers of women in the superintendency, research reveals that mentoring is an avenue that holds promise. Grogan (1996), Brunner (2000), Kochan and Pascarelli (2003), and Shakeshift (1989) described a mentor as one who teaches, coaches, advises trains, directs, protects, sponsors, guides, and leads another person or persons. Kinsella and Richards (2004) reported mentoring can assist one with gaining access to the superintendency. According to Gilmour and Kinsella (2009), mentors play

a crucial role in sharpening a superintendent's skills for decision making, regardless of whether the superintendent is a veteran or novice.

The State of the American School Superintendency (2007) reported that 39% of superintendents across the nation indicated that they had received no mentoring before becoming superintendent. In comparison, 33% of these individuals indicated they had received mentoring from a superintendent and this experience aided them in their transition into the superintendency. According to the research of Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008), mentoring is important; however, there exists a lack of mentors and role models for women. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011), who examined female administrators and their mentoring experiences, found these relationships beneficial in assisting women in gaining high level leadership positions. These correlations increased when the mentor and mentee shared many similarities such as values, background, experiences, and outlook.

### **Problem Statement**

The research of Brunner and Grogan (2007), Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000), Glass (2000), and Katz (2006) has indicated that women hold the majority of teaching positions, while men occupy higher level administrative positions. Although the number of women in administrative positions is on the rise, the numbers still remain disproportionate in this arena; these disproportions are even more significant when speaking of women in the top level position of superintendent. One reason noted for low numbers of women superintendents was a lack of support, particularly in the area of mentoring (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

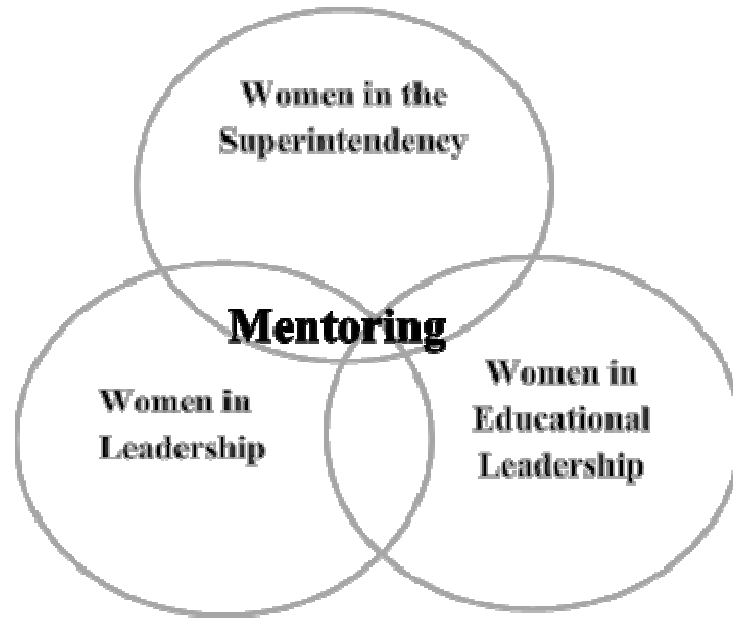
In an attempt to decrease disparities for women in the superintendency, mentoring was examined as a viable option. Some research has indicated mentoring provides opportunities for women to be informed about the best avenue to gain access to the top level position in the school system. The literature has indicated that women who have mentors advance into leadership positions like the superintendency, at a higher rate than those without mentors.

The purpose of this study was to gain information on the perceptions and experiences with mentoring by women superintendents in Georgia. Further insight will be gained on the extent to which women superintendents in Georgia have been mentored, how they describe these experiences, what elements are contained in an effective mentoring program, and how an effective mentoring program could encourage women to enter the superintendency. This information could be utilized to assist persons and agencies in mentoring women who become superintendents, thereby creating further opportunities for advancement and decreasing disparities in the number of women superintendents.

### **Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework is a set of coherent ideas or concepts organized in a manner that makes them easy to communicate to others. According to educational researcher Smyth (2004), conceptual frameworks are constructed from a set of broad ideas and theories that assist the researcher to properly identify the problem they are examining, assist them in framing their questions, and finding suitable literature. Conceptual frameworks are generally determined at the beginning of research because it is instrumental in assisting the researcher clarify research questions and aims.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework used for this study. The image reflects that mentoring is a common means to increase opportunities for women in leadership, and more specifically for women in educational leadership, and women in the superintendency.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Framework. This figure indicates a conceptual framework for mentoring women.

### **Research Question**

The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? The following sub-questions guided the primary question: (1) How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia?; (2) How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring?; (3) What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring

program?; (4) How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

### **Significance of Study**

This study described the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia, which could serve as an avenue to increase opportunities for women gaining and retaining the superintendency. Personnel developing mentoring programs in the future could utilize results obtained from this study to assist them in developing new mentoring programs for women superintendents. Women superintendents who are searching for mentors with effective qualities and women who wish to mentor other women aspiring to the superintendency could benefit from this study. In addition, those who mentor aspiring or current superintendents could utilize this study to ensure they are exhibiting the most salient elements found to assist women seeking or currently in the position. Educational institutions could also access this information to strengthen their preparation programs for female superintendents. Finally, organizations of support such as Georgia School Superintendents Association could access this information and provide findings to mentors assigned to women superintendents in Georgia.

### **Procedures**

The researcher conducted a sequential descriptive mixed method study in order to obtain information revealing the experiences of women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring. Sequential descriptive mixed methods allowed the over-arching research question to be answered by collecting and analyzing two types of data, quantitative and qualitative. Initially, a panel composed of four retired women superintendents was formed to validate both the survey and interview protocol. The quantitative portion of

the study included a survey instrument containing questions on mentoring given to 52 women superintendents in Georgia. The qualitative portion consisted of individual interviews of eight women superintendents to learn more about their experiences with mentoring. Inferences were then made based on the analysis of both types of data. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods contributed to the description of the phenomenon being studied.

Creswell (2003) has indicated mixed methods research recognizes the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data and can also be called combined research. A mixed approach has been deemed an excellent avenue for conducting research because it offers a broader understanding of the research being conducted. Patton (2002) has suggested quantitative research is well suited for questions that lend themselves to numerical values while qualitative research explains the meaning behind the numbers obtained.

Initially, a panel of four retired women superintendents was recruited to validate the quantitative survey questionnaire that was distributed to the current 52 women superintendents in Georgia. These same four retired superintendents were utilized to refine the questions that will be administered to the eight superintendents who participated in the qualitative portion of this research. The four retired superintendents on the panel did not comprise the pool of women superintendents who were surveyed and interviewed. The researcher, in consultation with the researcher's methodologist, designed the quantitative and qualitative questions for this study.

The panel of retired women superintendents assisted the researcher with validating the survey instrument and then refining the questions for the individual

interviews. The involvement of a panel is considered advantageous when interviewees are similar and cooperated with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information (Krueger, 1994, Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Hoijer (2008) indicated that panels have been utilized for an array of purposes. These purposes included stimulating new survey content and delivery mechanisms; determining what additional research tools may be useful for follow-up information collection; and better interpreting previously obtained quantitative information.

The quantitative portion of this study invited the entire population of women superintendents within the state of Georgia to participate. The 52 women superintendent's names and contacts were secured through the Georgia School Superintendent's Association. The researcher contacted all 52 women superintendents in Georgia to notify them that an online survey was forthcoming and to seek their support after the Institutional Review Board at Georgia Southern University granted permission. The anonymous online questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part I of the questionnaire included demographic items. Part II contained questions regarding the superintendents' mentoring experiences. Part III housed potential elements of an effective mentoring program specific to the position of superintendent. A five point Likert-scale was used to register responses.

The survey was sent to participants via *Survey Monkey*. Schaefer & Dillman (1998) indicated emailed surveys provide cost savings and time and efficiency is improved. Prior to the survey, the 52 participants received a letter alerting them the survey was coming in order to encourage their participation. An email to remind



participants to complete the survey and return the information was sent one week after the survey had been initialized. A final email was sent in hopes of securing a two-thirds response rate. The researcher attempted to gain a response rate of at least 56% (N=29) in order to yield a confidence level of 90% and a confidence interval of 10%.

In the qualitative portion of the study, purposeful sampling was utilized to select eight women superintendents for individual interviewing purposes from those that took the survey. Every effort was employed to seek women superintendents from rural, urban, and suburban districts, as well as request both new and experienced superintendents. These attempts would reflect all district types, as well as new and experienced superintendents in order to obtain the most reflective information. The term “new” was used to represent women superintendents who had zero to two year’s experience and “experienced” described women superintendents with three or more years of practice. The researcher who conducted the study served as the instrument in this phase. An interview protocol was constructed initially by the researcher and reviewed and critiqued by a methodologist experienced in qualitative research. The individual interviews explored the mentoring experiences of the participants by utilizing specific questions constructed by the researcher and the researcher’s methodologist. This portion of the research also sought insights on what elements comprised an effective mentoring program and pinpointed which elements were lacking. The researcher obtained permission from the participants to audio record their responses and verbatim transcripts were prepared to accurately reflect their responses. This data was analyzed in at least three stages in accordance with procedures for a basic interpretive study (Merriam, 2009). First, the researcher performed initial coding of responses, followed by identification of

patterns, which in turn led to the identification of broad themes. This information was utilized to assist in describing the quantitative portion of the data initially collected.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Due to the small sample size expected for the survey, results applied only to the participants and may not be transferable to other populations. Moreover, due to the nature of qualitative inquiry, the results from the interview portion of the study likewise applied only to the participants. The researcher served as the instrument in the qualitative section of this study; therefore, personal biases could be factors that impacted the data. These biases could have included the researcher's presence during the qualitative portion of data gathering, which could have affected the subject's response. Also, the researcher may have had strong views on certain questions and may have read that question as to emphasize a particular thought which could possibly have influenced participant's responses. The researcher could have also reinforced the statements of participants that may have led participants toward a thought pattern, and limited the other responses they may have given. The study was delimited to women superintendents in the state of Georgia. The limitations and delimitations are described in more detail in chapter three.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms listed below directly relate to the research being conducted and will be utilized throughout this study.

***Career functions.*** Friday and Friday (2002) reported career development functions included actions such as assisting the mentee in obtaining desirable positions, coaching, running interference, providing challenging assignments, and introducing the mentee to influential people in the field.

**Formal mentoring.** Formal mentoring is defined in the literature (Dunsbar & Kinnersley, 2012) as a relationship that results from a structured program that contains specific criteria for implementation. In this study, formal mentoring represents instances of mentoring that were more structured and purposeful and the interaction is limited to a predetermined set of topics.

**Good old boy.** The term good old boy is defined as a network typically refers to someone who engages in cronyism among men who have known each other for a long period of time. This network usually consists of all men, excluding women and minorities.

**Informal mentoring.** Informal mentoring is defined in the literature (Dunsbar & Kinnersley, 2012) as a relationship that develops spontaneously or informally without any assistance. In this study, mentoring experiences were impromptu and freer flowing where there was a comfort level between mentor and mentee. These sessions contained an array of topics that could be discussed at any time.

**Mentor.** A mentor is an important component of building support systems for personnel in administration and leadership (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). A mentor can be described as one who teaches, coaches, advises, trains, directs, protects, sponsors, guides and leads another individual or individuals less experienced (Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Kochan 2003; Shakeshaft, 1989). According to Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000), the term *mentor* may be utilized interchangeably with teacher, coach, advisor, trainer, director, protector, sponsor, guide, and leader.

***Mentoring function.*** Mentoring functions are utilized by the mentor to engage the protégé in the mentoring process. Kram (1985) separated these functions into two areas: career and psychosocial.

***Psychosocial functions.*** Psychosocial functions included activities that reinforce a positive self-esteem and competence for the mentee. Mentors can meet these psychological needs through behaviors such as acceptance, friendship, parents, role modeling, counselors, and social associations (Kram, 1985).

***Strong mentor.*** The researcher's definition of a strong mentor is one who has the knowledge, experience, patience, and guidance to assist another in obtaining and maintaining their goals. This mentoring relationship can be informal or formal based on which is best suited for the mentor and mentee.

***Transformational leadership.*** According to Burns (1978), transforming leadership is a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". Based on Burns interpretation, the transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations in which perceptions and values are redesigned, and change the expectations and aspirations of employees.

For purposes of this research study, the words women and female, as well as men and male were utilized interchangeable throughout. Typically, these are distinct terms in which women and men characteristically refer to gender which relate culturally to language, other cultural forms, and artifacts found within humans, while female and male referred to biological characteristics only. The American Psychological Association Manual stated that "gender" infers cultural meaning while "sex" was indicative of a

biological distinction. The researcher understood the terms female/women and male/men were not interchangeable; however, these terms were transposed throughout this study (American Psychological Association Manual, 2010. p 71).

### **Summary**

Research revealed that discrepancies have existed and continue to exist among the numbers of women and men superintendents across America. Currently, women only comprise 24% of superintendents across the nation. Baby boomers have indicated they will be retiring in the next few years, resulting in huge vacancies that could further widen the gap. In order for women to have increased opportunities, to fill these openings, mentoring may be considered an avenue to assist them in gaining and maintaining this pinnacle position.

This mixed methods study utilized both quantitative and qualitative research provided information regarding the perceptions and experiences of mentoring among women superintendents in the state of Georgia. This research further explored what women superintendents perceived to be the important elements of an effective mentoring program and which elements were lacking.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Women in the Superintendency: Recent Trends**

The superintendency is considered a crucial position in an educational school district and is a role that is highly coveted by both men and women educators. Among these applicants for this top level position are both males and females. As compared to females, males have dominated in terms of numbers serving as superintendent; however, women constituents have increased in number over the last several years. According to a study conducted by Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010), 24% of superintendents across the nation are women. In Georgia, there are 180 school districts and 29% of these districts preside with a female superintendent (Georgia School Superintendents Association, 2011). These figures indicated the number of women superintendents in Georgia (29%) were slightly higher than the national average.

The higher number of women superintendents in Georgia could be attributed to the existence of support organizations such as GSSA and GSBA (Georgia School Superintendents Association, 2011 & Georgia School Board Association, 2011). GSSA specifically presents the opportunity for an informal mentor to be assigned to new superintendents who choose to participate. These informal mentoring networks have assisted new Georgia superintendents in navigating the position, which may have led to higher percentages of women when compared to the national average.

#### **Women Contribution's to the Superintendency**

Despite higher averages in the number of women superintendents in Georgia,

careful consideration must be given to avenues that pave the way for women who are seeking to secure and retain this top level position of superintendent. Several studies have been conducted regarding the contributions females can bring to the superintendency (Grogan, 1996; Helgesen, 1990; Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992), unfortunately, these offerings may go unnoticed unless there are more women chosen for the available positions. Grogan (1996) detailed findings in her research on the voices of women aspiring to the superintendency that described the conversation that affected those females. Current communications have indicated a vast amount of traditional credibility must be present in order for a female to be considered for the superintendency. Women in Grogan's study believed that they had to display some traditional behaviors to prevent their gender from discounting them due to nontraditional leadership being viewed as intrinsically doubtful. However, Grogan (1996) reported female aspirants to the superintendency have defied traditional perspectives about the superintendency and offered individual contributions including alternative approaches to leadership, reformed practices, and teaching and learning were emphasized rather than organizational management.

Helgesen (1990) reported that women succeed by employing their feminine strengths such as supporting, encouraging, teaching, opening communication, soliciting input, and creating a positive, collegial work environment. Aburdene & Naisbitt (1992) indicated that women are interpersonal experts who network well when given the opportunity. Considering the positive attributes women have to offer the superintendency, mentoring was explored as another option to provide additional support for females to gain and maintain the superintendency.

## **Historical Background for Women in P-12 Education**

Historically women have held the majority of positions in the educational teaching field, while men have traditionally dominated educational leadership opportunities in American public schools (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Increasingly, women have successfully been accepted into administrative positions, such as assistant principal or principal. However, these numbers remain decreased when women attempt move into the superintendency (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

Ella Flag Young became the first woman superintendent in 1909. In the following quote (as cited in Blount, 1998), she foretold the future of women in educational leadership:

Women are destined to rule the schools of every city. I look for a large majority of the big cities to follow the lead of Chicago in choosing a woman for superintendent. In the near future we will have more women than men in executive charge of the vast educational system. It is woman's natural field, and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied leadership. As the first woman to be placed in control of the schools of a big city, it will be my aim to prove that no mistake has been made and to show cities and friends alike that a woman is better qualified for this work than a man. (p. 1)

Mertz (2006) noted passage of Title IX Educational Amendments in 1972 positively influenced the climate for women in every aspect of leadership except the superintendency. This longitudinal study indicated women were equitable with men in most leadership positions in school districts; however, the progress of women obtaining



the superintendency was inequitable compared to men. These findings revealed women would not likely obtain equality with men in the superintendency in the near future.

### **Women and the Superintendency**

In 2000, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducted a ten-year study of American School Superintendents by administering a stratified random survey from the Common Core of Data Public Education Agency Universe maintained by the United States Department of Education. This study indicated the number of female superintendents increased from 6.6% in 1992, to 13.2% in 2000. Although progress for women superintendents is indicated, these data still reveal a dramatic underrepresentation of women in the superintendency. This study also noted that disparities between women and men in the superintendency are ironic in the field of education given that women serve as teachers, principals, and central office staff in high numbers, yet very low numbers in the superintendency. Findings showed most women superintendents began their administrative careers in elementary positions and were employed in small districts. This same study revealed a large number of women superintendents were found to pursue the following career paths: teaching, assistant principal or principal, and central office. Men were noted as moving directly into the superintendency from the principalship. Of the female superintendents, 75% reported that networking assisted them in securing their position. Approximately half of the male superintendents felt the “good old boy/girl” network assisted them in gaining their position. The “good old boy’s network” has been described as professional relationships which facilitate accessing power and influence in informal male networks in which underrepresented populations are often excluded. Oakley (2000) indicated the “old boy

network” transfers competition and power advantages in the formal structure are transferred to friendship patterns and alliances within an informal system.

According to this study, females rated higher than male superintendents in the area of being hired as an instructional leader. Females were also found to place an increased value on interpersonal skills in the superintendency. Additionally, the authors noted female superintendents have more than doubled their participatory rates from the 1950 and 1992 AASA studies. This rate indicated that women will most likely constitute higher numbers in future pools for candidacy for the superintendency (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

The AASA study revealed similar information that was evidenced in the research of Glass and Franceschini (2007). Glass (2000) earlier indicated approximately 14,000 superintendents existed in the United States, and roughly 15% are women. In 2007, Glass and Franceschini (2007) confirmed, as formerly mentioned, 21.7% of the superintendents nationwide are women. These studies substantiated the prediction by Ella Flag Young that the number of women superintendents will increase over time.

Glass and Franceschini (2007) conducted a survey of 1,338 superintendents that provided a snapshot of school leadership in America and women’s preparedness for the superintendency. This study indicated that more women were securing positions in the superintendency across the nation than ever before. The number of female superintendents has increased to nearly 22% which is an improvement considering that women occupy the majority of teaching positions in education. However, the author noted that women were generally well prepared for the superintendency based on degree

levels obtained. Women who received doctoral degrees in educational leadership totaled 57.6% in 2007, compared to 43.4% in the 2000 study (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

Glass and Franceschini's (2007) study also examined locations of successful female superintendents. Findings revealed 55% of women superintendents were positioned in small, rural districts, 35% were located in suburbs, and urban superintendents accounted for 9%. Former studies indicated that female superintendents were located in smaller districts as well. As far as paths to the superintendency, nearly 40% of female superintendents were recorded as coming from an assistant superintendent's position. This path to superintendency was not replicated by male superintendents in which 53% of them came directly from the principalship.

This same report also revealed that both female and male superintendents were older, with the mean age being 55 years. Therefore, the increased mean age of superintendents from 51 to 55 may be due to reluctance for them to move from a "safe" non-superintendent position to a more "risky" superintendent's position. The estimated mean tenure of this study was five and one-half years for females and males. Stress levels were recorded at 60% for both female and male superintendents, which indicate high levels of stress between both genders. Considerable stress was recorded at 44% while significant stress levels were recorded as 15%, but both genders indicated satisfaction with the position of superintendent (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

This study was followed by the ten year or decennial study on the American School Superintendent conducted by Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010). These studies have been conducted every ten years since 1923. In this study, 1867 superintendents were surveyed in the same areas as the past two studies previously

presented. Women respondents composed 24.1% in this 2010 study as compared to 13.2% in the 2000 study, and 6.6% in 1992 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). Although the number of women superintendents are increasing, 51% of superintendents surveyed indicated they would not be in the superintendency by 2015, which indicates a substantial turnover in the near future (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Another substantial project concerning women in the superintendency was conducted by Grogan and Brunner (2005). Findings revealed women led 18% of the districts in 2003 nationwide. This study also supported the AASA findings in that women spent considerably more time in the classroom prior to securing the superintendency as opposed to men. Additional time in the classroom increased understanding of the curriculum and instruction that prepared women to lead districts to increased academic achievement. This process is paramount with the current No Child Left Behind (henceforth referred to as NCLB) regulations, which has placed greater emphasis on curriculum, instruction, and accountability, which affects all superintendents. Grogan and Brunner's (2005) findings supported women view themselves as educational leaders that are bringing a strong emphasis on learning and creating communities of learners to the superintendency. Academic preparations revealed that 47% of women obtained their highest degree within the past 10 years of this research that is higher than the percentages of men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). The facts recorded yield a significant number of women superintendents have spent more years in the classroom before entering administration, most have strong backgrounds in curriculum and instruction, and most place a high premium on continuing education for them. These findings indicated women view themselves as educational leaders perhaps

because they enjoy teaching, and administration gives them an opportunity to foster learning on a greater scale.

In relation to career advancement, this same study revealed 73% of women sought professional development in the area of curriculum and instruction as compared to 39% of men. Findings also indicated most women superintendents reported their boards hired them to be educational leaders rather than managers. Interpersonal skills and organizational relationships ranked high for women, which was another reason they felt they were hired. Most of these women also came from the elementary school background, which was conducive to these areas. Over one-half of the women superintendents reported they gained the superintendency through traditional routes, which were positions as teacher, principal, and central office (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

In the area of family considerations this same study revealed that 35% of women were raising children under age 20, while 32% were raising children 15 years or younger (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Findings also suggested that women experienced supportive husbands who were willing to support their families. However, 13% indicated they divorced due to their spouses being unwilling to accommodate them in their careers. Women who remained married indicated their spouses strongly supported them, as indicated earlier (Grogan & Brunner, 2005).

Chase (1995) also revealed in her study of women superintendents inequities existed in the numbers. She reported the educational system has undergone a tremendous change during the twentieth century, but the social characteristics of superintendents have not. Most all superintendents across the nation have been middle aged, married, white Protestant males who were native-born and of rural origin. She supported the fact that

male dominance in the occupation was striking because superintendents rise from the ranks of teachers, of which 70% were women. She reported only 2.6% of women superintendents existed in 1986, 4.2% in 1989, and 5.6% in 1991 nationwide.

Although female superintendent percentages have increased substantially over the last two decades, it will require more than three additional decades before the female superintendent percentages approach equity of male superintendents (Derrington & Sharrett, 2008). Equivocally, the underrepresentation of female superintendents has continued to be a concern throughout our nation.

The majority of research reviewed in this study involved men studying women superintendents and gaps that existed in the numbers. Gender could have potentially presented biases in the research. In addition, men could potentially have omitted important details that women consider significant. Women possess deeper understandings of their own identities and a female's perspective would potentially have constituted richer research. A woman can relate specifically to other women and tap into the major areas that have affected women in the superintendency.

### **Challenges Women Superintendents Face**

#### **Universal Challenges**

Challenges have existed for all superintendents regardless of gender. Ginsberg and Multon (2011) reported one prominent challenge found among superintendents and principals is budget cuts. Ginsberg and Multon (2011) also noted budget and finance tasks as huge obstacles in the superintendency. The findings from these surveys led authors to refer to the concept of a new normal that has been created due to the economic stress that pervades our culture. This "new normal" was predicted to affect

superintendents in stressful ways that they never anticipated. Many of these same people feel like their previous hard work is being sacrificed for simply remaining afloat. The new normal for superintendents was presented to be the following: survival mode will be a constant state; dissatisfaction with staffs territorial nature and policy maker's attitudes; loss of happiness in the job; and, attempting to wear a happy face when stress is surrounding the work place (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011).

McGrath (2011) reported that school district superintendents in Ventura County, California, indicated that low morale, increasing diversity, regulations that are a burden and an assessment system that is flawed are among challenges they face. The author pointed out there was a need for skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be included in curriculum and administration that would reflect cultural changes that are occurring today (McGrath, 2011).

Stress appeared to be another challenge for superintendents. Glass and Franceschini, (2007) indicated in the study of the American School Superintendent that stress was considerable for 44% of respondents, while nearly 60% rated stress as very great. The superintendents who indicated great stress were reported from small, rural districts. This study also reported that tight funding, No Child Left Behind demands, negative media, board relations, and conflicting community demands are possible sources of stress for superintendents (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Samuels (2007) also indicated that NCLB has created a considerable amount of stress in the superintendency and has had a negative impact on education. The author stated the study suggested stress was due to this federal law or such strains as limited

finding and contradictory community demands as previously mentioned in the AASA study.

Glass and Franceschini (2007) further noted the most contentious educational issue today for superintendents is NCLB legislation. Due to the complex array of mandates, superintendents noted numerous problems in leadership and management. Superintendents were then requested to rate the impact of NCLB on a scale of one (very detrimental) to 10 (very beneficial) and almost 59% selected, one, two, three, or four, which indicated a negative impact.

Hawk and Martin (2011) also conducted a study of stress and the superintendency. The degree and perception of stress among superintendents and how they coped with this issue were reviewed. Results from the study determined both male and female superintendents employed different types of coping mechanisms and there was a statistical difference between the two. No major difference was determined among the stressors in males and females. Over 50% of superintendents surveyed were found to be stressed. Qualitative findings revealed that boards of education did not provide assistance to superintendents in stress management skills and coping strategies.

### **Challenges particular to women superintendents**

Women superintendents have experienced challenges that could contribute to disparity in the numbers compared to men. Gender bias, work family balance, and mentoring and role models were specific areas that created challenges for women.

**Gender related issues.** Although numerous challenges are present for all superintendents, there are some that are specific to women. One challenge faced by women when attempting to become superintendent is gender bias. Gender bias can be



defined as the unequal treatment in opportunities for employment, promotion, pay, benefits, privileges, and expectations due to attitudes based on the employees gender (Hill & Hill, 2005). Former school superintendents confirmed what a number of research studies in the past 20 years suggested: being female increases the difficulty of overcoming barriers and successfully meeting the challenges associated with educational leadership positions (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Grogan, 1996; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1995) appointed by President Bush and Congressional leaders was mandated to identify the glass ceiling barriers that blocked the advancement of minority men and all women in the private sector. This report also revealed that there were three barriers identified: societal barriers that may exist outside the direct control of business; internal structural barriers within the direct control of business; and, governmental barriers.

In the study of *The State of the American School Superintendent*, Glass and Franceschini (2007) pointed out that the women in their survey selected gender discrimination by boards and the presence of a glass ceiling as being some of the reasons that there were so few women in the superintendency. Gender discrimination by boards was substantiated by 28.8% of females and 14.4% of males. The presence of a glass ceiling was validated by 16.5% of females and 8.5% of males. Female responses to each of these areas were double compared to male responses that were indicative of female “roadblocks”.

Marina and Fonteneau (2012) studied women of African ascent who have made great strides in their collective well-being, but continue to be affected by the presence of a stained glass ceiling that enables racism and sexism. They pointed out glass ceilings

are not easily broken, but delicate negotiations by women who unite hard work with servant-hood, community endeavors, and an attentiveness of God and neighbor are key ingredients for ascendancy. Generations of African American women serve as ceiling breaker pioneers which have expanded the capacity of convincing evidence of road blocks and discrimination. This work paralleled other findings in the literature that glass ceilings have existed for all women in terms of gaining leadership positions and these ceilings can be overcome.

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) indicated gender bias is a factor for women aspiring to the superintendency after studying 25 current and former women superintendents.

Grogan (2008) also reported on women superintendents in rural settings. The results of this study supported that women who assume the superintendency are still confronted with gender stereotyping that impacts the way women are perceived as leaders. A framework of feminist poststructuralist was utilized to explain how women characteristics continue to collide with the position of the superintendency.

Poststructuralism referred to the idea that individuals are positioned to discourses and those discourses are determined by our race, class, gender, sexuality and abilities or disabilities. This study concluded that women should reinvent the superintendency as they move forward and not allow it to be shaped by traditional views (Grogan, 2008).

Banuelos (2008) pointed out that breaking the silence on gender bias for women at the top was crucial. Thirty-five women superintendents were reviewed in the area of gender bias. This study concluded that speaking out on gender biases could reduce stress for females in administrative positions. Further training of gender bias should take place in order to prevent this from happening on interview panels. Banuelos (2008) also noted

that women speaking out on this issue instead of suppressing the issue would positively impact outcomes in the area of gender bias. Mentoring was pointed out as a factor that could assist women superintendents in this area of gender bias.

Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) indicated in their study that gender disparities existed in district leadership positions. They conducted a study in which uncovered themes connected to factors that contributed to the low numbers of superintendents and assistant superintendents that were women. Disparities of women in these positions were uncovered by reviewing knowledge and factors from the voices of women and then applying it to a feminist framework. Suggested actions and strategies could then be utilized to guide new women entering the field of the superintendency and make their experiences less problematic.

Miller, Washington, and Fiene (2006) also indicated that gender disparities exist in district leadership positions. Findings revealed that “a patriarchal system prevails in educational administration. Dominant male administrative models create attitudinal and institutional barriers for women seeking leadership positions” (p. 221).

Chase (1995) conducted research on gender inequities for women superintendents across the nation and composed their narratives. Her book, *Ambiguous Empowerment*, focused on professional power and discrimination encountered by successful women superintendents who worked in a white, male dominated profession. Chase described all of these women superintendents as having much to convey concerning how they managed to obtain the superintendency despite the anomaly of their gender or race. Chase’s narratives revealed as women superintendents recounted their experiences, they simultaneously drew on and struggled with various cultural discourses about individual

achievement and inequality. Also exposed were various forms of gender and race inequity that surround the profession and how these women responded to discriminatory treatment. Through this process, women constructed a better understanding of themselves that both shape and are shaped by those cultural conversations. These dialogues among professional women in the superintendency continued to reveal experiences about power and subjection.

Chase (1995) interviewed women superintendents with various backgrounds who led rural, suburban, and urban school systems throughout the United States. She presented their experiences and how these women superintendents rose to the influential positions. In addition, Chase described how they developed confidence in their authority and abilities, while being confronted with discriminatory treatment in a profession surrounded with gender and racial inequalities.

Chase (1995) concentrated on the anxiety, implied in the language these women use, between presumably gendered, and racialized communication about inequality. Despite these differences in experiences of the four women studied, commonalities existed among them in which women superintendents were primarily committed to their professional work and discovered individual solutions to the collective problem of inequity.

Haar, Rankin, and Robicheau (2009) indicated that there are steps that school boards can take in order to reduce gender bias. Thus school boards can establish a set of gender neutral standards to use as a basis for pinpointing candidates of quality for the superintendency. Establishing these standards would permit school boards to look

beyond experience in their careers and gender in order to view a set of specific skills. The authors suggested utilizing the AASA standards in order to accomplish this task.

Lips (2003) reported modern sexism is rooted in fundamental attitudes that are pessimistic about women and in dislike of and lack of support for social policies targeted at decreasing gender inequities. Lower salaries and shorter contracts also contributed to the dissatisfaction of women superintendents who had obtained the position. This information was supported by Tallerico and O'Connell (2001).

**Work family balance.** Work family balance was also noted as a challenge for women in the superintendency. Derrington and Sharrett (2008) replicated a study in 2007 that they had previously conducted in 1993 which revealed a shift in barrier results for women attempting to attain the superintendency. The shift involved the self-imposition in which women avoided the superintendency due to family responsibilities. Findings indicated that women are faced with multiple challenges in the position of superintendency. These challenges included having families with children who are school aged or younger or having to care for older parents after the children are grown. Furthermore, the top three barriers were not as sex role stereotyping in which the barriers to securing the position of superintendent are often self-imposed sexual discrimination in which the "good old boy" network assists men not women, and the lack of role models and mentors to guide women into the superintendency.

Darrington and Sharrett (2008) also offered suggestions for overcoming some of these barriers for women. These suggestions included resolve, balance, negotiate, and decide. Resolve involved cultivating an iron will that women often have to fight harder, wait longer, survive more scrutiny to become superintendent. Balancing was geared

toward personal and professional lives. Negotiate emphasized everything is negotiable. Deciding involved decisions about home and work and what will work for the superintendent. Although women have made tremendous strides in securing these top spots, they still have a long path compared to the percentages of men who are already there.

Derrington and Sharrett (2008) concluded that balancing the work demands of superintendent responsibilities and home expectations of a spouse and family was difficult. Researchers noted that parenting within itself often determines whether a woman will seek the superintendency. Also women reported facing tough choices when it comes to career, marriage, and motherhood when considering a superintendent's position. Brunner and Grogan (2007) further noted difficulties between the home and work role existed for women considering the superintendency.

Wickham (2008) studied female superintendents in California and listed top barriers for them. This study determined that females were less willing to relocate in order to obtain the position of superintendent due to family or their spouse's job. The second determinant in this study was females found it difficult to balance the demands of the superintendent position and family responsibilities.

**Mentoring and role models.** Investigations have been conducted by numerous researchers concerning challenges women face when pursuing the superintendency (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharrett, 2008, Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009; Katz, 2006). One of the top challenges listed by most researchers is lack of mentors.

In 2007, Brunner and Grogan noted a lack of mentors and professional networks are challenges that contribute to the disproportionate number of women superintendents. Indications unveiled aspiring women superintendents require positive, encouraging mentors and career environments that are supportive in order to reduce their anxiety. Overall, their research revealed mentoring can make a significant difference to women in their preparation for the superintendency.

Kamler (2006) indicated one reason the superintendency contains disparities among women and men are due to the lack of mentoring opportunities for women and people of color. According to Sherman (2000), a mentoring challenge specific for women superintendents was establishing the mentoring relationship. As reported earlier, the majority of superintendents are male and this reduced the number of females available for mentoring aspiring women (Glass, 2007). Mentoring research also revealed mentors are most likely to mentor those most like themselves, which again limits that availability of women mentors for other women (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Thus, Sherman (2000) reported that administrators that are male naturally move toward mentoring younger males who they view as younger versions of themselves. Therefore, this again restricts opportunities for women to be mentored by males pending they are typically pursuing mentoring their own gender.

As noted in the research, one of the top challenges faced by women superintendents is a lack of mentors and professional networking. In order to further investigate this challenge, this researcher investigated the experiences women superintendents have had in Georgia with mentoring.

## **Support Systems for Women Superintendents**

Due to the variety of challenges that have existed for women superintendents, one might assume that some of the professional organizations would provide support and guidance for this population. A number of organizations have continued to be available to school administrators seeking professional development. These organizations, as well as the services they provide, were described in detail below.

**AASA Professional Development.** The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is a national organization that had provided multiple services to all administrators. Their website (AASA, 2011) has continued to provide a wealth of information that is beneficial to all superintendents. Topics have included: Policy and Advocacy; Resources; Leadership Development; Events; Membership; and Children's Programs. The Leadership Development area and the quarterly electronic newsletter would also be of great interest to current, new, and aspiring superintendents. They also provided another journal for new superintendents which is an annual publication provided in the fall and includes articles written by national experts on topics of identified needs by new superintendents. This organization has specifically offered workshops geared to women superintendents. Although this national organization has magnified support for superintendents in general, the organization has not been formally evaluated for its effectiveness (AASA, 2011).

**Georgia School Superintendents Association.** The Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) is another organization of support that has provided numerous services to all Georgia superintendents (GSSA, 2011). This organization has offered coaching programs for both principals and superintendents that are productive in



assisting new principals or superintendents. GSSA indicated that coaching conversations serve to develop, improve, and optimize performance. Coaches are instructed on a five-step performance based process and four critical coaching skills. This process requires two days of training filled with twelve content hours. Topics covered include: review of the current literature related to coaching; demonstrate four coaching skills; demonstrate the five-step process of coaching; integrate the results of Personal Coaching Styles Inventory (PCSI) into the coaching practices; and writing a plan of action that targets two identified coaching skills.

GSSA has provided a website (Georgia School Superintendents Association, 2011) filled with crucial information specific to superintendents. A variety of other training programs are offered for current superintendents that will develop skills necessary for the position. These offerings have included the Strategic Budgeting Workshop; Facilities and Capital Outlay Management Institute; Human Resources Institute; and the Planning, Budgeting, and Finance Institute. Although programs provided offer support, none of them are specified for women superintendents. In addition, no formal studies have been conducted on this organization and its effectiveness (GSSA, 2011).

**Georgia School Board Association.** The goal of the Georgia School Boards Association (GSBA) has advocated for local control of public education by providing programs of support to local boards of education and local school systems. GSBA's support mechanisms have included legislative representation, year-round training opportunities on various topics, risk management and finance services, legal and policy services, and search procedures for new superintendents. Their website has offered many

publications to inform school leaders and keep them on track. Although this program offers support to superintendents, there has been no formal evaluation conducted on its effectiveness and none of their programs are geared to women superintendents (GSBA, 2011).

**Georgia Association of Educational Leaders.** The Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL) is the organization that has provided unity of school leadership groups in Georgia. It is a statewide "umbrella" organization, composed of six professional affiliate associations for school leaders. GAEL is an organization that has provided connections to all school leadership groups in Georgia. These groups have included the following: Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals, Georgia Association of Middle School Principals, Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals, Georgia School Superintendents Association, Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instructional Supervisors, and the Georgia Council of Administrators of Special Education. Membership is also extended to other school leaders such as assistant and associate superintendents, assistant principals, college and university administrators, state Department of Education administrators, and other school leadership personnel.

The GAEL organization is not geared to superintendents specifically; therefore, the organization does not address women superintendents. There has been no formal study conducted on GAEL and its effectiveness (GAEL, 2011).

**Regional Educational Services Agency.** Georgia has provided Regional Educational Services Agencies (RESA) throughout the state. Each RESA District is assigned a number and provides services to respective counties in that area. RESA's typically have convened once a month to service superintendents and provide a

networking system. This networking has provided support on the most current educational topics such as legislative sessions affecting the budget, professional learning available for schools, common core Georgia Performance Standards and readiness performance index initiatives, teacher and leader keys evaluation instruments, and an environment to share ideas. This support system is not aimed specifically at women superintendents and has not been formally evaluated for effectiveness (RESA, 2011).

**Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement.** Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) is another program that has supported school leaders. Services have included working as a catalyst among an organization to improve performance and securing solutions for needs that are identified by those they serve is the focus. Specifically for superintendents, GLISI has worked in conjunction with them and their teams to build district capacity to create and sustain these local systemic leadership performances that are modeled, measured, managed, and supported by them. In order to obtain desired results, they utilize team-based improvement, balanced performance improvement, and talent management. The only short fall of this program may be cost incurred and there has been no formal evaluations conducted on this program (GLISI, 2011). In addition, this program has not provided a specific support system for women superintendents.

### **Gap in Services**

As evidenced above, most professional organizations for school administrators promote assistance for school and district educational leaders in general. However, GSSA is the only program of support that has specifically served superintendents. In addition, women administrators are not offered targeted assistance within this, or any

other organizations. In order to support women superintendents, mentoring could serve as an avenue and should be examined.

## **Mentoring Women Superintendents**

### **Mentoring Defined**

Mentoring is defined as an important component of building support systems for personnel in administration and leadership (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). A mentor can be described as one who teaches, coaches, advises, trains, directs, protects, sponsors, guides and leads another individual or individuals (Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Kochan 2003; Shakeshaft, 1989). According to Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000), the term *mentor* may be utilized interchangeably with teacher, coach, advisor, trainer, director, protector, sponsor, guide, and leader. Zhao and Reed (2003) stated that “mentoring is a personal relationship that we experience in many areas of our lives” (p. 399). According to Kram (1985), mentoring is a developmental relationship with the goal of career development and guidance for the mentee. Kram more specifically described mentoring as a relationship between an older, more seasoned mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégés career.

### **Informal and Formal Mentoring**

Mentoring has occurred both informally and formally. Informal mentoring can be defined as a “mentoring relationship that develops informally out of natural interaction between the mentor and mentee” and fundamental similarities can be found as a basis of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Dunsbar & Kinnersley, 2011). According to Ragins and Cotton (1999), informal mentoring relationships were found to be more effective than formal mentoring programs. Informal mentoring generally is

sustained longer and does not follow a timeline. In most cases a veteran or seasoned person is paired with a younger, less experienced person. Goals of the relationship are typically not specified and outcomes are not measured.

Formal mentoring is described as a “mentoring relationship where the mentor and mentee are matched formally through a mentoring program” (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011 p. 18). Formal mentoring occurs when a structured program is developed by an organization and a timeline is defined. Goals are created from the beginning by the organization and the employee mentee. Outcomes from this relationship are typically measured. Training and support are also provided with formal mentoring.

### **Need for Mentoring**

According to Kinsella and Richards (2004), when mentors are provided for new administrators a large difference can be made. Mentoring has assisted individuals in learning the skills necessary for immediate survival in the new position. School leaders are in positions longer and they do a better job when mentors are utilized. Mentors have also served as a source of promoting longevity in the fields in which they mentor. This need has been propelled by the fact that many people leave the profession they have chosen due to a lack of mentoring.

According to Bjork and Kowalski (2005), effective mentoring must be available to provide guidance that is constructive. They must also be willing to engage in dialogue that is reflective and have the ability to communicate in an honest manner about their expectations and their actions. The authors also indicated that mentors need to be respected by their colleagues, effective in their own field, and they must have the ability to release the mentee when appropriate.

Glass (2000) contended that women superintendents need mentors. He observed women seem to have a less developed mentoring system than men. Aspiring women superintendents also needed mentors to provide in-district mobility opportunities. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) stated the evidence is clear, women with mentors shift into school district or school leadership positions more rapidly than those who are without mentors.

Gilmour and Kinsella (2009) indicated mentors can play a role in honing a superintendent's decision-making skills whether the superintendent is veteran or new. These same researchers interviewed several dozen women superintendents and found mentors make a critical difference assisting candidates to obtain the superintendency and then maintain their position and thrive. The superintendents reviewed indicated that engaged with a mentor who had the same values and possessed the skills, knowledge, and dispositions that were needed for achieving their goals. These interviewees also noted time as being an important component for a mentor. Mentors were sought who were diverse and hierarchical (Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009).

Odum (2010) conducted a qualitative study on the Lived Experiences of Female Superintendents in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia and noted most all participants recognized that both networking and mentoring were important factors that existed in the circles of the superintendency. They all reported networking as an important strategy, mainly among the male superintendents. Although networking with other superintendents can be a positive experience, most interviewed superintendents focused primarily on the all-male networking system that permeates the superintendency. This tendency could be related to the large numbers of male superintendents available for mentoring and networking as opposed to female numbers.

According to Kinsella and Richards (2004), studies in New York have indicated that there will be a shortage of school leaders in the future. Glass and Franceschini (2007) indicated that by 2015 several vacancies could exist in the superintendency. In order to meet the needs being projected, mentoring appears to be a vital component for superintendents.

### **Functions of Mentoring**

There are two main areas of support that mentors have provided for their protégé's: vocational/career and psychosocial (Bauer, 1999; Chao, 1997; Kram, 1985). Friday and Friday (2002) reported the career development functions included actions such as assisting the mentee in obtaining desirable positions, coaching, running interference, providing challenging assignments, and introducing the mentee to influential people in the field. Activities that reinforce a positive self-esteem and competence are included in the psychosocial function. Mentors have met these psychological needs through behaviors such as acceptance, friendship, parents, role modeling, counselors, and social associations.

Lund (2007) stated both the career and psychosocial functions are basic to the mentoring experience, and supports the idea that the most effective mentoring programs contain elements of both. Beneath the two functions for mentoring, 11 subcategories are housed. The career function is geared to advancement in the organization while the psychosocial function is aimed at building the protégés confidence through support.

Kram (1985) contended career oriented functions are activities that involve the mentor teaching the protégé how to learn the basics within the organization. Additionally, the mentor provides needed support to the protégé pertaining to

advancement in the organization. Kram (1985) also argued the mentors power and position in the organization can strongly impact the success of the protégé. Johnson (2007) has reported that career functions are basically designed to develop and sharpen professional knowledge and skill. There are five career mentoring functions for mentees which have included sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenges, and promoting.

***Sponsorship.*** Sponsorship occurred when the mentor acted in a proactive manner to benefit the protégé's career by championing their suitability for promotion. According to Dana and Bourisaw (2006), women aspiring to the superintendency must have esteemed individuals who are willing to put the mentee's name in the spotlight of conversation, and advocate for their promotion.

***Coaching.*** Coaching occurred when mentors provided advice, analysis, and feedback in order to improve decision making, organizational fit, and skills of the protégé. This function has also assisted the protégé in understanding the politics that exist within the group (Kram, 1985).

***Protection.*** Protection is similar to sponsorship, but considered more defensive in nature. Undesirable assignments and internal politics that can harm the protégés career development or advancement are shielded by the mentor. Protectors run interference between the protégé and the organization (Kram, 1985).

***Challenger.*** Within this function lies the opportunity to showcase the protégé's skills. Challenging tasks are assigned in order to assist them in building on their assortment of skills and the mentor provides feedback during this process. The mentor also offers technical support throughout the project if needed. This process affords the



opportunity for the protégé to develop assured competencies and feel a sense of triumph (Kram, 1985).

**Promoter.** The mentor assists the protégé in this area by facilitating their visibility in the organization. Opportunities are created for the protégé to impress important people. Also, the protégé's accomplishments are brought to the attention of key personnel. This exposure and visibility allows the organization to view the protégé's potential for career advancement (Kram, 1985).

Psychosocial mentoring functions have relied on the quality of emotional bonds and psychological attachments in the relationship (Kram, 1985). There are six areas that have encompassed psychological mentoring functions: friendships, social associates, parents, role models, counselors, and acceptors.

**Friendship.** This function of mentoring provided social interaction that yields mutual liking and comprehension between the protégé and mentor. Informal exchanges concerning work and nonworking experiences are enjoyed by both parties. Research led by Kamler (2006) noted that friendship actions as reassurance, support, transparency, and availability were crucial constituents of mentoring.

**Social Associates.** This component provided social interactions between the mentor and protégé outside the organization. These associations are informal one-on-one interactions. This function builds a stronger relationship for trust both inside and outside the organization (Kram, 1985).

**Parents.** The parent function served as an older, wiser mentor supporting a younger, more naïve protégé. This relationship allowed the protégé permission to go to the mentor easily for support and advice (Kram, 1985).

***Role Model.*** The mentor provided the protégé with appropriate attitudes, values, and behaviors as examples to follow. Dialogue occurs concerning tasks assigned, organizational apprehensions shared by both, and career issues. This experience assisted the protégé in redefining who they are in the organization (Kram, 1985).

***Counselor.*** The mentor enters the mode of listening for strategies the protégé is utilizing for success. They also are in tune with issues faced by the protégé that may interfere with the positive sense of self and career accomplishments. In each of these areas, advice is offered to assist protégés with their decision making to promote success in their role. Confidentiality is maintained at all times as in typical counseling roles (Kram, 1985).

***Acceptor.*** Both persons develop a sense of self in a positive regard. Support and inspiration is provided to the protégé while a basic trust is established. Acceptance is the foundation, risk-taking is encouraged, and experimentation is permitted with these new behaviors. The protégé builds a sense of self as a professional through the mentor affirming and understanding the protégé's experiences (Kram, 1985).

### **Research on Effective Mentoring**

According to the report from the State of the American School Superintendency (2007), mentoring assistance eased candidate's transition into the superintendency. This study also noted that 33% of the superintendents stated their previous district had provided mentoring support to make their conversion smoother. This study also indicated that mentoring programs have emerged, since the earlier study presented by AASA, in order to reduce negative effects of networks that restrict entrance into the superintendency (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

The Iowa Department of Education provided funding to pilot the Iowa Mentoring and Induction Program for principals and superintendents in their first year of service (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). These mentors were required to make application and must possess four years of successful experience of administrative service in which they positively impacted student achievement, utilized data-driven decision making, were committed to student success, and were willing to provide the personal time and attention to mentoring. Principals and superintendents noted benefits in the development of skills when addressing difficult issues. Positive relationship building between the mentor and mentee was recorded as important. Gender and race were two crucial variables that should be considered in mentoring programs. These programs should also be accommodating in order to meet the needs of the mentor and mentee (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006).

Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) noted that superintendents reported the most crucial source for enlightening elements of their practice was peer superintendents. The report also revealed these peer superintendents were typically from comparable school districts as the superintendents utilizing them.

### **Research on Effective Mentoring of Women Superintendents**

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) investigated female administrators and their mentoring experiences in higher education through a quantitative survey with women in Tennessee. The authors noted that women still lag behind men gaining leadership positions in both Prekindergarten-12 and higher education. Although the majority of teachers are females as opposed to males, only 24% of school superintendents in the United States are female. More than half of these served in small or rural districts. In

higher education, women consisted of about 40% of the faculty and staff, but only comprised about 21% of college and university presidencies. Mentors proved beneficial to those females who do aspire to the top leadership positions. The authors also noted that mentoring is more effective for these women when the mentor and mentee share many similarities, such as values, background, experiences, and outlook. At times, peers have served as effective mentors too. The study pointed out that mentor relationships that develop informally through natural interactions are generally more beneficial than formal relationships (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011).

Four research questions were asked and related research was examined. Findings revealed almost two-thirds of the respondents (64%) had a mentor. Caucasians composed 88% and had been involved in an informal mentoring relationship (90%) with a mentor who was also Caucasian (89%). Most of these worked in the same institution. Mentees in informal mentoring relationships stated their mentors provided more career-mentoring than those mentees in formal mentoring relationships. This finding also supported former findings from Blake-Beard in 2001 and Ragins and Cotton in 1999 (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011).

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) also found that there were no differences in the provisions of career or psychosocial mentoring between mentees with female mentors and mentees with male mentors in higher education. However, females who had female mentors perceived that the gender was important and would have an impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, which was supported by former research (Lowe, 2003; Wolverton, 2002). These two findings appeared to contradict. The disagreement is women believed a female mentor was significant and had an impact on

the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, but the items that addressed specific mentor functions; no considerable difference between male and female mentors was noted. One plausible explanation was the mentor was asked in the survey if specific functions were provided; it did not allow the mentee the opportunity to discuss the quality of the mentoring experience. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) indicated more research was required in this area.

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) indicated female administrators reported mentoring relationships had equipped them for leadership in higher education. Female leaders also affirmed they recommended finding a mentor as a tool for advancement. Overall, these findings confirmed the importance of mentoring relationships for women who aspire to the superintendency. Therefore, institutions should focus on developing a culture that supports and encourages the mentoring of new administrators (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011).

Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) reported their findings on women superintendents, assistant superintendents, and mentoring. Interviews were conducted with four women assistant superintendents and six superintendents in individual sessions. Open-ended questions were utilized to promote a reduced response to bias. Average years of experience were approximately 25 and their ages ranged from late 30's to 70. District populations had a range of 2,500 students to 45,000 in a mix of rural, urban, and suburban (Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008). Findings resulted in the following themes being developed: identified mentors were those people who served as the mentor; passive mentoring described by the person being mentored; and, networking which was an identified form of mentoring (Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008). All women

interviewed indicated that they had some form of mentoring in their career that benefitted them in the superintendency. However, when the topic deepened, there appeared to be lack of conversation, which may have indicated there was a lack of understanding for the true concept of mentoring. Further research in this study indicated that there were a lack of mentors and role models for women.

### **Conclusion**

Mentoring has been described as an older, experienced mentor developing a relationship with a younger, inexperienced mentee (Kram, 1985). According to Kinsella and Richards (2004), mentors have been associated with helping mentees achieve greater success in new positions. Glass (2006) specifically noted women superintendents need mentors and Gilmour and Kinsella (2009) indicated mentors play a role in honing a superintendent's decision-making skills regardless if they are veteran or new. Mentoring women superintendents can consist of formal and informal mentoring.

Bauer (1999), Chao (1997), and Kram (1985) reported there are two areas of support mentors have provided to their protégé's: vocational/career and psychosocial. There were 11 subcategories beneath these two functions. Dunbar and Kinnersly (2011) investigated mentoring women superintendents and they found mentors proved beneficial to females who aspired to top leadership positions.

Although studies on mentoring women exist, minimal studies have been conducted specifically on women administrators at the state level. Dunbar & Kinnersley (2011) reviewed 239 female administrators in Tennessee, but those women were involved in higher education leadership positions. Previous research has often offered quantitative surveys, as indicated in Dunbar and Kinnersley's study, or qualitative research only.

This research study will explore the responses of 39 women superintendents in Georgia's public school system in an effort to gain deeper understandings of the experiences of women in the superintendency. This researcher provided opportunities for participants to discuss the quality of their mentoring experiences by utilizing a mixed method study to reveal mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia in prekindergarten through grade twelve. In addition, this researcher sought to provide richer information in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized.

### **Summary**

This review of literature focused on women aspiring to the superintendency and how mentoring impacts this pursuit. According to research, men have dominated this field of top leadership for numerous years. However, according to the AASA who studied the superintendency in ten year periods, the number of women in leadership positions has slowly increased since 1923 (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Although the research has indicated the number of women superintendents are on the rise, the retirement of the Baby Boomers in the near future will further deepen discrepancies between men and women. Mentoring appeared to be viewed as one of the best avenues that narrow the gap between men and women in this top level position.

Despite mentoring assistance, challenges were noted that were common to both female and male superintendents. Trials such as budget constraints, NCLB regulations, (2001) and stress were noted. Challenges particular to women superintendents were gender bias, lower salaries, shorter contracts, family obligations, and a lack of mentoring or role models.

Professional association support systems such as AASA, GSSA, GSBA, RESA, GAEL, and GLISI were reviewed. These associations provided networking support for anyone in the superintendency. The GSSA supported superintendents specifically in both genders and the AASA provided the most statistics specific to women. However, these supportive programs for administrators and superintendents have not been formally studied and evaluated for their effectiveness.

Specifically, mentoring presented a viable option as an avenue to assist women in aspiring to the superintendency. Effective mentoring for women yielded improved results for the field of superintendency. Overall, effective mentoring was a necessary approach for women who are aspiring or currently in the role of superintendent in Georgia.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS**

A sequential descriptive mixed method study was utilized by this researcher to obtain quantitative and qualitative data from women superintendents in the state of Georgia. Chapter three includes a discussion of the following: researcher's personal narrative and assumptions, research questions, research design which included participants, quantitative, and qualitative data sources, procedures, and data analysis.

#### **Researcher Personal Narrative and Assumptions**

In her previous administrative roles, the researcher had the opportunity to work with numerous teachers, paraprofessionals, other school related staff, parents, community members, and the district stakeholders. The researcher served as an assistant principal for four years and as head principal for five years during a time when her particular school experienced significant academic progress. Within the first three years of serving as principal, the researcher's school was recognized as a Georgia School of Excellence. In the fourth year, the school secured the notable honor of National Blue Ribbon School in which they were recognized in Washington, D. C. The fifth year the school was named a second time Georgia School of Excellence that was only one of two named in the state of Georgia. Throughout this successful time, the researcher was surrounded by and benefitted from the advice of great mentors.

This mentorship was initiated during the researcher's early years as a school counselor. The researcher was afforded opportunities through a female mentor who at the time served as principal. The researcher considered the mentoring relationship informal, because it occurred organically and was not formally organized. There simply

was a mentor who wanted to share her knowledge and a mentee who was interested in learning about school administration.

When the researcher secured the assistant principalship position, the lessons learned as a mentee were transferred from the counseling field into the administrative arena. The mentor's assistance provided a smooth transition according to the researcher. Previous exposure to administrative tasks and problems allowed the researcher to utilize this knowledge to meet the requirements in this new position, as well as in the principalship four years later.

Some years later, the researcher became interested in pursuing the superintendency in her school district, which at the time was on Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) probation due to challenging circumstances and a high rate of turnover in governance and leadership. The researcher felt she had the knowledge and tools to pursue this endeavor and make a positive difference in the school district, but unlike her transition to the principalship, the researcher lacked mentors who had experience at the district level. Without the tutelage of mentors, the researcher's transition from local school administration to district leader has been filled with challenges. The presence of these challenges combined with an absence of mentorship, allowed the researcher to fully understand and appreciate the value of effective mentoring.

Once the researcher obtained the superintendency, she realized there were minimal numbers of female superintendents. After reflecting on her previous mentoring experiences and recognizing the huge disparity that has existed between males and females in the superintendency, the researcher surmised that perhaps mentoring could

assist more women with gaining and maintaining this position. As a woman superintendent who did not have the opportunity for mentorship, this line of inquiry prompted the researcher to further investigate the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. This investigation has expanded the capacity of evidence for mentoring women who are aspiring or currently maintain the position of superintendent.

### **Research Methods**

Supporting administrators through the utilization of mentors has been noted in the research as helpful for anyone aspiring or transitioning to administrative positions (Dunbar and Kinnersley, 2011). The superintendent, as the chief executive officer of the local board of education, is no exception. According to the report from the State of the American School Superintendency (2007), mentoring assistance eased candidate's transition into the superintendency, and supported current superintendents in the position. Unfortunately, little data is available on mentorship opportunities for superintendents in Georgia and specifically for women who hold this position. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain information revealing what experiences women superintendents have had with mentoring in Georgia. Further insight will be gained on the extent women superintendents in Georgia have been mentored, how they describe these experiences, what elements are contained in an effective mentoring program, and how an effective mentoring program could encourage women to enter the superintendency.

### **Research Questions**

The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? In addition, these sub-questions guided the primary question: (1) How extensive is mentoring among women

superintendents in Georgia; (2) How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring; (3) What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program; and (4) How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

### **Research Design**

Research designs consist of three types of models from which to choose: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods. Quantitative research was designed as a means for testing objective theories by examining relationships among variables (Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell (2008), these particular variables can be measured by an instrument in which numbered data can be analyzed by utilizing statistical procedures. Patton (2002) also suggested quantitative research is well suited for questions that lend themselves to numerical values.

Qualitative is a research design that is in stark contrast to the quantitative design. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative procedures rely on text and image data, entail unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse strategies of inquiry. Creswell (2008) further explained researchers are looking for broad explanations of behavior and attitudes. Patton (2002) also suggested qualitative research explains the meaning behind the numbers obtained. Creswell (2008) listed several characteristics common to qualitative methods: research is often conducted in the field which allows direct interaction with people being studied in their context; data are collected by the researcher by examining documents, observing behavior or interviewing participants; multiple sources of data are favored over a single source which requires the researcher to review

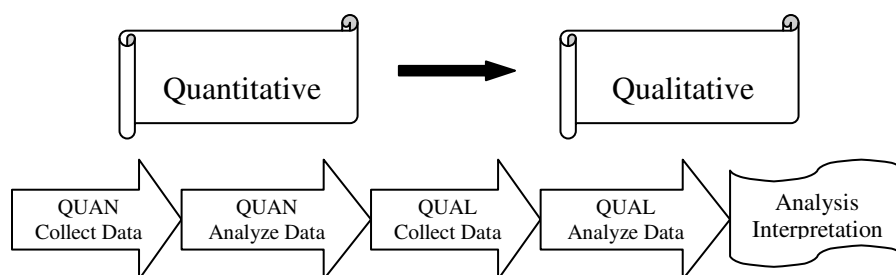
all data, make sense and organize it into categories or themes; patterns, categories, and themes are often built from the bottom up by the researcher which is considered inductive analysis; the research is emergent and can shift processes in response to the field; the researcher interprets what is seen, heard, and understood based on the researcher's background, history, context, and prior understanding; and the researcher attempts to provide a complex picture of the problem or issue by reporting multiple perspectives and identifies multiple factors involved.

A mixed methods approach combines or associates both quantitative and qualitative forms. Individually, quantitative and qualitative research is limited in their separate approaches, while a mixed method is not limited and provides strength to the study. According to Creswell and Plano (2007), mixed methods research is more than collecting and analyzing both kinds of data; it involves both approaches in tandem in order to strengthen the overall study, which is greater than either quantitative or qualitative research.

This researcher employed a mixed methods design to examine the effects of mentoring on women superintendents by utilizing a sequential descriptive mixed methods approach. Mixed methods research was designed for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research in a single study or series of studies to understand a research problem (Clark, 2003). According to Plano Clark (2010), several reasons existed to employ a mixed method study: quantitative and qualitative data are merged in a mixed method to obtain a more complete understanding of a problem; to develop a complementary picture; to compare, validate, or triangulate results; to provide illustrations of context for trends; or to examine processes or experiences along with

outcomes. According to Creswell (2008), the justification for utilizing any method for a study resides with the research questions, purpose, and assumptions. Creswell (2003) has indicated mixed methods research recognizes the convergence of quantitative and qualitative data and can also be called combined research. Mixed approach research has been deemed an excellent avenue for conducting research because it offers a broader understanding of the research being conducted. Tashakkori and Teddie (2003) indicated mixed methods are often more proficient in answering research questions than either qualitative or quantitative in isolation.

More specifically, this investigation was a sequential descriptive mixed method study. Sequential mixed methods studies allow one database to build on another (Creswell, 2008). When the quantitative phase is followed by the qualitative phase, the intent may be to help determine the best participants with which to follow up or to explain the mechanism behind the quantitative results (Plano Clark, 2010). In this sequential mixed method research, quantitative research was collected first and qualitative followed (see Figure 2). The quantitative numerical data was collected initially and the qualitative portion was utilized to explain the implication behind the numbers.



*Figure 2.* Sequential Descriptive Design. This figure indicates a sequential form of data collection.

Sequential descriptive mixed methods allowed the over-arching research question in this study to be answered by collecting and analyzing two types of data, quantitative and qualitative. A panel was initially formed to establish face validity for both the questionnaire and interview protocol. The quantitative portion was obtained through a survey instrument containing questions on mentoring that was given to 52 women superintendents in Georgia. The qualitative portion consisted of individually interviewing eight women superintendents concerning their experiences with mentoring. Inferences were then made based on the analysis of both types of data. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods contributed to the description of the phenomenon being studied.

### **Panel of Experts**

Prior to beginning the research, four retired women superintendents were contacted and formed a panel of experts. The purpose of this panel was to establish face validity for the quantitative survey instrument developed by the researcher and the researcher's methodologist, and to help refine the interview questions for the qualitative phase. The survey consisted of three parts: Demographic Information (Part I), Superintendents Mentoring Experience (Part II), and Recommended Elements for an Effective Mentoring Program (Part III). The panel convened with the researcher to review each survey question to ensure the survey is being worded correctly, that questions were designed answer the research questions listed, and that is the questions were being interpreted as intended. The same process was utilized to review and refine the eleven interview questions for the qualitative phase.

## **Participants**

For the quantitative component of the research, all women designated as superintendents in Georgia in the current or previous school year (2011-2013) were invited to participate in the survey. Every attempt was made to secure a two-thirds response rate, which required a minimum of 29 participants. Securing 29 women superintendent's responses would yield a confidence interval of 90% and a confidence level of 10% (Creative Research Systems, 2013). The relationship of the researcher with the participants enhanced obtaining results for the two-thirds response rate. The researcher visited with most women superintendents at the annual superintendent's conference and encouraged participation. This survey was developed by the researcher in cooperation with the researcher's methodologist.

For the qualitative phase, eight women superintendents were purposefully selected from those who participated in the survey. In an effort to get a representative sample, the interviewees consisted of superintendents of four women from rural areas, three women superintendents from urban areas, and one woman superintendent from suburban areas. This group was interviewed using questions developed from a subset of responses to the survey.

## **Data Sources**

Instrumentation in this research involved three components: an initial panel, followed by a quantitative survey, and qualitative interviews.

**Panel.** Initially, the panel consisted of four retired women superintendents. The panel critiqued the quantitative survey instrument for the purpose of establishing face validity. Suggestions received from the panel were incorporated into the instrument. The



panel then validated each of the items in the survey as appropriate to administer. Consensus from the panel allowed the researcher to obtain face validity. The quantitative survey instrument was then administered to the population of women superintendents in Georgia.

This same process which utilized the same panel of four retired women superintendents was replicated for the qualitative interview questions. The panel critiqued the interview questions to establish face validity. Consensus from the panel signified face validity had been obtained. Refined interview questions were administered to the eight women superintendents in Georgia who were selected to participate in the interviews.

The panel was selected from a purposeful sample of retired women superintendents and every attempt was made to secure them from rural, urban, and suburban areas. Several researchers reported interactions of the panel are advantageous when the interaction among interviewees yields the best information, when interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other, when time to collect information is limited, and when individuals interviewed one-on-one may be hesitant to provide information (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1988; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Hoijer (2008) indicated that focus groups emerged in the 1940's, and during this time have been utilized for an array of purposes. These purposes included stimulating new survey content and delivery mechanisms; determining what additional research tools may be useful for follow-up information collection; and better interpreting previously obtained quantitative information.

**Quantitative data source.** The quantitative portion of the instrumentation invited participation of the entire population of women superintendents within the state of Georgia. The women superintendents' names and contacts were secured through the Georgia School Superintendent's Association. The researcher contacted all women superintendents in Georgia to notify them that an online survey was forthcoming and to seek their support in participating.

Part I of the questionnaire included demographic items. Items included were highest degree in educational leadership, how many years of experience in the superintendency, and what type of district served as superintendent. Remaining demographic questions for Part I are located in Appendix B. Part II consisted of questions that explored superintendents' mentoring experiences. Item such as did you have a mentor when you became superintendent, if you had a mentor, how long did they assist you, and was your mentor male or female were included. Additional items to complete this section can be located in Appendix B. Part III consisted of items that asked participants to identify elements that would be found in an effective mentoring program. Items such as budget and finance, personnel, school board relations, and school community relations were included. Additional items can be viewed under Appendix B for Part III. A five point Likert-scale was used to register responses. The Likert scale will be utilized to rate 20 areas related specifically to the superintendency and the Likert scale ranges from "Never (1 point)" to "Always (5 points)". The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete, and yielded results for the quantitative portion of this research.

The survey was sent electronically to participants via *Survey Monkey*. Prior to the survey, potential participants received a letter alerting them the survey was coming in order to encourage their participation (Appendix A). An email to remind participants to complete the survey and return the information was sent one week after the first request (Appendix D). A final email was sent approximately one week later to assist with ensuring a two-thirds response rate (Appendix E). Schaefer & Dillman (1998) indicated emailed surveys provide cost and time savings, and efficiency is improved.

Of the 52 surveys distributed, 39 were returned and analyzed. This number represented a response rate of 75% and yielded a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of eight. According to Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2000), the number of contacts, personalized contacts, and precontacts are the factors most associated with higher response rates in analyzed Web studies.

**Qualitative Data Source.** For the qualitative portion of the research, purposeful sampling was then utilized to select eight women superintendents for individual interviews. These individual interviews allowed the researcher to explore the mentoring experiences of the participants in more detail. The researcher conducting the study served as the instrument in this phase. The researcher asked questions to the eight women superintendents. The researcher's identity positively impacted on the study. The researcher is currently a colleague of other women superintendent and can relate to the position as well. Having insider status as both a woman and a superintendent allowed for a higher level of comfort with participants who may feel women understand other women on a deeper level due to gender. This level of comfort potentially produced a more

honest response from the participants; in addition, these factors should have promoted a flow of conversation that is not impeded which will enhance the results received.

Specific questions were constructed by the researcher and the researcher's methodologist before the study began, and were vetted through the panel of experts. These questions were designed to explore the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. This portion of the research also sought participant's insights on what elements comprised an effective mentoring program and pinpointed which elements may be lacking.

These data were analyzed in at least three stages in accord with procedures for a basic interpretive study (Merriam, 2009). First, the researcher performed initial coding responses, followed by identification of patterns, which in turn was followed by the identification of broad themes. This process is further described in the data analysis section. This information was utilized to assist in describing the quantitative portion of the data initially collected. This purposeful sample included an even distribution of women superintendents who are both new and experienced. In this investigation, the term "new" was defined to mean women superintendents who have zero to two year's experience and "experienced" was defined to include women superintendents with three or more years of practice. Participants were from rural, urban, or suburban areas.

### **Research Questions and Instrument**

The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? This question was answered by utilizing both the survey and interview information gathered. Specifically, Part II of the survey was utilized to extract answers from participants. Part II is entitled;

“Superintendents Mentoring Experiences” and questions ten through twenty were applied to answer this overarching question (see Appendix B). Interview questions one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight were utilized to assist in answering this overarching question as well (see Appendix C).

The first sub-question was answered by Part II of the survey through questions 11, 17, and 18 (see Appendix B) and interview questions one, three, five, six, and nine (see Appendix C).

Sub-question number two was answered by utilizing the survey and interview portion. Part II of the survey was entitled; “Superintendents Mentoring Experiences” and questions 10 through 20 asked the participant 10 questions related to their mentoring experiences (see Appendix B). Questions one through eight from the interview portion were based on mentoring experiences as well (see Appendix C).

Sub-question number three was answered by utilizing both the survey and interview information. Part III of the survey entitled, “Recommended Elements for an Effective Mentoring Program,” was utilized to assist in answering this sub-question. This section contained a Likert scale with 19 questions related to effective elements of a mentoring program (see Appendix B). Interview questions that applied to this question were items nine and ten (see Appendix C).

The fourth sub-question was answered by utilizing questions number nine, ten, and eleven from the interviews (see Appendix B).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Once approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (see Appendix G) at Georgia Southern University, a letter (see Appendix A) was mailed to women

superintendents in Georgia alerting them of a forthcoming an online survey encouraging their participation. One week later, quantitative surveys (see Appendix B) were emailed via *Survey Monkey* to all women designated as superintendents in the state of Georgia during the years 2011-2013. A reminder email (see Appendix D) encouraging participation was sent one week after the survey was distributed. One week after that message, a final email reminder (see Appendix E) was distributed encouraging participation. After the deadline for completion, data from these surveys were collected when participants return the completed survey to the researcher via email.

Individual interviews were conducted with eight women superintendents in order to gather information which described their perceptions and experiences with mentoring. Purposeful sampling was utilized to make every attempt to seek women superintendents from rural, urban, and suburban areas. Interviews were conducted via telephone, at dates and times convenience for each of the eight women superintendents. These interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcripts were prepared by a professional transcriptionist. A third party agreement (see Appendix F) was signed by the transcriptionist for confidentiality. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 25 minutes. Each interviewee's identity has remained confidential throughout the research and data reporting.

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative and qualitative data results were analyzed in this study. Research questions were answered by examining each type of data separately and collectively. Two distinct areas were analyzed: quantitative and qualitative.

**Quantitative results.** Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze quantitative results from the online surveys. Frequencies, percentages, and distributions were reviewed to assist in answering the research questions. These results were utilized to inform the quantitative phase of the research.

**Qualitative results.** Qualitative interviews conducted with individual superintendents were analyzed in hopes of explaining the meaning behind the data presented from the quantitative phase. Patton (2002) stated the goal of qualitative data analysis is to reveal emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings (Patton, 2002).

Merriam (2009) explained that data analysis for qualitative research is the process of making sense out of the data, which involved consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have stated. The analysis of data was a complex process that involved moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation. This researcher began coding by reading the first interview transcript and jotting down notes, comments, observations, and queries in the margins next to bits of data which assisted in answering the research questions (Merriam, 2009). The same process was conducted on the remaining interview transcripts. Merriam (2009) refers to this process as “open coding” because the researcher is being open to anything possible at this point. The researcher retained a list of groupings extracted from the first transcript to check and see if they are present in the second set. After all eight transcripts were reviewed; these lists were merged into one master list of concepts derived from all of the data.

Assigning codes to pieces of data enabled the researcher to begin to construct categories. Categories cover all individual units or bits of data. This process of grouping open codes is sometimes called “axial coding” or “analytical coding” which is coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) stated that the beginning of this analysis process is highly inductive and the end of the analysis becomes more deductive in which the researcher will be looking for more evidence to support the final set of categories established. These categories established will answer the researcher’s questions and it will be the questions that guide analysis and coding of the raw data.

### **Reporting the Data**

In order to report the data, the researcher mirrored Creswell’s (2008) example of arranging the results collected in two phases: quantitative and qualitative. Overall, the quantitative research findings reviewed the descriptive statistics to discover the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia, while the qualitative results revealed patterns and themes which was supported by the participant’s direct quotes. The quantitative data was displayed utilizing tables and the qualitative data was reported based on the themes and patterns obtained. Quotes from participants were incorporated into reporting qualitative data and should add a deeper level of understanding to the information found in the quantitative data.

### **Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations**

Confidentiality was of utmost importance and each participant’s identity was protected throughout this study. Protecting confidentiality increased opportunities to secure accurate data. The survey conducted in the qualitative phase was anonymous. In



order to report the individual interviews from the qualitative portion, the monikers of “Superintendent One” through Superintendent Eight” were utilized for each of the participants. A secured key list which identified each participant with their corresponding superintendent number, was constructed and available only to the researcher. This will remain under lock and key until the research has been completed and then the list will be destroyed. Interview participants were informed during the verbal interview portion their identity as well as the districts would not be revealed in the results of the study. After transcription, the researcher erased the audio recordings. These transcripts were secured at the researcher’s residence, where they will remain secured until the research has been completed and then they will be destroyed.

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

Validity and reliability were essential criterion terms for quality in quantitative paradigms, the terms trustworthiness or credibility, neutrality or conformability, consistency or dependability and applicability or transferability are to be the crucial criteria for quality in qualitative paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2003) suggested that when utilizing quantitative research, content validity can be obtained by ensuring items in the survey measure the content they were intended to measure. In order to achieve face validity, a panel of four women superintendents was formed initially. This panel of four reviewed the quantitative survey and provided feedback that denoted if the designed survey would assist in answering the research question proposed.

Merriam (2009) suggested a common strategy for ensuring internal validity or credibility for qualitative research is “member checks” or “respondent validation” (p. 217). Feedback was solicited from the emerging findings from the women

superintendents interviewed. Clarifications were sought on their mentor's gender, if their respective districts were rural, urban, or suburban, and the number of years they had been in the superintendency. This approach, as Maxwell stated:

... is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observe (p. 111).

The nature of the mixed methods approach inherently allowed for triangulation of data, which increased validity and trustworthiness. Creswell (2008) also indicated researchers triangulate among various data sources to enhance the accuracy of their study.

Triangulation was utilized in this study to corroborate evidence retrieved from the panel, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews.

In addition, trustworthiness was enhanced because of the researcher's role as a female superintendent in Georgia. The researcher was not perceived to be an outsider, but one of them as a fellow women administrator.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods design was to reveal the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. As such, the entire population of women superintendents in Georgia were invited to participate in the quantitative portion of the study and eight respondents were chosen from that pool to engage in individual interviews for the qualitative portion. The quantitative data was analyzed for descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data was reviewed for patterns and themes using open coding.

The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? In addition, these sub-questions will guide the primary question: (1) How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia; (2) How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring; (3) What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program; and (4) How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

Overall, the information found by answering these questions provided insight into the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in the state of Georgia. Through this study, new knowledge was gained regarding the extent to which women superintendents in Georgia have been mentored, how they described these experiences, what elements were contained in an effective mentoring program, and how an effective mentoring program could encourage women to enter the superintendency. In addition, the information gained from this research could assist persons and agencies in mentoring women who become superintendents, thereby creating further opportunities for advancement and decreasing disparities in the number of women superintendents.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this sequential mixed methods study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. The quantitative portion was derived from the survey responses of 39 women superintendents in Georgia, and the qualitative section was consisted of interviewing eight of these women in an effort to explore their mentoring perceptions and experiences.

This study was based upon the overarching research question: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? The following sub-questions that stemmed from the overarching research question were: (1) How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia?; (2) How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring?; (3) What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program?; (4) How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

#### **Participants**

The quantitative survey was administered via *Survey Monkey* to the entire population of 52 women superintendents in the state of Georgia. Names, addresses, and emails were secured from the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) website and were assembled into one contact group for the researcher. Prior to the survey being administered, a letter (Appendix A) was mailed to all women superintendents in Georgia alerting them an online survey would be forthcoming and requesting their

participation. Approximately one week later, the online survey (Appendix B) was distributed. In hopes of getting a greater response, a week after the survey was launched all of 52 women superintendents were emailed a reminder (Appendix D) about participating in the survey. A final email reminder was sent three weeks later to again increase the participation rate (Appendix E). A total of 39 surveys were completed and used for this study.

The survey contained two questions asking those participants who indicated they had been mentored if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Of the sixteen who indicated a willingness to be interviewed, four rural, three urban, and one suburban participant were selected as a representative sample of women superintendents that had experienced mentoring. These eight interviews comprised the qualitative portion of the study.

## **Quantitative Results**

### **Response Rate**

The quantitative online survey was sent to 52 female superintendents throughout Georgia and 39 were received for a response rate of 75%. This sample size of 39 yielded a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval or margin of error of 8. This indicated that the researcher could be certain 67% to 83% on the entire population would have selected the same answer as the 75% who responded.

Merriam (2009) reported the goal of purposeful selection is to choose samples that will most likely reflect information rich results with respect to the studies purpose. In this study, eight women superintendents in Georgia who had been mentored were

purposefully selected in order to reflect rural, urban, and suburban districts. The interviews was comprised of 11 predetermined interview questions (Appendix C) created by the researcher. The eight participant’s mentoring experiences were then recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. Eight women’s mentoring experiences were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using 11 predetermined interview questions (Appendix C).

### Demographic Data

Part I of the survey instrument collected demographic information on women superintendents in Georgia. Personal and professional characteristics of these respondents and the district in which they serve were tabulated in percentages.

Question one asked respondents to classify their age in four categories. The data revealed that nearly half of female superintendents who responded (46.2% or n=18), classified themselves between the ages of 51-60 years old. Table 1 listed below represents the current age of women superintendents who participated in this study.

Table 1

#### *Current Age of Superintendent*




|               |            | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|---------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 25 - 40 years | █          | 2.6%                | 1                 |
| 41 - 50 years | ██████     | 25.6%               | 10                |
| 51 - 60 years | ██████████ | 46.2%               | 18                |
| over 60 years | ██████     | 25.6%               | 10                |

Of the 39 respondents, 84.6% (N=33) reveal themselves as Caucasian, 10.3% (N=4) African American, and 5.1% (N=2) as “other”. A high percentage of Caucasian of

women superintendents reported in this study, mirrored elevated percentages in the AASA national survey which was 94% for both men and women (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Table 2




*Ethnicity of Superintendent*

|                         |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Caucasian</b>        |  | 84.6%               | 33                |
| <b>African American</b> |   | 10.3%               | 4                 |
| <b>Hispanic</b>         |  | 0.0%                | 0                 |
| <b>Other</b>            |   | 5.1%                | 2                 |

The highest degree held by participants is shown in Table 3. All 39 participants responded with 48.7% (N=19) holding a specialist, 48.7% (N=19) holding a doctorate, 2.6% (N=1) holding a masters and 0% with a bachelor degree.

Table 3

*Highest Degree Obtained*

|                   |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Bachelor</b>   |   | 0.0%                | 0                 |
| <b>Masters</b>    |  | 2.6%                | 1                 |
| <b>Specialist</b> |  | 48.7%               | 19                |
| <b>Doctorate</b>  |  | 48.7%               | 19                |

Question four inquired if the highest degree obtained was in the area of educational leadership (Table 4). A total of 39 participants purported and 89.7% (N=35) indicated educational leadership was their highest degree while 10.3% (N=4) reported

educational leadership was not their highest degree. In the previous question regarding the highest degree obtained, 48.7% indicated they possessed a doctorate degree; however, this data indicated not all of these had a doctorate in educational leadership.

*Table 4*

*Highest /Educational Leadership Degree*

|     |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-----|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Yes |  | 89.7%               | 35                |
| No  |  | 10.3%               | 4                 |

Question five inquired how many years of school or district administration each participant had prior to becoming superintendent. Results revealed 2.6% had zero to two year's experience, 7.7% had three to five years of experience, 20.5% had six to ten years of experience, and 69.2% had more than ten years of experience. The highest percentages reflected that most women superintendents had more than ten years of experience in school or district administration before obtaining the superintendency. Table 5 shows how many years of school and/or district administration prior to the superintendency.

*Table 5*

*Years of experience as administrator prior to superintendency*





|                    |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| 0 - 2 years        |  | 2.6%                | 1                 |
| 3 - 5 years        |  | 7.7%                | 3                 |
| 6 - 10 years       |  | 20.5%               | 8                 |
| more than 10 years |  | 69.2%               | 27                |



The highest percentage of experience in the superintendency was zero to two years. Out of 39 respondents on question six, 33.3% (N=13) revealed they had zero to two year's experience in the superintendency; 30.8% (N=12) had three to five years; 23.1% (N=9) possessed six to ten years of experience; and 12.8% (N=5) had eleven or more years of experience in the superintendency.

Table 6




*Years of experience in superintendency*

|                         |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>0 - 2 years</b>      |    | 33.3%               | 13                |
| <b>3 - 5 years</b>      |    | 30.8%               | 12                |
| <b>6 - 10 years</b>     |    | 23.1%               | 9                 |
| <b>11 or more years</b> |  | 12.8%               | 5                 |

A majority of participants, 82.1% (N=32), indicated they served as superintendent in rural school districts, 12.8% (N=5) served in urban districts, and 5.1% (N=2) reported they served in suburban districts. This information is shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*District Type Served*

|                 |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-----------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Rural</b>    |  | 82.1%               | 32                |
| <b>Urban</b>    |   | 12.8%               | 5                 |
| <b>Suburban</b> |   | 5.1%                | 2                 |

Results in Table 8 disclosed 46.2% (N=18) of the participants served student populations between zero and 3499. 33.3% (N=13) served student populations between 3500 and 6999. Results also revealed 12.8% (N=5) served student populations between 7000 and 9999 which related more closely to urban districts. Superintendents who served in urban districts were reported at 12.8% as noted in Table 7. Results revealed 5.1% (N=2) served student populations between 10,000 and 14,999 while 2.6% (N=1) served student populations over 15,000. These final two percentages more closely represented suburban school districts.

Table 8

*District Student Population*





|                        |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>0 - 3499</b>        |  | <b>46.2%</b>        | <b>18</b>         |
| <b>3500 - 6999</b>     |  | <b>33.3%</b>        | <b>13</b>         |
| <b>7000 - 9999</b>     |  | <b>12.8%</b>        | <b>5</b>          |
| <b>10,000 - 14,999</b> |  | <b>5.1%</b>         | <b>2</b>          |
| <b>over 15,000</b>     |  | <b>2.6%</b>         | <b>1</b>          |

Participants were asked about the positions they occupied prior to becoming superintendent in Georgia (shown in Table 9). All 39 participants answered the question, but the total number of responses was 70. This likely means that some participants served in more than one position listed prior to becoming superintendent. Results revealed 85.6% occupied a central office position such as assistant superintendent, curriculum director, or human resources director prior to becoming superintendent. Of

the 85.6%, 48.7% (N=19) indicated they served as assistant or associate superintendent, while the remaining 35.9% (N=14) served in another type of central office position. The previous position of principal accounted for 51.3% (N=20) and assistant principal was 43.6% (N=17).

Table 9

*Position Prior to Superintendency*



|   |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|---|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Assistant Principal</b>                |  | 43.8%               | 17                |
| <b>Principal</b>                          |  | 51.3%               | 20                |
| <b>Assistant/Associate Superintendent</b> |  | 48.7%               | 19                |
| <b>Other Central Office Position</b>      |  | 35.9%               | 14                |

**Superintendent's Mentoring Experiences**

Part II of the survey explored the mentoring experiences of women superintendents. Question number 10 inquired if the superintendent had a mentor and all 39 participants responded. As shown in Table 10, 84.6% (N=33) of respondents indicated they had a mentor when they became superintendent and 15.4% (N=6) reported they did not have a mentor when they obtained the superintendency.

Table 10





*Mentor or not*

|     |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-----|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Yes |  | 84.6%               | 33                |
| No  |   | 15.4%               | 6                 |

Then length of the mentorship experience is shown in Table 11, and 34 of 39 responded. The following findings were obtained: 58.8% or 20 had a mentor zero to one year; 35.3% or 12 had a mentor one to two years; 2.9% or one had a mentor from three to five years; and 2.9% or one had their mentor more than five years. Results from question ten reflected 33 participants had a mentor when entering the superintendency while six indicated they did not. The answers provided to question 11 conflicted with this number and appears to indicate one less respondent. The researcher surmised that perhaps one participant overlooked marking this particular item.

Table 11

*Length of Mentorship*

|                   |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| 0 - 1 years       |  | 58.8%               | 20                |
| 1 - 2 years       |  | 35.3%               | 12                |
| 3 - 5 years       |  | 2.9%                | 1                 |
| more than 5 years |  | 2.9%                | 1                 |

Question 12 explored the gender of the mentor. As noted in Table 12, participants who had male mentors accounted for 63.6% of the responses, while 36.4% indicated they had a female mentor.

Table 12



*Male or Female Mentor*

|        |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|--------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Male   |  | 63.6%               | 21                |
| Female |  | 36.4%               | 12                |

Question 13 inquired as to whether the women superintendents in this study believed the gender of their mentor was important. All 39 participants answered this question with 23.1% indicating the gender of their mentor was important and 76.9% reporting the gender of their mentor was not important.

Table 13

*Mentor Gender*





|     |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-----|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| Yes |   | 23.1%               | 9                 |
| No  |  | 76.9%               | 30                |

All 39 participants answered question 14 regarding the type of mentoring received. A definition of informal and formal mentoring was provided with the question to assist in clarification. Informal mentoring was defined as a relationship that developed spontaneously or informally without any assistance. Formal mentoring was defined as a

relationship that resulted from a structured program that contained specific criteria for implementation. As shown in Table 14, participants indicated 56.4% (N=22), indicated they received both informal and formal mentoring. A total of 17.9% (N=7) received informal mentoring, 10.3% (N=4) received formal mentoring, and 15.4% (N=6) reported they did not have a mentor in the superintendency.

Table 14

*Type of Mentorship*

|                                    |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Formal Mentoring                   |    | 10.3%               | 4                 |
| Informal Mentoring                 |    | 17.9%               | 7                 |
| Both Formal and Informal Mentoring |    | 56.4%               | 22                |
| Did Not Have a Mentor              |  | 15.4%               | 6                 |

Questions 15 and 16 inquired about the district size of the participants' mentor and if similar district sizes were described as rural, urban, and suburban. Results uncovered 56.4% (N=22) of mentors came from the same and 28.2% (N=11) reported their mentor came from a different district size. The survey indicated 15.4% (N=6) did not have a mentor and could not respond. Participants were then asked if it was important for a mentor to have experience in a similar district size. Results also revealed 84.6% (N=33) reported it was important to have a mentor from the same district size and 15.4% (N=6) indicated this was not important. It is interesting to note 84.6% (N=33) reflected all women superintendents who had a mentor, while 15.4% (N=6) represented those who did not have a mentor. It appeared that 28.2% changed their decision on this

question regarding the importance of having a mentor. In question 15, 28.2% reported similar district sizes were important for them and their mentor and question 16, 28.2% confirmed it was important for their mentor to come from the same district size.

Table 15

*District Size*




|                              |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                   |  | 56.4%               | 22                |
| <b>No</b>                    |  | 28.2%               | 11                |
| <b>Did Not Have a Mentor</b> |  | 15.4%               | 6                 |

Table 16

*Similar District Size*

|            |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Yes</b> |  | 84.6%               | 33                |
| <b>No</b>  |   | 15.4%               | 6                 |

Questions 17 and 18 explored the average frequency and duration of mentoring sessions (Tables 17 and 18 respectively). Question 17 was answered by 31 respondents and eight did not answer. Of the 31 participants, 71% (N=22) responded the average frequency of their mentoring sessions was once a month. Results also indicated 12.9% (N=4) reported they saw their mentor once every three weeks, 12.9% (N=4) reported mentoring sessions once every two weeks, and 3.2% (N=1) reported mentoring sessions once per week.

Table 17

*Frequency of Mentoring Session*

|                          |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>1 X/week</b>          |  | 3.2%                | 1                 |
| <b>1 X every 2 weeks</b> |  | 12.9%               | 4                 |
| <b>1 X every 3 weeks</b> |  | 12.9%               | 4                 |
| <b>1 X/month</b>         |  | 71.0%               | 22                |

Question 18 regarding the duration of mentoring sessions was answered by 32 of the 39 participants. The choices available (listed minutes) were 15, 30, 45, or 60. A total of 43.8% (N=14) indicated their mentoring sessions were 30 minutes in duration. Results also revealed 15.6% (N=5) respondents reported their session durations were 60 minutes or one hour, while another 15.6% (N=5) indicated their sessions were more than 60 minutes or one hour. In addition, 12.5% (N=4) respondents reported durations of 45 minutes while 12.5% (N=4) reported sessions of 15 minutes.

Table 18

*Duration of Sessions*

|                           |  | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|
| <b>15 minutes</b>         |  | 12.5%               | 4                 |
| <b>30 minutes</b>         |  | 43.8%               | 14                |
| <b>45 minutes</b>         |  | 12.5%               | 4                 |
| <b>1 hour</b>             |  | 15.6%               | 5                 |
| <b>Longer than 1 hour</b> |  | 15.6%               | 5                 |



Question 19 applied only to participants who were mentored and inquired if participants believed the mentoring process was beneficial. The choices were: Strongly Disagree; Disagree; Neutral; Agree; Strongly Agree. A total of 33 participants responded to this question. The six who did not were participants who stated they did not have a mentor. Results revealed 51.5% (N=17) strongly agreed the mentoring process had been beneficial, 39.4% (N=13) agreed the process had been beneficial, 3% (N=1) was neutral in the response, 0% chose they disagreed with mentoring being beneficial, and 6.1% (N=2) responded they strongly disagreed the mentoring process was beneficial.

Table 19

*Was Mentoring Beneficial*





|                   |            | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | ■          | 6.1%                | 2                 |
| Disagree          |            | 0.0%                | 0                 |
| Neutral           | ■          | 3.0%                | 1                 |
| Agree             | ■■■■■      | 39.4%               | 13                |
| Strongly Agree    | ■■■■■■■■■■ | 51.5%               | 17                |

Question 20 explored if participants were not mentored, did they believe this process would be beneficial. Of the 39 respondents, 12 indicated they did not have a mentor, while 27 did not answer, signifying they did have a mentor. Of the 12 respondents, 33.3% (N=4) indicated they strongly agreed mentoring would have been beneficial. Results indicated 41.7% (N=5) participants agreed mentoring would have been beneficial. Therefore, three quarters, or 75% (N=9) of the 12, indicated mentoring

would have been beneficial to them in the superintendency, 16.2% (N=2) reported they were neutral on this topic, and 8.3% (N=1) strongly disagreed mentoring would have not been beneficial.

Table 20

*Benefits of Mentoring*

|                   |   | Response<br>Percent | Response<br>Count |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------|
| Strongly Disagree |  | 8.3%                | 1                 |
| Disagree          |   | 0.0%                | 0                 |
| Neutral           |  | 16.7%               | 2                 |
| Agree             |  | 41.7%               | 5                 |
| Strongly Agree    |  | 33.3%               | 4                 |

### **Recommended Elements of an Effective Mentoring Program**

Part III of the survey investigated elements that should be included in an effective mentoring program as perceived by the participants. The 19 elements listed involved areas that often require a school district superintendent's knowledge and understanding. Participants were instructed to rank each item as to its importance of being included in a mentoring program. A five-point Likert scale was utilized with the following choices: 1 was Never; 2 was Seldom; 3 was Sometimes; 4 was Frequently; and 5 was Always.

Part III of the online survey was designed to help answer assist in answering research sub-question three, "What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program?" The highest number of participants was 37 out of 39, except for question on school law which

obtained 36 responses. A Likert scale was utilized to rate the importance of each element listed, with a score of five (5) denoting the highest level of importance for each particular element. Table 21 depicts the average scores for each of the 19 items.

Table 21

*Effective Elements of Mentoring Programs*

|   | Never        | Seldom       | Sometimes  | Frequently    | Always            | Rating<br>Average | Rating<br>Count |
|---|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Budget and Finance</b>   | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 2.7%<br>(1)  | 2.7% (1)   | 27.0%<br>(10) | 67.6%<br>(25)     | 4.59              | 37              |
| <b>Personnel</b>  | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 5.4% (2)   | 24.3% (9)     | 70.3%<br>(26)     | 4.65              | 37              |
| <b>School Board Relations</b>   | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 2.7%<br>(1)  | 0.0% (0)   | 18.9% (7)     | 78.4%<br>(29)     | 4.73              | 37              |
| <b>Politics in Education</b>  | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 2.7%<br>(1)  | 24.3% (9)  | 48.0%<br>(18) | 24.3%<br>(9)      | 3.95              | 37              |
| <b>School-Community Relations</b>   | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 29.7% (11) | 27.0%<br>(10) | 43.2%<br>(16)     | 4.14              | 37              |
| <b>Strategic Planning</b>   | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 18.9% (7)  | 32.4%<br>(12) | 48.6%<br>(18)     | 4.30              | 37              |
| <b>Collaboration</b>  | 2.7%<br>(1)  | 2.7%<br>(1)  | 29.7% (11) | 32.4%<br>(12) | 32.4%<br>(12)     | 3.89              | 37              |
| <b>School Law</b>   | 2.8%<br>(1)  | 5.6%<br>(2)  | 19.4% (7)  | 33.3%<br>(12) | 38.9%<br>(14)     | 4.00              | 38              |
| <b>Facilities (planning, construction,<br/>and operations)</b>                            | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 32.4% (12) | 48.0%<br>(18) | 13.5%<br>(5)      | 3.70              | 37              |
| <b>Data Analysis for Instructional<br/>Improvements</b>                                   | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 13.5%<br>(5) | 13.5% (5)  | 32.4%<br>(12) | 35.1%<br>(13)     | 3.78              | 37              |
| <b>Being familiar with Board<br/>Policies and their impact on the<br/>school district</b> | 0.0%<br>(0)  | 10.8%<br>(4) | 18.2% (6)  | 28.7%<br>(11) | 43.2%<br>(16)     | 4.05              | 37              |
| <b>Conflict Management Training<br/>and Application</b>                                   | 8.1%<br>(3)  | 10.8%<br>(4) | 32.4% (12) | 32.4%<br>(12) | 16.2%<br>(6)      | 3.38              | 37              |
| <b>Knowledge of Federal Programs<br/>such as Title I, IIA, III, ESOL,<br/>Migrant</b>     | 10.8%<br>(4) | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 27.0% (10) | 29.7%<br>(11) | 27.0%<br>(10)     | 3.57              | 37              |
| <b>NCLB/Waivers</b>   | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 18.9%<br>(7) | 27.0% (10) | 29.7%<br>(11) | 18.9%<br>(7)      | 3.38              | 37              |
| <b>Preparing Grants at the federal,<br/>state, and local levels</b>                       | 10.8%<br>(4) | 10.8%<br>(4) | 32.4% (12) | 40.5%<br>(15) | 5.4%<br>(2)       | 3.19              | 37              |
| <b>Professional Development for<br/>Faculty and Staff</b>                                 | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 13.5%<br>(5) | 24.3% (9)  | 32.4%<br>(12) | 24.3%<br>(9)      | 3.57              | 37              |
| <b>Personal Time Management</b>   | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 27.0% (10) | 24.3% (9)     | 37.8%<br>(14)     | 3.84              | 37              |
| <b>Work-Family Balance</b>  | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 27.0% (10) | 27.0%<br>(10) | 35.1%<br>(13)     | 3.81              | 37              |
| <b>Personal Stress Management</b>   | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 5.4%<br>(2)  | 21.6% (8)  | 32.4%<br>(12) | 35.1%<br>(13)     | 3.86              | 37              |
|   |              |              |            |               | answered question |                   | 37              |
|   |              |              |            |               | skipped question  |                   | 2               |

The top 10 effective elements of a mentoring program listed by the respondents were: school board relations, 4.73; personnel, 4.65; budget and finance, 4.59; strategic planning, 4.30; school community relations, 4.14; board policies familiarity, 4.05; school law, 4.00; politics in education, 3.95; collaboration, 3.89; and personal stress management, 3.86.

The bottom remaining nine in rank order were: personal time management, 3.84; work family balance, 3.81; data analysis for instructional improvements, 3.78; facilities, 3.70; knowledge of federal programs and professional development were both equal, 3.57; conflict management and NCLB were equally scored at 3.38; and the lowest was preparing grants at the federal, state, and local levels; 3.19.

## **Qualitative Interview Results**

### **Description of Participants**

Question 22 of the online survey asked participants if they were willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Of the 17 respondents, three indicated they did not have a mentor which reduced the available candidates to 14. Eight women superintendents were then purposefully selected from the 14 and interviewed using 11 predetermined questions (Appendix C). The eight women superintendents selected represented the following districts: four rural, three urban, and one suburban. Additional attempts were made to seek more suburban participants; however, these requests did not yield any responses. Each of the eight who committed to the follow-up interview, confirmed a date and time to between June 10, 2013 and August 12, 2013. A description of participants is provided in Table 22.

Table 22

*Characteristics of Interviewees*

| Superintendent Number | Years of Experience in Superintendency | District Type | Mentor Gender    |
|-----------------------|--|---------------|------------------|
| Superintendent 1      | 5                                      | Rural         | Male             |
| Superintendent 2      | 6                                      | Suburban      | Male             |
| Superintendent 3      | 11                                     | Urban         | Female           |
| Superintendent 4      | 6                                      | Urban         | Male             |
| Superintendent 5      | 5                                      | Urban         | Male then Female |
| Superintendent 6      | 1                                      | Rural         | Female           |
| Superintendent 7      | 1                                      | Rural         | Female           |
| Superintendent 8      | 5                                      | Rural         | Female           |

Experience ranged from one year to 11 years in the superintendency. Two superintendents had one year of experience, one had four years, two had five years, two had six years, and one had 11 years of experience. Of the eight, four were from rural counties, three from urban, and one suburban. Three superintendents had mentors who were men, four had women mentors, and one had a man followed by a woman.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data from the interviews of the eight women superintendents yielded themes and patterns which emerged from open coding. Initially, transcripts were read and notes containing pertinent details were made in the margin. From this information, the researcher made connections among these chunks of data which led to

emerging patterns. Member checking was also utilized to clarify information regarding the gender of their mentor and district size. This was accomplished by communicating with the eight superintendents to clarify district sizes and the gender of their mentor.

The first level of data analysis involved reading each transcript in its entirety and noting significant points in the margin. The researcher reviewed the notes and recorded any commonalities that existed. Transcripts were examined more than once which provided 19 initial level elements listed in Table 23. Additional examinations yielded a second level of analysis which provided six elements listed in Table 23. A third level of analysis was then conducted which produced three major elements or themes which included mentoring experiences, elements of an effective mentoring program, and encouragement to enter the field of superintendency as listed in Table 23. The three major themes that emerged mirrored the research questions and were utilized to investigate the mentoring experiences of Georgia women superintendents. Specific quotes from the eight superintendents have been included to add to the depth of information obtained. Table 23 outlines the first, second, and third levels of data analysis. The three themes and the corresponding sub themes will be described in the following sections.

Table 23

*Three Levels of Data Analysis*

| 3 <sup>rd</sup> Level of Data Analysis |                            |   |
|--|----------------------------|---|
| RQ1. Mentoring Experiences             | RQ2. Effective Elements    | RQ3. Encouragement to Enter Field         |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Level of Data Analysis |                            |   |
| 1A. Positive Experiences               | 2A. Knowledge Based        | 3A. Need for Effective Mentor             |
| 1B. Negative Experiences               | 2B. Social/Emotional Based | 3B. Advice in Seeking an Effective Mentor |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Level of Data Analysis |                            |   |
| 1A. Support System                     | 2A. Budget/Finance         | 3A. Builds Confidence                     |
| 1A. Good Relationship                  | 2A. Board Relations        | 3A. Increases Success                     |
| 1A. Female Mentor                      | 2A. Personnel              |   |
| 1A. Formal/Informal                    | 2A. Facilities             |   |
|  | 2A. Curriculum             |   |
| 1B. Distance                           | 2B. Support                | 3B. Good Relations                        |
| 1B. Informal Only                      | 2B. Good Listener          | 3B. Experienced                           |
|  | 2B. Female Mentor          | 3B. Female Mentor                         |

**Mentoring Experiences: Theme 1**

All eight participants indicated their overall mentoring experiences had been positive and beneficial. Although all eight indicated their mentoring experience as a



whole had been positive, some of them identified things could have made their experience more valuable. Mentoring experiences were broken into two sub-themes that included positive and negative experiences. The positive experiences were further divided into the following sub-themes: support system, good relationship, female mentors, and formal and informal mentoring experiences. The negative experiences were sub-themed into distance and informal mentoring only.

### **Positive Experiences: Sub-theme 1**

All eight superintendents purported their mentoring experiences had been positive. Underneath this overall topic, all eight superintendents described positive mentoring experiences as having someone that offered a supportive system (superintendents one through eight); having a mentor that was always available to them (superintendents three, four, five, and six); having a mentor that was experienced in the field of the superintendency (superintendents three, five, and eight); someone that encouraged them or built their confidence (superintendents three, four, and five); someone that matched their personality (superintendent three); females mentoring females (superintendents three, four, five, six, and eight); someone who introduced them to broaden their network connections (superintendents three and six); and a mentor who checked on them (superintendent four).

Superintendent one replied, “All of my mentoring experiences have been positive and I think it’s because my mentor matched my personality.” Superintendent five indicated her mentoring experience was constructive because her mentor built her confidence when he phoned to inquire how she was doing and often visited in the district.

Superintendent six indicated having a person available that understands the position of the superintendency and is available to support you was important in the mentoring process.

This positive sub-theme was further separated into four additional areas: support system, good relationship, female mentor, and formal and informal combination.

***Support System.*** Superintendents one through eight divulged mentoring served as a support system for them during interviews. A support system for mentoring was described as being one in which they could associate and interact with communications that enabled the mentee to gain needed assistance. Superintendent one revealed the most beneficial portion of her mentoring was understanding she was supported when she stated, “Knowing that there are other superintendents out there who face the same types of issues and you know hearing how they deal with things in their district in order for you to try it in my district” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013).

Superintendent three received support from another woman superintendent. When she arrived in Georgia, the GSSA inquired if she could benefit from a mentor. She had five previous year’s experience as superintendent in another state, but knew that Georgia would be different in some areas. She was contacted by the Georgia School Superintendents Association president who inquired if she desired a mentor since she was in a new state. Superintendent three accepted this mentorship and revealed her mentor was a great example to follow, was constantly available, and provided tremendous support.

Superintendent four revealed her positive experiences included her mentor building her confidence by simply checking on her with simple task. She stated, “He just calls me when he sees test scores come out, when he’s in the area, when he sees what is going on in the newspaper because he’s that kind of individual” (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013).

Superintendent six informed the researcher her mentor provided a system of support. She revealed having a mentor who was accessible and desired to see her successful was significant when she stated,

I think one of the biggest and most important experiences was having that mentor and the other positive thing to me was that she took it very personally. It was not just call me if you need, but she wanted me to do a good job at being a mentor. It meant a lot to her and you could tell it. She would go way above and beyond by going to state board meetings so I could have that experience and introduce me to people. (Superintendent 6, July 19, 2013).

Superintendent seven reported she experienced a supportive mentoring experience when she initially began the superintendency. She exclaimed support was a necessary ingredient for success when she stated,

My mentor provided support throughout my experience. She let me know quickly that other superintendents had the same problems and issues as me and that brought relief. Sometimes you think you are the only one with these issues and you are not. Just knowing you have good people out there that are willing to help you and support you for success was a benefit. (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013)

***Good Relationship.*** All eight superintendents disclosed having a good relationship with your mentor could be advantageous. Superintendent two was named interim superintendent due to the dismissal of her predecessor. The Georgia School Superintendents Association assigned her a male mentor and she was grateful to have assistance. Superintendent two revealed it was important to have a good relationship with your mentor and someone close in distance to access especially given the way she inherited the position,

They assigned me someone geographically close to me and someone who had a lot of experience with different types of situations since I was in a difficult situation where someone had been fired and there was a lot to clean up. We had a good relationship immediately and this was instrumental in my success with a difficult situation. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

Superintendent three reported her mentoring relationship began when the Georgia School Board Association assigned her a female mentor. They began their affiliation by going to lunch and simply having conversation regarding their backgrounds, families, and commonalities. Their first topic was how to build positive relations with school board members. “She said you just get to know them as individuals and ask what their interests are, what their issues are, and what their soapbox issues are so to speak.”

In addition, superintendent three revealed having a mentor with a similar outlook proved to be key to the relationship when she stated, “My mentor matched my personality and I think that is important” (Superintendent 3, June 14, 2013).

Superintendent five had a male mentor initially and she described their relationship as positive. Their first topic was budget. She revealed her mentor was seasoned and one who had numerous experiences with budgets. “We talked about how to build a budget and make it last” (Superintendent 5, July 1, 2013). She reported feeling comfortable asking questions and all questions were appropriate due to a good relationship. She supported this statement when she stated, “I felt I could put everything on the table and it was fine.” She built a relationship and trust in which she was able to grow. She described her mentor as answering questions she had never encountered before and being a resource. She indicated her experience was beneficial.

Superintendent eight revealed an important component of mentoring was the mentor understanding the mentee and developing a good rapport as described below:

My mentor could be described as someone who was open and listened. She also communicated with me and I feel the listening part is so important for them to listen to your concerns. We had also done a personality inventory; she (my mentor) knew what I was thinking and my approaches. She led me around in different directions to handle things which were good. It taught me a little bit about how to really look at things a little differently. (Superintendent 8, August 12, 2013)

Overall, the participants revealed a high-quality relationship with their mentor.

Descriptions portrayed during interviews indicated these affiliations were important attributes of a positive mentoring experience.

***Female Mentor.*** It was disclosed that a female mentor provided a positive experience for those who had one. Superintendent one reported her mentor was a man. She revealed this was the situation for most superintendents due to a high number of men superintendents compared to women when she stated, “I believe this is probably the case with many of us because there are typically more men in the profession” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013).

Superintendent four reported she desired a deeper mentoring experience, one which she found by seeking out another female mentor. This female mentor assisted her by asking good questions regarding her issues and allowing her to discover her own answers.

She helped me work problems out without giving me advice. Just asking really good questions and then sending me some material later that went along with about what I was talking about and I was able to work out my problem exactly and this is more than just a confidence builder. (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2014)

She carefully supported the male mentor, but continued to expound on how females have different challenges when she stated,

You know there’s nobody to really help us through things and I think women have a whole different challenge to, you know another dimension of challenge. We tend to approach problems differently and it’s kind of rare to seek out a male superintendent to talk with you. I mean men superintendents are very fine people and I enjoy conversations with them, but how they would go about handling problems such as personnel issues, communication problems, and things like that

are just a whole lot different than I would. They are fine colleagues and we network with them, but when it comes to those real solutions women tend to have a different style and there are so few of us. I know when you talk about something you have done and how you went about something, you feel like you are talking another vocabulary. (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013)

Superintendent five reported she initially had a male mentor, but later began leaning on other female superintendents. She shared, “Even though I had a male mentor, I leaned heavily on other female superintendents because I felt like sometimes some of the same issues may not be the same for a male superintendent.” She explained she was fortunate to live in a part of Georgia where there were numerous female superintendents who were open to mentorship. Superintendent five revealed this when she stated, “They were very encouraging and really, you know, absolutely pulled me into their small group. At that time, our female state school superintendent had a program for female superintendents where she met with us.” She also indicated that Georgia has a higher percentage of female superintendents than other states and she believed Georgia School Superintendents Association played a huge role since they assisted with mentorship. All areas of support she received were notable and she could not recall any negatives.

Superintendent six was assigned a female mentor when she assumed her position. She had been in the education field for approximately 25 years, but reported that there were topics in the superintendency with which she did not have experience. She believed having a female mentor assigned to new women superintendents was key given the state of education:

Being a superintendent is definitely a man's world and so there are some things you have to deal with that you are going to deal with the majority of men. The committees are going to be men and other groups you are in are going to be men. It was exciting that the mentor I had was a female veteran superintendent to give me guidance in the role of being a superintendent, but also in being a woman in a man's world. (Superintendent 6, July 19, 2013)

Superintendent seven revealed an important ingredient for mentorship was females being available to support other females. She stated,

I had a mentor who was a female superintendent with six years' experience and it has been nice to talk to other women superintendents because I think we are few in numbers until the last five years. They have been so helpful and I have not had anybody say I cannot do it at this time. Everybody's been so supportive of me as superintendent and females understand females. (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013)

Superintendent eight discussed female dynamics are different from males and that women handle situations much differently than men. She expressed appreciation for being assigned a female mentor when she stated, "female superintendents can talk to other female superintendents who understand you and will not judge you for being open and honest and everything discussed remains among us." Her positive experiences included, "having a woman mentor whose personality was different than hers." She depicted her as an expert on hand and one that was highly involved. "She knew how to



ask the right questions to elicit responses appropriate for resolving issues in the superintendency.” (Superintendent 8, August 11, 2013)

Overall, this section indicated female superintendents desire other female superintendents for mentoring due to specific challenges their genders face. Evidence was noted in this segment that supported women mentors are another positive experience of mentoring.

***Formal/Informal Combination.*** Superintendents two, three, four, six, seven, and eight revealed their mentoring was a combination of both formal and informal which was a benefit. Superintendent two indicated that her mentoring experience began as formal and then added informal components. She described the formal mentoring sessions as being scheduled, following protocols, and timelines. Informal mentoring also took place when she began calling him in-between scheduled times for guidance and advice. Over time, a relationship developed that continued to contain formal and informal elements of mentoring. Positive experiences included a mentor with a vast array of knowledge.

Superintendent three disclosed her mentoring relationship was both informal and formal. Informal in that she could call her mentor anytime on any topic and formal in that the mentor gave her assignments. For example, “I had to list my goals for the 2011-12 school year and she looked over these goals, gave me feedback, and let me know if I was on the right track for priority setting.”

Superintendent four reported she was hired as superintendent because what she had accomplished in her previous leadership positions as a principal with leadership development, teaching, learning, and school improvement. She confirmed her past

experience as principal assisted her with operational issues, but not with areas such as transportation and construction. She was mentored by a male through some formal and mostly informal sessions. She stated,

He made an appointment with me and we sat down and just talked about things. I think it was more of a supportive conversation and he asked me to talk about anything that was bothering me or particular things I had anxiety about. He made me feel like what was happening was pretty normal. (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013)

She then pointed out the mentoring was more informal because there was no real structure to the meetings and she phoned when needed.

Superintendent six portrayed her mentoring experience as both formal and informal. Formal in that there were certain topics she addressed and a schedule was maintained to keep them on track. Informal from the perspective she could call her anytime with simple questions or concerns.

Superintendent seven had a female superintendent mentor who had six year's experience and described the experience as very positive. She explained the informal nature of her mentoring experience when she said, "Informal would be when I picked up the phone and called just to get some information." (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013). Formal mentoring commenced when times were scheduled to meet and review her concerns as a new superintendent.

Superintendent eight described her mentoring experience as both formal and informal; however, she only reported informal. Her informal mentoring included

meeting and talking with the mentor in order to teach her methods to address and resolve problems.

This section supports information received that a combination of both formal and informal mentoring was beneficial to participants. This type of mentoring was again noted as a positive experience in terms of themes.

### **Negative Experiences: Sub-Theme 2**

When participants were questioned about their negative mentoring experiences, the majority of participants indicated they did not consider their mentoring encounters adverse. The few negative experiences that were shared can be divided into two categories: distance and informal mentoring.

*Distance.* Superintendent eight verbalized the distance she and/or her mentor had to travel to visit in person was less than ideal. She indicated their meetings had to be planned in advanced in order to receive maximum benefit. Threaded into her report was a desire to have her mentor located closer to allow for impromptu meetings when issues arose unexpectedly. She stated, “The disadvantage was my mentor was so far away that I had to schedule at particular times and the other times were on the phone. I think it would have been better to have our meetings face to face” (Superintendent 8, August 12, 2013).

Negative experiences for superintendent six included when her mentor retired and moved away and then re-entered the superintendency in another area and did not have as much time to spend with her. She expounded on this when she stated, “My mentor was concerned we would not have the opportunity to talk as much as we did because she was

leaving and would not have the opportunity to get together as much as we did”

(Superintendent 6, July 19, 2013).

***Informal Only.*** Informal mentoring can be defined as a person forming a spontaneous relationship with another person and guidance is sought from an experienced person. Superintendent one was the only superintendent that described her mentoring as informal. She shared this when she stated, “because meetings were not planned, they did not have an agenda, and they simply conversed a lot.” She described the in-depth conversations as a positive benefit of mentoring; however, she desired sessions to be more planned.

### **Effective Elements**

#### **Knowledge-Based**

Effective elements for the sub-theme knowledge-based included budget and finance, board relations, personnel, facilities, and curriculum. Superintendent one reported budget and budget cuts were the first topic addressed by her mentor as they began their mentoring relationship. She revealed her desire as a new superintendent was to have the ability to explain to the public what was taking place in the education world in an understandable fashion. She stated,

I have a lot of questions about how to get the message out there and to be able to explain the message well to both the public and board. Sometimes we are so immersed in school business, that we do not do a good job of explaining our message well to others not in the educational field” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013).

Superintendent five emphasized knowledge based elements when she stated, “Effective components of a mentoring program included going through the budget process, hiring procedures, through the human resources piece, curriculum, and stakeholder involvement.” She acknowledged these areas are critical to the role of the superintendent.

Superintendents six included the following knowledge-based components: curriculum, finance, budget, and a contact person who assists you in staying abreast of all the changes in education. She indicated a mentor should stay abreast of changes in education, stating, “Knowledge base is one of the biggest things for an effective mentor because you do not want a mentor who would guide you in the wrong direction” (Superintendent 6, July 19, 2013).

Superintendent seven reported an effective program would contain more formal mentoring experiences and topics on budget, how to work with board members, facilities, building new facilities, bond issues, referendums, and teacher evaluations. Every aspect of the superintendency should be included.

Superintendent eight was assigned a female mentor from GSSA and her first topic addressed was personnel. She indicated entering the superintendency after the school year had begun and addressing personnel issues was a tremendous task and her mentor provided guidance once entering the role.

### **Social-emotional Based**

Social emotional characteristics are grounded in people interactions and understanding ones emotions. These elements were listed by participants and were noted

to be effective units for a successful mentoring program. The following social-emotional essentials were included from the eight women superintendents interviewed: a supportive mentor, a good listener, and a female mentor.

**Support.** Support is a critical component for mentoring. Superintendent one revealed, “If the mentor allows our mentee to come up with the answer on their own and we listen to what they say and then we are able to support them which instills the confidence in them to be able to make those decisions” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013). She also reported mentors provide support by having a plan for each meeting, an agenda or guide, and being a good listener.

Superintendent four reported an effective elements needed in a mentoring program would include support for managing emotions. She also expounded the importance of mentors assisting women with directing their feelings when she stated,

It would be nice to have people to tell us how you manage your emotions in this job, how do detach when you make a decision and what do you have to do to take care of yourself because you are able to do that. I think this would really be beneficial to a lot of women. (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013)

**Good Listener.** Superintendent three noted effective elements in a mentoring program were being understanding, a good listener, and having good communication skills. However, she placed one area above the others, stating “A mentor should be aware that female superintendents are a minority in the state of Georgia and in the United States and conveying confidence to the mentee in order for them to know a female

superintendent can do anything a male superintendent can do, if not better”

(Superintendent 3, June 14, 2013).

***Female Mentor.*** Superintendent two reported having a woman mentor would be beneficial, but she stated there are very few of them available. Superintendent seven reported the worth of a female mentor in a formal environment providing pertinent topics involving the superintendency when she revealed,

I think it would be nice to have a list of those and you and your mentor plan to get together to discuss. I think it would be great if there was more formal time to talk and mainly with female superintendents. (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013)

### **Encouragement to Enter the Field: Theme 3**

Participants interviewed provided advice for encouraging potential women superintendents to enter the field. Results were reported into two sub-theme categories: Need for an Effective Mentor and Advice in Seeking an Effective Mentor. Underneath the topic of Need for Effective Mentor, superintendents revealed building confidence and increasing success were two important areas. Below Advice in Seeking an Effective Mentor, participants disclosed they would seek a mentor they could develop a good relationship with, one that was experienced, and they would also seek a female mentor.

#### **Need for Effective Mentor**

Encouragement to enter the field entailed the need for a mentor that was effective. Effective mentors were described as assisting the mentee with confidence building and increasing their success in the superintendent’s position.

***Builds Confidence.*** Superintendent two noted experience, a servant leader, and confidence building were important qualities in a mentor. She revealed this when she stated,

He gave me the confidence I needed to understand I was not as stupid as I thought I was. He also built my confidence by reminding me everyone faces the same things that I did and they did not know exactly what to do any better than I did.  
(Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

Superintendent eight listed the following qualities the mentor should contain in order assure the mentee: good training for the mentor, being a conversation listener, understanding what is heard, and being an expert in questioning. She reported these elements assist superintendents in finding their own answers which leads to confidence building. “The whole process teaches you to become confident in your decision making which is critical” (Superintendent 8, August 12, 2013).

***Increases Success.*** A mentor that assists the mentee with increased success has been noted as a key component to encourage an aspiring superintendent. Superintendent six described her most beneficial experience as having someone there that wants you to be successful.

### **Advice in Seeking an Effective Mentor**

Superintendent eight advised aspiring superintendents to search for an experienced mentor who is willing to provide a mentee with the support needed to be successful, be open, willing to listen, and communicate with you. She stressed the importance of getting all the facts before deciding to take on the superintendent role. She



suggested, “Before you decide you really want to do this or not, be a superintendent, I would think you would want to talk to some superintendents first because it’s a very interesting job” (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013).

***Good Relationship.*** When searching for a mentor, all eight of the participants indicated they would look for a good relationship. Underneath this overall topic, they described a good relationship with their mentor as being someone they were comfortable with (superintendents two, three, and eight); someone who would share their experiences (superintendents two, six, and four); a good match (superintendents one, three, and eight); an experienced superintendent (superintendents one, six, and eight); one that would provide support (superintendents four, six, seven, and eight); someone you trust and is honest (superintendent one and eight); willing to serve (superintendent two); and a good listener (superintendents one, seven, and eight).

Superintendent eight reported attempts needed to be made to select a mentor that was compatible. She suggested women superintendents pursue a mentor they could trust and would be a good match for them. She revealed the proper mentoring relationship was imperative when she stated, “I think the relationship is important and it’s very important that they match personalities with the right people” (Superintendent 8, August 12, 2013).

***Experienced.*** Finding a mentor with experience was noted as another important area to consider. Superintendent one defined an experienced mentor as, “Someone who has traveled the road before us” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013). Superintendent four described the qualities of good mentor as being, “Someone who has been through the

fires more than you and has survived them. Someone who has made mistakes and is willing to share what some of those mistakes might have been” (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013). Superintendent six indicated a seasoned mentor was important when she mentioned, “You need a mentor who has had the experience because unfortunately, it is difficult” (Superintendent 6, August 19, 2013).

***Female Mentor.*** Superintendents two, three, four, six, and seven indicated having another female superintendent would be important in a mentor. Superintendent four stated,

I think women have a whole different challenge, you know, another dimension of challenge and we tend to approach problems differently. You would feel more comfortable taking through something with another woman. I mean most of the men superintendents I know are very fine people and I enjoy their conversations with them, but how they would go about handling problems such as personnel issues, communication problems, and things like that are just a whole lot different than I would. They are fine colleagues and we network with them, but women tend to have a different style on how to deal with things. You know men just have a different vocabulary and after a while you don't even share that much. (Superintendent 4, June 27, 2013)

Similarly, superintendent six reported,

I was very excited to be assigned a women mentor because the reality of it is being superintendent is definitely a man's world and so there are some things you have to deal with that that involves men as the majority. Committees are going to

be men and groups you're in are going to be men. I was very excited I had a female, veteran superintendent. She could not only give me guidance in the role of being a superintendent, but also in being a woman in a man's world.

(Superintendent 6, July 19, 2013)

Superintendent seven also noted the importance of a female mentor, as well as having additional formal times to discuss crucial tasks pertinent to the role. She stated,

I think it would be great if there were more of a formal time where female superintendents get together and talk about the budget, how to work with board members, facilities, especially new buildings, bond issues, referendums, and teacher evaluations. (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013).

The researcher has reported the three major themes as evidenced above. The findings will be shared by way of the research questions.

### **Overarching Research Question**

The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? The overarching research question was answered by Part II, Mentoring Experiences, of the online survey which utilized questions ten through 20, and the interview portion utilized questions one, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight.

Results from the quantitative survey revealed 84.6% of women superintendents had mentors when they entered the role with the majority being mentored zero to one year. A total of 63.6% of these women had male mentors and 76.9% did not believe the gender of their mentor was significant. The majority of women who were mentored

reported they had both formal and informal mentoring from the same district type which was relevant to them. Results also revealed 71% were mentored once a month for 30 minutes. Overall, 91% of the mentored superintendents believed the mentoring process was beneficial and those who were not mentored agreed mentoring would have been beneficial.

Results from the qualitative interviews revealed all eight superintendents reported their mentoring experiences as extremely positive. All eight expounded on this topic by discussing details of their initial mentoring topic, describing the type of mentoring received, their positive and negative experiences, and their most beneficial part of mentoring. Quotes were cited to add to the richness of the data collected.

### **Subquestion Number One**

How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia?

Subquestion number one was answered by Part II, Mentoring Experiences, of the online survey which utilized questions 11, 17, and 18. The interview portion utilized questions one, three, five, six, and nine.

Results from the quantitative portion revealed 85% of women superintendents had a mentor when they entered the position and the remaining 15% did not. A total of 58.8% of participants had their mentor from zero to one year. Mentoring sessions were once a month for 71% of respondents and 44% reported the duration of their mentoring sessions were 30 minutes.

Results from the qualitative research indicated all eight of the women superintendents reported positive mentoring experiences that were beneficial. A total of

62.5% were mentored by other women, 12.5% were mentored by both a man and woman separately, and 25% were mentored by a man.

All eight superintendents reported numerous, positive experiences from mentoring. Results revealed 100% (N=8) of women superintendents reported mentoring provided a support system for them. A total of 75% (N=6) of them specifically mentioned mentoring was a supportive system for them, while subtopics that could be included in this broad topic were also reported. These subtopics included that could be housed underneath “a supportive system” were as follows: always available (superintendents three, four, five, and six or 50%), building a positive relationship (superintendent three, or 12.5%), building confidence (superintendents four and five, or 25%), someone always there for me (superintendents three, four, five, and six, or 50%), an immediate contact (superintendents five and six, or 25%), someone who introduced me to other people (superintendents three and six, or 25%), someone to have an in depth conversation with (superintendent one, or 12.5%), and someone who checked on me (superintendent four, or 12.5%). It is to be noted again that these superintendents interviewed often reported more than one positive mentoring experience which explains cross over’s in the percentages.

Other positive experiences areas for mentoring outside of a supportive system included the following: expert in the field or someone who was “seasoned” (superintendents three, five, and eight, or 37.5%); a mentor who knew the right questions to ask to elicit good responses (superintendents three and eight, or 25%); a mentor who had coached before (superintendent eight, or 12.5%); a mentor who took their position

personally (superintendent six, or 12.5%); and a mentor who matched my personality (superintendent three, or 12.5%).

The following negatives were noted by the superintendents regarding mentoring: distance of mentor, no formal planning, and a lack of women superintendents being available to mentor. Superintendent one revealed she preferred her meetings with her male mentor to be more planned. “I just felt like if we had some conversations up front about the things that I needed help with and then came up with a plan it could have been more helpful” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013).

Superintendent two was the only one who described the superintendency as a “boys club.” She purported men superintendents do not intentionally exclude women superintendents, but this does occur. She continued to expound upon groups of men superintendents are not inclined to include women on topics prevalent to the superintendency, but individually they would incorporate women on less prevalent topics. She stated,

I have seen this happen with our local people around me that were men and men I was close to. One on one I would talk with them all the time. They would call to be sure I was okay, but they would get together once a month and meet and never invite me. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

Superintendent eight indicated that distance was one topic that could be considered negative because they really had to work hard to plan their meetings in order to maximize their time. She revealed it would have been more beneficial to have someone closer geographically when informal items arose and then they could meet in person to discuss. “My sessions had to be scheduled at particular times in Macon, Savannah, or Atlanta and

when things are busy you don't really have time to sit down with them due to distance and so most of ours was on the phone. I think many times it would have been better to have it face to face" (Superintendent 8, August 12, 2013).

### **Subquestion Number Two**

How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring? Subquestion number one was answered by Part II, Mentoring Experiences, of the online survey which utilized questions ten through 20. The interview portion utilized questions one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and eight.

Results from the quantitative survey revealed 84.6% of women superintendents had mentors when they entered the role with the majority being mentored zero to one year. A total of 63.6% of these women had male mentors and 76.9% did not believe the gender of their mentor was significant. The majority of women who were mentored reported they had both formal and informal mentoring from the same district type which was relevant to them. A total of 71% were mentored once a month for 30 minutes. Overall results revealed 91% of the mentored superintendents believed the mentoring process was beneficial and those who were not mentored agreed mentoring would have been beneficial.

Results from the qualitative interviews indicated superintendents two, three, four, six, seven, and eight or 75% of the participants described their mentoring experience as a combination of formal and informal. Superintendent two stated,

My mentoring was a combination of both that began with formal mentoring that contained protocols and timelines and the informal portion came in when I casually called him between the formal, scheduled sessions. In the formal

sessions, he guided me and helped facilitate my thinking without giving me advice. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

Superintendent three indicated the formal portion consisted of assignments while the informal portion was geared toward the relationship. She stated,

On informal I could just say you know I've got this situation and this is how I'm thinking about handling it. What do you think? That's kind of informal because we are just having a conversation. Or I could get specific formal feedback in writing of something I had done, for example, my goals, my priorities that I knew I wanted, I would want to know her point of view and if that was the route I was supposed to be taking. (Superintendent 3, June 14, 2013)

Superintendents one and five only experienced informal mentoring. Superintendent one stated,

I felt like it was more informal, you know, we just did a lot of talking. I learned a lot from that, but it didn't seem to have a formal path to it. He would stop by from time to time and just chat. There didn't seem to be any particular questions he asked and I never really knew when he was coming so I would not always be prepared to ask things. (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013)

Superintendent five stated, "It was very informal. I felt very free to ask questions. I felt like there were not any questions that I didn't feel comfortable asking so in other words, there were no dumb questions" (Superintendent 5, July 1, 2013). She also indicated during the informal mentoring sessions they built a relationship of trust and her mentors assisted her in growing. She also pointed out that they served as a great resource to



answer a wide array of questions which is crucial for this position. None of the female superintendents interviewed reported formal mentoring only.

All eight superintendents reported having positive experiences from mentoring and that it served as a support system for them. A total of 75% (N=6) of them specifically mentioned mentoring was a supportive system for them, while subtopics that could be included under this broad topic were also reported. These subtopics were as follows: always available (superintendents three, four, five, and six, or 50%), building a positive relationship (superintendent three, or 12.5%), building confidence (superintendents four and five, or 25%), someone always there for me (superintendents three, four, five, and six, or 50%), an immediate contact (superintendents five and six, or 25%), someone who introduced me to other people (superintendents three and six, or 25%), someone to have an in depth conversation with (superintendent one, or 12.5%), and someone who checked on me (superintendent four, or 12.5%). The superintendents interviewed often reported more than one positive mentoring experience which explains cross over's in the percentages.

In addition to providing a supportive system, other positive experiences stemming from mentoring described by the participants included the following: an expert in the field or someone who was "seasoned" (superintendents three, five, and eight, or 37.5%); a mentor who knew the right questions to ask to elicit good responses (superintendents three and eight, or 25%); a mentor who had coached before (superintendent eight or 12.5%); a mentor who took their position personally (superintendent six, or 12.5%); and a mentor who matched my personality (superintendent three, or 12.5%).

Superintendent one revealed she preferred her meetings with her male mentor to be more purposeful and structured when she stated, “I just felt like if we had some conversations up front about the things that I needed help with and then came up with a plan it could have been more helpful” (Superintendent 1, June 10, 2013).

Superintendent two indicated she was concerned about male superintendents and their tendency to exclude women. She felt this was not intention on the men’s behalf, but it was more of a relationship issue. She stated,

There is the perception, which is based in some reality, that the superintendents are a boys club. It’s not a fault, but men reach out to other men in similar situations so that the camaraderie of support is there. They want to open it to women, but it’s that relationship kind of thing and they become just like any other man. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

She continued to report if the men superintendents had a sister they handled the relationship portion somewhat differently. She stated, “If they’re a man that had sisters or were comfortable with women and stuff they are very comfortable to opening up, but they are not as a group” (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013). She further expounded that men superintendents will include you individually, but not when they are in a group.

This statement was supported when she revealed,

When you get nine or ten men that have worked together for years and are going to lunch or talk on the phone individually, they will include you. But, as a group, they’re not going to naturally do that. They have to work to bring you in. I have seen this with our local people around me that were men and men I was close to. One on one I would talk with them all the time. They would call me to be sure I

was okay. You know, they were great. But they get together every month and have lunch and never have invited me to do that. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

She also indicated relationships like these are not a detriment to women superintendents, but if it led to being excluded from leadership roles that would not be acceptable. She stated,

It could be detrimental if you were excluded from leadership roles because of it, but that is not the case. Now, those women superintendents that are more critical of the process say this happens, but I've never been denied any opportunity and I have been fairly active in GSSA and AASA. (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013)

Superintendent eight indicated that distance was one topic that could be considered negative because they really had to work hard to plan their meetings in order to maximize their time. She revealed it would have been more beneficial to have someone closer geographically when informal items arose and then they could meet in person to discuss.

Overall, all eight superintendents interviewed indicated that support for success was the most beneficial portion of their mentoring experiences. Some superintendents reported it was difficult to narrow the most beneficial portion down due the fact they had encountered more than one positive experience. Superintendent five stated, "I am trying to think of just one area and that's pretty hard because they have helped in so many ways. I feel like overall it has been a very supportive system" (Superintendent 5, July 1, 2013). Superintendent one reported knowing that you are not alone. Superintendent two indicated a support system is important when she stated, "I think just developing the relationship with someone that continues to be a cheerleader for me which gave me more

confidence” (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013). Superintendent three reported learning from others was her most important experience while Superintendent’s four and seven indicated having another woman superintendent available was significant. Superintendent six revealed their mentor’s willingness to assist them was very helpful. Superintendent eight mentioned having someone outside the district to vent to and not being judged was critical. When inquiring as to why these items were most beneficial in their superintendency, they all responded these items had contributed to their overall success as a women superintendent.

### **Subquestion Number Three**

What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program? Subquestion number three was answered by Part III, Recommended Effective Elements of an Effective Mentoring Program, of the online survey which utilized a five-point Likert scale to rate 19 items. The interview portion utilized questions nine and ten.

Quantitative results revealed the number one element that was important was school board relations with a rating average of 4.73 out of five. The second was personnel with a rating of 4.65, third was budget and finance rated at 4.59, fourth was strategic planning with a rate of 4.30, and fifth was school community relations rated at 4.14. Elements six through ten were reported as follows: being familiar with board policies, 4.05; school law, 4.00; politics in education, 3.95; collaboration, 3.89; personal stress management, 3.86. Items 11 through 19 that were considered less effective elements to include were: personal time management, 3.84; work-family balance, 3.81; data analysis for instructional improvements, 3.78; facilities, 3.70; knowledge of federal

programs and professional development tied at 3.57; conflict management training and NCLB/Waivers tied at 3.38; and least important was preparing grants at the federal, state, and local levels, 3.19.

Results obtained from interviews revealed topics for an effective mentoring program. It was reported by four superintendents that being a good listener in order to understand was important and five superintendents noted having another woman mentor would be beneficial due to better understanding a woman's perspective and challenges. Superintendent two reported, "I think having another woman if it is possible because there are just not enough of them spread out where they need to be and there is value in having a woman mentor another woman" (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013).

Superintendent three stated,

I think understanding, good listening, and communication skills are key. It is also important understand that female superintendents are a minority in the state of Georgia and in the United States, but can do anything a male superintendent can do and we need them as mentors. (Superintendent 3, June 14, 2014)

In addition, two superintendents indicated being a seasoned mentor would be an important element. Superintendent two revealed, "Be sure your mentor is an experienced, servant leaders." (Superintendent 2, June 11, 2013). Planned meetings as opposed to random were important elements for two superintendents. The remaining effective elements dealt with knowledge based areas which included curriculum, budget, finance, hiring and personnel, community relations, stakeholder relations, how to work with board members, facilities, and teacher evaluations. Superintendent seven reported, "I think it is important that female superintendents get together and talk about the budget,

how to work with board members, building new facilities, bond issues, referendums, and teacher evaluations” (Superintendent 7, July 22, 2013).

Superintendents were then questioned as to why they believed these elements were most beneficial. Overwhelmingly, they reported these elements were confidence builders and increased a superintendent’s success. It was pointed out that effective training of the mentor led a superintendent to being able to solve their own problems with confidence by superintendent two. A total of three superintendents again noted there was value in having another woman mentor because women understand each other and have different challenges than men.

#### **Subquestion Number Four**

How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of the superintendency? The interview portion utilized questions nine, ten, and eleven to obtain data.

Quantitative results revealed the same results in subquestion three for interview questions nine and ten. Interview question eleven was also utilized to elicit responses. Overall, all superintendents agreed that a mentor’s relationship with the mentee is crucial for current women superintendents. Superintendent five stated,

I think it is important to connect you with someone you can build a relationship with, you know where you trust them, you know you can go to them and it is confidential. They give you the support that you need and then they call back and check on you and don’t just leave you and all of these things are important.

(Superintendent 5, July 1, 2013)

These warm relationships built with mentees can encourage aspiring women to enter the field. Good mentors are willing to share their experiences, are giving, experienced, honest, a good match, provides support, honest, and a good listener. These qualities can promote new women to enter the field as well. A total of five superintendents indicated earlier in the research that having another woman mentor would prove beneficial and also encourage others to enter.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in the state of Georgia. Chapter four presented the introduction, participants, response rate, demographic data, analysis of the data, overarching question, sub questions, and summary. The data collected in the surveys and interview sessions was explained using descriptive statistics. The results revealed the majority of women superintendents in Georgia have had experiences with mentoring that were beneficial.

Tables were included to provide information surrounding responses elicited from the online survey. Results revealed demographic information, mentoring experiences, and their perceptions of effective elements of a mentoring program. A total of 33 of 39 participants had been mentored in the superintendency with 20 of these indicating mentoring had occurred from zero to one year. Results also revealed 21 of the 33 had a male mentor and 30 of 39 reported the gender of the mentor was not important. The majority of the interviewees reported the gender of their mentor was important. Therefore, the survey results and the interviews did not agree on the importance of the mentor's gender.

The majority of female participants indicated they served in a rural school district and 33 of 39 reported it was important for their mentor to be from a similar district size. A total of 22 of 39 revealed they received both formal and informal mentoring. In addition, 90.9% or 33 mentored women superintendents reported mentoring had been very beneficial.

Women superintendents interviewed all agreed the mentoring process had proved beneficial which was also noted in the quantitative results. A total of five interviewees believed it would be more beneficial to be mentored by a female superintendent, which conflicted with the survey results. Superintendents two, three, four, six, and seven or 62.5% specifically experienced a women mentor in the superintendency. Superintendent five experienced both a man and then a woman mentor and reported there is value in both because it is a balance.

Three themes were developed from results obtained from the qualitative research. These themes were mentoring experiences, effective elements found in a mentoring program and encouragement for those entering the field of the superintendency. Underneath the mentoring experience theme, women superintendents in this study indicated they found the mentoring experience valuable and focused their discussions on their positive experiences. Positive sub-themes included having a good mentor/mentee relationship and the overall mentoring experience served as a support system for new women superintendents. Effective elements contained in a mentoring program were categorized as both knowledge and social-emotional elements. Knowledge based elements included budget, board relations, personnel, facilities, and curriculum. Social-emotional issues incorporated support from the mentor, having a good listener, and the



desire for female mentors. Encouragement to enter the field was sub-themed into the need for effective mentors and advice needed when seeking an effective mentor. These sub-themes yielded an effective mentor built confidence and increased success while their advice consisted of having a good relationship with the mentor, seeking one the was experienced, and considering a female mentor due to gender related issues.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in the state of Georgia. The researcher conducted a sequential descriptive mixed method study in order to obtain information regarding this topic. The following overarching question guided this study: What experiences have women superintendents in Georgia had with mentoring? The following sub-questions guided the primary question: (1) How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia?; (2) How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring?; (3) What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program?; (4) How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

The quantitative online survey was emailed to 52 women superintendents in Georgia and had 39 respondents. Participants responded to three components in the survey: Part I contained demographic information with nine questions; Part II questioned each superintendents mentoring experience with 11 questions; and Part III inquired about recommended elements for an effective mentoring program. Descriptive statistics were utilized to present results.

The qualitative portion consisted of individual interviews of eight women superintendents who had been mentored. These interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to develop themes among the women superintendents.

The purpose of this chapter was to review the rationale of this study; the research methods utilized, and present a summary of major findings. In this chapter, the researcher utilized findings related to the research questions to draw conclusions and consider implications of the study.

This chapter is consisted of the following: Discussion of findings, recommendations for future research, implications for educational leaders, implications for leader preparation programs, limitations, and conclusions.

### **Research Sub-Question 1**

How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in Georgia?

The quantitative results revealed women superintendents extent of mentoring across Georgia. A total of 33 surveyed superintendents and seven of the eight interviewed participants indicated they had a mentor when they entered the position. Therefore, qualitative results supported the findings in the quantitative research regarding having a mentor when they entered the superintendency. It was also reported seven of eight interviewed indicated the Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA) had assigned them a mentor. Considering Georgia has a higher percentage of women superintendents than the nation, perhaps GSSA's support in assigning mentors has assisted females with navigation of the position (Georgia School Superintendents Association, 2011).

The survey indicated most of the women superintendents had their mentor assist them for one year. Only one indicated they had their mentor more than five years. Interviews responses specified all superintendents had mentors when they assumed the superintendency, and most have continued mentorship to date. The participants who

shared they still have mentors reported that while mentoring was important, they sought assistance mostly from other women superintendents. A total of five participant's emphasized female mentors were best for other female superintendents and had a positive effect on their mentoring relationship. This study supported the findings of Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011) who reported females that had female mentors perceived their gender was important and would have an impact on the effect of the mentoring relationship. Discoveries from Dunsbar and Kinnersley's research were previously substantiated by Lowe (2003) and Wolverton (2002). Some of these more experienced women have now become mentors to new superintendents, but they also reported they continue to seek mentoring assistance with issues in the superintendency.

Data from the quantitative and qualitative portions also disclosed the women superintendents were mostly from small, rural districts, then urban, followed by suburban. This information mirrored Glass and Franceschini's (2007) study which revealed 55% of women superintendents were positioned in small, rural districts, 35% were located in suburbs, and urban superintendents accounted for 9%. Mentees from this research also reported their mentors were from similar district sizes as the mentee. Furthermore, participants also pointed out this commonality were important to them due to their respective challenges associated with the individuality of district size.

Results from the survey indicated the average frequency of mentoring sessions for the majority of participants was once a month. Interviews revealed the majority of women utilized formal and informal mentoring sessions in which formal sessions were scheduled and informal encounters occurred on an as needed basis.

The demographic profile of the 39 surveyed women reported the majority of women superintendents surveyed were between the ages of 51 and 60. The AASA (2010) decennial study also revealed the majority of superintendents across the nation were among these same age ranges. Glass and Francheschini (2007) purported the average age of superintendents was 55. This respective age range accounted for additional time spent in the classrooms, school leadership positions, and then central office positions as evidenced by the majority of participants who responded to the survey.

The number of years of experience in the superintendency was noted to be primarily zero to two. The investigator found it interesting to note that the majority of women superintendents in Georgia only had zero to two years' experience, as she too had two years of experience. The researcher thought the majority of superintendents would have had more than two years' experience, in part because the average timespan for superintendents indicated in the research was five years. Perhaps this new information may be indicative of a high rate of turnover in the superintendency as a result of *No Child Left Behind* and other school accountability measures. Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson's (2010) study revealed that by 2015, approximately 39 percent of superintendents plan to either leave their position, or retire. This could also be a reason why superintendents in this study averaged two years' experience or less.

A total of 91% of surveyed participants and 100% of interviewed women indicated mentoring had been an advantageous process for them. Previous research by Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) revealed mentoring benefitted women in the superintendency which supported the findings of this study. Benefits of mentoring noted from the qualitative portion of this study included building a support system, creating a

good relationship, being mentored by another female, and employing both formal and informal mentoring. As a female superintendent, the researcher agreed that having a mentor proved valuable in the superintendency because the uniqueness of the position. No one else in the district occupies a role like that of the superintendent; therefore, mentors with experience in the superintendency play a crucial part in assisting the mentee. There are multiple topics to be assessed including knowledge-based elements and social-emotional based components, and a mentor serves as a great tool to assist women superintendents.

Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011) found mentoring proved beneficial to females who have aspired to top leadership positions and the findings from this study reinforced those claims. All eight superintendents interviewed disclosed their mentors provided a support system that included building their confidence, serving as an immediate contact, being as expert in the field, and conducting in depth conversations to resolve issues.

A majority of women superintendents surveyed indicated their previous position was an assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, or another central office position as opposed to coming directly from a school setting as an administrator. This data supported the research conducted earlier by Grogan and Burnner (2005) who indicated the majority of women superintendents were previously a central office employee, mainly an assistant or associate superintendent. These data again reflected the AASA (2010) studies that stated women superintendents typically traveled the following career advancement path: assistant principal, principal, central office or assistant superintendent.

These findings revealed a different path than that of male superintendents, who as reported by the AASA (2010) studies primarily come from the high school principalship. The researcher pondered if serving at the central office is an unwritten component for women seeking the superintendency. This could potentially point to an ongoing situation where women must repeatedly prove themselves as leader before securing the position of superintendent. This thought was supported by Grogan's (1996) work who detailed there has to be a vast amount of traditional credibility in order for a female to be considered for a superintendency. The findings of this study also mirrored Marina and Fonteneau's (2012) work which maintained glass ceilings are not easily broken in the superintendency. Their study also indicated women could overcome these glass ceilings by employing delicate negotiations. Marina and Fonteneau further pointed out these negotiations included hard work, a servant-hood attitude, engagement in community endeavors, and an attentiveness of God and neighbor were key ingredients for ascendancy. This research also confirmed Darrington and Sharatt's study that reported women often have to fight harder, wait longer, and survive more scrutiny to become superintendent. As a current superintendent, the researcher agreed securing the role automatically requires more commitment and proven work replicated in order to verify competency, while a man typically does not experience this level of effort.

### **Research Sub-Question 2**

How do women superintendents in Georgia describe their experiences with mentoring?

All eight superintendents indicated their experiences with mentoring had been positive. The survey yielded 91% of participants who indicated they had a mentor

believed the process had been beneficial to them in their current position of superintendent. Those who were not mentored responded that they believed the mentoring process would have been beneficial to their development as an administrator. Similarly, those women who took part in the interviews claimed mentoring had been valuable to them. Benefits noted by these participants included developing a support system for them in the district, creating a bond or good relationship that has continued, having a female mentor, and experiencing a combination of both formal and informal mentoring. Bjork and Kowalski's (2005) research was supported by this study in which participants revealed mentoring is an important component of building support systems for personnel in administration. The Iowa Department of Education's study by Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) maintained that positive relations between mentors and mentees were recorded as important and the same information was found in this research. As a doctoral candidate who currently serves as a superintendent, the researcher agreed that mentoring is crucial for women superintendents attempting to gain access to the position and those currently in the role. Specifically, the researcher concurred female mentorship is crucial because it provides a system of support that builds a strong relationship with other women through formal and informal mentoring experiences.

Surveyed participants indicated the majority of them served as a superintendent in rural school districts, followed by urban and suburban districts representing the lowest in number. The same findings were noted in interviews, as rural school district superintendents outnumbered those working in urban and suburban district. These data support the findings of both the AASA (2000) and Glass and Francheschini (2007) who suggested most women superintendents serve in small rural school districts.



The majority of surveyed superintendents reported they secured their mentor's assistance for one year. It is possible that these data reflected the participant's formal mentor assignment only and that they continued to have informal mentorship experiences once the formal assignment ended. The researcher made this deduction based upon the data revealed in the interviews. Most of the interviewed superintendents disclosed they had mentors when they began their position and indicated they have maintained a mentor to date. However, many their mentors have changed during this time and most sought out a female mentor if they previously did not have one. Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011) pointed out in their study those mentoring relationships that develop informally lead to natural interactions that are generally more beneficial and longer lasting than those created more formally.

A total of 63.6% of surveyed participants indicated they had a male mentor. Previous AASA studies (2010, 2007, & 2000) revealed more males occupy the superintendency than do females, which may be the reason for the higher numbers of male mentors. Conversations emerged from interviews revealed that while these women appreciated and supported their male mentors in the field, they felt that women better understood women, and a female mentor could better assist with challenges specific to women. Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011), Lowe (2003), and Wolverton (2002) also reported females who had female mentors perceived their gender was important and would have an impact on the effect of the mentoring relationship. Only one superintendent in this study indicated a combination of both a man and woman mentor brought value to the arena and provided balance. Although she believed both having

mentors of either genders was beneficial, her conversation also revealed she leaned on her female mentor because they were more familiar with women and understood them.

Further discussion in the interviews acknowledged these women agreed issues in the superintendency are generally the same for women and men; however, they felt women faced additional challenges due to their gender. One interviewee believed the superintendency was a “Boys Club”. She initially had a male mentor and then sought out a female. Marina and Fonteneau (2012) pointed out glass ceilings are not easily overcome for women, but those who unite diligent work with a service oriented attitude would find critical ingredients for accomplishment. Through the interviews the researcher concluded all participants were determined to overcome gender inequities by networking with other female superintendents with experience to produce positive results from mentoring. Chase’s (1995) work also supported this claim, as all the women she interviewed across the nation were committed to their professional work and discovered individual solutions to collective problems of inequity.

The survey results showed most participants had male mentors when they became superintendent and the gender of their mentor was not perceived important. As noted by Glass (2007), the majority of superintendents are male and this reduces the number of females available for mentoring aspiring women. However, interviews reported most of the participants considered the gender of their mentor important. Therefore, this information was found to be in conflict between the two data sources.

Those surveyed could have contemplated their mentor’s gender was not important because they were appreciative of having a mentor in general. Surveyed participants did not have an opportunity to further inquire or clarify their responses online. Conversely,

interviewed candidates had the opportunity to provide more depth when answering questions and the researcher had ample occasions to clarify if needed. The participants who were interviewed clearly expressed their mentors' gender was important and most preferred to have a female mentor. Surveyed participants did not have to opportunity to further inquire or clarify their thoughts. Possibly on the survey, the question could have been restructured to ask specifically if they believed a "female" mentor was important, as opposed to asking if they thought the "gender" of their mentor was important.

The majority of females surveyed and interviewed indicated they received a combination of both formal and informal mentoring. An amalgamation of both would prove beneficial due to a constantly changing arena that would require informal mentoring, while preparation and planning would require formal mentoring.

The relationship between district size and mentors was addressed in the survey specifically; however, this was not a designated question for interviews. Surveyed participants reported that in most cases their mentor came from a similar sized district and they indicated this was an important point. Although the question was not asked in interviews, the researcher inferred through threaded conversations with the participants that having mentors from similar sizes was important when resolving issues due to the unique characteristics found within rural, urban, and suburban districts. These findings supported Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) when they revealed a crucial source for enlightening their practice was peer superintendents from comparable district sizes. A knowledgeable mentor from a similar district size would understand the distinctiveness surrounding a particular district size and possibly advise, guide, and assist

based on past successful experience. When mentors understand district size and apply certain attempts to resolve issues, success is possibly increased for the mentee.

Positive experiences for mentoring were explored in more detail through interviews. Most participants stated mentoring provided an excellent support system and an opportunity to have in-depth conversations regarding the superintendency. This support in turn led to confidence building and a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee. As the conversation deepened, it was revealed that most of the participants preferred having a female mentor. Further insight from the participants in interviews revealed women better understand women and the challenges they face due to their gender. Alsbury and Hackmann's (2006) research substantiated positive relationship building between mentor and mentee. Their research also indicated gender and race were two crucial variables considered important in mentoring programs. Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011) also reported mentoring was more effective for women when the mentor and mentee shared many similarities such as values, background, experience, and outlook.

Based upon the interviews, negative mentoring experiences were found to be almost nonexistent. One participant declared her experiences were all positive, but mentioned that the distance from her mentor was a negative. She desired her mentor to be more accessible, which would allow for a more personal and a stronger relationship to be built. The mentor would also better understand the district dynamics by visiting, which in turn could perhaps provide the mentee with improved guidance regarding situations that surface. One participant mentioned there were not many women superintendents, which reduced the number of women available to possibly serve as

women mentors. This participant also pointed out women spends more time in the classroom and their experiences in curriculum development would be beneficial during the mentoring process. This comment supported Brunner and Grogan's (2007) research that suggested most women spend more time in the classroom than men.

### **Research Sub-Question 3**

What do women superintendents in Georgia perceive to be important elements of an effective formal and informal mentoring program?

Important elements of an effective mentoring program emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative results. Surveyed information listed specific elements from the knowledge-based portion of a superintendent's job and interviews. The most important knowledge-based element from the survey was school board relations. Other top knowledge-based elements were personnel, budget and finance, strategic planning, school community relations, board policies, school law, politics in education collaboration, and personal stress management. In the literature, Kram (1985) contended career oriented functions are activities that involve the mentor teaching the protégé how to learn the basics within the organization. Johnson (2007) has reported that career functions are basically designed to develop and sharpen professional knowledge and skill. Effective elements that paralleled these claims surfaced during interviews. Similar knowledge-based survey elements were budget and finance, how to work with board members, facilities, teacher evaluations, personnel, curriculum, community and stakeholders relations. Areas that emerged from the interview that were not related to knowledge-based survey questions were being a good listener, having a woman mentor,

being experienced, and a servant leader. These appeared to be more like effective qualities of a mentor as opposed to knowledge based elements.

The researcher inquired from interviewees why they believed the elements mentioned were effective in a mentoring program. Responses revealed these elements build confidence, increase success, and high-quality training from your mentor leads mentees to solve their own problems. This study supported the work of Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) noted that principals and superintendents benefitted from mentors who assisted them in developing skills needed to address difficult issues. In addition, this study, is like that of Gilmour and Kinsella (2009), which also affirmed mentors play a role in honing a superintendent's decision-making skills regardless of their experience level.

After reflection, the researcher would have been more specific in questioning the interviewees to discover knowledge-based effective elements as related to the surveyed questions. Evaluations would have been more comparative in these specific areas. Rich information was obtained from this process; however, some responses obtained were social-emotional effective elements for the mentor rather than knowledge-based in the superintendency. The researcher's desire was to collect more information from the interviews on knowledge-based elements which would have mirrored the survey.

#### **Research Sub-Question 4**

How can an effective mentoring program encourage women to enter the field of superintendency?

The overall study implicated women superintendents in Georgia have had positive mentoring experiences that have yielded success in the field. These positive experiences

can be shared to encourage those women considering the position of superintendent, as reflected in conversations during interviews. This study supported the findings of Dunsbar and Kinnersley (2011), who purported mentors had proved beneficial to females attempting to aspire to top leadership positions. The research also supported Glass's (2000) work which contended women superintendents need mentors and benefits are there to encourage women to move into the field of the superintendency.

In this study, effective mentoring programs which consisted of knowledge-based and social-emotional based components can be offered to mentees aspiring to the field of superintendency. Knowledge-based components would consist of budget, personnel, school board relations, while social-emotional based would be composed of good listening, support, and trust. Participants reported when mentors utilize these effective elements, anxiety can be reduced and reassurance can also be offered to encourage women to enter the field.

Conversations with the women superintendents interviewed indicated that effective mentoring consisted of developing a good relationship with the mentee. Participants suggested female mentors should be assigned to other females due to the unique challenges they face in the role. A mentor who represents a good match for the mentee was noted as important. Mentors who were experienced, provided support, and were good listeners proved beneficial those aspiring to and currently in the position of superintendent. As a current superintendent, the researcher supports these components as avenues to encourage women to enter the field of the superintendency. Knowing support is available from a mentor utilizing an effective mentoring program may promote confidence in other women to embrace opportunities in this position.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study has provided valuable insight into the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. However, other recommendations will be explored to enrich the topic of mentoring women superintendents.

To confirm or refute data obtained from this study, a future mixed methods study could be replicated on the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. The qualitative portion could utilize interviews from eight different participants from rural, urban, and suburban participants. This study could also be replicated in additional states to broaden the research and also compare to the results obtained to those found in Georgia. It is recommended that both quantitative and qualitative research continue to be utilized as opposed to a single research method in order to produce enriched results.

Due to conflicting data obtained from the survey and the individual interviews in this study, it is recommended that a mixed methods study examining whether or not gender of the mentor makes a difference in the mentoring experience be conducted. This study could provide needed information regarding assignments of mentors to female superintendents which could enrich their experiences and possibly decrease disparities in numbers.

Finally, a qualitative study could be developed to ascertain if formal, informal, or a combination of both styles would also be more productive for women superintendents being mentored. Confirming the approach could possibly assist with decreasing disparities in the number of women and men superintendents. Information obtained from this study indicated that a combination of both would be most beneficial. Data obtained from this type of study could support or contradict results obtained in this research



project. Mentor programs could utilize this to inform mentors what relationship is preferred when guiding mentors.

### **Implications for Educational Leaders**

This research study has contributed to the knowledge base of educational administration by documenting the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia from 39 surveyed participants and eight interviewed participants. The study explored their extent of mentoring, how they described their experiences, what elements were contained in an effective program, and how these effective elements could be utilized to encourage women to enter the superintendency. An important finding was Georgia women superintendents overwhelmingly reported mentoring was a positive experience for them and it occupied an important role in assisting them with their transition into the superintendency, as well as providing needed support for maintaining this position.

### **Implications for Professional Associations**

Based on the findings of this study, this researcher suggests the Georgia School Superintendents Association use the results from this study to assist them in exploring their current mentoring program and decide if changes could be employed to strengthen it. Modifications could possibly include GSSA offering a mentoring component specifically for women. Considering Georgia's numbers of female superintendents are higher than the national average and GSSA could potentially be a reason, the potential exists for further increasing the numbers if specific programs for mentoring women superintendents were offered. This Georgia model could potentially then be reviewed

nationally for consideration to decrease disparities in the numbers of female superintendents versus male as well.

The results of this study could also be offered to organizations of support in Georgia such as RESA, GAEL, GSBA, and GLISI to add information and depth to their programs for women superintendents. Elements mentioned in this study as effective for mentoring included knowledge based and social-emotional based. Knowledge-based elements included were budget, board relations, personnel, facilities, and curriculum. Examples of social-emotional based elements were support, good listener, and female mentors. Consideration of these effective elements could be provided to GSSA assigned mentors in order for these areas to specifically be addressed during mentoring sessions. This could possibly be incorporated into the formal mentoring sessions where participants list, review, and address each effective element to benefit women superintendents in the role. AASA is a national organization for administrators in general, but they have offered gender specific conferences for women in the past. AASA could consider adding mentoring for women superintendents to their program which could increase numbers nationwide.

### **Implications for Leader Preparation Programs**

It is also recommended colleges and universities consider results obtained in this study in order to incorporate information into their preparation programs for women superintendents. The women that were interviewed for this study preferred a female mentor in part due to their increased understanding of the challenges faced by women in the superintendency. Institutions of higher education could use this information and

consider constructing modules on mentorship for women leaders in order to increase awareness in this area for future leaders.

### **Implications for Current School Administrators**

Current school administrators including assistant principals, principals, Title I Directors, Special Education Directors, Transportation Directors, Human Resource Directors, Assistant and Associate Superintendents could review this research to enlighten themselves on the benefits of a mentor if they were considering advancement to the position of superintendent. Superintendents could also review this study to perhaps mentor another female administrator in their district or another nearby district who desires to aspire to the superintendency. Based on this study, consideration should be given to assigning female mentors to other females aspiring or currently in the superintendency. A combination of both formal and informal mentoring should be recommended for these mentees. Formal mentoring sessions should include scheduled meetings between the mentor and mentee with designated topics which should comprise board relations, budget, and personnel. Informal mentoring should be available when needed to discuss topics pertinent to the superintendent.

### **Implications for Boards of Education**

Boards of education could consider this research in an effort to reduce gender bias during the hiring process by creating gender neutral standards that pinpoint candidate qualifications for hire. This was also pointed out in the literature by Haar, Rankin, and Robicheau (2009) where they introduced steps for school boards to take in order to reduce gender bias when hiring. A set of gender neutral standards assist the board in examining a specific set of skills as opposed to gender.

Most of the female superintendents surveyed and interviewed shared they had been in the field from one to two years. This could possibly be due to accountability constraints, as well as the baby boomers that are beginning to retire. More women are needed in the role of superintendent in order to deal with disparities in the numbers. This study could possibly assist with recruiting additional women to the position of superintendent when they discover support is available from mentorship. This mentorship could assist with building their confidence and increasing success rates in the position of superintendent as reported in this study.

### **Limitations**

Due to the small sample sizes considered a limitation. However, aspects of the data obtained in this study could be utilized to inform current practices. The study was delimited to women superintendents in the State of Georgia.

Another limitation in hindsight was that some questions on the survey and interviews were not incorporated. The survey specifically inquired about effective elements of mentoring and participants rated them, while the interview questions only asked in general what participants thought were effective elements of mentoring. These additional inquiries in the interviews could have enhanced information gained in this study regarding effective elements in the knowledge-based areas.

On the survey an additional question should have been asked to seek clarification about the importance of the mentor's gender. Another inquiry regarding if they preferred to have a female mentor would have been beneficial to the research in the survey. Similarly, specific questions on the interview section regarding effective elements would have further developed conversation on the knowledge-based elements and social

emotional based elements. Also, research question four depended on the interview questions primarily and more questions should have been included on the survey to inquire about encouragement to enter the field.

The researcher serving as the instrument during interviews could be considered a limitation. Questions may have been read that emphasized a particular thought which could possibly have influenced participant's responses. The researcher could have also reinforced the statements of participants that may have led them toward a thought pattern, and limited other responses they may have given.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the numbers of women superintendents across the nation have remained disproportional when compared to men in the same role. The literature indicated there were low numbers of women superintendents due to lack of support, particularly in the area of mentoring (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). In an attempt to decrease disparities for women in the superintendency, mentoring was examined as a viable option. This study was successful in examining mentoring for female superintendents in Georgia and the data obtained substantiated former research which stated mentoring provided opportunities to gain and maintain the superintendency.

The researcher's purpose for conducting this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia. This purpose was accomplished by employing a descriptive mixed methods approach which yielded quantitative and qualitative results. The quantitative portion entailed surveying all women superintendents in Georgia to seek input on their demographics, mentoring experiences, and effective elements found in a mentoring program. The qualitative components

involved interviewing eight purposefully selected women superintendents from rural, urban, and suburban districts. Results were presented in both chart and/or narrative forms from both research methods. Overall findings revealed women superintendents in Georgia benefitted from mentoring and their experiences had been exceedingly positive. They also indicated women aspiring to the field would benefit by having a female mentor guide and support them in this position.

The conceptual framework (Figure 1, p. 6) of this study reflected that mentoring could serve as a common means to increase opportunities for women in leadership, more specifically for women in educational leadership, and most specifically women in the superintendency. The participant's responses supported this conceptual framework when female superintendents in Georgia reported positive mentoring experiences had assisted them in gaining access to the role of superintendent. They further revealed that female mentors had also assisted them in maintaining the position of superintendent.

The demographic profile of surveyed superintendents revealed the majority were between ages 51 and 60, Caucasian, had obtained a specialist or doctorate degree, had served in the superintendency an average of zero to two years, served in rural districts, and had mentors when they entered the superintendency. This information was supported from findings obtained from the interviewed participants.

The overall results of the study revealed that the surveyed women superintendents in Georgia and all eight interviewed agreed that their mentoring experiences had been positive and beneficial. In the quantitative results, most women indicated the superintendency is a critical role, there are few women in the position, and guidance from experienced superintendents had assisted them with many issues. Women who did not

receive mentoring indicated by survey that they would have benefitted from mentoring in the superintendency. Interviews yielded mentoring had been extremely positive in all cases. Participants stated that their mentors had assisted them with numerous tasks including knowledge-based elements and social-emotional based elements. Knowledge-based tasks included learning about budgets, board relations, personnel, facilities, and curriculum. Social-emotional based elements included building support, being a good listener, and obtaining another female for mentoring. The top five effective elements cited by the survey included knowledge in the areas of school board relations, personnel, budget and finance, strategic planning, and school community relations.

The women in this study also disclosed positive mentoring experiences included creating a system of support, building a good relationship, being assigned a female mentor, and including both formal and informal mentoring for the mentee. Negative experiences comprised having a mentor that resided a long distance away and experiencing informal mentoring only. Conversations continued to reveal female superintendents benefitted most from female mentors due to a shared understanding of their gender and specific challenges faced by women administrators. They were supportive of men mentoring as well; however, they felt women possessed a deeper understanding of their own identities and challenges that led to more valuable mentoring experiences. Female mentors further increased their self-assurance and opportunities for success in the superintendency.

Encouragement to enter the superintendency was also examined in this research. Data revealed effective mentors and advice in seeking an effective mentor would be two components that would assist those aspiring to the position. Effective mentors were

determined by participants to build confidence and increase success for aspiring and current superintendents. When searching for a mentor, participants indicated the mentee should seek an experienced, female that would be a good match for relationship building.

Finally, the mentoring perceptions and experiences of women superintendents in Georgia have been both beneficial and positive. The data obtained indicated mentoring could serve as a viable option to increase the number of female superintendents which will decrease gender disparities in Georgia and across the nation. This information could be utilized to assist persons and agencies in mentoring women who become superintendents, thereby creating further opportunities for advancement. It is the hope of this researcher that mentorship can be utilized to increase the number of women superintendents in Georgia and across the nation.



## REFERENCES

- Aburdene, P. & Naisbitt, J. (1992). *Megatrends for women*. New York: Random House
- Alsbury, T.L., & Hackmann, D.G. (2006). Learning from experience: Initial findings of a mentoring/induction program for novice principals and superintendents. *Planning and Changing*, 37, 169-189.
- American Association of School Administrators (AASA). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.org>
- American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> edition). (2010). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Blount, J. (1998). *Destined to rule the schools: Women and the superintendency, 1873-1995*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bauer, T. N. (1999). Sex Roles, 40(3/4), 211-225.
- Bañuelos, M. V. (2008). Breaking the silence: Gender bias in the top ranks. *Leadership*, 38(1), 28-30.
- Bjork, L. G., & Kowalski, T. J. (2005). *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Brunner, C. C. (2008). Invisible, limited, and emerging discourse: Research practices that restrict and/or increase access for women and persons of color to the superintendency. *Journal of School Leadership*, 18(6), 661-682.
- Brunner, C. C. (2000). *Principals of power: Women superintendents and the riddle of the heart*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Brunner, C. C., & Grogan, M. (2007). *Women leading systems: Uncommon roads to fulfillment*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.

- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Carvin, B. N. (2009). The great mentor match. *T+D*, 63(1), 46-50.
- Chao, G. T. (1997). Mentoring phases and outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 51(1), 15-28.
- Chase, S. E. (1995). *Ambiguous empowerment: The work narratives of women school superintendents*. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Cook C., Heath F., Thompson. (2000). A meta-analysis of response rates in web- or internet-based surveys. *Educational and Psychological Measures*, 60(6), 821-36.
- Creative Research Systems. (2013). The Survey System. Retrieved from [www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm](http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm)
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research planning, conducting and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research*. International Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dana, J. A. & Bourisaw, D. (2006). *Women in the superintendency: Discarded leadership*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Derrington, M. L., & Sharrett, G. (2008). Female superintendents: Breaking barriers and challenging life styles. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 75(2), 8-12.
- Dunbar, D. R., & Kinnersley, R. T. (2011). Mentoring female administrators toward leadership success. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, 77(3), 17-24.

- Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. (1995). *A solid investment-Making full use of the nation's human capital. A Report.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.
- Friday, E., & Friday, S. S. (2002). Formal mentoring: Is there a strategic fit? *Management Decision.* 40(2), 152-157.
- Gardiner, M. E., Enomoto, E. & Grogan, M. (2000). *Coloring outside the lines: Mentoring women into school leadership.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Georgia Association of Educational Leaders (GAEL). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.gael.org>
- Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://glisi.org>
- Georgia School Board Association (GSBA). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.gsba.com>
- Georgia School Superintendents Association (GSSA). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://gssanet.org>
- Gilmour, S. L., & Kinsella, M. P. (2009). *Succeeding as a female superintendent: How to get there and stay there.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Ginsberg, R., & Multon, K. D. (2011). Leading through a fiscal nightmare the impact on principals and superintendents. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(8), 42-47.
- Glass, T. E. (2000). Where are all the women superintendents? *The School Administrator*, 57(6), 28-32.

- Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. C. (2000). *The study of the American school superintendency: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Glass, T. E., & Franceschini, L. A. (2007). *The state of the American school superintendency: A mid-decade study*. Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Grogan, M. (1996). *Voices of women aspiring to the superintendency*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Grogan, M. (2008). The short tenure of a woman superintendent: A clash of gender and politics. *Journal of School Leadership, 18*(6), 634-660.
- Grogan, M., & Brunner, C. C. (2005). Women leading systems. *School Administrator, 62*(2), 46-50.
- Harr, J., Raskins, C., & Robicheau, J. (2009). Attracting women leaders to the superintendency. *Minnesota School Boards Journal, 61*(4), 12-15.
- Hawk, N., & Martin, B. (2011). Understanding and reducing stress in the superintendency. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 39*(3), 364-390. doi:10.1177/1741143210394000
- Helgesen, S. (1990). *The female advantage*. New York: Doubleday
- Höijer, B. (2008). Ontological Assumptions and Generalizations in Qualitative (Audience) Research. *European Journal of Communication, 23*(3), 275-294.
- Kamler, E. (2006). The aspiring superintendents study group: Investigating a mentoring network for school leaders. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 14*(3), 297-316.

- Katz, S. (2006). *Just do it: Superintendents speak to aspiring women*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Kinsella, M., & Richards, P. (2004). Supporting school leaders. *American School Board Journal*, 191(8), 32-35.
- Kochan, F. K., & Pascarelli, J. T. (Eds.) (2003). *Global perspectives on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and cultures*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing Inc.
- Kowalski, T. J., McCord, R. S., Petersen, G. J., Young, I. P., & Ellerson, N. M. (2010). *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Kram, K. E. (1985 original work). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, and Company.
- Kruger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lips, H. M. (2003). *A new psychology of women*. Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Lowe, M. (2003). Attributes of effective mentoring relationships of female administrators in three Tennessee school districts. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN. (UMI 3116153)
- Mahitivanichcha, K., & Rorrer, A. (2006). Women's choices within market constraints: Re-visioning access to and participation in the superintendency. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(4), 483-517.

- Marina, B., & Fonteneau, D. Y. (2012). Servant leaders who picked up the broken glass. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5(2).
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- McGrath, R. (2011). School superintendents discuss challenges of their roles. *Ventura County Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.vcstar.com/news/2011/mar/11/school-superintendents-discuss-challenges-of/>
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.
- Miller, S. K., Washington, Y. C., & Fiene, J. R. (2006). Female superintendents: Historic barriers and prospects for the future. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 4(4), 219-242.
- Morgan, D. L. (1988). *Focus groups as qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- National Education Agency. (2002). *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001*. Retrieved June 20, 2012, from <http://nea.org/home/NoChildLeftBehindAct.html>.
- Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: Understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 27(4), 321-334.
- Odum, R. D., (2010). *The lived experiences of female superintendents in Alabama, Florida, & Georgia*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from [http://dspaceprod.georgiasouthern.edu:8080/jspui/bitstream/10518/3551/1/odum\\_ruth\\_d\\_201001\\_edd.pdf](http://dspaceprod.georgiasouthern.edu:8080/jspui/bitstream/10518/3551/1/odum_ruth_d_201001_edd.pdf). Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA.

- Plano Clark, V. L. (2010). The adoption and practice of mixed methods: U.S. trends in federally funded health related research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(6), 428-440.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). Elements of successful mentoring of a female school leader. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 9, 108-129.
- Ragins, B. R., & Cotton, J. L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 529-549. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.84.4.529
- Regional Educational Services Agency (RESA) Website. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.fdresa.org>
- Samuels, C. A. (2007). Superintendents content in jobs, but stressed, too. *Education Week*, 27(6), 7-7.
- Schaefer, D. R. & Dillman, D. A. (1998). Development of a standard e-mail methodology: Results from an experiment. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62, 378-397.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1989). *Women in educational administration*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sherman, A. (2000). Women managing/managing women: The marginalization of female leadership in rural school settings. *Educational Management & Administration*, 28 (2), 133-143.
- Sherman, W. H., Muoz, A. J., & Pankake, A. (2008). The great divide: Women's experiences with mentoring. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, 6(4), 239-259.
- Stewart, D. W., & Shamdasani, P. N. (1990). *Focus groups: Theory and practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Symth, R. (2004). Exploring the usefulness of a conceptual framework as a research tool: A researcher's reflection. *Issues in educational research, 14*(2), 167-180.
- Tellerico, M., & O'Connell, R. W. (2001). *Women and men in the superintendency: A case of a promising research alliance*. In Brunner, C. C. & Bjork, L. G. (Eds.) *The new superintendency* (pp. 75-86). New York: Elseiver Science, Ltd. & behavioral research (pp. 671-702). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Wickham, D. (2008). Female superintendents' perceived barriers and successful strategies used to attain the superintendency in California. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. March 26, 2008, New York City, New York.
- Wolverton, M. (2002). A matter of degree: Men and women deans of education. In W. H. Gmelch (Ed.), *Deans' balancing acts: Education leaders and the challenges they face* (pp. 35-57). Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Publications.
- Zhao, F., & Reed, C. J. (2003). *Love, trust, and concern: Ingredients for successful mentoring relationships*. In F. K. Kochan & J. T. Pascarelli (Eds), *Global perspectives on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and culture* (pp. 399-415). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.



**APPENDIX A****WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS LETTER PRIOR TO ONLINE SURVEY**  
Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents in Georgia**Subject:** Online Dissertation Survey

Greetings,

My name is Scarlett Miles Copeland, and I am a fellow superintendent of yours in the state of Georgia. I am currently a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University and am writing a dissertation concerning mentoring perceptions of female superintendents in Georgia. It is my goal to obtain valuable insight from each of you into your experiences as a women superintendent with mentoring.

Your contact information was obtained through the Georgia School Superintendents Association. It is possible there may be errors, so if you are not a female superintendent in Georgia, please disregard this email. If you are receiving this email as a representative from a school district with a female superintendent, please forward it to her.

I have met many of you at our Georgia School Superintendents Association and Georgia School Board Association Meetings and I would greatly appreciate you completing an online survey that will be coming your way within one week. This survey will be sent online via *Survey monkey* and will only require a few minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for assisting me with my doctoral dissertation. Your input is invaluable and the overall information collected will serve as another avenue that will enhance opportunities for women attempting to gain and maintain the superintendency.

Kind regards,

*Scarlett Miles Copeland*Scarlett Miles Copeland  
Fellow Superintendent

## APPENDIX B

### WOMEN SUPERINTENDENT'S MENTORING SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to conduct a study of mentoring experiences of women superintendents in Georgia.

#### Part I – DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please complete the following profile information by choosing the appropriate radio button that accurately reflects your response.

1. What is your current age?
 

|                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 25 - 40 years | <input type="radio"/> 51 – 60 years |
| <input type="radio"/> 41 - 50 years | <input type="radio"/> over 60 years |
  
2. What is your ethnicity?
 

|                                 |  |                                |                             |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Caucasian | <input type="radio"/> African American | <input type="radio"/> Hispanic | <input type="radio"/> Other |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
  
3. What is the highest academic degree in you have obtained?
 

|                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Bachelor | <input type="radio"/> Specialist |
| <input type="radio"/> Masters  | <input type="radio"/> Doctorate  |
  
4. Is your highest degree in educational leadership?
 

|                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
  
5. How many years of school and/or district level administration experience did you have before becoming a superintendent?
 

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 – 2 years | <input type="radio"/> 7 – 10 years       |
| <input type="radio"/> 3 – 5 years | <input type="radio"/> more than 10 years |
  
6. How many years of experience in the superintendency do you have?
 

|                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 0 – 2 years   | <input type="radio"/> 7 – 10 years  |
| <input type="radio"/> 11 – 20 years | <input type="radio"/> over 30 years |
  
7. What type of district do you currently serve as superintendent?
 

|                             |                                |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Rural | <input type="radio"/> Suburban |
| <input type="radio"/> Urban |                                |

8. What is the student population in your district that you currently serve as superintendent?

0 – 3499                       7000 – 9999                       over 15,000  
 3500 – 6999                       10,000 – 14,999

9. What type of position did you serve in prior to becoming superintendent? Check all that apply.

Assistant Principal     Assistant/Associate Superintendent  
 Principal     Other Central Office Position

### **Part II – SUPERINTENDENTS MENTORING EXPERIENCE**

Please complete the following questions by choosing the correct radio button next to the appropriate response that depicts your personal mentoring experience as a public school district superintendent.

10. Did you have a mentor when you became superintendent?

yes                       no

11. If you had a mentor, how long did your mentor assist you?

0 – 1 years                       1 – 2 years                       3 – 5 years                       more than 5 years  
 Did Not have a Mentor

12. Was your mentor male or female?

male                       female     Did Not have a Mentor

13. Do you believe the gender of your mentor was important?

yes     no     Did Not have a Mentor

14. What type of mentoring did you receive?

*Informal mentoring* – Informal mentoring can be defined as a relationship that develops spontaneously or informally without any assistance.

*Formal mentoring* – Formal mentoring can be defined as a relationship that results from a structured program that contains specific criteria for implementation.

Formal Mentoring     Both Formal and Informal Mentoring  
 Informal Mentoring     Did Not have a Mentor

15. Did your mentor come from the same district type (e.g., rural, suburban, urban) as yourself?

yes       no       Did Not have a Mentor

16. Do you think it is important for a mentor to have experience in a similar district size as yours?

yes       no       Did Not have a Mentor

17. The average frequency of my mentoring sessions with my mentor were:

1 X/week     1 X every 2 weeks     1 X every 3 weeks     1 X/month

Did Not have a Mentor

18. The duration of these communications were:

15 minutes     30 minutes     45 minutes     1 hour

Longer than 1 hour       Did Not have a Mentor

19. If you were mentored, do you believe this process was beneficial? Please rate question based on the following Likert scale:

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

20. If you were not mentored, do you believe this process would have been beneficial? Please rate question based on the following Likert scale:

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

### **Part III – RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAM**

Listed below are areas that often require a school district superintendent's knowledge and understanding. Please read each item and utilize the radio button to rate your opinion based on whether the item is an important element to include in a mentoring program.

|       |        |           |            |        |
|-------|--------|-----------|------------|--------|
| 1     | 2      | 3         | 4          | 5      |
| Never | Seldom | Sometimes | Frequently | Always |

Subject Areas

Indicate the extent which the following administrative functions should be included as an Effective Element of a Mentoring Program for Superintendents

|  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Budget & Finance   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Personnel  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| School Board Relations   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Politics in Education  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| School-Community Relations   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strategic Planning   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Collaboration  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| School Law   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Facilities (planning, construction, & operations)                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Data Analysis for Instructional Improvements                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Being familiar with Board Policies and their impact on the school district | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Conflict Management Training and Application                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Knowledge of Federal Programs such as Title I, IIA, III, ESOL, Migrant     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| NCLB/Waivers   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Preparing Grants at the federal, state, & local levels                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Professional Development for Faculty & Staff                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

|                            |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Time Management   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Work-Family Balance        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Personal Stress Management | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Perceptions of Mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents in Georgia

##### Interview Questions:

1. Describe your mentoring experience as a women superintendent.
2. What was the first topic you and your mentor addressed in the superintendency?
3. How would you describe your mentoring experience, formal or informal?
4. What leads you to say it was a \_\_\_\_\_ mentoring relationship?
5. What positive experiences have you had based on your mentoring experience as a women superintendent?
6. What negative experiences have you had based on your mentoring experience as a women superintendent?
7. As a women superintendent what has been the most beneficial part of your mentoring experience?
8. Why was \_\_\_\_\_ the most beneficial in this role?
9. Describe effective elements that an effective mentoring program would contain for women superintendents based on your experience.
10. Why do you believe these elements are most beneficial?
11. What advice would you provide to aspiring women superintendents when searching for a mentor?

**APPENDIX D****REMINDER EMAIL FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION**

Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents  
in Georgia

Greetings to all fellow women superintendents:

This is a friendly reminder strongly urging you to complete the online survey that was sent out approximately one week ago concerning your input on women superintendents and mentoring. Your perspective on this issue is vital to me as a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University and to other aspiring women superintendents.

Thank you in advance if you have already completed this survey. If you have not, please take a few moments of your time to do so. Your information is crucial and can potentially impact women superintendents in our state. A copy of this survey is attached to this email for your convenience.

Kind regards,

Scarlett Miles Copeland  
Fellow Superintendent



**APPENDIX E****FINAL REMINDER EMAIL FOR SURVEY PARTICIPATION**

Greetings to all fellow women superintendents:

This is a friendly reminder strongly urging you to complete the online survey that was sent out approximately two weeks ago concerning your input on women superintendents and mentoring. Your perspective on this issue is vital to me as a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University and to other aspiring women superintendents.

Thank you in advance if you have already completed this survey. If you have not, please take a few moments of your time to do so. Your information is crucial and can potentially impact women superintendents in our state. A copy of this survey is attached to this email for your convenience.

Kind regards,

Scarlett Miles Copeland  
Fellow Superintendent

**APPENDIX F****THIRD PARTY CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

Perceptions of mentoring: Examining the experiences of women superintendents in  
Georgia

**Third Party Confidentiality Agreement**

I agree to remain confidential with the information transcribed from the audio tapes regarding this doctoral research study which will be conducted by Scarlett Miles Copeland. I agree to transcribe verbatim the information received from the audio tapes. Once transcription is complete, these audio tapes and transcripts will be returned to the researcher, Scarlett Miles Copeland.

*Tammy Page*  
Signature of Transcriptionist

9-30-13  
Date

## APPENDIX G

|   |                         |                                       |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Georgia Southern University<br>Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs |                         |                                       |
| <b>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</b>   |                         |                                       |
| Phone: 912-478-0843   |                         | Veazey Hall 2021                      |
| Fax: 912-478-0719   | IRB@GeorgiaSouthern.edu | P.O. Box 8005<br>Statesboro, GA 30460 |

**To:** Scarlett Miles Copeland  
Dr. Dan Calhoun

**CC:** Charles E. Patterson  
Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College

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

**Initial Approval Date:** 5/23/13

**Expiration Date:** 5/31/14

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

After a review of your proposed research project numbered **H13438** and titled "**Mentoring Women Superintendents in Georgia.**" it appears that (1) the research subjects are at minimal risk, (2) appropriate safeguards are planned, and (3) the research activities involve only procedures which are allowable. You are authorized to enroll up to a maximum of 56 subjects.

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

If at the end of this approval period there have been no changes to the research protocol; you may request an extension of the approval period. Total project approval on this application may not exceed 36 months. If additional time is required, a new application may be submitted for continuing work. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior** to initiating any such changes or modifications. At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, you are required to complete a *Research Study Termination* form to notify the IRB Coordinator, so your file may be closed.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Haynes  
Compliance Officer