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# What are the factors that motivate and inhibit female school administrators in Nebraska to seek the school superintendency?

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# WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE AND INHIBIT FEMALE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN NEBRASKA TO SEEK THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY?

by

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What Motivates and Inhibits Female Administrators to Seek a Superintendency?

BY

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GRADUATE COLLEGE
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WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE AND INHIBIT FEMALE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN NEBRASKA TO SEEK THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENCY?

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify factors that motivate and factors that inhibit female administrators from seeking a school superintendency. Key informants nominated twenty-one Nebraska female administrators as outstanding female school leaders with skills to succeed in a superintendency. These females were interviewed regarding public challenges to education, leadership behaviors needed by the superintendent, and motivators and inhibitors for females to pursue a superintendency. The interview material was analyzed for common themes which were elaborated through the native statements of the female administrators. Propositions were generated that suggested female administrators' perceptions about public school needs and effective leadership strategies. Also, reasons for females to pursue or reject the school superintendency were proposed.

Public challenges that emerged from the data were: coping with change, accountability, public involvement, and promoting positive school image. Leadership needs were described as: empowerment, collaboration, vision, use of information, political tolerance, and transformational leadership skills.

Encouragement emerged as the strongest motivator for females

to pursue a superintendency. Other motivators were: the challenge to change education, leadership experience, positive role models, mentoring, career aspiration, networking access, family support, and financial gain.

The inhibitors for females to pursue a school superintendency were: public stereotyping of female roles, the nature of the job, undeveloped career plans, family considerations, mobility issues, budgeting inexperience, a lack of female role models, limited jobs, and the instability of the position.

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C.S.R.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The cry for reform in educational settings has become increasingly demanding (Passow, 1989). Competent school leaders with solutions to difficult school issues are urgently needed. The public implores school improvement, but reform is not easily achieved. According to Bennis (1989), American organizations are faced with "an unconscious conspiracy in contemporary society preventing leaders . . . no matter what their original vision . . . from taking charge and making changes" (p. xii). Public school administration is particularly vulnerable to pressure by various power groups. "Over the past ten years, educational decision making has been controlled by shifting governmental coalitions and external forces, including such diverse groups as federal courts, state courts, local interest groups, and local agencies, such as police and health authorities" (Kirst, 1989, p. 69).

Local school superintendents have listened to many opinions on restructuring public education. The public focus on improvement has been emphasized since the 1986 Carnegie Forum's landmark report, A Nation Prepared, asserted the need to "restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teachers, freeing them to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children, while holding them accountable for their progress" (Carnegie Task Force, 1986). Public agencies both support and threaten school leadership with the demand

for an attitude of change. A National Governors Association report suggested to public school officials, "Change, or see your responsibilities and clients drift away to other organizations" (Elmore, 1987). Al Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, warned educators, "If you don't restructure, public education in America is going to be finished in five to ten years" (O'Neil, 1990, p. 10).

The nation's business community, as both protagonist and ally, is concerned about public education, suggesting:

> Business is not in a mood to be timid or fuzzy about changing the education system. At least a million workers a year are coming into the job market not knowing how to read or write, and corporations collectively are spending millions teaching them basic skills. (Lewis, 1989, p. 99)

As a school leader, the local superintendent holds the key position to bring about school improvement (Wissler & Ortiz, 1988). The superintendent must provide insight and vision to create an environment that assures student learning. Developing student and teacher goals, securing resources with limited funds, and responding to the demands of the many power groups interested in education are but a few of the responsibilities of the school superintendent.

The demand for reform in public schooling should focus the attention of local school boards on the importance of the selection of quality school superintendents (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). According to Cuban (1989), an effective superintendent can influence change and alter the fundamental ways of achieving organization goals by introducing new goals and interventions that transform familiar ways

of doing things into novel solutions to persistent problems.

School superintendents with creative vision can transform the image of public schooling (Cuban, 1989). Bennis (1976) concurred, "The school leaders must use creativity to the hilt, and encourage others in the institution to use theirs" (p. 162).

The continuing high attrition level of top administrators validates the need for active recruitment of competent educational leaders (Joekel, 1991; Lewis, 1989). Despite the increasing call for quality leadership, public school management is one of the many professions in this country that under-utilizes its pool of potential female candidates (Edson, 1988). The administrative job market is available to male and female administrators, but females have been notoriously under-represented in the superintendency (Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Schuster and Foote (1990) reported that white males predominate in the position of superintendency, with less than four percent of the female administrators in the nation acting as school superintendents. At a time when societal changes challenge the traditional structure of schooling, male and female administrators who are creative problem solvers should be encouraged and invited to vie for the top leadership positions through which they can best influence school improvement (Bennis, 1989).

Women's under-representation in the superintendency is not easily understood. Competence does not appear to be a missing skill in female administrators. Studies reviewed by Gross and Trask (1976) revealed quite the opposite: women administrators had a

greater knowledge and concern for instructional supervision, students' academic performance and teachers' professional performance improved under women's administration, staff preferred the decision making and problem solving behaviors of women, and women were more concerned with helping deviant pupils. Female leaders have skills to offer the nation's school improvement efforts.

Shakeshaft (1987) reported there were increasing numbers of women in graduate programs training to become school administrators, but they were not being hired for the school superintendency. Therefore, lack of qualification alone does not explain the low percentage of females in the role of superintendent.

Research is varied regarding why more females are not participating in the school superintendency. Social obstacles have been defined through various studies which point out sex discrimination, societal attitudes, mobility issues, role conflict, and networking access (Edson, 1988). Less has been described about a woman's motivation to seek a superintendency (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Perceptions of the desirability or undesirability of the position of the superintendent are mixed in the ranks of both male and female administrators. More research is needed regarding what attracts administrators to the most important leadership position in local school districts, the superintendency. In order to successfully recruit and train the best school leaders to solve educational problems, recruiters must know what motivates and what inhibits female school administrators from seeking the superintendency. Further

investigation may identify the forces that affect the decision to pursue the superintendency, illuminating why so few women are represented in this position. The study was designed to examine the perceptions of certified female administrators who may be contemplating a career of school superintendency.

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose for conducting this study was to identify factors that motivate female administrators to seek the position of school superintendent and to discover factors that inhibit female school administrators from pursuing the superintendency.

Pursuant to the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the challenges school districts will encounter during the next decade as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

2. What leadership behaviors are needed by school superintendents to improve the quality of schooling in Nebraska as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

3. What factors motivate and inhibit outstanding female administrators to seek the school superintendency?

## Assumptions

1. A qualitative research method, the interview process, disclosed specific information to answer the research questions.

2. Specific factors could be identified by female administrators to explain why female administrators seek or avoid the superintendency.

3. Selected key informants knew female administrators with excellent leadership behaviors.

4. The female administrators selected for the study provided a representative sample of potential superintendent candidates.

## Limitations and Delimitations

1. The interview process depended on comprehensive questioning to collect sufficient data during time of direct communication.

2. The population of this study was confined to nominated female administrators in Nebraska.

3. Data collected was based on self-reports.

## Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Administrator. An individual reponsible for directing and controlling the activities of an organization.

Career. An individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over a span of a person's life (Hall, 1976).

Collaboration. Involvement of all audiences in information sharing, problem solving, and decision making regarding school issues.

Empowerment. Providing staff with the information, resources, support, and encouragement to actively participate in shared leadership.

Inhibitor. A factor that prevents a person from doing something or reacting in a particular way.

Leadership. The process of persuasion by which a leader or leadership group (such as the state) induces followers to act in a manner that enhances the leader's purposes or shared purposes (Sergiovanni, 1989).

Mentor. A trusted professional peer who uses his or her greater knowledge, experience, and status to help develop a protege's knowledge and skill; the mentor does not simply pull the protege up the organizational ladder on his or her coattails (Bass, 1985).

Motivator. A factor that guides individual choices among different forms of voluntary activities.

Role model. A person who demonstrates examples of desirable behaviors in particular job or life situations and is highly regarded by observers.

Superintendent. An individual who holds the position of chief executive within a school system.

Transformational leadership. The bonding of leaders and followers in such a way that they raise one another to higher levels of motivation, performance, and morality (Sergiovanni, 1989).

Vision. Creating and communicating a desired state of affairs that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future (Bennis, 1985).

## Significance of the Study

The need for a greater pool of superintendent candidates to replace retiring administrators is evident in Nebraska and in the nation (McCormick, 1987). According to Fred Hoke, the Executive Director of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, tremendous shortages in Nebraska school administration will occur within the next five years due to the attrition of older administrators (Fred Hoke, personal communication, November 20, 1990).

Although many women have achieved certification and demonstrated the necessary leadership skills for the superintendency, there are few females represented in this administrative strata (Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Females have much to offer to the challenge to restructure public education (Shakeshaft, 1987). Leadership that bonds human efforts to achieve goals is effective in today's society. Research on female administrative styles suggested that women are adept at such transformational leadership due to their human relations skills and their ability to work with and through people to achieve stated goals (Loden, 1985). Nevertheless, women remain an underutilized resource in public educational leadership.

People involved in recruiting and selecting school administrators must be made aware of the potential market of leaders from the female ranks. Females themselves must believe there is a need for representation in the top district leadership positions and seek such jobs, feeling supported in their application efforts. Gender equity in the superintendency will create positive role models for

young impressionable children as well as aspiring female administrators and somewhat diminish the perception of societal bias against female superintendents.

This research study provides information that can be used to identify and promote competent female leadership in the top administrative position at the local school level, the superintendency. The research also suggests aspects of the position of school superintendent that remain incompatible with female administrators' career interests. The reported findings should influence the efforts of superintendent recruiters and trainers and professional associations as they consider the changing leadership needs of public school education and the available source of competent female leaders.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The challenges of administering public schools today, the leadership strategies of effective school administrators, and the factors that influence female administrators in career decisions are discussed in this chapter. Gender issues in school leadership and career decisions were a focus for the study. The review of the literature has provided a background for analyzing and understanding the world of female educators on the administrative career ladder in Nebraska schools. Awareness of the expectations and demands of the superintendency, the needed leadership traits for the position, and the enticements and obstacles of this role has an impact on the career decisions of female administrators.

## Female Representation in the School Superintendency

Females have been under-represented in the ranks of the superintendency (Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Women have gained status in other professions, but males still predominate in educational administration. In 1986, 97.33 percent of all United States public school superintendents were men (Schuster, 1987). The American Association of School Administrators reported in 1984 that only 293 chief executives in the nation's 16,800 school districts were female (O'Reilly, 1985).

Few females participate in the position of school superintendent

in Nebraska (Joekel, 1991). A study by Grady (1989) reported a lack of female applicants for the position of superintendency in Nebraska even though qualified candidates exist. Peterson (1990), the Director of the Nebraska Association of School Board's superintendency search program, expressed, "School boards are interested in female applicants for the position of superintendency, but few females are applying" (Bob Peterson, Personal Communication, August, 1990).

The National Center for Educational Information (1988) reported, "Probably nowhere in America is there a larger block that gives credence to the phrase 'old boys' club than public school administrators. They are disproportionately men, white, and older than their counterparts in other occupations" (Schuster & Foote, 1990).

In other school administration areas, females have made some progress. Mertz and McNeely (1987) reported gains in the status and representation of women high school administrators since 1972, particularly in large city districts. At the same time, women were making less spectacular progress in suburban, medium size, and rural districts.

Reasons for females' slow progress are not readily evident. Lack of qualification is not a predominant causal factor for low representation of females. Women have the necessary credentials. A study of academic administration programs in six states indicated that women comprised 18 percent of the degree recipients seeking positions as superintendents, 23 percent of those seeking positions as secondary principals, and 43 percent of those seeking elementary

principalships (Whitt & Shedd, 1987). According to Grady (1989), women commonly comprised a majority of the students in graduate programs in educational administration in the 1980s.

One factor that may influence the under-representation of women in the superintendency is the recruitment process. In a study of administrative job applicants holding doctoral degrees in the state of Pennsylvania, men made an average of four applications to get the job, while women averaged eighteen (Hullhorst, 1984), The rejection rate of female application efforts was four times the rejection rate of males. Although school boards profess no gender bias in their hiring practice (Neil, 1989), few women are getting top administrative positions. At the same time, Neil's study indicated that women increase their chances for the job if they can manage to get to the interview stage.

In some cases, policy has been created or legal action taken to support the cause of gender equity in educational settings. As a result of a 1987 Supreme Court ruling (Johnson v. Transportation Agency of Santa Clara County, California), prospective employers gave preferential treatment in hiring and promoting female candidates for positions in order to promote equitable representation of the sexes in the workplace (Schuster & Foote, 1990).

The federal government has supported efforts in each state under Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) projects. Currently LEAD provides funding for promoting administrative candidates, especially women and minorities (Mooreman, 1986).

A federal policy, Title IX, prohibits educational institutions from discriminating on the basis of gender at the risk of losing their federal dollars. Criticizing this policy, Schmuck and Wyant (1981) suggested that it is one thing to adopt a policy or plan and quite another to keep equity in mind when recruiting and selecting candidates for administrative positions.

Shakeshaft (1987) discussed a number of programs created to increase representation of females in administration, but reported that only one program had documented successes in actually placing females in leadership positions. That project was called Female Leaders for Administration and Management in Education (FLAME).

A great concern of Shakeshaft (1987) was the virtual absence of female school administrators as role models. Many students, both male and female, have never seen a woman in a leadership position. The lack of female role models influences a continuance of discrimination and inhibits aspirations of young females.

There is an identified need for many more competent leaders to administer the nation's public schools. Policy makers have been warned that by 1990 as many as 70 percent of the practicing elementary principals would retire or leave the occupation (Crow, 1990). McCormick (1987) reported that between one-half and three-quarters of all United States superintendents would retire within seven years. Females have represented a vast fund of under-used talent for the leadership jobs available (Joekel, 1991). Active recruitment of competent women could lend solutions to the availability pool and to

the extreme challenges of "restructuring" the educational arena. Corporate business agreed. Chief executive of Pitney Bowes, George Harvey, observed. "It doesn't make sense to cut yourself off from half of the talented people in this world" (Rudolph, 1991). If the top jobs became truly available to both genders, Edson (1988) predicted that women, especially black women, might be the primary change agents in educational institutions in the future due to their unique sensitivity and perceptual ability.

To remedy the inequity in representation, Neidig (1980) offered recommendations to increase female representation: provide more support in departments of higher educational administration, provide visibility to women in professional organizations, establish internships, announce job openings to men and women at the same time, and support beginning women administrators.

## Leadership Challenges for the School Superintendent

In the school setting, the superintendent has been expected to identify the courses of action that must be taken, to inspire unity, and to work effectively with subordinates to achieve desired goals (Zehnder, 1988). The key responsibility of the superintendent of schools is to manage the action that leads to school improvement. Today that task has become complicated by societal demands. Public school educators operate in a complex and unstable environment over which they exert only modest control. Bell (1980) warned:

> Many schools are now unable to disregard pressure emanating from their wider environments. They are

> no longer able to respond to the uncertainty which such pressures often bring by buffering themselves against the unforeseen or by gaining control over the source of the uncertainty and thus restoring stability. The external pressures are, in many cases, too strong for that. (pp. 186-187)

Timar (1989) agreed, "There is increasing evidence that schools are products of the political cultures of states and districts, and thus, lack a coherent environment." Superintendents are required to lead in an ambiguous setting; falling enrollments, expenditure cuts, youth unemployment, curricular and examination reforms, and parental expectations are some of the external pressures on the schools which create unpredictable conditions (Bush, 1986). Moreover, there is substantial evidence to suggest that the nation's business, civic, and political leaders have had little confidence that public schools can teach the basic skills students will need in the future (Moore, 1989).

In the nineties, school leaders are often left with a sense of ambiguity in their leadership roles. The goals of the school are not very clear. Different members of the school perceive different goals or attribute different priorities to the same goals, or are even unable to define goals which have an operational meaning. While those who work in schools are expected to have some overall purpose, the organizational context of many schools is likely to render this impossible or very difficult. Hence schools face an ambiguity of purpose (Bell, 1980). Leading in a setting that is ambiguous in terms of expectations and support and in an environment that oftentimes appears hostile prevents the superintendent from actualizing his or

her own effective style of leadership.

Superintendents are expected to play several roles in responding to societal challenges. Sergiovanni (1984) described the superintendent as a "manager, minister, servant, and high priest who protects the values of the school." He suggested that different approaches are needed for different school situations. If a school has achieved educational competence, the leadership efforts should focus on building human strengths and bonding. "Depending on whether the issue is competence or excellence, leadership by bartering would work in one school, but in another leadership by building or bonding would work better" (Sergiovanni, 1990).

In the face of remarkable challenge, superintendents are the primary and most important persons engaged in continuous, comprehensive school reform efforts (Wissler & Ortiz, 1988). However, the reform efforts of the eighties did not expect the mission of change to be accomplished singlehandedly by the school superintendent, but rather to involve others in the change process (Carnegie Task Force Report, 1986; Governor's Commission, 1986; Holmes Report, 1986; A Nation at Risk, 1983). Critics such as Schlechty and Joslin (1986) disagreed and suggested that schools should be managed similar to business entities: "If things do not lead to profit and growth in the long run, it is the Chief Executive Officer that is fired." The superintendent would be held directly responsible for lack of progress in school improvement.

Creative problem solving is necessary to lead in such

ambiguous environments, but it is a skill that may be stifled by outside factors. Borman and Spring (1984) claimed that because schools receive funding on the basis of meeting externally determined regulations at the board, state, and federal levels, school leaders have learned to gain these resources primarily through conformity to regulations which, in turn, has impeded the creativity of the educational process. Rowan (1981) explained that as administrators conform, they devote less time and energy to the core instructional problems. Timar (1989) suggested that novel thinking is needed, "Administrators have relied on centralization and regulation to achieve specific results for thirty years" and refocusing efforts on creative problem solving is difficult.

The political nature of schools is accelerating and requires thoughtful problem solving and decision making to address emergent issues. Sergiovanni (1984) addressed the problem:

> The political perspective is concerned with a dynamic interplay of the organization with forces in its external environment. Schools are viewed as open rather than closed systems, as integral parts of a larger environment, not as bounded entities isolated from the environment. They receive inputs, process them, and return outputs to the environments. Inputs are presumed to be diverse and output demands often conflicting. As a result, there is constant dynamic interplay between school environments. (p. 6)

Schooling today requires a new leadership paradigm. Schlechty (1990) urged the use of innovation to find new ways of thinking about schools and of organizing them to reach students more effectively. However, Canter (1983) proclaimed, "Innovation is confounded by the practice of fragmentation of organizations into departments and levels,

each with a tall fence around it. Information becomes a secret rather than a circulating commodity" (p. 405).

Unfortunately, much of the literature on the superintendency emphasized the superintendent's vulnerability and political context as the critical factors, rather than the superintendent's positive actions to improve the organization, student achievement, and the staff's work performance (Wissler & Ortiz, 1988). Knezevitch (1975) claimed that "the superintendency is a position born with conflict." Blumberg and Blumberg (1985) described the highly political and conflicting world of the superintendent as "randomized, irrational, and uncontrollable" (p. 57). Bennis and Nanus (1985) further elaborated on the challenge, "The context of apathy, escalating change and uncertainty make leadership like maneuvering over even faster and more undirected ball bearings." Simpkins (1982) suggested, "Schools now face a period of turbulence arising from the clash of incompatible pressures and administrative conservatism and change."

The superintendent is the mediator of social concerns. Unions want to control finance, resource allocation, and personnel decisions; other groups control special education; still other groups control bilingual and compensatory education or education for the gifted and talented (Timar, 1989). To the extent that the superintendent can understand the events that he or she confronts and intellectually analyze them, he or she will be better able to order the world, control it, and maintain his or her own sense of self (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985).

## Effective Leadership Strategies

Effective leadership is critical to the success of public schools today, but responsibility for school success cannot be vested solely in one person's performance. Lieberman and Miller (1990) suggested, "The traditional bureaucratic model of school organization is not only outmoded, but harmful. Real success in high quality schools requires putting teachers and site administrators at the center of the educational process."

Effective leadership is shared between leaders and followers (Sergiovanni, 1989). Leadership in a climate of change or unrest cannot ignore the need to involve others in the process. Baldridge et al. (1978) suggested:

> Leaders serve primarily as catalysts. They do not so much lead the institution as they channel its activities in subtle ways. They do not command, they negotiate. They do not plan comprehensively, they try to nudge problems together with pre-existing solutions. They are not heroic leaders, they are facilitators of an ongoing process. (p. 26)

Leadership strategies that are responsible and address the needs of the organization and its members were well-supported in the literature. Burns (1978) suggested that leadership is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize resources so as to arouse and satisfy the motives of followers. Sergiovanni (1990) believed that leaders and followers share a common stake in the enterprise; positive reinforcement is exchanged for good work, merit pay for increased performance, promotion for increased persistence,

and a feeling of belonging for cooperation--a system Sergiovanni called "leadership by bartering."

An earlier supporter of shared leadership, McGregor (1967), argued that "management by direction and control fails under today's conditions to provide effective motivation of human effort toward organizational objectives. These are useless methods of motivating people whose physiological and safety needs are reasonably satisfied, but whose social, egoistic, and self-fulfillment needs are predominant" (p. 14). McGregor supported a form of transactional leadership whereby the leader's task is to get people's cooperation and to create conditions under which people willingly and voluntarily work toward organizational objectives.

Successful leadership strategies carefully include all participants in the educational endeavor. Leadership that is transformative, according to Burns (1978), unites leaders and followers in pursuit of higher level goals common to both. Both leaders and followers want to become the best. Both want to shape the school in a new direction. Each raises the other to higher levels of motivation and morality.

Sergiovanni (1989) supported transformative leadership as the cornerstone of an effective long-term leadership strategy for schools because such leadership has the power to help schools transcend competence for excellence by inspiring extraordinary commitment and performance. Transformative leadership moves people from being subordinates to being followers. According to Kelly (1988),

good followers think for themselves, exercise self-control, and are able to accept responsibility and obligation. They care about what they do and are self-motivated; thus, they are able to do what is right for the school, do it well, and do it without close supervision. Kelly described effective following as a form of leadership.

According to Rosenholtz (1989), a new leadership paradigm is needed that facilitates a shared purpose, norms of collegiality, norms of continuous improvement, and structures representing the organizational conditions necessary for significant improvements. Deal (1990) added, "At very least, we need to treat educational organizations as complex social organisms held together by a symbolic webbing rather than as formal systems driven by goals, official roles, commands, and rules."

As institutes of cultural transmission, Hoyle and McMahon (1986) believed that the management of schools ought to be of a different order; management should be concerned with the creation of meaning. The symbolic function of school leadership may be met by a leader of vision and charisma, but the vision should be informed by the realities of the educational world: forces in the situation, subordinates, the environment, and forces in the leader.

The literature referenced various strategies for effective leadership. One dealt with the use of information. Wissler and Ortiz (1988) pointed to information control as a factor in successful change processes. Information sharing reduces conflict and helps to determine actions and decisions. Information is so critical and

sensitive that direct control by the superintendent is important. Bennis (1976) defined "information" as the chief leveler of power. He added, "getting, handling, and interpreting information is now the dominant business of our whole economy" (p. 128). Successful change is dependent on the sophisticated control of information rather than people (Wissler & Ortiz, 1988).

Another leadership strategy is communication. Schein (1985) supported the importance of communication as an important tool in managing the school culture and creating meaning. Pitner (1979) found the single dominant pattern that characterizes superintendents is their constant communications. They communicate with municipal authorities, state departments of education, teachers, parents, residents of the communities, attorneys, and colleagues. Much of the day is spent talking about minor things, making rather inconsequential decisions, and holding meetings about ordinary agendas. Although effective communication is critical to school improvement, superintendents find themselves responding to the little irritants in organizational life rather than addressing the big picture of school restructuring.

Several theorists promoted empowerment as a tool to develop shared leadership which increased motivation and commitment to work (Bennis, 1976; Lawler, 1986; Sergiovanni, 1989). Although Lawler endorsed the empowerment of staff, he emphasized that certain conditions must be present; employees need to be knowledgeable about the issues that need solutions, they must be motivated to solve the

problems in a way that is consistent with the best interest of the organization, and mechanisms must be set up to facilitate the implementation of the solution. Brittenham (1980) cautioned those who use empowerment by stating, "Once participants know they can make decisions, they will make them. And they are not all good. But the greater part of them must be honored." Although Sergiovanni (1989) advocated staff involvement, "leadership by outrage" would be applied when staff or others attempt to break down the school's common values core.

A leadership behavior mentioned quite often in the literature was that of educational vision. Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggested that transformative leadership requires the capacity to create and communicate a compelling vision of a desired state of affairs, a vision that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future. Brittenham (1980) agreed that the leader must start with a vision that will give structure to the progress and help resolve potential problems associated with the envisioned change. Zehnder (1988) defined vision as "the ability to formulate objectives that people sense to be right, and to show how these can be accomplished."

A study by Ortiz (1982) described a successful strategy called "intentional" leadership. Intentional leadership provides a vision and sense of mission for the organization. The superintendent instructs, trusts, and experiments with the organizational members. Individual contributions are appreciated, and information is controlled to facilitate change. The superintendent also involves

an intellectual to ensure that the school accesses and pursues the latest theoretical and research information.

Fullan (1982) theorized that superintendents need three behaviors to influence change: technical knowledge, conceptual and technical understanding of the dynamics of change, and interpersonal skills and behaviors of an active communicator who can demonstrate sincere intentions.

In a study of chief executive officers with proven success rates, Bennis and Nanus (1985) asked about personal qualities needed to run their organizations. The chief executive officer (CEO) respondents referred to persistence and self-knowledge, willingness to take risks and accept losses, commitment and consistency, and challenge. Above all, the CEOs talked about continuous learning.

Schein (1985) described five mechanisms by which leaders are able to influence the ongoing daily life of the organization: through what they pay attention to and reward, through the role modeling they do, through the manner in which they deal with critical incidents, through the criteria they use for recruitment, selection, promotion, and excommunication, and through the conflicts and inconsistencies which get communicated and become part of the culture.

The literature on organizational change makes it clear that the old leadership paradigms do not fit the future. Classical organizational theory holds that power must be centralized in the chief officer (Hanson, 1979). Gies and Willis (1990) stressed that

the entire organization must become the leadership team. The notion that one individual possesses the ability to unilaterally lead a modern complex organization to achieving its potential dooms it to unfulfillment.

## Leadership Behaviors of Male and Female Administrators

The skills and behaviors associated with effective school administrators are observed in both male and female administrators (Frasher et al., 1982). Comparing management style of genders, Friesen (1983) discovered that all employers prefer a nondirective or participatory style of leadership, but particularly so when working with females. Results of similar research conducted by Denmark (1977) reported conflicting results. Male leaders exhibited and found approval from followers for more authoritarian behavior than did female leaders. Denmark's (1977) study concluded that male and female leaders performing similar functions were evaluated as equally effective in terms of performance and skills by subordinates. Studies conducted from 1959 to 1979 comparing male and female administrative skills found either no gender difference or that women received higher ratings in comparisons of actual performance (Greer & Finley, 1985; Schuster & Foote, 1990). Analysis of data collected from 91 female and 98 male principals, as well as 1303 teachers, in 41 cities in the United States indicated that the professional performance of teachers and the amount of student learning was higher on the average at schools with female principals (Dopp & Sloan, 1986).

Studying male and female superintendents, Pitner (1979) discovered that all superintendents, regardless of gender, perform the same job activities: supervising schools, providing leadership, engaging in activities to promote public support of the schools, communicating with the press, and meeting with a variety of people. Both male and female superintendents fulfill the role of communicator within the community. However, each tended to communicate more with group members who were of the same sex. Males related to groups such as the Lions and the Rotary, while females spoke more with parent groups such as parent-teacher associations (Pitner, 1979).

A few researchers suggested generalized differences between male and female leaders. Observing roles, Bernard (1981) offered that women are better conditioned to cooperate, while men learn to compete. Abrams' research (1981) proposed that women learn to empathize with others and to build and maintain social structures, while men learn to manipulate and study ways of destroying social structures. For women, it is more important to maintain a network of relationships than to be "separate and on top" (p. 24).

Findings from studies on school climate for leadership revealed that female administrators are more likely to lead in schools that are closely knit (Fishel & Pottker, 1975; Morsink, 1968), and women principals have better communication with their teachers (Fishel & Pottker, 1975; Meskin, 1974; Wiles & Grobman, 1955). One study observed that female superintendents use their time to visit classroom teachers, keeping abreast of the instructional program,

while males use the time to walk the halls with principals and the head custodian, requesting follow-up on concerns (Pitner, 1979).

Shakeshaft's (1987) findings showed differences in leadership styles between men and women. She suggested that, for women, relationships with others are central to all action, building community is an essential part of the administration, and the line separating the public world from the private is blurred. Men often have two very different ways of behaving dependent upon whether they are in the privacy of their homes or in the public space of work. Shakeshaft noted that women are often criticized for this lack of separate behavior.

Loden (1985) found a competitive operating style in men compared to the female's cooperative style. Men create a hierarchical organizational structure while women develop team approaches. Her findings were:

> The basic masculine objective is "winning." The female goal is quality output. Males use a rational problem-solving approach, while females prefer an intuitive-rational strategy. Key characteristics of the male administrative climate are high control, strategy, little emotion, and analysis. The female administrator is characterized by lower control, empathy, collaboration, and high performance standards. (p. 6)

Loden admitted that these traits are not totally gender specific.

Chavez (1990) suggested that the capacity for human beings, men and women, to manage and nurture is ever present. Jacklin and Maccoby (1974) agreed, "The male potential for empathic and sympathetic emotional reactions and for kindly helpful behavior toward others (including children) is seriously underrated." Finding

no evidence of gender-specific differences, Jacklin and Maccoby's study concluded that women are not psychologically handicapped for management, but are blocked by recruitment, hiring, and promotion practices.

Perceptions of followers affect female leadership behavior. Owen (1986) analyzed an aversion of some women to being called "leader" as a strengthening of their hold on that role by minimizing their threat to male members. Results of one study indicated that women who were perceived as leaders by their female peers based on dominance and talkativeness in a group setting were also perceived as "cold," a correlation not shared with male leaders having the same traits (Porter, Geis, & Jennings, 1983). According to Shakeshaft (1987), some women take a subtle approach to leadership by trying to look less authoritarian, less in charge, and less threatening in an effort to be effective. Her studies indicated that men rate women who appear less threatening higher than women who are seen as competent.

Some researchers found differences in factors related to job performance. Miller, Labovitz, and Fry (1978) reported that women in high status positions receive fewer communications, have less influence over peers and subordinates, and are generally more isolated than their male counterparts. The management task of finance and budgeting was not an identified concern by male administrators, but was self-perceived as a weak area by female administrators (Lea, 1989).

Females proved to be strong in the area of curriculum and instruction (Ely, 1984). Most women spent several years in the classroom before assuming an administrative position, which allowed for the perfecting of curriculum knowledge and instructional skills (Whitaker & Lane, 1990).

Some researchers supported leadership that incorporates the values expressed in the female ethos. More business organizations are promoting cooperation, intuitive wisdom, and collaboration to enhance productivity (Block, 1987). A new style of management is emerging in the business world. According to Helgesen, the new style is characterized by "talking more frankly with employees, sharing information rather than withholding it and keeping the office door almost always open" (Rudolph, 1991). This new leadership behavior works to facilitate the restructuring of public schools. Shieve (1988) described the new view of administrative authority as a facilitator--to persuade, explain, assist, convince, monitor, model, develop, redefine, and encourage, and to make teachers colleagues in decision making. Shakeshaft (1987) proposed that schools headed by women tend to sound very similar to schools described as "excellent" in the effective schools research.

Whether women are capable of restructuring schools will be tested as more females accept superintendencies. Their different approaches to leadership may promote successful schooling. Because female administrators must examine their career motivations and educational philosophies more thoroughly and reflectively than men,

Edson (1988) believed that female administrators may have a tremendous impact on school restructuring.

## Factors that Influence Career Aspirations

Early socialization patterns of boys and girls influence their career and leadership aspirations. Clement (1980) discovered that boys more often practice leadership and decision making in games, on teams, and through interactions with peers in very specific task-oriented situations. People have different experiences as young children that affect their eventual selection of vocations. According to Frasher et al. (1982), women who become superintendents reflect a more traditional orientation during childhood and appear to integrate masculine modes of behaviors as they advance to higher levels of authority and responsibility.

In a study by Gilligan (1982), women's development was characterized by a recurring tension between caring for others versus self. She concluded that girls reach a psychological impasse around age 11 when they confront the conventions of a male-dominated culture. They discover their intense awareness of intimacy is not highly prized. Girls become less confident and more tentative in offering their opinions--a trait that often persists into adulthood. Belenky et al. (1986) found that men like to argue and debate each other in class; women do not like to express themselves for fear of separating themselves from others. Thus, people believe the stereotype of unassertion and passivity of females.

Self-concept plays a critical role in forming career aspirations. Shakeshaft (1987) reported that even as students, females come to believe they are not smart or important. They learn that if they do well in school such achievement is because they are lucky or work hard, not because they are smart or capable. Hafner (1988) and Schneider (1988) concurred that women have lower self-esteem than men. Schmuck (1977) identified lack of confidence and low self-image as internal barriers preventing women from considering administration. The self-confidence dilemma increases when male decison makers conclude that their "failure to recognize women as leaders represents women's failure to act like leaders" (Porter, Gies, & Jennings, 1983, p. 1046). Super (1984) hypothesized that there is no difference in the part self-confidence plays in male and female career development. Both appear to make decisions on the basis of their self-concepts and their concepts of the circusmtances in which they live.

Female confidence can build through professional experiences. Females who have had the opportunity to administer programs and demonstrate their competence perceive themselves as competent people (Schmuck, Charters, & Carlson, 1981). Althanassiades (1977) found that female self-concept is affected by the society's stereotypical expectations. Women are publicly expected to be emotional, sociable, other-dependent, personal, and enthusiastic. However, in private, women view themselves as self-centered, emotionally stable, willing to take risks, and unenthusiastic about their present responsibility. Sacrificing their own self-concept, women's public lives are much

closer to the female stereotype than to their inner feelings.

Job opportunity also affects female ambition. Kanter (1977) stated that when individuals lack the opportunities that those in better positions in the same organization have, they will tend to lower the level of their amibition and commitment and seek rewards outside of work.

Much of the available research on aspirations indicated that lowered aspirational levels of women are at least partly responsible for under-representation in administration (Dopp & Sloan, 1986; Schmuck, 1975; Schneider, 1988). Katzell et al. (1972) argued that women are socialized to have limited professional aspirations:

> Girls tend to accept the definitions of what they may do; they do not aspire high. Even the smart ones, those who could become qualified never are motivated sufficiently to attain the skills they would need later. When it comes to jobs, women generally have minimal aspirations, choose short run social and economic advantages, and fail to question the social definitions and expectations of their motivation and their capacities. Women decide against a career, anticipating limitations or defeat before testing the reality. (p. 76.

A study by Crandall and Reed (1986) found that of those aspiring female administrators who professed their aspirations, failure in the job was not feared, but rather never having the chance to try was a concern.

Schmuck, Charters, and Carlson (1981) suggested that the level of a person's aspiration is significantly related to the amount of effort the individual will devote to the things he or she values. Dill, Hilton, and Reitman (1961) reported that levels of aspiration can change as a person goes through various phases of a career, which may

explain why few women initially target the superintendency as a career goal.

Family considerations also affect motivation. Dias (1976) found that having children or expecting to have children in the future lowers females' administrative aspiration levels.

Women often define job satisfiers differently than men. Nicholson and West (1988) reported that in managerial roles, both men and women were looking for psychological fulfillment from their occupations. Clement (1980) explained:

> The rewards for top administrators are power, influence, money, status, and an increasing sense of competency. If none of these is seen as a reward, per se, and maybe considered to be unfeminine traits, then the costs involved in aspiring to top leadership positions might clearly outweigh the benefits. (p. 134).

Motives and attitudes regarding careers are different for women. According to studies conducted by Nicholson and West (1988), women have higher growth needs and are more self-directed and intrinsically motivated in career choices. Men are more materialistic, status-oriented, and goal-directed in their career orientation.

Atkinson and Feather (1966) studied motivation and found that people who are relatively high in achievement motivation tend to attempt tasks that appear moderately difficult (rather than easy or extremely difficult); tend to be persistent in the face of difficulties they encounter in their tasks; and tend to show evidence of good performance and achievement over a period of time. This may relate to female administrators' more typical aspirations for a principalship rather than a superintendency.

Some administrators do not consider the superintendency because the job is too removed from staff and children. A participant in Crow's 1990 study on career incentives stated, "I'm people oriented and if I became superintendent, I'd have to deal with busses, buildings and the board" (p. 49). Crow reported principals who remain in that position feel that the job offsets the financial rewards of a superintendency; the close contact with students and teachers and better job income security are more important than increased income.

## Career Paths of Male and Female Administrators

Gender discrimination acts to limit women's career horizons much earlier in the life cycle than at the point of looking for a job. Epstein (1970) believed it begins in the cradle where boys and girls begin receiving different messages about their future roles. She reported that women learn early the most professional jobs are men's jobs, and they do not think about the possibility that a woman might decide to take one of them.

Career ambitions develop early in men. Males define growing up in terms of a career regardless of what the other facets of their life may look like. In contrast, Clement (1980) suggested that women are socialized to choose between work and marriage. Ginzberg (1984) reported the tentative period of career development corresponds closely between men and women, at approximately ages 11 to 18, and consists of four stages: interest, capacity, value, and transition to reality. Gender differences become apparent following the

capacity stage, the stage of congruence between one's interest and capacities. By the transition stage, women are heavily oriented toward marriage. Many men are also oriented toward marriage; however, for them, traditionally marriage and career have not been in conflict. Some researchers pointed to two early career stages that influence decisions: the "education and exploration" phase, ages 15 to 25, during which job-related skills are learned, career possibilities and goals mapped, and career choice made, and the "identification and establishment" phase, ages 25 to 40, during which individuals identify with careers and move into them (Hall, 1976; Hill & Miller, 1981; Shine, 1978). Osipow's 1983 review of the literature concerning women's career interests and preparation concluded:

> Women are similar to men in their interests and they are dissimilar. The career path is more difficult for females striving to succeed. Even women who are otherwise identical to men in job characteristics face fundamentally different situations in developing careers than do men. (p. 271)

Interest in administrative careers appears to develop either prior to teaching or after teaching for a period of time. Blood (1969) found that early entrance into administration allows a certain detachment from the rest of the teachers, making the teaching departure less stressful. Planned entrance into the administrative arena has not been a major factor in female career decisions. Research collected by Funk (1986) suggested that the average female does not aspire to be a superintendent, and neither does she plan an administrative or any other long-term career. Few women plan early for administrative careers. In a study of female superintendents

nationwide, only one out of fifty had planned a career as a superintendent (Williams & Willower, 1983). Evidence does suggest that while men often plan their move into administration several years before it occurs, women may not think much about being an administrator until the opportunity arises (Cobbley, 1970; Paddock, 1977; Scriven, 1973; Zimmerman, 1971).

Females display goal-directed behaviors in career selection. Harrigan's (1987) review of the literature revealed that women who succeed in male-assigned roles are those who persist and who strongly believe in the direction they are moving. Paddock (1981) found that more women superintendents (33.0%) than male superintendents (12.5%) had obtained doctoral degrees. Adams (1984) reported that high-achieving women have very high expectations in both home and career areas and have to seek out companies and professions that will accommodate family life.

Aspiring administrators often follow prescribed career patterns. A report entitled The Profile of the School Superintendent (American Association of School Administrators, 1960) described two major career patterns for superintendents: teacher/principal/central office/superintendent and, in smaller communities, teacher/principal/superintendent. However, a study by Schmuck (1975) concluded that career patterns of women might be quite different from career paths of men, since women hold many staff positions between their tenure of customary line positions. Schmuck also found that top-line female administrators' experiences did not differ much from the males'.

Ortiz (1982) reported that males enter administration sooner than females due to three factors: (1) white males are strongly encouraged as teachers to become administrators; (2) they find themselves outnumbered as teachers, particularly elementary; and (3) the pervading male norm is that an administrative position signifies success.

Gross and Trask (1976) found that males teach five to seven years and females fifteen years before assuming their first administrative position. More than one-half of the high school principals studied by Schuster and Foote (1990) reported at least one year of experience as an athletic coach or director.

In a study by Edson (1981), female aspirants described different reasons for pursuing a principalship: their own personal motivations and encouragement by family, peers, and supervisors. Most females indicated a combination of internal and external motivations.

More female administrators are employed in large districts and metropolitan areas because women with family responsibilities are more place-bound, larger districts have more administrative positions in support of staff areas, and large districts simply have more vacancies (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981).

McGivney and Haught (1972) discovered that the quest for the superintendency required calculated risks. Aspiring administrators took risks in making decisions for the school district and were aware of making decisions which had high visibility and which appeared most appropriate at the time. The personal accretion of power in

this manner usually meant a superintendency for these individuals.

Males very often have mentors teaching and encouraging them to consider administration as a career (Walker, 1987). In a study by Pavan (1986), sixty-eight percent of the women who had mentors named a male principal most often. Mentors use their greater knowledge, experience, and status to help develop their proteges, not to simply pull the proteges up the organization ladder on the mentor's coattails (Bass, 1985). Women are much less likely than men to find authorities of either sex who are willing to act as sponsors and mentors for them (Hall & Sandler, 1983; Speizer, 1981).

Female aspirants often exert great efforts to become administrators. Fishel and Pottker (1977) found that women teachers must possess superior qualifications and skills to be appointed to an administrative position. In contrast, some aspiring males simply wait for an administrative position to open in their teaching district; others move for the positions (Crow, 1990). Pavan's (1989) study concluded that younger aspirants needed greater effort to obtain their first administrative job. Women aspirants submitted more applications, had more interviews, and searched longer than male aspirants. Those applicants with a doctorate submitted more job applications and had more job interviews than those without the degree.

## Career Obstacles and Inhibitors

Certain obstacles inhibit career advancement for women

in administration. Gupta (1983) defined three general categories of barriers that inhibit women's progress in educational administration: personality characteristics, background influences, and socialization patterns. According to Gupta, these barriers function to perpetuate myths and biases about women's abilities and tend to group women together in such a way that all women suffer from the failure of a few. Kanter (1977) suggested that the imbalanced gender ratio allows members of the dominant group (males) to exaggerate differences according to the stereotypes they believe about women. Wohman and Frank (1980) added that a "solo" person has lesser status in any group. Larwood and Gutek's (1984) findings concluded that females face more discrimination and stereotypes detrimental to career advancement than do men. According to Weber et al. (1981), society conditions both men and women to believe that women are not as capable of holding leadership positions as men.

Morrison (1988) presented three similar causes of differential treatment of females in the work force: discrimination by the majority in power, deficiencies due to under-representation, and structural, systemic discrimination.

Women have been the victims of gender biases. Both male and female board members responsible for selecting superintendents sometimes impede females' administrative progress. O'Reilly (1985) reported societal obstacles as described by board members: the tradition of hiring men, sexism in larger society, the assumption that women are place-bound and hold the primary responsibility for

child care, women's primary interest in teaching, women's lack of perseverance and qualification, and their nonaggression about career goals. As female representation on local school boards increases (38.0% in 1990), attitudes toward female superintendents may improve (American School Board Association, 1990).

Female educators perceive the external barriers, those emanating from the society and its institutions, as more serious obstacles to advancement than internal barriers, those relating to self-concept and aspiration (Fong, 1984; Pacheco, 1982; Wiley, 1986).

Katzell (1972) believed that some attitudes of female discrimination are even seen as valuable to some groups. Executives do not need any more competition than exists now. Additionally, as Katzell suggested, attitudes sometimes have ego-satisfying functions. Defining women as inferior is a utilitarian, self-serving approach.

Hollander and Yoder (1980) reported on society's perceptions of the leadership role and the stereotype of a female administrator having limitations in that role. They suggested that women must redefine either their feminine role or their leadership role in order to be seen as effective by local patrons.

Some researchers reported that opportunities have not increased for females. Kahn and Crosby (1985) found that the realities of sex discrimination, especially a sex-segregated work life, have remained much more static than attitudes. They suggested people often overlook inequities. According to Lerner (1975),

there is considerable evidence that people will deny the existence of an obvious injustice rather than question their belief that the world is just.

Edson's (1981) review found that some female aspirants believed that inexperienced men are selected for their potential, whereas women are required to have already demonstrated their competence. Females have accepted this challenge. Charlotte Whitton, former mayor of Ottawa, teased, "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult" (Gibbs, 1991).

A career limitation for females is experience. Experience is a vital component in the preparedness of administrative aspirants (McLure & McLure, 1974; Moore, 1981). A review of the literature by Schmuck and Wyant (1981) found experience to be the telling factor that determined an aspirant's chances for advancement, just as lack of experience was the reason most frequently cited for not advancing women. Research findings suggested that female aspirants should seek every opportunity to receive experience in a wide variety of settings (McLure & McLure, 1974; Moore, 1981; Shakeshaft, 1987; Valverde & Brown, 1988). When unable to gain a variety of experiences on the job, Gallagher (1988) suggested to women the benefits in securing training through planned field experiences.

Kanter (1977) discovered that the structure of hierarchical opportunities discriminates between men and women. The evidence

shows that males have greater access to coveted positions (Schmuck, 1976; Stockard, 1980). Often women are placed in easy administrative positions, disallowing females to do tough jobs. This serves to perpetuate the inequality (Stockard & Johnson, 1979).

Women face family constraints in their quest for leadership positions. The parent role is differently defined for men and women in society. The mother role requires substantially more time and effort than the father role (Gutek & Larwood, 1987). Women typically take on the mental responsibility of child care, allowing the professional man to be what Hochschild (1975) termed a "family-free" man. Women with younger children who are competing with men for higher level jobs face the dilemma that the years during which women who want children must bear and raise them are the key years in the struggle for career success (Rix & Stone, 1984).

A career in management seems to mean sacrifices for women which are not equally demanding of men. The inequalities of the distribution of household labor means that marriage and families are supportive structures for men's careers, but obstacles for women (Nicholson & West, 1988). To the extent that husbands receive more attractive job offers and their careers progress faster, women tend to adapt and maximize total family career progress (Markham, 1986; Pleck, 1977; Wallston, Foster, & Berger, 1978).

Mobility also hinders career advancement. Many women feel they cannot move to the available position, thus limiting their career choices. In a study of thirteen hundred female educators in

Illinois who held administrative certificates, but were not practicing, Krchnick (1978) found that 78 percent of the women were not willing to relocate to get a position. Schmuck (1976) suggested that men are even willing to move their families during the credentialing stage, but women are not. The assumed tendency of a married women to remain or move with her husband regardless of career possibilities has been used to label women as unreliable administrative candidates (Kane, 1976).

Schmuck (1987) found a difference of idle expectation for females when compared to men: "Men are encouraged, expected, and even pressured to be upwardly mobile and professionally successful; women are not expected to pursue successful leadership positions. Both men and women communicate these expectations to one another." According to Ortiz (1982), females in higher education who announce an interest in moving into administration have a harder time gaining tenure: "Male administrators seem threatened when women are bent on advancing." Kanter (1977) noted one male's reaction to female aspiration, "It's ok for women to have these jobs, as long as they don't go zooming by me." Kanter found that younger women, however, appeared less cautious in expressing their career goals. But the longer they remained as teachers, the more cautious they became about expressing their aspirations. Unfortunately, Kanter discovered that as they settled into teaching, women found the upward climb unrealistic for them.

The belief exists that women do not really expect to become

superintendents, and this belief is supported through research by Keim (1979) who studied a group of females who earned certification within a designated timeframe. She learned that none had become superintendents. Studies of qualified female educators who do not go into administration work suggested that most of them simply do not want to, even when they hold certificates or have had prior experience in the field (Krnchniak, 1978; Mansergh, 1976; McMillan, 1975; Newman, 1980; Weber et al., 1980). A study by Newman (1980) quoted women teachers who described administration as "not worth the hassle." Mansergh's (1976) study reported that many teachers have observed how difficult it is for a women to obtain an administrative position, and they have stopped trying to do so.

Ortiz and Marshall (1988) cited sponsorship as one of the causes of discriminatory hiring practices: "To date, sponsorship has contributed to the perpetuation of school-based professionals divided by gender into separated instruction and management camps" (p. 126).

Whitaker and Lane (1990) suggested that lack of role models limits female administrative opportunity. Having distorted role models affects social expectations, parental guidance, and self-aspiration. Gilligan (1979) argued, "By taking for their model the lives of men, theories have failed to account for the experiences of women. They have tried to fashion women out of masculine cloth" (p. 432). A woman aspirant's opportunity to study and compare her talents, skills, and abilities with her same sex model is limited.

Without such opportunity, one cannot be on secure footing about the appropriateness of career choice (Schmuck, Charters & Carlson, 1981).

According to Shakeshaft (1981), much of the research done thus far on females in management has looked for a single barrier, and often times the one reason given is the make-up of the woman herself. Causation is multifacted rather than singular, and blaming the victim will not be productive in removing barriers and providing strategies.

## Summary

A summary of the literature addressing challenges faced by public school superintendents, leadership needs of today's public schools, and factors related to female administrators' career aspirations and obstacles to the superintendency offered the following insights:

1. Public schools today face remarkable political, social, and economic challenges that are ambiguous and inconsistent in expectations for school superintendents. Schools require a leader who is responsive to the changing needs of the community served, the staff employed, and the parents they hope to partner, as well as a leader accountable for student achievement. Political demands, divided purposes, and unsure financial resources demand creative leadership (Cuban, 1989).

2. A style of leadership that can communicate the leader's vision of school needs and goals into a common mission that all accept, participate in, and enforce is needed to restructure schools

today. Transformational leadership has the potential to involve all audiences in creative problem solving and shared commitment to work together toward achieving excellence in schools and professional self-fulfillment (Sergiovanni, 1989).

3. Females are successful leaders. Female administrators often portray a style of shared leadership that seeks participation from staff, parents, and patrons. Females seek openness and mutual problem solving in schools rather than a style of autocratic leadership or a bureaucratic distribution of power (Schuster & Foote, 1990).

4. Although females have proven leadership skills, they are under-represented in the superintendency. Several researchers suggested that very few women actively seek the top-level administrative position in public school districts. A variety of internal and external constraints influence female career decisions (Whitaker & Lane, 1990).

5. Aspirations toward leadership careers are influenced by social expectations from early childhood experiences throughout life, even during direct career training. Males are socialized to believe they have good chances to secure administrative positions if they so choose and professionally prepare themselves. Aspirations are positively affected by "encouraging" people in one's life as well as actual opportunities to prove competence to oneself through direct job experiences (Schmuck, 1987).

6. Bias still exists against women in school administration

due to societal gender stereotyping. Females tend to mask "femininity" traits in order to be accepted in a male-dominated setting (Owen, 1986).

7. Women are needed in the role of school superintendent for the following reasons: there is a need for more quality superintendent applicants; attrition of present superintendents necessitates a bigger pool of available candidates; many female administrators demonstrate a style of transformational leadership that may better serve the system of public schooling in today's society; and positive female role models are needed in public school leadership to work against societal stereotyping of females as unable to become leaders and to influence other female educators to aspire to the top leadership position, thus creating a more gender-harmonious society.

# CHAPTER III

# PROCEDURES

A review of the literature revealed the politically challenging role and the leadership needs of the school superintendent and factors that influence female administrative career decisions. The purpose of this study was to identify factors that motivate female administrators to seek the position of school superintendent and to discover factors that inhibit female school administrators from pursuing the superintendency. The study explored the perceptions of female administrators who choose or reject the possibility of becoming a school superintendent.

## Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges school districts will encounter during the next decade as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

2. What leadership behaviors are needed by school superintendents to improve the quality of schooling in Nebraska as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

3. What factors motivate and inhibit outstanding female administrators to seek the school superintendency?

## The Population

A purposive sampling method was employed to select the subjects for this study. This selection process allowed intensive study of a critical group of female administrators considered to be outstanding administrators. They were nominated by a selected group of educators. Through this approach, the selected cases generated "information rich" responses to the research questions.

Key informants were used to identify the sample population of outstanding female administrators who were the focus of the study. Key informants were individuals who appeared to be particularly well-informed, articulate, approachable, or available (Wolcott, 1988). The names of key informants were recommended by three sources: the Nebraska Associate Commissioner of Education (male), the Dean of Teachers College at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln (male), and the Executive Director of the Nebraska State Education Association (female). The investigator requested the names of potential key informants in Nebraska through telephone contact with the three aforementioned state leaders. Twelve informants who were active educational leaders located in the state of Nebraska were recommended. The nominated key informants were state leaders recognized for their knowledge of educational administration who were professionally acquainted with many state educators. Seven key informants were male and five were female.

The sample population for the study of outstanding female administrators was identified through written nominations made by the

key informants who were asked to nominate two female administrators (and one alternative) whom they perceived to have potential to become excellent school superintendents and to support the nominations with descriptive data.

The purposive sampling resulted in thirty-one names of female educators in the state of Nebraska. The sample was reduced to twenty-one female administrators after duplications and ineligible nominees were discounted. Ineligible nominees were practicing female superintendents and females not yet in administrative roles. Due to the select nature of this population, the investigator was able to focus the data collection on the rich descriptions of the female administrators' perceptions on the phenomenon studied.

The written nominations provided by the key informants served as a part of the data collection. The nominators' leadership criteria for selecting particular administrators were of particular value to the study in providing information on skills and behaviors viewed as effective leadership traits. The proven competence of the professional leaders providing these data lends validity to the written criteria.

## Description of the Research Design

The design of this investigation was qualitative research. Naturalistic inquiry was used to answer the research questions pertaining to school challenges, leadership, and personal motivation and inhibition toward a superintendency career change. The participants

were encouraged to elaborate and provide the researcher with rich insights into the issues. The use of a semi-structured interview yielded a first look at the respondents' social environments and perceptions and induced open-ended responses. "The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982). Case study methodology was employed to gather and report the data in a way that illuminated the real and perceptual worlds of female administrators selected as outstanding leaders.

## Instrumentation

The primary tool used to identify the sample population and the criteria for their selection was a nomination form developed by the researcher to solicit names of practicing administrators who could become outstanding superintendents (see Appendix B). The form was intentionally short and open-ended to solicit actual beliefs of effective leadership traits on the part of the key informants. The use of the informants' own language and descriptions of leadership provided additional insights on leadership for the data collection. The nomination form was reviewed by four practicing administrators in southeast Nebraska. Suggestions for improvement of the instrument were offered and incorporated. Each key informant was asked to identify two female administrators who could become excellent school superintendents, give one alternate name, and suggest the criteria

for their selection. The nominees could not be currently practicing superintendents. The open-ended question posed to the key informants was, "Of the female administrators you know in the state of Nebraska, who do you believe could become an excellent superintendent and why?" The nomination forms, along with a cover letter (see Appendix A), were distributed by mail to key informants in the state of Nebraska. Of the thirteen key informants solicited, six required follow-up letters. After the second request for participation, twelve had returned the nomination and the requested information. Personal contact was made with three key informants to clarify the nomination request.

The second research instrument was an interview schedule that was used with the sample population (see Appendix C). The format of the interview was semi-structured, allowing for more spontaneous responses to questions addressing public school challenges, leadership needs, self-perceptions of leadership, and career interests. Questions were posed in an open-ended format, framing some issues, yet allowing for flexibility and depth of response. The interview process allowed probing and clarification of issues when needed.

The interview questions were developed using findings from the review of the literature regarding issues of leadership, public school challenges, and individual career considerations. Thought was given to the sequencing of the questions to provide a more natural flow of conversation with the respondent. The first draft of the interview guide was presented to two practicing Nebraska school

administrators (one female and one male) to review for clarity and relevancy of questions. Suggestions were given that reduced duplication of information and clarified the intent of questions. Modifications were then implemented to improve the quality of the interview instrument.

## Data Collection

The research questions directed the collection of data. Information and perceptions related to the challenges of public school administration, the needed leadership behaviors of the school superintendent, and the factors that influence career decisions were gathered, categorized, coded, analyzed, and interpreted. This information was collected through the nomination forms of the key informants and the personal indepth interviews with the female administrator cases.

The first phase of the data collection was the nomination form and descriptive information provided by the twelve selected key informants. These data provided names of persons perceived to have leadership talent for the superintendency as well as describing the leadership criteria used to select the nominees. A nomination form was mailed to the informants to collect these data (see Appendix A). This collection identified the population to be studied and explained the characteristics of leadership that state educators attribute to effective superintendents.

The second phase of the data collection was the indepth personal interviews with the nominated female administrators. This sample population was identified and located through data on the key informant nomination form which provided specific information on the location, position, and telephone access to the outstanding female nominees. Female administrators were then contacted by the researcher by phone. The intent of the study was explained and participation was invited. All twenty-one of the nominated outstanding female administrators agreed to participate. The respondents were informed that they had been nominated as a select group of female administrators with superintendency potential. Most participants verbally responded to this information with a chuckle and a reply of satisfaction. The researcher then scheduled one-hour phone interviews with the female nominees. The interviews were conducted over a two-month period. Participants were asked if they preferred to be called at home or at their place of work. All but four chose an evening call at their home. The investigator believed that the home setting provided participants a more relaxed setting and a "closer to reality" view of their sometimes conflicting domestic and career expectations.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to stimulate responses to the research questions. Verbal replies from the respondents on issues of leadership, challenges to the superintendency, and motivators and inhibitors in seeking the position of the superintendency were recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Each interview took seventy to ninety minutes.

## Data Analysis

The information gathered from the nomination forms of the key informants and the indepth personal interviews was reviewed and analyzed for emergent themes addressing the issues of challenges to public school leaders, leadership needs, and influences on female career decisions. The analysis included three steps: information from the interviews was categorized using topics from the review of the literature along with new topics emerging from the female administrators' perceptions; respondents' quotations that supported the identified categories were coded, noting commonalities and differences; and the coded quotations were used to describe emergent patterns that contributed to an explanation of the phenomenon of female under-representation in the school superintendency. Five issues outlined the challenges to public education. Leadership needs specified six categories. Nine themes relating to motivators and ten topics that spoke to inhibitors for female administrators to pursue a school superintendency emerged.

The twenty-one cases studies were individually described, noting career patterns, family background, and professional goals. Each respondent was assigned an identifying name. The cases were then synthesized looking for common themes on leadership and career persuasions. Direct quotes of the participants were used, validating the selected themes.

The research questions were answered as follows:

1. What are the challenges school districts will encounter during the next decade as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

Emergent themes discovered in the interview responses of female administrators were reported. Propositions guided by these themes were developed and tested for support in the raw data. Ideas among the case studies were cross-validated for common themes.

2. What leadership behaviors are needed by school superintendents to improve the quality of schooling in Nebraska as perceived by selected outstanding female administrators?

The dialogues of the female administrators along with the written descriptors of leadership provided by key informants were analyzed for similar and contrasting perceptions. Specific propositions developed by the researcher were validated through direct quotations of the two populations, the key informants and the female case studies.

3. What factors motivate and inhibit outstanding female administrators to seek the school superintendency?

Female respondents' information was coded for categories of motivators and inhibitors that described the revealing perceptions of females making career decisions in education. Emerging themes and propositions were tested for validity through the direct quotes of the female administrators interviewed. The review of the literature on female career influences provided the researcher a frame of

reference to develop the propositions to be tested.

The research findings from this study of what motivates and inhibits female school administrators from seeking the superintendency were reported in a narrative format. The raw data were used to discover emerging themes from this female population. The themes led to propositions to be tested. The propositions were validated by including direct quotes from the respondents, giving the reader access to the feelings and conceptualizations of the people represented in the study, the "outstanding" female administrators. The researcher painted a rich portrait of the female administrators and the various influences on their professional development and career selection. The natural language of the interviewees provided a comprehensive description of the world of the achieving female administrator and the factors that impact her decision to seek a school superintendency.