

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

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 review of the literature provided abundant descriptions of the restraints on females in their administrative career selections. Looking from another perspective, this study investigated the phenomenon of female administrators' positive motivation for the superintendency.

Life circumstances and experiences develop the personalities, skills, and values of individuals which, in turn, affect individual career aspirations. In order to study career motives of female administrators, individual profiles of the nominees were constructed and attitudes regarding educational leadership were studied. Patterns that identified aspiring school superintendents were sought.

The method of this reflective research was interview. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty-one administrators who were identified as outstanding female administrators with the potential to become successful superintendents. (Demographic information on the nominated female administrators may be found in Appendix D). The sample was identified through the nominations of twelve key informants who were noted educational leaders in the state of Nebraska. (For demographic information on the key informants, see Appendix E.)

The interviews were conducted between April 1991 and June 1991. All interviews were conducted by telephone, and each took from seventy to ninety minutes. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The interviews focused on four central issues: the challenges of public education today, the essential leadership behaviors needed by school superintendents, motives for administrators to seek a superintendency, and factors that inhibit administrators from seeking a superintendency.

The pages that follow delineate the case studies and present a synthesis of the data. Each case study gives a descriptive career profile of the female administrator and personal background information. Each participant was given a fictitious name in order to credit responses to the person using direct quotes. The names are neutral, not meant to suggest positive or negative connotations. The emphasis throughout this report was on letting the participants speak for themselves.

### Case Studies

#### Case 1 (Anna)

Anna had been an elementary principal in a Class III system for two years. She was responsible for two buildings. Prior to this experience, she worked as a speech therapist in a public institution and in a Class II district. She earned a doctorate and was certified for the superintendency. She was raised in a metropolitan area by

parents who were a plumber and a homemaker. She did not intend to go into teaching; rather, she majored in speech and language pathology. Anna's career plan was to stay in the principalship for several years, but move to another building or a different school system. Anna was in her forties and divorced. Her children were grown. She emphasized working with others:

We have a staff-community-parent team that I worked with all year. We really worked hard at learning to work as a team and also to reach consensus without voting on issues, and how to express our opinions and listen to each other and modify what we say to incorporate someone else's ideas, and how to accept a viewpoint that may not be identical to ours.

#### Case 2 (Betty)

Betty was an assistant principal in a high school in a metropolitan area. She held the same administrative position in another building in the same system and had been a junior high teacher there as well. She grew up in a rural area; her parents' vocations were car sales and teaching. Betty married soon after high school. She did not plan to be a teacher. She had a short-term career goal of becoming a principal. Betty earned her doctoral degree, was certified for the superintendency, and felt she would eventually apply for that position. She was married, and her children were grown. Her husband was a law official. Betty was in her forties. Discussing leadership, she suggested:

There is a point in time where you start behaving differently based on the way people act toward you and for whatever the catalyst is you just do that and sometimes it's hard to isolate that, but then that's kind of the beginning of that self-image of leadership.

### Case 3 (Cynthia)

Cynthia had been a supervisor of elementary personnel services in a large district for four years. She was also the Title IX officer for the district. Her past experience was as a building coordinator and special education teacher in the same district. Cynthia grew up in the district she currently served. She was the oldest of three children. Her mother modeled a "driver" personality and was always involved in community leadership. Her grandparents were college graduates, and her grandmother's parents were both physicians. She always had strong female role models. Cynthia did not profess a specific career plan, but believed she would enjoy an assistant superintendency. Not yet certified for the superintendency, she planned to be prepared for the job when her children were grown. Cynthia was married with two children. She was in her thirties. Her husband was in the insurance business. Regarding relocating for career opportunities, Cynthia shared:

I would consider a move. It's getting more difficult as my husband advances in his company, but we both have talked that we would consider a move at some point. It's so hard when you have your kids and we're real happy with what goes on with them here in school. I think I'm getting maybe just smarter, pickier about where I might consider going and what I might consider doing.

### Case 4 (Diane)

Diana had been an assistant junior high principal in a Class III district for five years. She had been curriculum director and held five different jobs in the same district. She was to assume a principalship in the same district the following year. Prior to

administration, she taught elementary grades and a gifted program. She was raised in a large city by a father who worked in insurance and commercial business and a mother who was a teacher/librarian. She was married and had no children at home. Her husband was in automotive sales. Her career plan included a move from the assistant junior high principalship to the junior high/middle school principalship or central office. She had a specialist degree in administration and was certified for the superintendency. She believed she would eventually apply for that position. She was thirty-nine. Diane stated:

Our superintendent is connecting a lot with community people; making all the right connections. So you don't have to be alone at the top like they tell you superintendents are. There's been a taught stereotype in college classes. We need to change the image of what the superintendent is in order to attract qualified and quality people into that position because it has been portrayed as being somewhat negative.

#### Case 5 (Elaine)

Elaine had been the director of elementary education for a large city school for six years. Her prior experience was as elementary principal, supervisor, consultant, master teacher, and classroom teacher in the same school district for fifteen years. She also taught Head Start for one year. She was raised in two large cities and was working in the city in which she spent her elementary and secondary school years. Her father worked in a meat packing plant, and her mother worked in a school cafeteria. She was the fifth of six children. Elaine had her doctorate and was certified

for the superintendency. Although she had no specific career plan, she had applied for an out-of-state superintendency and could see herself in that role, or in the role of assistant superintendent. She was divorced, and her children were grown. Elaine was in her forties and was an African-American. She explained her interest in administration:

I like planning. Problem solving and planning abstract are probably two of the things that I think are my strengths. The plus I have is the ability to apply it to actual educational agendas. In most of the roles I've had, it's been to first create it, then develop it, then to implement it, and then to monitor it, and once I do that then I'm ready to move on to something else.

#### Case 6 (Fran)

Fran was administrative assistant to the superintendent in a large city school for three years. She served on the superintendent's cabinet. Currently, she was on leave from the district to complete her doctoral studies. She had served the same district as principal, assistant principal, administrative intern, and elementary teacher for fifteen years. Fran grew up in a large metropolis out of state. Her father was a department head in a United States government office, and her mother was a budget analyst. Fran was encouraged by her grandmother to believe in herself, work hard, and be ready when the door of opportunity would open. Her professed career plan was "gaining different types of experiences to be prepared for whatever comes along." Fran was certified for the superintendency and had applied. She was offered a major superintendency out of state, but declined due to family considerations. She was in her forties

and married with three children. He husband was a manager in a major business corporation. Fran was an African-American. Responding to balancing her home and her profession, she explained:

I don't want anyone to feel cheated, the children nor my husband. I guess if anyone gets cheated, it's probably me trying to find some time for myself.

#### Case 7 (Gail)

Gail had been an elementary principal of a Class III district for thirteen years. Her prior experience was as an elementary teacher and reading teacher for five years in a city school. She grew up in the district she was currently serving. Her father was a family practitioner, and her mother was a nurse. As the oldest of four children, she developed her leadership role early in life. She was married, had no children, and was age thirty-nine. Her husband was in the medical field. Gail described her view of working with staff:

Lots of listening, lots of dialogue, lots of answering questions, lots of being able to pose questions that let those audiences stop and think about what their own values are, what their own goals are, whether they're kids or professionals or other careers.

#### Case 8 (Harriet)

Harriet was in her first year as an elementary principal in a Class III district. Prior to this experience, she was a resource coordinator for three buildings in another district, and she was a classroom teacher for nine years in a consolidated district. She had also taught college classes. She grew up on a farm. Her mother was a school teacher, and her father was on the school board. Learning

was always an important emphasis in the family. She was high school valedictorian. She was the oldest of seven children. Harriet delayed starting college until her children began school. Her children were grown. Her husband was a school administrator in a district ninety miles away, which necessitated weekend commuting for them to be together. Although she was not certified, Harriet did have a career plan to move into a superintendency. She was forty-four. She reflected about her current job:

I thought [her work location] would be nice considering I would not be with my husband. It would be nice to have some family in the area, but more primarily, I was looking at a school that was demanding and challenging. I wanted some multi-cultural experience. I wanted a true test of administration, a challenge.

#### Case 9 (Isabel)

Isabel had been elementary principal in a small private school for two years. Her prior experience was eleven years as principal in three small school districts and as an elementary teacher for eight years. She grew up in a small town as the youngest of three children; however, she felt like an only child as her brothers were 16 and 20 years older. Her father managed a creamery, and her mother was a homemaker. Isabel had always wanted to be a teacher. Her career plan was to obtain a doctorate or a specialist degree. Although she was not certified for the superintendency, she could see herself in that role. She was forty-four and married without children. Her husband was a parcel carrier. Reflecting on personal growth, she shared:



I think that I am personable. I think that I have learned to listen in my maturing years. When I was a younger administrator, I think I probably was for the power part a little bit more, but I changed that, and I really like working with people. I really don't mind controversy. I don't mind conflict. I don't want it in my life all the time but I think that in order to have a school system, you have to have some conflict, and you have to have some conflict management skills.

#### Case 10 (Jane)

Jane was a department staff assistant of a large urban school district. She had been in this position for six and one-half years. Prior to this experience, she had been a junior high teacher for three and one-half years and a department head. She had earned a doctorate and had a career goal she was pursuing. She was certified and had applied for the superintendency. Jane was thirty years old and single. Her father was a farmer, and her mother was a homemaker. They professed a strong work ethic during her formative years. She did well in school, academically and athletically, and was involved in leadership activities. Reflecting on obstacles as a female administrator, Jane suggested:

Credibility is never assumed. You have to prove your credibility. It's not an assumption that you're good. People will believe in your reliability after they've seen the sharp presentation or the good proposal or the effective grant.

#### Case 11 (Kathryn)

Kathryn was an elementary principal in a large suburban school district and had held that position for twelve years. Her prior experience was elementary school teacher for eight years in the same

district and in one smaller system. She was raised in a small town. Her father and mother were a laborer and a nurse, respectively. Her mother, divorced early, preached the importance of a career for self-support. She had no professed career plan, but expected she would complete a doctoral degree. At the time of the study, she lacked superintendency credentials, but planned to get certification and eventually apply for a superintendency position. Kathryn was forty-four and single. She suggested:

I see the superintendency as much like the principalship and I think that those of us who've worked with large buildings function as small superintendents. We have more students than most superintendents have. It is true that we're not dealing with bussing contracts, planning budgets from the ground up, and not dealing with the roofer, but in terms of responsibilities, we all have PTO boards that are pretty strong and influential, and we do part of our fund raising, and we deal with lots of different kinds of staff.

#### Case 12 (Leanne)

Leanne was an administrator in charge of instructional strategies at a state department of education. She started her career as a rural elementary teacher and followed as an itinerant special education teacher in a large metropolitan area. She had earned a doctorate and had no immediate career plans. She was single and in her forties. Leanne was an only child of rural parents who were a salesman and a teacher by profession. Her father was very influential in her career decisions and still remained so. Academically, she performed very well in school. She was certified for the superintendency and had "not ruled out" the possibility. Relating to

frustrations of her job, Leanne offered:

One of my weaknesses clearly is big picture thinking in a microcosm environment. I'm thinking into bigger issues and today, I'm dealing with a conflict regarding the date of a workshop and I'm told, please clear them with your supervisor. I get bogged down in things that are not really able to make a big difference.

### Case 13 (Mary)

Mary had been a junior high assistant principal of a large Class IV district for four years. Her past experience had been as a building coordinator and as a regular and resource teacher in Nebraska and in two other states. She grew up out of state as the oldest of five children. Her father worked for the telephone company, and her mother was a homemaker. She loved teaching and always planned to become a teacher. Mary had a career plan she intended to actively pursue. She was not yet certified for the superintendency, but felt that she would apply once she was certified and had gained building experience. Mary was forty-five and married with two children. Her husband was in the car wholesale business. Responding to the nurturing behavior of female leaders, she suggested:

Generally speaking, I think females tend to nurture. I know that I take more time with kids than other males that I have worked with, and I don't know if that's because I'm a female or if that's because of the special education. It's hard for me to assess that because I'm used to working a plan with a youngster and if it doesn't work, then I rework the plan, and we try again, and I know that there are times when I probably spend too much time when it's time to say this is it. We've worked enough.

Case 14 (Nora)

Nora had a top administrative position in a state department of education. She had taught elementary education overseas and in Nebraska. Her parents were a farmer and a teacher and raised her near a metropolitan area. Nora was in her forties. She had no defined career plan and, although certified, was not sure if she would apply for a superintendency. She questioned the value of career plans:

I think, having a real specific goal can narrow the field of opportunities. Sometimes things just evolve that you may have been totally unaware of. If you do grow, that growth is going to up your own capabilities and you can see yourself in a different vein too.

Case 15 (Olivia)

Olivia was in her first year as an elementary principal in a rural school district. She also served as director of special education and Chapter I. Her prior experience included eighteen years of elementary school teaching in Class II, Class III, and Class IV schools. She had a career plan that included the superintendency. She had her doctoral degree and certification as a school superintendent. Olivia was divorced and had no children. Her family moved between states when she was a child. Her father was a mechanic, and her mother was a homemaker. She was greatly influenced by her mother who held expectations for her daughter's superior performance. Olivia always wanted to be a teacher. She was the oldest of three children. She was in her forties and had definite plans for advancement:

If I am not in a superintendency position in . . . [location] within five years, I will be at a larger elementary principalship.

#### Case 16 (Patricia)

Patricia had been an associate superintendent for instruction in a large Class IV system for four years. Prior to this, she had served as a junior high school social studies teacher, federal program director, and administrative assistant in personnel in the same district for sixteen years. She grew up in a small town. Her father was a farmer, and her mother was a teacher. She was the oldest of two children. Her grandparents always encouraged her to do her best at everything she tried. Patricia had a doctoral degree and was certified for the superintendency. She had no specific career plan, but would not rule out the possibility of the superintendency. She was forty-one, married, and had no children. Her husband worked in higher education. Regarding her effective leadership skills, she suggested:

I'm spending enough time with people individually to have built an individual personal relationship so they feel safe and comfortable with me and, in groups, really focusing on what it is people have to say, modeling, listening as much as I can, looking for points of agreement, trying to focus on the things that we do agree on and the points where we're starting to form an agreement so that we recognize there are a whole lot of things that we do agree on, and see if there's a way that we can work our way out.

#### Case 17 (Rachel)

Rachel had been the director of elementary curriculum for a large suburban school for seven years. Her prior experience had been as a junior high assistant principal, special assignment teacher, and

elementary teacher. Rachel grew up in a metropolitan area. She was the oldest of the four girls in the family. Her mother was a master's level teacher. Her father was a strong role model. He encouraged her to think critically. They frequently had long discussions about common and complex issues. Rachel was an eager college student. She completed her bachelor's degree in three years. She did not profess a specific career plan. Although she was certified for the superintendency, she did not feel it was desirable at the time. Rachel was forty-two, married, and had no children. Her husband was a school administrator. She described her early love of learning:

I always read a lot. My summer consisted of riding my bike to the library and checking out two or three books, and then later checking out two more in our public library. I read the entire astronomy section in our library. When I was in fourth grade, my goal was to read through the encyclopedias. I got pretty much through them. So school was always easy.

#### Case 18 (Sandra)

Sandra had been an elementary principal in a Class III district for two years. She was to assume a new principalship in a larger district in the next year. Her prior experience was as an elementary instructor in a different district for five years. She grew up in a small town as the oldest of two children. Her father was a farmer, and her mother was a homemaker. Her parents strongly encouraged her professional goals. She had a career plan which was ahead of schedule due to the principalship in a larger district in the next year. Her plan changed as she achieved her goals. She was not certified for the superintendency. Sandra was twenty-nine, married,

and had no children. Her husband was willing to relocate for her career needs. She shared her thoughts about the superintendency:

My main motivational factor for being in administration is wanting to be able to influence children. If I felt that job [superintendency] could be very, very influential to children, if I could do something that was really major for kids, because the superintendent controls the money, that would be very motivational for me to apply for a superintendent position.

#### Case 19 (Theresa)

Theresa had been Chapter I supervisor in a large Class III school district for five years. She also taught Chapter I reading and math classes and coordinated the district's testing program. She had been an elementary teacher for seventeen years. She grew up in a large city out of state. Her father was an engineer, and her mother was a homemaker. Her father had high expectations and hoped she would choose engineering, but she always wanted to be a teacher. Theresa held leadership roles in high school. Her career plan was to be a central office administrator. She believed that she first needed a principalship. She was not yet certified for the superintendency. Sandra was remarried. Her husband was in the cattle business. They were raising a son. She was in her forties. She described her commitment to administration:

I know very much that what I want to be in is administration, and so I'm willing to do what I need to do to show that I am capable of handling the administrative type duties. So, when they give me jobs or responsibilities or something that is administrative, I'm very much willing to find the time to do it.

Case 20 (Vivian)

Vivian had been an elementary school principal in a large suburban district for eleven years. Prior to this principalship, she taught elementary grades for ten years in the same district. She grew up in a large Nebraska city. Her father worked as a sales manager. Her mother was a school secretary. Although she was the middle child in the family, Vivian felt more like a first child because her father was in the military during her older sister's first five years. Vivian was a good student. Her parents supported her higher education when she defined the goal of her training as teaching. She was in her forties, single, and had no defined career plan. Although certified for the superintendency, Vivian did not plan to apply for a superintendency because:

I don't want to do my doctorate degree and I really think that people probably ought to have the highest degree that's out there to get the job. And you never know what you're going to have in terms of a board who may upset the apple cart. I suppose it's the job security more than anything.

Case 21 (Yvonne)

Yvonne had been a combination principal/teacher for two years in a small Class II district. Her prior experience was as an elementary teacher in the same system for nine years. She had not completed her master's, but had a provisional administrative certificate. She grew up in a small town. Her father was a mechanic, and her mother was a bank teller. Yvonne had a career plan to complete her master's and specialist degree and to become a full-time principal.



Although she had thought about the superintendency, she knew she must focus on gaining experience in her position as principal. Yvonne was thirty-five and married with three children. Her husband, a service station manager, was disabled. Explaining her busy daily schedule, she reported:

I am teaching from 8:15 until 11:15 and then I do the lunchroom supervision until 12:20. Then I take about a thirty-minute lunch break and then I'm back in the principal's office by 1:00. Usually I have tried to read my mail before that. I try to read it at home over lunch, or during a fifteen or twenty minute break that I might have in the morning. I haven't corresponded or answered mail, but at least I've tried to prioritize it. I do all my own typing, so I spend long hours in the office. It's probably been more of a sacrifice on my family than what they're willing to pay, but they do understand that this is temporary and it will get better, plus I'm still in college and taking classes.

### Case Study Synthesis

Description and quotation are the essential ingredients of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). This research attempted to present "thick" description so that the reader could enter into the situation and thoughts of the outstanding female administrators and make connections between individual cases and larger public issues (Denzin, 1989). The findings were organized by the research questions. The headings were chosen to describe the themes that were found in the answers to the interview questions.

### Public School Challenges

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

Responses concerning public school challenges were collected from the outstanding female administrators' interviews. The responses supported the claim of the superintendent's role as ambiguous (Bell, 1980) and the superintendent's need to be flexible in responding to public pressures (Sergiovanni, 1984). Female respondents described challenges to public education in five areas: adapting to changing societal/family patterns, being accountable to students and society, coping with change, influencing positive regard for public education, and getting others involved in the educational process. Each theme is described in the following sections through the rich comments of the respondents.

Adapting to changing societal/familial patterns. A concern shared by female administrators was the changing nature of society into a divided community of people who have material resources and people who must do without. They spoke of the challenge to schools to provide equitably for all populations with diverse family values, even though society has not defined future needs:

We are a country of "have and have nots" and that has also been permeated into the school system. It's OK to have "have nots." We need to sit back and say OK, do we want to have a middle class in this country. We don't really talk about the kinds of jobs there are going to be to support a middle class and then what kinds of students do we want to have those jobs. When you've got the

proliferation of McDonald's type jobs, to me, the schools may be producing the perfect kind of kid. Pre-schools reflect society in many ways. We have a society that is grappling with what is this country going to be about and are we going to try to keep the "have and have not" gap widening. Schools mirror that a bit. (Leanne)

The problems that are being generated by society in the United States or the world are going to really, really affect education or education is going to affect them. There's the breakdown of the family, the transient type of students, a growing gap between the people who have a lot of money and the people who have not. Some families just don't value education because they have survival things that they have to do in order to survive. Money to feed their kids is more paramount to them than getting their child to school on time. (Isabel)

The biggest problem here for me working with staff is getting them to accept the various socioeconomic levels and how rapidly that's changing in terms of values and in getting people to be teamed with the teachers and share expectations instead of presenting expectations. I mean there's just not the vision of what they are dealing with and how to work with those people and that's the biggest blocker to our staff in being successful with all students here. (Fran)

The challenge was perceived to be more than promoting teachers' awareness of changing family values. The respondents believed that the general public also must understand the changing needs:

One of the most challenging things is articulating to a community the changing nature of the students that we serve and the changing nature of the world that they're going to live in, what skills and knowledge those kids are going to need to be successful citizens. Everybody thinks that they're an expert on school because they all have a picture of what school was like, and even if they didn't like it, they think it still should be like that. So we need to articulate that kids come to us from different circumstances than they did before. They're going to live in a world that's quite different than the one that they grew up prepared to live in. It's hard for anybody to have seen it [change] well enough to be able to say this is why it is and here's what you need to do. So that may be why there's no one doing a real good job

because it's happening to us as we're trying to figure it out and know how to address it. (Patricia)

Society needs to be more conscious and more sensitive to the need of all people and the more we become diverse and more pluralistic, the more we know and hope that our children are not going to stay within the bubble that we might raise them in. We need to be sure that they'll be able to work with any and all kinds of people. (Fran)

Most female administrators professed an awareness of a growing number of dysfunctional families and children, but were less cognizant of strategies to support the children's school success:

Family dissolution and restructuring of education where dysfunctional families become the rule rather than the exception is the most challenging problem. Some parents expect to call 100 percent of the shots. In a recent confrontation with a parent, the superintendent finally said, "Let that mother have whatever she wants. Get her off my back." The superintendent is called on to fix everything. Fixing for one is breaking it for someone else. (Gail)

We are going to get tougher and tougher kids even in suburban [districts] to work with in terms of what they've got at home, what kind of knowledge and experiences they come to us with, behavioral patterns. All of that is changing immensely and how are we going to rise up and meet that demand and do the best we can for all kids coming from all different places? (Vivian)

The challenge of good schools is to do well with kids that traditionally fail in our schools. Most of the kids who do well do well with or without us. The kids that are in the gray zone need to be helped to be successful. (Leanne)

It's going to be a real problem to see that all of our children are ready to learn. So much of that comes from home before we ever see them, but we don't really have control over what happens there, so we've got to find ways to help when we get them, to get them to want to learn and keep wanting to learn. That's a pretty big responsibility. (Harriet)

One administrator explained how parents may interfere with the school's strategy to help at-risk children:

I see a lot of parents who are probably too supportive of their student rather than the whole institution of education. They believe, "So what if a kid breaks all the rules? They're my kid and they deserve the best." They make excuses, "Well, he meant. You misinterpreted why he did that." They use this kind of mediating behavior. If the parents were a little more willing to understand and work with the schools, and if the teachers were more willing to work for the student, I think the student would have a better chance, because the students are going to remain the same, no matter what. (Betty)

Setting up a learning climate that promotes success for children of diverse needs entailed new thinking and valuing on the part of the school staff:

When we talk about success for students, we have to appreciate and celebrate diversity. If success means that all kids have to be alike, that's not where I'm going to come from. I'm going to come from encouraging and explaining and exploring that whole idea of diversity and celebrating it. (Rachel)

That's been one of the biggest challenges, opening that world up for them and saying there's more to it than just the 9:00 to 3:30 with those kids in the room. They've got so much else going on in their lives that we've got to recognize it and know that it's influencing what they're doing in the room. (Vivian)

Some of the student success depends on actualization of the kid. Why can't some people make it in the time-frame that we've arranged for them to make it, but can come back to school and be extremely successful, or make it in alternative settings and not the traditional settings? (Elaine)

With some teachers, the expectations aren't there, especially for kids from low socioeconomic type standards. The school I teach in is 80 percent minority. The teachers' attitude is often, "He's not going to learn this because look at his home." I think kids read that in a minute. (Theresa)

In addition to this change of attitude, school staff needed more information about these families and students: behavior interventions, teaching strategies, and home supports:

We go into the teaching profession blind. There's a lot of conflict in student lives. I'd like to see more information given to teachers at the college level on dealing with children who are suffering and hurting. I see a lot of that. We don't have enough information on what to do and how to help these kids and the extreme behavior problems. We know nothing about dealing with them. (Yvonne)

New interventions that address student needs might require more time and a different instructional plan on the part of the teaching staff:

What we're getting is a damaged child a lot of times and it's real hard to mend that. Lack of time parents spend with their children affects school success. I look at middle school teaming, home-base, all the things that we are implementing are taking the place of that parent role, becoming a significant other for that child. More and more we're paying attention to whether they've had enough to eat, and pulling agencies together to help the child. It's very frustrating. (Mary)

The home environment hasn't been there to check on homework, turn off the TV, and take Johnny to the library, the zoo, and talk to him about what's happening in the world. Something needs to happen there and I think the schools are going to have to lead the way in showing the public that it is important that that does happen. (Harriet)

One respondent suggested that even a strong knowledge base on effective interventions might not be enough. The resources to implement good plans might not be available:

We know enough to be able to guarantee a much higher rate or degree of success for all students than we currently do. I don't think we have the resources to do that. I don't mean just fiscal resources. We don't always have the time to do that. We know a whole lot more than we know how to organize and manage. As a classroom teacher,

I knew a lot more about what my kids needed individually than I could figure out how to organize that in the classroom. We know a lot more about effective schools, but we don't know how to organize the institution to get there. (Patricia)

Being accountable to students and society. Along with the challenge of societal changes, the issue of school accountability was described as a challenge by female administrators who perceived public pressure on schools to prove educational effectiveness:

Accountability to whom and for what is a major question to be addressed. (Patricia)

Showing evidence that kids are learning and trying to meet the needs of society is a problem. We keep groping because that's evolutionary. It's hard to be accountable because about the time you figure out how to make sure what you're doing, then we shift our emphasis. (Kathryn)

Many female administrators described continuous pressure by the business community for schools to provide an efficient and capable working population, ready to assume any job. However, until the jobs of the twenty-first century are identified, their expectations were deemed impractical:

Our business community expects that kids will not only have the basic skills, but a lot of the technological skills and will be able to problem solve and work together and communicate orally and in writing . . . . We're doing a great job in educating kids for the jobs of the 70's, but I think the biggest thing facing us right now is how do we meet the needs of our customers so that they can meet the changed jobs that will occur in their lifetime, the jobs available for the twenty-first century. To me that means looking at restructuring secondary education. (Diana)

Business's concern is going to be that the kids are prepared to work without them training and retraining them. (Anna)

They're saying we need people to hire with thinking skills and who will come to their place of employment for minimum wage and not complain. That's a real dichotomy. (Leanne)

Business looks at things a little too simplistically, thinking it can be done very easily. They expect every student who comes out of the school to perform precisely what they expect when they walk into their door to be employed. (Nora)

Business expectations are not always realistic. Wanting kids to love going to work at Burger King for \$4.50 per hour is a little too unrealistic. Then they tell us we're too idealistic. (Rachel)

The threat of an unsupportive business community was described by two administrators:

The business field is not real appreciative of some of the products in some schools where they have to retrain them. I think the schools need to work in concert with businesses so that the goals are the same. There has to be articulation. If we're not really careful, I feel that businesses will start doing it for us. There won't be a superintendency. It will be some corporate leader. (Isabel)

The business community seems to be saying, "If you don't do it [educate kids], we'll do it. We'll take over. But I haven't seen how that's working either. (Betty)

Coping with change. The interviewed female administrators perceived the challenge of change to be a considerable problem for most schools. Some staff and parents did not see the need for change:

Helping parents understand and be more accepting of the kind of changes that we need to make in education is a challenge. In our district, I've seen lots of teachers want to do things and parents don't want it changed. Helping teachers and all of us understand that we're always going to have to change. We're never going to be done. The whole idea that it's probably going to be more nebulous, always growing and changing. (Rachel)



Some administrators suggested that the ability to change the ways of education, the "how to," may be the greatest obstacle, but they agreed that something must be done to initiate the change process:

We're a product of our culture. So for us to have really novel thoughts may be tricky cause we also have paradigms that have been placed there by culture.  
(Leanne)

Public schools don't know how to restructure. They're just experimenting. They're exploring, but they don't know how. But experimenting and trying is certainly better than not doing anything at all. You have to start somewhere. (Anna)

Resistance to change on the part of staff was a noted challenge:

There are times when I see teachers wanting to just work the rule type of concept--I'm here. If the kid doesn't want to work, I'm not going to make him. I'm not going to change my way, the way I deliver the information to help him. That really frustrates me.  
(Betty)

Some outstate schools are trying things differently. They're being really successful, but the people resisting are teachers, not public or parents or kids. It's going to take a commitment from the principals, superintendents, and the community. (Diane)

We have some people who don't care for any change whatsoever and they kind of resent the fact that some women administrators are bringing new ideas in. I don't know how much is related to women or the new ideas or both.  
(Anna)

A big challenge is to instill in the teachers the need to keep up with educational trends. We're real satisfied with ideas that we've learned in the 70's. Why do we need to move up into the 90's? We need to get teachers into the current world. (Olivia)

The time factor was seen as an impediment to the improvement of schooling. Often, insufficient time was allotted to see change take hold and prove successful:

I think that it takes time if it's going to be successful [change]. I think education tends to throw out things too quickly. We take teachers through training, and they try their required couple of lessons and stuff, and then we say, well, they've done that and it doesn't work. It was no good. (Diane)

A lot of the time in school we get too many things thrown in too quickly, and we don't get the follow-up or we don't get the chance to really get it implemented to where we're comfortable with it. (Theresa)

Influencing positive regard for public education. Several female administrators sensed that the current public view of education was somewhat negative, which seemed to be causing a great challenge in gaining support for educational efforts:

The negative press that education gets is a real problem. We hear that we're not doing our jobs. There have been so many negative reports in the 80's, that the public is down on education. When we're looking for increased funding, people are saying you aren't doing your job, why should we give you any more money? We constantly have to battle those kinds of things when you feel and you know in your heart that you're doing some really wonderful things for kids. It's hard to deal with. (Sandra)

There has been so much negative talk and it has been so generalized that communities are perhaps skeptical and doubtful when they don't even have any real reason to be. They read something and they're convinced that their own school's falling apart. Leadership by lament has been a defensive reaction on our part. (Patricia)

The school reform reports have undermined our public support for education. They have very much destroyed the public support that we used to enjoy for education. (Harriet)

Some respondents felt that the negative image of public schooling could be repaired by an active campaign to inform the public about the work involved in schooling:

One of the things we need to do is to build credibility with the public in terms of emphasizing things we do well. Public schools have an expertise and professionalism that gets slotted away. It doesn't make the news. (Elaine)

Schools need to get enough information to the public so that they can be supportive of what we're doing. I think we are in a day and age where people expect us to be cost effective, but they have very high expectations for the outcome or the product that we produce. So I think we have to give them the information they need to get the support that we need. (Cynthia)

A lot of people think that if they had the job to do, they could do it better, but they don't really realize what the job is all about and what we're doing. We need to communicate more in reference to what it really does take. Many times we do such a good job with the little bit of money that we have. People don't realize how much work it does take. We, as educators, need to promote ourselves more in reference to the importance of our job. I still hear people say, "Don't go into teaching. That's not where the money is. Go into business." That hurts because we need bright, motivated, enthusiastic people going into education. (Fran)

Accountability is something that's really hitting us hard right now. We're told that we're not getting our students ready to go out into the world. I don't know if we're specifically not doing the job, or if we just haven't handled our public relations right. We really have to work on our public relations with our parents and our community and not be so within. Everything's within our four walls of where we teach and then we sink the boat. I think that's where we've really hurt ourselves. (Theresa)

Getting others involved in education. Involving community members in school improvement was cited as a challenge to public education:

I think we have tried to let money be the public answer to all of our problems and it's just not. It's not going to wash with the public anymore. I think involvement, bringing people back into the school so that the community is working with the school and not expecting the school to have and be a "hear all and end all" for everything that is necessary. (Harriet)

It's important for the community to work very closely with the school system and continue that opportunity for success in reference to what families need. So many families have needs, and so often the schools are looked upon for the support that sometimes the communities need to give the families. (Fran)

Getting parents involved in education in a meaningful way to overcome negative perceptions of school was described as a strong need:

Schools must create a parent involvement that is responsive to the 90's and the twenty-first century. PTA is not parent involvement. It's just informing parents. The number of parents who attend a meeting is perceived to be involvement. Real involvement occurs when parents are actively involved with their children, whether it be at home, whether it be a note, whether it be via their participation in a parent/teacher conference, or an hour of volunteer time a month. I see that as reflective of today's parent participation. (Elaine)

Education is really challenged to get parents involved. Lots of parents won't be involved because of negative things that happened to them and what they remember about school as negative. I think we can work with them. We can change that. (Theresa)

School is really challenged to try to get those parents involved, and a lot of those parents won't be involved because of negative things that have happened to them and of what they remember about school as negative. If we can work with them, whether we get them in the school, or whether we find different ways to reach them, then we can change some of that around. (Theresa)

One female administrator found a way to involve parents:

When I started I was told I would not have a lot of parents interested, and I have parents who will do anything I ask them to do. Currently, I have thirteen parents working as volunteers in the classroom and six parents on the curriculum committee. Most of the parents involved are not working parents. And I do have a couple of fathers. I have one particular father who's a farmer. He will come in anytime. He doesn't care what's going on. He will just leave his tractor and come. I think it's just something they haven't had and now are given the opportunity and are just eager to do it. (Olivia)

Along with the challenges described, finance was often cited as an obstacle to school improvement. The sample population consistently targeted the challenges of human persuasion, getting people to be aware of, accept, learn about, and be willing to work with the perceived needs of children in today's society, and getting staff and public to be willing to accept change and find solutions to better education. Although females were aware of the political pressures on education for accountability, their emergent concerns centered on improving human interactions, rather than fixating on the "political conflictual world" of the superintendent, as cited by Blumberg and Blumberg (1985) in the literature.

### Essential Leadership Behaviors of the Superintendent

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

Data on leadership behaviors needed in the school superintendency were collected through two sources: the key informants' written reasons for selecting particular female administrators and

the statements of the interviewed female administrators on leadership needs. Some leadership behaviors suggested by both key informant and female administrator populations were those skills commonly attributed to practices of successful superintendents, such as envisioning and communicating. The key informants, however, tended to focus on personality-related traits, while the nominated female administrators selected specific leadership strategies. The results of the key informants' written descriptions of positive leadership behaviors of the nominated female administrators are shown in Table 1.

The essential leadership behaviors that emerged from analysis of the outstanding female administrators' interviews included: empowerment of staff, collaboration, vision, the use of research and information, transformational leadership, and political tolerance.

The following themes relating to the essential leadership behaviors of the superintendent are elaborated in the responses of the female respondents.

Empowerment. The females interviewed in this study strongly supported the concept of staff empowerment. Empowerment emerged as a construct necessary for effective leadership in public schools today. When empowered, the leadership skills of the staff helped achieve the mission of the school:

It's going to take a superintendent that's very willing to give the reins to other people and not have to be the one in power, more of a guidance person or a leader. One person can't do it and needs to give the teacher the opportunity for grass roots changes. That's exciting to me. (Theresa)

TABLE 1

Leadership Themes of Nominated Outstanding Female  
Administrators as Perceived by  
Selected Key Informants

---

Extremely bright	Builds trust and support for
Experienced	school activities
Assertive with tact	Aggressive/tough minded
Well-defined vision or philosophy	People skills
Good communication skills	Brought positive attention to
Broad perspective on educational	district/state honors
issues	Ability to motivate, build and
Can lead people/manages people	maintain morale
well/empowers others	Sensitivity
Good decision maker	Understands the individual needs
Confident	of children
Task/goal/action oriented	Academic knowledge
Can find solutions to tough	Success-oriented
problems	Risk taker/embraces challenge
Pleasing personality	Positive outlook/envision better
Outgoing/enthusiastic	future
Well-organized	Good sense of humor
Ambition/drive	Ability to build constituency
Committed to excellence/profes-	support
sional/solid educator	Persevering/resilient
Innovative problem solver	Understands equity issues
Capable/competent	Desire/motivation
Generalist's training	Conceptual understanding

---

A good leader facilitates people using their own expertise and is not so inclined to tell people how to do things, but allows them the freedom to do what they have been trained and educated to do. Men have not been taught to nurture and women have grown up nurturing, at least women of our generation. That may unfortunately be changing a good deal because we don't have any parents at home doing any nurturing. Each individual needs to handle the problem differently, not be told what to do. (Harriet)

Being able to see leadership potential in other people makes you a leader, and being able to tap into that and encourage people to pursue leadership at whatever level, whether it's team leader or getting a degree or whatever, is very important. (Mary)

You really need to have people with different philosophies, but they're strong leaders in the building. If these people buy in, they're able to sell that message. So I fertilize the best teachers. (Kathryn)

Some administrators spoke of the balance of knowing when to lead and when to let others apply their leadership skills:

I love working with others, and I do believe in participatory management and shared responsibilities and asking others to be a part of decision making and that type of thing. So I believe in people having ownership in the decisions that are made, but I do enjoy the leadership role. I don't shy from it. (Fran)

Leaders cannot just say tomorrow we are doing this and expect them all to follow along. They have to be part of the decision or part of the process. Otherwise they will undermine it at every chance they get. So there has to be a close interaction. The leader's job is one of facilitation or transacting or agreeing to give on some things; on others the leader has to be the one to say yes and say no. (Vivian)

I don't know if initiator would be the right word, but I'm a person who tends to lay the issues on the table and to guide and direct. This is what we need to do next. This is what you share. This is what you disagree about. These are the questions that yet need to be resolved, a facilitator, I guess. Whoever has to be responsible in the end gets to make the decisions and that's in the classroom too. (Kathryn)



I believe in teachers being treated as professionals and having information to make decisions, so the whole concept is that teachers are professionals and should have tools in their pockets to be able to meet the needs of kids. (Elaine)

Modeling appropriate behaviors and supporting staff efforts were cited as a means to staff empowerment. These strategies were used by female administrators to bring about change:

Some of the research coming out is that people learn innovations much like a child acquires language. There's kind of a mom or parent in place that helps the kid, gives positive reinforcement when they try something in the language, and they have an adult to model and to mentor them. In my mind some of that needs to be refocused on how a teacher also acquires innovation. I don't think adults are all that much different than children. (Leanne)

A plan should call for training, an acceptance of mistakes during the first part and a willingness to keep at it. The leader should not monitor people, but support them-- "How's it going? What do you need and what can I help you with and what are you learning about this that we need to think about when we get to the revision stage?" (Patricia)

I think great leaders use participatory management and empowering others. They lead by creating enthusiasm in others as opposed to putting rings through their noses. (Jane)

Females remembered to reward staff for their efforts which reinforced staff initiative taking:

Don't forget to praise and stroke people when they do things, when they give of themselves, and they give of their time. Don't forget to recognize that in some kind of way, recognize it where it begins. There are not perks in the job, but we can do certificates, and we can do professional conferences and the professional growth and achievement, and we can do things like that. We can give them opportunities to recognize the fact that we're acknowledging. . . . I think you can offer teachers a number of incentives, but I've seen nothing that works better than praise, recognition for a job well done,

even with the money. You know that the money is small and that it goes, but recognition for leadership and opportunity for leadership and to be involved in decision making are things that teachers really want. (Elaine)

They will come in and say, "I have this idea. What do you think of it and do you think we could try this sort of thing?" They are asking for advice and for a pat on the back, and that's OK. It's a chance to reward, and I very much do that. I publicly reward them a lot. We have a daily bulletin. I ask the staff to thank others for their contribution articles. You're basically telling them that you value their thinking and what they're doing to be better in their job and in their profession. So it's kind of setting that collegial model. (Harriet)

Building trust and nurturing were behaviors female administrators often applied to bring about teacher growth:

I think the key is trust. I've seen superintendents go in and just try to turn everything topsy turvy, but my sense is, given the present environment, they don't stay long and then the changes they tried go away when they're gone. I'm thinking a slower pace, building on respect and trust. (Leanne)

They weren't skeptical because I was a woman, but because I have not been a senior high principal, and so I've really worked hard to spend time in their building and get to know them and any opportunity to be supportive of them. I've taken advantage of their experience in terms of learning everything I can from them about high schools. The most uncomfortable place in any building is the teachers' lounge. There's always a chance that no one will know me. If they do know you, then there's a behavior change. You don't know what it is. You don't know whether they're more aggressive than usual or if they're quieter than they usually are, but in some way behavior has changed. (Patricia)

I think amiable people don't necessarily, aren't more nurturing. They may be really just nice people and people pleasers and that's different to me than nurturing. Nurturing is allowing someone else to grow in a caring environment. Nurturing seems more goal-directed to me, kind of helping a person to achieve that next step. (Anna)

Nurturing skills developed cohesiveness in their building that allowed staff to focus on common goals for school improvement:

I have probably created one of the finest elementary schools in the state. If it's not the best, there aren't any better. I've been able to hire good people, do staff development, and then I've nurtured and fertilized their growth. Now the staff is much more specialized than I am. Now they are leading me as we move to these evolutions in curriculum and instruction. I build self-esteem, value what they do, and acknowledge their contribution and see that they have the opportunity to grow. (Kathryn)

It's almost like being like a chameleon, trying to recognize what their individual needs were, being able to listen to them, stopping by their offices frequently to talk to them, checking out their needs, making sure they felt comfortable. We do a lot of social things at our home that they didn't do before. All of those things together have made everyone feel pretty comfortable together. We've met here for staff development meetings and we talk about goals for the quarter and we've done social things with spouses. (Betty)

I think through hiring, through inservice, through a lot of talking, the philosophy now looks at the whole child and we worry whether they have enough to eat, they have clothes to wear, all of those things that encompass making a student successful at school. And it used to be that I was the only one that said that and the counselors. (Mary)

My greatest success has been in communication with staff. My staff members know where I'm coming from. I visit with them. I talk to them. I involve them in things that they want to be involved in. I know from their comments that they feel I'm a person that finds out what's happening in the school, that I support them and back them, and say things that they need to have the support and backing. I know what their needs are and want to work on meeting their needs. (Sandra)

Some administrators felt challenged in the use of nurturing behaviors to handle discipline problems. One respondent indicated that males also used the skill:

A lot of people wondered whether I'd be able to handle it, to be able to stop fights. I've made the point and I've shown them that I can really be creepy or not creepy. I can really be the disciplinarian and they understand that. I just act very direct and change my affect, my voice tone, and I change when things are going ok to be very nurturing too. You can turn around and love them when things are ok. I don't know if men can do that very well. I haven't observed that in the past. (Betty)

I think sometimes when we tend to do discipline women give kids lots more chances than male administrators will do. (Vivian)

Some of the things I do at the junior high, it was just innate to do because I didn't have any preconceived conceptions of what a junior high assistant disciplinarian should do. So I wasn't the previous macho, let's kill them if they're the bad person. I came from elementary. Let's help. Let's find the cause. Let's figure this out. So things just kind of evolved . . . . A lot of times men go in and cut out what I call the cancer and let's go on with it. They amputate when they could do a few stitches and it might be ok. I see that as a real difference. . . . I don't think genders are so different. The principal that I work with is a far gentler, kinder person than I am. He is definitely more androgynous, more female than I am, in a very soft gentle way. (Mary)

For one principal empowering others had lightened her administrative load:

It took me about eight years to come about. That was a real hard thing for me to be able to leave and not to take things personally. In some ways, I'm really more encouraging now without being enabling and being very realistic about what my role is and also helping the other person to deal with their end of the bargain or their end of the responsibility, versus me taking it all on my shoulders. (Gail)

Collaboration. The female administrators readily named collaboration as an effective strategy to bring about school success. They strongly supported this leadership behavior:

It's a team effort. It's not me telling people what's necessary and I don't mean to imply that there are never times when I don't tell someone something. There are times when a decision has to be made, and it is very much a telling sort of thing. But for most things of this nature, the common consensus is very important. The quality of the work is far superior when everyone buys into it, when everyone feels that they have a true say in what is happening. (Harriet)

They [female administrators] compliment staff more and give much more positive reinforcement for a task well done. They are participatory leaders. They don't come to a decision and then pass it down. They'll say, "Here's the situation. I'd like all of you to collect your thoughts and give me your input in writing. Let's discuss it and then we'll come up with a solution (even though they have the final decision)." They implement a team process to make that happen. (Jane)

A good leader is able to pull people together in a real teamwork and build a sense of community within the school, a very inclusive person, able to draw people in, never shut people out. She uses lots of conversation, lots of shared experiences, whether it's reading a book and talking about it, looking at a model and analyzing it, spending some time together informally as well as formally. I think shared experiences are just at the heart of beginning school improvement. (Patricia)

You have to set up a real collaborative kind of an atmosphere and a true spirit of shared inquiry. I would remove a lot of the barriers so that when people want to try things, those roadblocks don't have to be there. (Rachel)

A compromise in philosophy was described by one respondent who, after some time in administration, discovered the effectiveness of collaboration:

I was trained, probably when I went through in my graduate work, in the top-down model of administration. So I see myself changing from that on a daily basis. I really don't believe in top-down. I believe in a collaborative type of effort, but I believe that somebody has to be responsible. The buck stops with whatever the problem is. (Isabel)

Continuing communication and information sharing with different audiences seemed to be a strong aid to implementing a collaborative process:

Communication has got to be the key component. Information, formal and informal, is critical as we work through issues--keeping people up to speed as you work toward change, getting people with you philosophically, and telling them more, but not forgetting some of those folks that are back there. We're all in this together. (Mary)

For improvement, a lot of communication back and forth; oral is probably better. A lot of group discussions and a lot of curriculum development. I like to have the group input and the ownership. We all own the not necessarily problem, but we'll all work together to find the best solution. (Yvonne)

Persuasion was part of the collaborative team process. Sometimes this persuasion was indirect through actions and reactions rather than through direct verbal communication:

I try to get the person that's angry or upset about something to talk more about it and to look at it in different ways. I ask questions. I have a script of sort, so I know ahead of time what I want to ask. I plan it and I rehearse it in my mind. I go through what will be important to express or what I want to get communicated. I don't confront. I'm not a hostile person. I listen to the other person's viewpoint first and try to communicate mine or someone else's. (Yvonne)

People congratulated me for being successful, and I'm going, "I didn't do anything." But maybe, even though I don't always do things, somehow I communicate those things to other people, whether I really feel strongly about it or not, and they see me as a leader. (Betty)

Some female administrators felt that targeting individuals and supporting them in change efforts was necessary to build a team focus. Seeds of information regarding the improvement were planted

and risk-taking encouraged and supported by the leader:

If I think risk-taking is important for kids, I try to encourage teachers to take risks and try to be there to support. I want them to see me as somebody that they can call and talk to about things, and not be judgmental and think that there's only one way to do it, and that I have the right answer. I would say, "I don't know. Let's try to explore this together and come up with the best answer." . . . I would try to read and find out as much as I can about what exists and would encourage lots of other people to try to do the same. I would encourage teachers to begin to experiment and try some things. There would be lots of people that have had real experiences with that and could operate from experience. I would pull together a group of people and try to make sure I got all the groups represented, but also get some real thinkers, people willing to really try some things and see if this group can come up with the best answers. (Rachel)

The staff has to buy in. You have to seed the idea and find some folks who say, "Yes. I see that as an option." I always educate those folks first because they come back and spread the message and some of our people are not going to go on, are not willing to give of the time to educate themselves, and so they're going to learn it from their colleagues. You always take those people who buy in first, and then you let it move like a wave. For the others, you just keep bringing it back again and again, in little doses and small bites, and you make it easy and palatable; short inservice sessions, shared information, whatever; constant fertilization is needed. (Kathryn)

A critical element mentioned in building collaborative efforts in a district was the skill of listening. The importance of listening was strongly emphasized by female administrators:

There has to be a lot of listening on the part of leaders. Sometimes leaders get in the position of, well, this is what needs to be done and so I need to do it. We need listening and paying attention to what they're listening to, being willing to hear something that maybe doesn't quite go along with what they want or what they think is right, because sometimes our ideas can be changed for the better. We have to give people the feeling that they can come to us about anything and, no, we may not like it.

But we'll listen and maybe hear what they have to say, and we'll contemplate. Maybe they're right. (Theresa)

I think a female can lead and perhaps even better. A female can do it with sensitivity to people and with a real willingness to listen and with an interest in people at all different levels and a real care and concern. (Nora)

In politically sensitive situations, some female administrators had been effective due to the ability to be good listeners:

I'm able to remain very calm and sensitive to what the other person is saying and needing. I don't have any need to respond, tend not to respond defensively or aggressively and usually I can defuse rather than escalate a situation, usually, not always. (Patricia)

The superintendent stated that he needed someone to go into the position to be a listener. He said we had staff there who had shown a very high degree of commitment because they stayed through during very tough times. He felt that the staff really deserved to have an administrator that would listen to them and encourage them and support them. So I went into the position with what I believe are some of my strengths and that is being a listener, being a person that took time to care, being a person that is very visible in the school and in the community. (Fran)

I tend to see females as nurturers and as listeners and being able to be fair and firm and consistent. I really do see females having a lot of "mother wit" so to speak, being able to make really good decisions. Some people really could call me a little sexist in a way toward females because I think they are able to handle a great deal and I think females really are the stronger sex. (Fran)

Vision. A particular leadership strategy espoused by Bennis (1989) and Brittenham (1980) also appeared in the leadership needs named by both the key informants and the outstanding female administrators. That need was educational vision, the ability to analyze school needs and influencing factors and communicate that picture



to many audiences to gain support for common school goals, and to enable people to mutually achieve those goals. Vision was the most-often mentioned leadership need of the school superintendency. Some female administrators shared their perceptions of the "big picture" visioning:

As a teacher, I had a very narrow focus. As you move up the ladder and have different experiences, you should be able to acquire the ability to see the big picture and learn as you go. (Mary)

I see superintendents that I think are just managing and see themselves as managers, but don't see themselves envisioning what the school districts should be like. I think I understand curriculum and instruction which is truly the function of schooling. (Rachel)

I have a clear mission and a clear vision of what education, of what we need to be doing in education, and I think that's important for a leader at any level to be able to say this is what I believe and this is the direction that I think we should go. I am able to help other people figure out what their mission and vision is and how we hold that together in a unified direction. A leader headed at 180 degrees different from where the folks in the organization are probably isn't going to get very far very fast. It's important to be able to really be clear about the kids that we serve, the world that they're going to live in and what it is that we need to do to get them ready to do that. If we could be clear about that and have community agreement, we would be miles ahead of where we are. (Patricia)

Female leaders spoke of the importance of establishing goals to lead a vision and making sure these goals and plans were commonly supported:

An advantage of the superintendency is using a vision to have so many things you've worked on to be able to be the person to put those in place, to have the ability to create the strategic plan that moves your district forward, to be the catalyst for the actual. (Jane)

A challenge is sorting out. There are so many pressures and issues. You need to sort out what are most important and set goals and set a vision. You need to determine the right course and filter out all the external forces, be they pressure groups or national reports or somebody who's a real problem in the community, and keep in mind what's important to provide a good education to the kids. (Nora)

You have to create a common goal, and when you have a common goal, then you can overlook differences and you can work through differences through your compromise to the common goal. I've tried to build the broadest base so that nothing is dependent on me. I try to build extensions of my philosophy, of my feeling and have people help me shape that philosophy so that my base isn't just me. (Elaine)

The leader has to be able to get the group focused on a goal or a mission or a purpose, and to make the group all want to work toward that goal. So the skill of identifying goals or objectives for them to choose from and then helping them to focus their energies on that is important. (Cynthia)

An established vision and an agreed upon vision is important. I mean what I perceive as a vision if no one else in my school system perceives or has the vision, I might as well not waste my breath on it. It has to be commonly perceived, commonly understood, and then people have to come together and frequently discuss, "Are we on the right path? Are we all walking down the same path toward this vision?" And if we are getting off of that, conversation will bring us back together. (Harriet)

Administrators who strongly supported the concept of creating a "vision" specifically described how they worked with their staff to achieve this strategy:

A leader needs to spend a lot of time talking and sharing, sharing a vision, but also asking for others to share their vision and their input, and then coming together in large groups and brainstorming and talking about being able to change our paradigms in reference to what we see education in a particular community. I just really believe in participatory management. One person just can't get the job done alone and individuals need to know that they are very important in the process. (Fran)

I just simply talked to it until people got a clear picture of what the interdisciplinary concept was. I wanted to challenge them a little bit and get them into groups, and we did this and finally came up with the idea of working together as a team, in doing some interdisciplinary things. Then I just focused on that and pushed that harder than I did anything else to where they really bought the idea, and they are still doing it. (Betty)

Service as a change agent is the thing I like to do the most: work with teachers and encourage them, help them think about new ideas, putting things together in different ways. I always ask, "Why can't we do it differently? Why can't it change?" Sometimes I worry because maybe that means I don't have enough respect for tradition and the way we've always done it. Sometimes you blend in, pieces of the old still fit in, just giving people the vision of how that fits in. (Rachel)

We have to develop a baseline, an environmental scan of what is real here and what is real in society today and what do we want for our kids in the twenty-first century and how are we going to do it. Bring in lots of sources and have them kind of work in groups to figure out where we want to go to develop that cooperative vision and then what will be our action plan to get there. (Diane)

The summer before I took over the principalship, I called in each staff member, one by one, and we talked about what they saw my role as and how they hoped the school would benefit by my presence, what their vision was in reference to what they thought the school needed. (Fran)

One administrator preferred sharing information in parts, rather than providing the "big picture":

The more communication you have with staff, the better; giving them small bits of what you want the outcome to look like at different sessions, instead of giving them the whole total picture is good. I think you have to do it in bite sizes. (Olivia)

Another female suggested the great potential for positive schooling results if one could truly widen one's vision of the learning environment:

People don't realize how narrow we've set our own focus on being what school is all about, and when you start chipping down some of those barriers, people can become pretty excited about what potentially school can be after breaking down that wall that we've built around ourselves and bringing us back to being the child/learner. Just kind of regressing a little bit, putting yourself in the learning situation where you had no restrictions and were in the learning process helps. (Gail)

Use of research and information. Female respondents supported Bennis' (1976) belief that information is the chief leveler of power. They endorsed a strong knowledge base and the use of shared information for educational decision making. Without such, the desired change seemed doomed to failure:

A good superintendent needs a good knowledge of curriculum and instruction. This is just critical. I am so impressed when I visit with superintendents who have been to workshops on instructional issues and are really interested in that because so many seem to forget about that when they become superintendents, and that's really the basis for making some major decisions. (Nora)

It's really important to learn what information is valuable and important whenever you're going to make a decision and to spend some time up front determining what information is necessary. Some decisions require a lot more than others, and I think it's important that those requiring more, that information is gained first. (Anna)

If you make a decision based on how somebody feels, if you make a decision because it's convenient or you haven't thought it through, you make it without data, then you get caught in what I call the breeze, and that's the wind pushes you one way and you lean that way, pushes you the next way and then you lean that way, and then people don't have any stability. (Elaine)

Information, both formal and informal, is critical as we begin to work through issues, keeping people up to speed. (Mary)

Gathering research from a variety of sources and sharing current trends were promoted as effective strategies to facilitate

staff growth and enhance staff understanding regarding what works with students:

We gather as much background information as we can from a variety of experts. I usually call or write all over the place to find as much information as I can. We sit down in small groups and evaluate the information and eliminate what we don't need. (Yvonne)

I think that we have to continue to grow in our knowledge base about how kids learn and what we can do for kids to enhance their learning. We just have to keep doing that, upgrading our skills and our knowledge . . . . You have to give them knowledge about that piece, so do some staff development with them. You have to bring people in who have done that successfully and show them some models. I think you start with a couple of people that are interested and let them take the messages on to the rest of the staff. (Vivian)

I like to do a lot of reading and read the research and find out what things the research is saying, and I like to visit with my staff and professional colleagues about the things that they've found to be successful in working with kids. (Sandra)

One of the aspects that I brought to my school was we read research. It's very important to us. We don't need to make the same mistake that somebody made last year if we read research and we find out. And we find our success. So maybe it will work here because it was successful someplace else. That does not guarantee success here, but it's more probable than negative. (Harriet)

Some female administrators believed the personalized sharing of research had a greater chance of influencing the teachers' understanding and application of particular instructional innovation:

I have a monthly newsletter, primary and intermediate one. I try to go through and pick a few articles that I think would be of interest to them from all the reading that I do and then share it. Now what's happened is people will send me articles and say, "I came across this. I thought it would be good to share in the newsletter." (Rachel)

If I run across a piece of research that I feel is very beneficial, I run a copy of it, and I deliver it to them personally and say, "Here's something very interesting and it's a topic that we've maybe talked about. I'd like you to read it. It's really important to your teaching area." I like to handle it on a personal level. When we just stick things in mailboxes, they get tossed. I ask them to read it and then ask, "Would you come back and tell me what you thought about it?" If they see anything, I always encourage them, "Would you please run a copy for me or come and tell me about it?" (Sandra)

Transformational leadership. The concept of transformational leadership emerged as a common leadership strategy used by the interviewed female administrators. Sergiovanni (1989) theorized that transformational leadership induced extraordinary commitment and performance on the part of followers. Females who used this strategy described their success:

I pull together people resources to recognize the strength that somebody has as part of a team and to keep building that team by bringing in people who have certain kinds of strengths and to see the people who are on the team become confident and strong enough to move. (Elaine)

One of the things that I've been trying to do is gear into other people's interests, take the time to find out what they're interested in, because they're willing to take things that they're interested in. If you just start assigning things at random, you're not going to have a whole lot of luck with them doing a good job, but if you can find what people really want to be doing, then they're more likely to be able to do it in a really exemplary way. (Anna)

I just listened to them and told them I hear what they're saying, and I understand where they're coming from, and then I try to share with them maybe a little bit of how what we chose fits into what they think. (Theresa)

I don't even know how you would say it--teacher excitement or motivation or helping them see how far they can go. I really encourage them to apply for different things, and we won two Peter Kiewits and several other awards. Empowering people and giving them the credit and in the end

the credit comes back. I've seen a major growth with teachers and some marginal teachers that really were struggling and that I had to work really hard with and it wasn't easy to tell them what to work on and how to work on it and what to do. But they are kind of coming out shining stars and I feel like I had a hand in that, instead of just letting them be marginal. (Diane)

I have an ability to get along with people and encourage them to try to do more than they are. I tend to watch people a lot and notice what things in certain people work and what things turn people off right away, very analytical in that sense. So I've patterned and developed strategy based on what I've seen other people do. If they feel good about what they're doing, they're ready to try some other things. Once you get that started it magnifies existentially and it's tough to keep up with everybody and start saying we can't do that. We don't have the money. We don't have the time . . . . Women principals tend to take longer in the data gathering and involvement stage. They will set up more processes for people to have a chance to learn about something, to express an opinion about something, to be involved in the decision-making process, to get a tentative proposal back to people and have their responses before a final decision is made. I see women doing more to include and involve their staff members along the way than I do men, but the male principals here do it very well. They don't put in quite as much time or energy. (Rachel)

Being able to see leadership potential in other people makes you a leader, and being able to tap into that and encourage people to pursue leadership at whatever level, whether it's team leader or getting a degree or whatever is very important. Doing it at a young age is important. I urge them to not put it off as long as I did. (Mary)

One administrator presented specific examples of transformational leadership:

I had a phone call the other day from someone who wanted to know why couldn't we do standardized timing district wide for achievement tests. I thought why is it important for everybody to give the reading test at 9:30 or the same time. I did spend some time with that person because he aspires to be an administrator in the district. He did have some legitimate issues but I kept pressing it, tell me how common testing times would solve that problem. I

think eventually he decided that that wouldn't solve the problem . . . . I helped a person develop that. I think he has the innate capacity to be a good listener and to bring people together. I helped him process what was going on in the buildings and helped him think about strategies as to how you would deal with it, how to deal with conflict and how to resolve it. I think there are skills that all of us can learn that make us better in doing things. I am far more successful at figuring out what somebody's strengths are and helping them figure out how to lead with their strengths rather than try to become something they aren't. (Patricia)

Political tolerance. A leadership need that was defined by female respondents was the ability to tolerate ambiguity and deal with the daily political conflicts that arise from serving diverse interest groups. The need to be responsive was emphasized:

A real big skill is inviting active participation from the public, looking at challenges or problems as opportunities. An example is when our superintendent received a petition from our constituents regarding staff reduction. She said, "I view this as an opportunity to educate people." It wasn't an easy board meeting, but it helps if you look at those things as opportunities to build, to bring something positive out that's important. (Diane)

I don't know how much distinction the parents make between the principal and the superintendent. Sometimes my perception is that the distinction they make is when they're upset with the principal, they call the superintendent. I think the business community expects the superintendent in some ways to be one of them, to be in the service clubs or other local organizations and to interact with the members of the business community. (Patricia)

I think the business community would like the superintendent to be much more rigid in terms of what the superintendent allows to happen in school. Here's this little tyke that comes to you and this is what you are going to do with them by the end and then they're ready to walk into their business and go to work the next day. Sometimes I think the business people had to come through public schools at a time in which we were so rigid. So I don't know that they know what schools are like anymore because schools have really changed. (Vivian)



Some females did not like the political challenge of educating and negotiating with a sometimes difficult school board:

I found the superintendency to be a political hot seat and you are so busy putting out fires that it is very hard to do the job that you are getting paid to do. When the board starts stepping into the administrative realm, then it starts tying the superintendent's hands and lessens the kind of job that she should be able to do. I see board members coming on with their own personal agendas and not really looking at the district as a whole in reference to what all children need and that concerns me. (Fran)

I hear some men saying they don't want all that headache and hassle, meaning probably budget. There's a perception that working with boards of education, keeping the board happy is not pleasant. (Nora)

I think I would need to improve on board relations. I've never tried a board. I think it would be trying. You're in the limelight. I can work with committees and eventually they go away, I mean, or change. The board is a continuous sort of thing. (Leanne)

Female administrators identified the business perspective and continuous image-building as tiring responsibilities of the superintendent.

It's the opportunity to lead, to be a CEO. It duplicates the business world because if you're really doing the job as superintendent, you are delegating and moving to so many audiences. Politically, you have to be a student of business, as well as you are in the educational world. You have to know as much about tax base. It's not just education. (Elaine)

As a superintendent, you're very PR. You're very public. There's a lot of being downtown, being visible, boosting up the school, creating an image. (Yvonne)

Some females enjoyed the challenge of connecting with the business and political community:

She's [superintendent] connecting a lot with community people, so her support base is the chamber, the editor

of the paper, those people. She's making all the right connections. So she has that support network no matter what. So you don't have to be alone at the top like they tell you superintendents are. That has been a taught stereotyping in college classes. (Diane)

I am enjoying and have started to become more active at a state and regional level and more political in a sense of lobbying people, senators, or those kinds of people about what's really good, and speaking out on educational issues. I enjoy that and see myself broadening out in that area. (Rachel)

The leadership strategies that emerged from the raw data proved to match closely with the leadership skills needed in public schools today, as outlined in the review of the literature. These skills were demonstrated by outstanding female administrators in their leadership repertoire and included empowering staff, collaborating, sharing a vision, using research for decision making, and being responsive to political demands.

#### Factors that Motivate Female Administrators to Seek the Superintendency

Research question 3a. What factors motivate outstanding female administrators to seek the school superintendency?

The indepth interviews with the sample population of outstanding female administrators attempted to define factors that were considered to be motivators for female administrators to seek the position of school superintendent. The questions were open-ended, allowing for natural responses. The administrators gave their impressions of the role of the school superintendent and the desirability of that position. They shared their growth experiences in administrative advancement and their personal motivations for future

administrative roles. The interview results were analyzed to identify recurring themes. Nine themes relating to motivators emerged from the responses of the female administrators. They were: the challenge of change, encouragement, positive role models, leadership experience, mentoring, career aspiration, professional networking, family support, and financial gain. Each theme is discussed in the following sections through the eyes of the outstanding female administrators.

Challenge of change. Some outstanding female administrators spoke of the challenge to change public education as being a strong reason to assume a top leadership position. Although aware of staff resistance to change, they would consider a superintendency in districts willing to work toward change:

It would have to be a progressive school district too. I'm not sure there are a lot of school districts that I would be willing to go to just because of those kinds of things, not being seen as progressive and wanting to change. . . . We need to make changes and do things differently. It's disappointing to me when it's really hard for some people to let go of the old and try the new. I know that exists and I try really hard to understand why, but sometimes that's real disappointing, the little closed-minded situation where you can't break the barriers. (Rachel)

I would like a school district interested in looking at making some major changes in their secondary schools and had the same thing in their elementary schools. (Gail)

I haven't ruled it out. If it's in the right place at the right time, I think it might be appealing in a community that was interested in trying new things; I think a smaller community. You'd want to have face-to-face association with people and build on those associations because I think that's how you make change. And you'd want a board that recognizes the value of staff development; they really want to make their school different,

maybe they already have some things going that you could build on . . . . My sense of female superintendents is that they're a little bit more into change issues, seem to be more positive about innovations, and seem to be more willing to work at things like staff development and things that would generate change. . . . I'm disappointed in the difficulty in really getting school change. It just goes on and on in spite of staff development. If you're in that very long, it's really kind of a salmon swimming upstream, especially when you look at the research on change and how innovations happen. You get pretty overwhelmed quickly with how, what limitations we have on dramatic change. I think the biggest thing is changing the system's focus on student outcomes to educational staff outcomes. Nothing can change education until the people who are in those classrooms and who are supervising those teachers change, and yet our total focus is on how can we change the kids. Teachers and staff cannot give what they do not have themselves. You would also have to have much more broadmindedness in communities toward board members and superintendents. (Leanne)

Respondents described the necessary behavior of the superintendent in a school restructuring process:

The superintendent is a change artist. They are the ones supporting the change, and they have to be there to support it in a way that allows people to pursue an area they're interested in or allows that school to go through change. Sometimes it's given in a way that's voiced but not meant. It doesn't take long for people to notice that. (Theresa)

What I see that comes from the superintendency is leadership that can really cause the school system to change. You have to be a pretty dynamic superintendent, because sometimes that's quite a controversial position. I can visualize where you can really get a whole system working together for the change that is going to be going on. I think education is in a real exciting changing time right now. (Theresa)

A common motivation reported by female administrators was simply to "make a difference" in the lives of children.

I seek the satisfaction of knowing that what I'm doing is making a difference in education and that the people that I work with are comfortable with sharing things with me and knowing they can come to me with the ideas and

things they want to try; that we can look at the pros and cons and decide if it is something that we should pursue. (Theresa)

The thing that will tempt me to apply for a superintendency is if I decide that the trade off is such that the opportunity to make an impact or to make a difference is big enough and I want that enough that I'm willing to take on the board work. In the right district, with the right board and the right staff, the opportunity to make an impact that really can have some important outcomes for kids is a powerful motivator. Women might have more of a missionary zeal for the superintendency. . . . It's real rewarding to me to make schools better places for kids and I can do that and have done that in a variety of roles. (Patricia)

The only way a person should seek out the superintendency or would want to, because it certainly is not the most glorified position, would be a person who really feels that they could make a difference, who is really committed to the youth of the community and the district, and who really feels that their being in that position can help the positive growth of the youngsters there. . . . If the superintendent felt I could assist more children and encourage them to work hard and do well in school, then I decided to take the job. (Fran)

Is the school superintendency a good place for me or would I get bogged down even further in things that are not, that I'm not really about to make a big difference in or a dramatic difference in, or is that a really good place to try some of these things? I don't know the answer to that. (Leanne)

Some people are motivated for the money. That's certainly not my motivation. The number of hours in the pay per hour certainly doesn't warrant it. I think my motivation is the challenge, yes, I know I can bring a school system around to doing what is an effective school. (Harriet)

As a teacher, I knew I had a great effect on the 20 or 25 students that I had in my classroom, but beyond that I really couldn't do anything, and I really felt like my hands were tied a lot of times. I saw some things happening to kids that I didn't think should happen, and I couldn't do anything about it. So I thought by going into administration I would be able to influence and have an effect on more children. (Sandra)

I want to do a good job. I want to benefit the children I'm trying to serve even though I might not directly see the results of something I do. I think the greatest reward is doing a job well. (Jane)

I seek having a job well done, that I have affected students somehow, somehow, that I have made a difference in some small way, that I have made some student's life a little bit better or helped them so they could learn better. (Isabel)

I like to feel that what I'm doing has made a difference, and if I hadn't been there doing this job, it wouldn't have been done quite so well or people wouldn't have been quite so happy, or we wouldn't have moved quite as far along as we have. (Cynthia)

I had never thought of myself as a leader. I had been a teacher for a long time and I had been raising kids. I got started a little later than a lot of people do. I enjoyed working with people in that capacity. It gave me a real lift and I felt like I was affecting education more from that point than I felt I had been doing in the classroom. I feel I can affect so many more students' lives by making effective change with teachers. (Theresa)

Often females pointed out the satisfaction they derived from influencing growth in staff and students, a transformational leadership skill espoused by Sergiovanni (1989);

The reward comes when teachers say, "I'm really glad to be in this building. I'm happy to be working with you. I'm learning things from you and I'm learning with you. We're growing in the job of teaching and working with kids together." (Vivian)

I guess just fulfillments of things that I need to see happening in the building and in children, influencing self-esteem and self-worth, improvement in things happening for kids motivates me. (Olivia)

Seeing individuals take on a process and establish it and apply it in their classroom is a motivator. For me, it is seeing a procedure established and seeing it produce. I like to see the base and I like to see the change in people. (Elaine)

If I can help someone else to be more successful or help encourage or facilitate them to be the best they can be, whether it's students or teachers, it's a reward. It's probably more working with teachers to enable them to be more effective with kids, rather than working with kids directly. (Gail)

Some females described their leadership as being action-oriented and skilled in the use of influence and power. These skills served well in an environment of change:

I'm an action kind of person. So when projects or ideas come to me, and I don't develop a lot of my own ideas, I work with people on ideas as much as possible. I do get projects going. I do reflect on them. I think about causes and effects with them. I'm pretty good at those kinds of things. I do pretty good at presenting information, but I don't like to do that. I don't like much to get up and talk in front of people. I do it, but I don't necessarily like it. (Vivian)

I am more high strung, more organized, more of a workaholic than my counterpart is. He's very laid back and things just flow. If he gets to them fine, and if he doesn't, fine. For me, that drives me crazy. My productivity rises under stress. (Olivia)

I helped coordinate a community effort. All these different organizations, different agencies that have conflicted for years and years and years and I've pulled them together by setting out the guidelines and setting out meetings and bringing in that little bit of humor. It worked really well. We've been successful. (Betty)

I was writing curriculum before I even started to teach. I was on a curriculum committee the summer before I taught and I liked influencing what was happening. I thought I had opinions that were worth something. . . . I like kids and I like to be around kids, but I liked more often working with the adults and making things happen. I felt like I was doing more things for kids because I was affecting more children than the ones that were in my classroom. So to get to what I liked to do and what felt good, I needed administration. (Cynthia)

I really enjoyed staff development. I really enjoy getting up in front of people and giving them some information and giving positive feedback . . . . If it comes down to

applying, it will probably be an ego thing, saying I can do this. I'm ready for another challenge. Maybe that might not be ego, but taking a further step in challenging myself. (Betty)

A lot of people are motivated by the simple fact that they can have an influence on children. They'll have a say on how the money is spent and how things are handled. They will be in charge. (Sandra)

The challenge of moving upward is motivating. There are people who are seeking new challenges and increased ways to have an influence on an educational program or a system. I think the personal satisfaction of moving higher and farther is motivating. (Nora)

I think the challenge of it all, to be in charge, to be the person that moves a district along in an area that needs growth or an area where it needs to fix something or change something is a motivator. I think the challenge of that. (Vivian)

The plan was to just keep moving up the ladder of more responsibility. The junior high was a good experience for me, but I didn't like being an assistant. That's a hard position to be in because you're just not able to use your creativity to the highest degree, and some of the things are imposed. I wanted to be more in control of the kinds of things that I did. I thought at one time that I would like to do more as far as maybe look at a superintendency or assistant superintendency, but I'm not sure that the kinds of things that I would be doing are what I would really want to do. (Rachel)

One administrator felt that administrative opportunities were becoming more available for females willing to take the difficult challenges:

The difficult positions that are coming up just have hit Nebraska. Some of those large schools can't find men who are willing to take those challenges on and are looking more towards women to take those jobs. So I think that if we want to, it's probably there for us. It's just a matter of us going out and getting it. (Vivian)

Encouragement. Female administrators named encouragement most often as the strongest influence in their selection of higher



administrative positions. Most women related personal experiences in which they had been urged by others to actualize their leadership potential. They were encouraged to choose varying educational roles by their diverse supporters:

Several have encouraged me or inspired me or suggested things along the way. Probably the reason I'm where I am is because people suggested that I do things I may not have thought about doing, but I thought if they thought I could do them, I might as well do them. (Nora)

I had a supervisor who encouraged me to change my degree to administration saying that one day you might like to do something other than teaching, maybe when you are in your 40's. So I went ahead and changed my major to educational administration. I was encouraged by my district also to go into administration, so they gave me a position. (Fran)

I have a couple of people who are encouraging me to look at higher education and that's something that's in the back of my mind as a possible goal for down the road. That's a possibility. (Anna)

One of the superintendents asked if I would chair the learning climate committee, and when I started that direction I had a couple people say you might want to consider administration because you might have some talent in that area. So then I kind of looked into it and took the night classes. There were some administrators that were there that were not as effective as others, and I guess I saw myself as, "I think I can do this." (Isabel)

The superintendent looks for the best ideas he can get. He valued my opinion so that caused me to get involved in most district kinds of things because I enjoyed my working relationship with him. I felt like I had an influence, that I really did make a difference. (Kathryn)

I've got a fair lot of encouragement on this superintendency business, but I don't know. I have doubts whether that's something I want to do. (Leanne)

A professor told me, "You know, you're going to be done with your course work. You really should start applying for some jobs, just to get the interview, to get the experience." I guess I really hadn't thought about it. I applied and I didn't get the job. I just kept applying

for jobs and anything that was within a certain radius of . . . . A professor has talked to me about the superintendency, to think about it, to really give it some serious thought. I've had encouragement also from my colleagues that they really felt that I had some skills and some leadership and that I should pursue other avenues. (Sandra)

I had a number of friends that kept saying, you really need to go into administration. I had said, "I will never be a principal because I don't want to deal with irate parents." (Olivia)

I had a friend who said, "Why don't you apply?" I said, "I don't have the administrative background and I don't want to go into competition with you, that doesn't seem fair." Well, I got the job and she didn't. We're still friends. (Mary)

A number of principals and people in central office are encouraging me because they know that my boss will be retiring in a couple of years, even the superintendent says things about other director positions like, "You might want to look at that." (Cynthia)

One aspirant described the effect of personal encouragement from professional peers:

I still don't know if I ever will or not [apply for a superintendency], but I think about the encouragement from colleagues and people that I respect as really top-notch educational leaders themselves as probably the most important. My ex-principal when I left there, one of the things that he told me was someday he'd like me to come back so that he could work for me. That was really directly implying that I would make a good superintendent. Comments like that are the kind of things that really make you feel like, "Hey! I would be good at that job." I think we need to do that with each other a lot more. If we recognize those qualities, we need to make comments and say encouraging things, even if someone isn't geared toward that direction, but just planting seeds. It's like we do with kids; the more encouragement they hear from us as educators, the more they'll believe they can do whatever they want to do. Females seek rewards from their position. It's the professional prestige. It's being seen as being competent and being encouraged in that area. I think that's really important for females, even more so than money factors. (Anna)

Female administrators described support from supervisors as influencing their professional goals, although the support was not always readily apparent:

I've had people that made me get into this whole thing. They've been supportive. My supervisor is not as overt, but more internal. He'll say little things and you say, "Oh! That means something." (Cynthia)

My superintendent has been very supportive of me. One thing that's been nice, he's allowed me to run my program and do some things that maybe he didn't agree with me at first, but he let me try them and do them, and I think that speaks highly of him. I was lucky they were successful. (Sandra)

I spoke to my principal about whether I had aspirations for that [elementary principalship] and if he thought I was competent enough to do that and then went on to get my endorsement. (Vivian)

In one case, a female administrator decided that supervisor support could be detrimental to professional advancement:

A not so strong superintendent who was a young man was resigning. There was an administrative position to be filled. He really liked me, and I didn't want to be perceived as getting ahead because of that. It was a real deliberate decision. I debated long and hard because I would have been the obvious person, and they would have chosen me easily. But also, I just had some things I wanted to finish. (Diane)

Another respondent sternly challenged the perceived feminine need for confirmation of self-worth, suggesting that such behavior detracted from the female power base:

Women too much need affirmation from others, either in terms of how women speak, "don't you think," or those kinds of little questions. It takes power away from the manner in which our presentations are heard. I think women need to feel more self-confident and less self-critical. I couldn't emphasize that enough. Women are too concerned about trying to do everything they read in a magazine and look like Cosmo and be worth Fortune 500. (Jane)

Being singled out for particular competence and encouraged to develop that skill greatly influenced the career aspirations of a female educator:

There was a program at the University of Nebraska at Omaha called FLAMES for female leadership. It really kind of said we believe in you and we believe females have all kinds of opportunity in education administration, and the organizer was very good at it, and you got a chance. I was exposed to other people who felt the same way because he used to have these little meetings on Sunday and you would sit around and discuss educational issues and that kind of thing. He brought in role models which was exceedingly important. In other words, I had a very narrow world and so, finding out there were other areas . . . in fact, I did not choose education. Now I can't believe that career choices were so narrow. I can't believe that I didn't go to, why didn't I try for Harvard? It never even occurred to me. (Anna)

The females who were sorted and selected for district leadership tasks early in their careers as teachers developed into outstanding female administrators. They described their early encouragement.

They opened a new building in the district. The principal got to select from everybody interested. I went with him, and then he opened another new building and asked me to go with him. When an assistant principalship opened, he suggested that I apply for that. I had never considered that because I had no secondary experience at all. At his suggestion, I gave it a try and got the job. When he left the district, he encouraged me to apply for his job which I wouldn't have at that point had he not suggested it. (Rachel)

In my second year, he said I really think you ought to pilot this new program. I've arranged for your training. Whatever you need, I'll be glad to support it. Next year, he said there's vacancy for the team leader. I want you to do it. I think you're the best person on the team that can do it. I was a trusting soul. I thought, "Gee! I don't know if I can do this." But you just could never tell [name] no. You just did what he wanted you to do. . . . My principal asked me to be a team leader in that federal program and so I did that. (Patricia)

I had just gone away for the summer and had been called by the superintendent and he said, "We have a principal's job for you. You need to come home. We need to get this started." So I came back. (Vivian)

They asked me to work with a pilot program which meant I was relieved of my teaching duties, but I was responsible for helping the rest of the building. I never got that far away from kids. And I still do the same thing. I don't believe you can develop good curriculum for kids unless you maintain some kind of linkage where you're trying it out. (Elaine)

Female administrators who were directly recruited into administrative positions described their unique situations:

The superintendent stopped me and said, "I don't see your application on my desk." I said, "It's after the deadline," and he said, "It doesn't matter." So I went ahead and submitted that and I was interviewed. (Kathryn)

When my supervisor asked me to come in, I thought, what did I do wrong? What's going on in the district? But anyway, he asked if I would consider taking the job if it was offered to me. And so I said, "Sure." (Cynthia)

My principal encourages me a lot and I've even had principals and superintendents in other districts encourage me. A district close by contacted me this year and wanted me to apply for a position that I'm really not qualified for and told me to keep them in mind for another opening. I'm beginning to be known. I've become active at the service unit and active in professional organizations. I was an officer in PDK. People become acquainted with you. Two or three administrators asked me if I wouldn't apply for positions at their schools, but a lot of them are an hour away. (Theresa)

The director of special services asked me if I would be the summer school supervisor. I had been teaching summer school, and I found I really did like supervising. (Theresa)

The superintendent came to me one day and stated that he would like me to be a part of his cabinet, and he said that the positive influence I had been able to have on 400 students, you can now make on 41,000. And I thought it would be great if there's anything I could do to assist more children and encourage them to work hard and do well

in school. And if my superintendent is believing in me, I was encouraged to go that route. (Fran)

Both superintendents that left have encouraged me. One of them called me from Minnesota and would like me to come there next year. Since different people like that and my professor have encouraged me to apply for a superintendency, I just really felt like I needed . . . . I didn't think they would jump from an assistant principal to a superintendent. (Diane)

Two females spoke of the administrative jobs they had been assigned and the district's trust in their competence and stated their need to trust the district's intentions for their well-being.

I saw my transfer as being a positive thing in the long run as they wouldn't have asked me to do that if they didn't feel like I could do it and if they didn't feel like they really needed me. When they say we need you, you know I'm a trooper, and I'll do what I can to support the system. I do feel like I can trust them and I do feel like I can go to them with a problem and they'll be very supportive of me. But you're right, there are times when I feel like a sacrificial lamb, but I think they also know that because they call every once in awhile to see how I'm doing. (Betty)

I finished my master's in elementary education. The district gave me a cornfield agreement that if we don't like you and you don't like us. . . . You've got a year to get your provisional. So I did that. (Diane)

Some administrators reported that being experienced in district work and prepared by professional degree enhanced their career opportunities:

I had worked on a couple of the major district committees. I chaired the alternative school committee and the program and facilities committee, and with the work we'd been doing internally on the early childhood program, it seemed to be a logical progression and I was real interested in it, and the superintendent asked me one day, "Would you like to be the principal of the alternative school?" (Gail)

The superintendent will probably be here another year and then will retire. When I was interviewed for this position, I was asked if I would consider the superintendency. They are real intrigued with the doctorate. I have never been to anything that is school-related where I have not been introduced as Dr., and the kids are real interesting. Once in a while, one of them will say Mrs., no Dr. [name]. So Mrs. does not fit. (Olivia)

Only one female respondent mentioned that she was persistently being recruited for the position of school superintendent by influential administrative peers:

A professor has asked me if I'm interested in the superintendency and said, "When you are, let me know and I'd be glad to recommend you." My superintendent asks every now or then if I decided yet and could he help me. (Patricia)

Positive role models. Female administrators reported that positive role models did have a strong influence on career selection and were necessary in order to entice more females into top leadership positions in school administration:

I think that it's healthy for our girls in elementary schools and high schools to see women in leadership positions. (Vivian)

I think that when girls see women in all sorts of roles that they recognize that there are all kinds of possibilities and you can have a broad vision of where you might want to go. (Nora)

I think you need to see people who are like us who are successful. I think that's most important. Just look at the kids who grew up to be in fields related to their parents' occupations. It depends on who their parents socialize with. (Kathryn)

While females communicated the need for positive role models in administration, most felt gender was not an issue, suggesting that

administrative aspirants could learn equally from male and female practitioners.

I don't think it's gender-based. I think you have to have some people that you model after and just like a teacher, have to have positive role models in order for you to become a better administrator. (Isabel)

What I tend to do is watch and observe women as models and even men, and I will see behaviors I like to emulate because of the impact it has on people, or because of the negative impact of what I see this person doing. I try to be real analytical of my own experience and say the way I acted, what were the good things or the bad. Role models are something to bounce it off against. I really try hard with teachers to model for them the kind of behavior that I would work with and the way that I'd like to see them change as they work with their kids. (Rachel)

I think role models are important for anybody. I don't think that's something that's necessarily exclusive just to females. It's just as important for males to have appropriate positive role models as far as what an administrator or whatever the position is. In this particular community, there have been some strong role models and very successful female heads of corporations who are very strong business leaders. (Gail)

I think role models are really important, but I don't think they have to be the same gender. When I look at my role models, I have some of both, and I have really learned to watch people and to ask for help and advice. I'm finding myself becoming a role model for others too, which is real interesting. (Anna)

One respondent agreed that aspirants could learn from male and female role models, but only the same gender example could influence growth and self-confidence:

She was doing a lot of waiting, but she did it in a way that she was constantly improving herself, doing different things, getting more involved in district things. I think that we have to kind of do that to prove that we are capable of handling those kinds of things. She's someone I've looked up to. There haven't been many females to model after. It's been almost all men, but I've kind of modeled after some



of the men too. A female gives you the message, if I exuded the confidence . . ., where you just won't do that as much with a male role model. (Theresa)

Some female administrators eagerly elaborated on the leadership behaviors of the particular female role models who had influenced their career aspirations:

She's got some good supporters. She's a competent lady. She's a lot more public than what we've had before, visible to the public and the community. She was here and involved right away in a leadership capacity. She's getting her hands dirty. She handles herself very well. She's just got it all together. She really outshines the others in her poise because our superintendent is quieter. Women bring a little different aspect to administrative roles. They bring a little softer touch and yet can be a very strong person. If she believes something, she's not afraid to stand by it, very commanding. And yet there's a kind of warmth there also. Nurturing does show up in administrative jobs. (Theresa)

She has tremendous credibility with the public. She has an incredible capacity to listen to the concerns of citizens and teachers, to reiterate those concerns and give you a message that she cares about what you have said. You feel good about the fact that you've been able to express your opinion or your concern, and yet she's promised nothing. The two female role models I am thinking of are good listeners, very intelligent, workaholics. They have real strong ability to lead, to see what needs to be done and to get a group of people there. One has been in a tough position where she's had the ability to pull the staff together. (Mary)

She was a role model. She did a lot to build cohesiveness. We met once or twice a month and did group cohesive skills and a lot of things that you would do with gifted kids. I was pretty left-brained and pretty sequential and these kinds of things, but I think that because of those experiences, I have a more holistic approach and see myself now as doing more right-brained and more abstract kinds of things, and I enjoy those more and I think I had those capabilities, but those experiences brought them to the forefront. (Rachel)

They have strong intelligence and common sense about what's right and what's wrong and what we can realistically do and what doesn't make any sense. They have very good

presence. When they walk into the room, people just listen to them. They're also knowledgeable. They've had experience back in the classroom, the experience of knowing what's realistic. They keep themselves current. They're good listeners and have a good sense of humor. They laugh. They laugh a lot. I think you can learn to lighten up a little bit and take some of those things people say and inject a bit of humor. (Vivian)

She's dynamic. She's an efficient, well-organized, charismatic individual. You can't find too many people that knock her. She's earned respect. Anyone that knows what's happening in the building certainly gets on their knees for her. She's just really done the job. (Jane)

She's change-oriented. The best teacher I have had is having her. If women could have women role models, I think we would unleash a new energy and change for kids. I have grown more in the last six months under her, just modeling her to see the things that I've always believed really working. You always thought does this mean weak or does this mean . . . . The textbooks tell you never to socialize with all your staff. She broke right through that. You'll see her with her secretary. She may be golfing with a teacher. She may be out with her principal and that's OK. And seeing another woman do that helps. The men were always aloof. They were always "the superintendent." She doesn't mind connecting with people that she works with. And just a minute detail, emotion and the little touches that are women, putting tableclothes on tables and sending thank you notes of appreciation and those things are just me. But to watch her do it and the response is fun because you've never seen someone else do what I believe. It validates my ideas. I'm not sure we ever see why we're successful. (Diane)

Females spoke with awareness of and commitment to their own images as role models to students and other female professionals:

I feel that young women need to see that this can be done, that a woman completing a Ph.D. program or a woman being able to accomplish certain goals in her profession are things that women can do and raise a family too, and that career is important and that family is important. I don't think one has to have one or the other. I think that is what keeps me motivated is to let others see that it is something that can be done. (Fran)

A person that is visible, a person that does not mind going out and working in the trenches. There is an individual who I know, an assistant principal, who was asked by her principal to take over a classroom for a teacher who got ill, and her first response was, "I don't do that anymore." I see that as a leader who is not ready to lead because we have to lead by doing and by example. Individuals need to see that you are willing to do all that it takes to get the job done, even if that means that you need to go and work behind the cafeteria line or take a child's temperature or go on a home visit or run a board meeting or whatever it takes. A person should be willing to be able to do that. (Fran)

I enjoy teaching but I'm not going to miss it. It's almost overwhelming because you just have so much to do. I not only have a classroom and bulletin boards and those kinds of things and grades to do, but then I have a full-time principal's job. I struggle with it because I'm a role model. You can't let your teaching down because if my teaching isn't good, why should anyone in my building do anything good? My teaching has to be top-notch. Then I have to be top-notch as an administrator too. It's really been hard. At times I'm burning the candle at both ends because I feel that I have to be this role model for people in the teaching profession. (Sandra)

I'm more determined than anything to do whatever it takes to help our female superintendent because she will, no matter what, open doors for women. I think she has already opened doors. I think people are talking about this one being successful and it gets to board members and they are the ones who take applicants and interview. She's doing things and educating them along the way. It will open the door for all the rest of the women. I don't think somebody in western Nebraska would fear a woman right now. But she's one of those gifted people who's athletic and musical. She's in everything and I think we need that Barbie Doll that could do it all as our first one through, and then those of us that are not perfectly built or whatever who are committed to the community and kids and education will also have an opportunity. I'm glad the first one out of the gate is getting that attention, is that gifted in all areas. She can golf with them. She can sing. She exercises at five. (Diane)

A particular female model had a direct influence on the career aspiration and leadership style of an outstanding female administrator:

I had always admired her [principal] and sort of thought I would like to be like her, so I applied and was hired. She just always seemed to me to be on very, very low key, but at the same time, very confident on everything, just a very intelligent woman and extraordinary personal skills, just could make anyone at ease. If you think you need a female role model in the job that you hope to have, that may never happen. It has been powerful for me to see how the principal worked and important to me to try to do things as well as she did. (Patricia)

Respondents shared ideas regarding the impact of present women role models on the female leadership image:

What successful models have proven is that we're good in secondary. Their reputation sure carries a long way and does a lot of good for the rest of the people in the state. (Elaine)

The number of females is expanding. So I think people's ideas about women in a leadership position like that are changing. I think they're more open to it. (Theresa)

I believe up until this year the boards would not see a female as being competent to manage the public, the community, and the groups and macho conversations that need to go on, but I think with the role models that we've had presented in a couple of smaller school systems, now we've got in. The school board association has something to hold up to the local school boards to say, "Here's a situation where it's worked beautifully and here's the good things that have happened." It's going to be changing within the next five years. We'll see more females, but it's still tough because it's the coffee shop situation where you need to go down and kind of sit back and just listen to the local farmers bitch about the weather conditions, drink a beer, and it's not real attractive to most females to do that. (Kathryn)

Because the few [female superintendents] we have in and them being successes at it, barriers are breaking down and school boards are realizing that females can do it. (Olivia)

Leadership experience. Actual experience in school administration seemed to be a factor that influenced women's self-perception of their leadership potential. The respondents spoke of having had

previous experience as a critical element in career advancement. They valued past experience for developing credibility in sought-after administrative positions:

I think teachers sometimes view male administrators as not as competent as they are as teachers. I've heard teachers say, "He never taught but for a couple years, or you've never done my job before in terms of classrooms." I think there's that discrimination. I think it's real important for you to have some experience with what it is you're going into, or at least you say, "I haven't had experience, but I'm here to learn. I'm not going to make major changes until I've had opportunity to work in this job for a little while." (Vivian)

I think experience is really important. You understand a lot of the issues once you've experienced them. I like to feel really well-prepared and fairly knowledgeable by experiencing a number of things before I think you're really adequately ready. (Anna)

There are many teachers who are concerned about the position I have saying, "I could never do that because I couldn't take on that responsibility," or similar types of feelings when I think of the superintendent saying, "Oh my God, snowing! How can you decide whether to have school or not?" I think it's probably the same risk factor. When you're ready to do it, you're ready. The experience of having done that, or been exposed to that a few times makes the difference. (Betty)

I think experience is important to a person's self-esteem. The "I can do it." I've had experience here. I know I can lead. I know I can make appropriate decisions. I've been successful here. (Yvonne)

I think it's critical to be accepted by other people in their movement. Basically, I'm the same person I was five years ago. I know how to do some things differently now which makes me probably more acceptable by the masses. So you know, I've learned from some of my mistakes and some of my experiences, but I'm basically exactly the same person. (Betty)

I think past experience is important because I think you build on experience. With all the people graying at the same time in Nebraska, there are going to be a whole lot of us out there without the experience, the wisdom to

draw back on. I've seen young superintendents who've made mistakes that were probably unnecessary. It was just lack of experience. (Diane)

I think experience is probably more important for a female than I would think for a man. Men get places faster than women. (Cynthia)

Those females desiring administrative advancement promoted the value of gaining experience in a wide variety of leadership situations and explained how particular activities helped them achieve higher positions:

Some things I'm striving to have would be experience. I thought it very important to have the opportunity to work in various levels of the school system, and I encourage individuals who are looking toward administrative positions to not limit their opportunity to work in different educational situations. I have seen individuals stay in one school the whole time they were a teacher and stay in one grade level, and I think that they limit themselves when they do that. (Fran)

I think you need a variety of experiences. Sometimes, when they seek to fill positions with people who've had exactly the same experience or as close to it as the one they're trying to fill, I think, sometimes, they limit themselves as far as what a new person with a new vision could bring in. They can narrow their vision if they don't look at some people who've had a wide array of experiences that might lead up to them being able to change. (Gail)

I did my practicum as part of my masters in central office. I did whatever "go-fer" work they wanted done, and I got to know the people here. (Jane)

When big wigs and superintendents define strong leaders in their districts, it's quite often the assistant principals who get named as being those leaders. It may be roles you play in terms of problem solving and liaisons, etc., but it's a perception in research. It's a good position to be in as far as being noticed for your competence, because it's obvious to number one leaders in districts. (Mary)

The experiences with the Chapter I and the special education were very strong factors in helping me receive this position. Now as director of those two areas, moving into

the next step, the experience will be helpful. An aspiring administrator should volunteer for committees that are set up within the district, trying to be able to chair those instead of just being a member, and professional involvement outside of the school, Phi Delta Kappa and organizations like that, where you can get exposure in different areas and leadership, just the local education association too, hold office there. (Olivia)

Specific early life experiences had strong impact on the leadership development of some of the successful female administrators:

Basketball was part of my childhood and that's real competitive. I think it does help for females to get involved in some kind of team competition . . . . The experience of having to get aggressive basically, and still work as a team, to be friends after that aggression on the court, is good. It's good inducing that for your life and being aggressive. I think that whole experience does something to females and makes you more competitive. You have to believe in yourself and demonstrate your skill. (Jane)

Just discussing politics at the dinner table and receiving encouragement helped me. I just really had a high self-esteem because of that and my grandparents. Both my grandmothers had always worked for a living, and we're real supportive and just strong women. I had a little nature club in the summer and charged all the neighborhood money to take care of their kids, and we lived by a cemetery and charged them money for plants and all of these little things I was charging when I had to be ten max. (Diane)

Probably what's influenced me the most was when I was on Teachers' College Advisory Board for several years. The dean believed in giving the students more than a token voice. I was a voting member of the chairman council where I could vote on salaries of people, and it was real controversial. The faculty was kind of up in arms on some things, and they really had to follow through. He allowed me and the teachers' college board and his faculty to go on an overnight retreat just to listen to students, and that has had such a major impact. I was chairperson. We had developed a rapport. (Diane)

Females felt that administrative job targets were at times unattainable due to public perceptions and stereotypic expectations for

career paths and specific leadership experiences:

Almost everybody wants somebody that's already been a superintendent. They want previous superintendent-level experience. Many men face the same issues that women do. There's so much variation in ads for superintendents that we almost need to talk more in terms of "has the person had some kind of experience that has allowed them to develop this skill and demonstrate this skill, rather than a particular level or a particular number of years?" (Patricia)

It's not necessary to have a secondary principalship to be a superintendent, but maybe that's a gate, a door that opens more easily if you've had more of those kinds of experiences. (Rachel)

I don't think it's ever been a problem about being a female or male in terms of responding to the needs of education. I think you can prove capability. I think it's experience. They believe that the more experienced you are, probably the more likely you are to be able to solve problems. Maybe one of the drawbacks is the fact that most of our experience is in elementary, and people think of superintendents as secondary people. So that's another thing that sets males and females apart. (Elaine)

I'd like a building first. I think I need the experience of running a building. If I were interviewing someone for a superintendency, and they hadn't had a building level position, I would wonder why. I think there's a natural progression. When things get tight, I can pass if off if I feel like it. I think that you need to be able to deal with the bottom line issues. (Mary)

I think I may need to do a building principalship, even though I might lose some money at it. I may need to go back to the building and pick up some building leadership. After applying, I've sent out a couple of feelers this year, and I get the feeling that at least for a woman, you can't skip anything. Even if it's a lateral move, you need to have the building experience as well as the central office. I could argue that you could do good in the central office without building leadership; however, I also think it would be good for you to have that. I think it's credibility. They perceive that if you're going to be directly responsible over building principals, you have more credibility with them and more real life experience to understand how best to give guidance and leadership if you've actually held that position previously. (Jane)



One female administrator adamantly opposed the "lack of experience" argument for nonpromotion of females into the superintendency and offered the lack of opportunity as the bigger concern:

Men think experience is important. I don't think women think it is. Women typically did not follow that career route because they couldn't, and so they're more likely to maybe go from curriculum director to a small school superintendency and that may be a "Nebraskaism." Women have not had the same experiences as men traditionally went through. To try to hold a women to the same experiences would not be very fair and would in essence keep women out of the superintendency. I think it's a gender issue. (Leanne)

Mentoring. An influence on career advancement reported by several outstanding female administrators was the practice of mentoring. Females who achieved notable career growth spoke of the mentors in their lives. Mentors came from various roles, but most were college professors, school administrators, and spouses. Most were male. The support relationship tended to subsist and grow over the years:

A professor from the university was in administration. He was my mentor and is to this day. (Kathryn)

I still see a college professor a lot and meet with him sometimes and that was my earliest mentor. Since then I've had other mentors at the college level. I took several classes from my first mentor and realized I was probably talking more than the rest of the students. So, in one particular class I decided I would be like the rest of the students. We were done early. He said, "You know you generate so much discussion on good topics that I depend on you being a part of the class." Well then I went to bat. I try not to dominate that much, but I'm interested so I'm not afraid to be outspoken. (Diane)

A professor was my mentor. It was more mutual. He really encouraged me to go on into education and so kept in contact in all the job changes that I had and still provides a good sounding board and a good person to bounce ideas off of. (Isabel)

Mentoring was seen as a mutual support relationship for some female administrators. They spoke of the transformation of mentoring into "teaming":

I've had one true mentor, and another, but also just as a real professional, as really a friend, and I always felt like she encouraged me a lot. And I felt like I encouraged her. At first it may have started out as kind of a mentor role, but I've always seen it more as peers encouraging each other to be more and more. (Rachel)

You just kind of pick them up along the way, and when you see them every five years, it's still a neat relationship. They're somebody who's cheerleader for me, and I'm cheerleader for them. It's a real reinforcing relationship, but we both are for lots of other people. (Diane)

My current boss in some ways is a mentor, but I've filled the same role for him. It's more style than mentoring. It's more an opportunity to learn. I think mentoring is leveled. At a certain point, I think it's more teaming than mentoring. I consider myself a mentor to lots of people that have come to me for advice or career path. I've made suggestions, but I don't see myself taking on a nurturing role. It's not my demeanor. I think I can inform. I can support, and I can provide experiences and counseling, but I don't know that I take on a very personal role. Attachment is too much. (Elaine)

Prodding and pushing by mentors were often identified as elements of the relationship, but these behaviors were received by the female administrators in a positive manner:

My ex-husband was the driving force in my career. He was a "type A" personality. Through his pushing and prodding, I worked on a doctoral degree. (Olivia)

My principal kept saying, "Go to school. Get ready. Get your certificate." If it hadn't been for him, I don't know if I would actually have gone ahead. He hired me three times! (Mary)

My husband said, "Now's the time if you're ever going to do it. You have to jump in now." He was saying go ahead. Go for it. (Harriet)

My principal kept saying, "Go into administration. You make good decisions and this is where you could best serve all students." He was the one that kept prodding me. (Yvonne)

She was there supporting me, pushing me. It was not a formal mentorship. It was just there. And then it evolved into other people which is kind of nice because as my needs, my goals changed, I needed someone else to change, to move up with me and she could not help me in the building. The whole concept of mentorship is one of evolution as far as my experiences are. (Betty)

A desirable behavior attributed to mentors was the ability to bring visibility and positive regard to the females they counseled. Aspiring females felt their competencies were better noticed when others highlighted their job performances:

One of my advisors in grad school encouraged me to talk to the state education department. I think he knew that there might be a possibility of my getting some other options out of that relationship, like a job. The school was much more into mentoring their students than most higher ed places I'd been to. It may be hard for men too, but particularly for women to toot their own horn. If somebody says so and so really has done a nice job on this, it helps. A mentor can first of all share some skills that you have and help you perfect them, but also if they're in a key place, can make sure that you become visible to people that matter. Men seem to be noticed a little bit more than females in the leadership positions, so mentoring really serves a purpose of bringing a female to the limelight and for some reason, they'll listen to someone else instead of see what they see. (Leanne)

It does not matter how good you are if no one knows about it. It doesn't matter how well you do the job if you're not given the recognition for having achieved that. For every elementary principalship opening, we have 80 people on file that have requested for the job. So I firmly believe in terms of a larger school district, you have to have a mentor because somebody needs to be in somebody else's ear saying, "Hey! Did you see what she did? This is an excellent whatever." People acknowledge whoever the intercom comes from, or the person making the presentation

receives the credit. I don't think you need to blatantly have your name passed out in terms of business cards at every meeting, but I do think having someone make sure that you're the one that's getting the exposure is important. (Jane)

One female administrator saw mentoring as a mutual selection of partners with common goals and beliefs that could not be super-ficially arranged between two people desiring to practice or receive mentoring:

When the university women in leadership said, "Are you willing to be a mentor for someone?" I was real hesitant and I even wrote it down. I like the concept. However, to just pair one person up with another, "a" goes with "b," doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me. It's got to be a mutually agreed upon decision. Personalities really have to click. (Betty)

Other females explained that the leadership skills of the mentor should be critically evaluated and selectively modeled to enhance one's own administrative style. Not all mentor behaviors were desirable:

He was a mentor in his personal qualities and in the way that he works with people. He was just remarkable at making everyone of us want to do our very best and to put forth the most effort and energy we had, to come up with the best ideas that we could. He just stretched us in a very safe and secure, and almost loving, manner. You always felt like whatever you did he would think it would be wonderful, and, therefore, you would want it to be wonderful, so that you wouldn't let him down. Another mentor I especially watched as he worked in difficult situations and conflict situations, because that's the area I feel least confident in, so I watch for how he does that. I think if I would be comfortable doing that or if I couldn't, what other things could be done? . . . . There are many things about his values I would say that have strongly shaped and influenced mine and the way that he works with people, the way that he brings people together, I would say is something that I've tried to emulate. I think I am more organized than he is. I probably do better at public speaking, but in terms of listening for

what's important and communicating what's important, he does that very well. (Patricia)

I don't think that my principal mentored me as much as he was just a model for me to look at and learn; to learn what you can do wrong in this job when you are so good at what you were doing. He had some personal difficulties. (Vivian)

Professional network support. Support from a professional network was not a strong influence for career advancement. Although no formal female network was described, a few female administrators shared how they were learning to network:

I think I need to expand even more in networking. It's something you have to work at. You have to be willing to give the time to do the networking because it does take time. In Nebraska, we're so spread out and we, in western Nebraska, have a tendency to get stuck. On top of that, being a classroom teacher, you don't have quite the flexibility to go when you need to. (Theresa)

Men tend to network. Women are just beginning to network a lot better than we've ever done in the past. I think men knew how to network and knew how to use the "good old boy" channel to get information. When they got in the position, they could reach for someone who had the experience and who could help them. Women are beginning to do that because there are beginning to be enough women who you can call upon for them to lend their expertise to the situation. (Elaine)

Those females who spoke of network connections described different reasons for using the network:

I depend on a group of women administrators in the district that I can call at any time about anything and they will be the listener that I need and the sounding board that I need. I feel comfortable calling and saying, "Tell me how you do this or help me think this one through." (Patricia)

There are certain groups that I network a lot with because they're the key to what I need to have happen here. There are people, if I was in a particular pinch on certain topics, I know I could call and get support.

I try out things on them and get their perspective. They can give me their opinion of what they see happening.  
(Leanne)

I do a lot of phone calling to find out more about other people's opinions: specialists, psychologists. I'm learning to network, but it's hard to sit down at a meeting of 45 men and 3 women and talk about things. But I'm learning that that's very important. Men go on the golf course and do that real well. (Yvonne)

I make a point to sit at different tables at lunch so that I have social time with different department heads. I probably would choose to sit with a group of white male administrators and make an effort to get to know them better or to sit next to them taking notes and commenting professionally. When I make a presentation, I'm more apt to get their professional support if they know me personally.  
(Jane)

There are three different people that I communicate with at the central office. They have different personality types and different kinds of strengths. I was just thinking about this not too long ago. I go to one of them when I want somebody to pick my brain and stimulate me to think more. I go to another when I want somebody to tell me some ideas or maybe tell me what to do, and I go to the third one when I need emotional support. Less networking may occur because women still feel threatened that men don't see them as decision makers. (Anna)

I call and ask, "How are you handling this? Did you get that new form? How does that work?" Bounce things off of them. There are several individuals that I call. I think it's very important that women network, and I think it's very important that women network with the existing male networks. There are more existing male networks than existing female networks, and I don't think we should be afraid of being a part of those existing male networks. I think it's very important that women allow themselves to be friends with each other because in studying about women's issues, I read about the "queen bee" syndrome where women are almost afraid to support one another because they think that somebody might take their job, the only position that might be available for them. I think it's very sad to see that. I believe in really encouraging one another and just to have a female anywhere is exciting and it doesn't have to be you. You just want to be supportive of the person that is there. I think networking is very important. (Fran)

Females chose a diversity of groups as their network connections:

I work with my elementary colleagues, and we socialize together as a support group. I use a group of friends who are outside of education. I find that real helpful because of different views. Then I use a skein at the university level. I'm not afraid to call and ask for advice. I've certainly learned that over the years. (Kathryn)

I feel like I can go to anybody depending upon what the problem is, and I seek different people because there's a large number of them. There's a summer conference that's been a group that the superintendent has kind of hand picked. We go the second week of July and socialize, listen to speakers, and things like that and talk about what our plans are for the following year. It's not a group that gets together frequently, but they are there if we need them. (Betty)

The people I have gone to get support have been males, not females. They were people that I knew previously. I have only worked under one female principal and would not call her for anything. That was not a good experience. There are a couple of female principals, from what I have seen in meetings, I'm not sure that I would call and ask them too many questions. The female superintendent I would. (Olivia)

Some females supported the value of creating a female network:

Having somebody like other women as a network, I wouldn't be afraid to be a superintendent because I know now that I could call a female and say, "What do you think about this?" and have a support network. (Diane)

My groups are mainly community groups. I would like to see a network of women or just a support group that gets together and does these group things and stuff. (Diane)

I think women need to do more networking. We need to have a good old girls' system where we can rely on one another and support and encourage one another in administration. (Sandra)

Career aspiration. Two females spoke of their early awareness of administrative aspirations:

I got my master's in administration after my second year of teaching. I knew right away that was the direction I wanted to go. Teaching was like a stepping stone. I knew from the beginning that I wanted to be an administrator. (Gail)

When I started college, I asked my very first counselor, "What do I have to do to become a principal?" (Kathryn)

Few females articulated precise career goals and steps to achieve job targets. They offered a "fuzzy" vision of their aspirations:

At the university, they asked you to make a career plan. I had kind of thought over the next ten years that one of the things I wanted to do was to become an elementary principal. My job as principal now is definitely part of that plan. I didn't expect it to happen quite as fast, so my career plan is kind of this is what I planned for ten years and it's now here and I don't know what's next. (Sandra)

I really like my job. I think if I was going to do another, my next goal would probably be as an assistant superintendent. (Cynthia)

For one female, career advancement necessitated moving for the available job:

I moved here because they were the first one to offer me a contract. (Olivia)

Career aspirations were tempered by the risk applicants took in seeking top-level positions and facing possible rejection in their job-seeking efforts. Such rejection threatened positive self-image:

My job was an interim position. After one year, I had to reapply. They opened it up and advertised nationally and brought people in, and that was all threatening, and I had to interview for it again. It was pretty scary because you're really on the line at that point, like now, I'll



be seen as incompetent if I don't keep it. You have those self doubts. (Cynthia)

You're putting yourself on the line. You're saying, "Take a look at me." And when you don't choose me, you take a look at yourself and say, "What is it that I don't have that I should have had?" A man will look at a position that's available, and if he can do 40 percent, he'll apply. A women has to be able to do 90 percent before she'll apply. (Mary)

Two females believed that the top jobs were attainable if females truly wanted them:

My perception of that would be it's because they haven't wanted to. It never dawned on me that I wouldn't get a job as a principal some place. If we really wanted it, we would go out. We would actively pursue it. We would challenge decisions in which we were not selected. Why wasn't I selected? Provide me the evidence. I think if we really wanted them, we would go out and get them. (Vivian)

I did apply for a smaller district outstate. I have applied for a few [superintendencies] and if I'm going to be serious on a superintendency, I need to apply to a couple of dozen and hope to get interviews in maybe three or four out of that and maybe offered one. (Jane)

Family support. Females spoke of the role family support played in their willingness to seek and achieve professional goals. All married respondents felt strong support from their spouses. Some described the specific behaviors that demonstrated this support. One female felt support, but wished for more help with household duties:

I have a husband who's very, very supportive and encouraging of whatever I would want to do. I was a principal when we got married so he knows what he got. (Gail)

I think we both encourage each other. We're both willing for each other. I think we're good for each other. (Rachel)

My husband did all the child care. We have two children and [name] was an infant when I went back to school and

he did all of it. I didn't wash her head until she was three years old. (Mary)

Marriage has affected career goals more positively than negatively, just in the support that I've gotten. He's a good host, a good social person. In those public environments, he can blend well, a very good political person. (Betty)

My husband's real supportive. I'm probably less limited than many men and women because of his job. I can go to any state, and he's encouraging me to go on and work on a doctorate. I really try to preserve weekends for him, and that works really well. It would be more difficult if he didn't travel, but I'll do the week activities and occasionally use a Saturday workshop or something. (Diane)

My husband has been a real strong influence. Had he not been as understanding and as accepting and encouraging, I probably would have done things a lot differently. I think sometimes a lot of women don't seek positions like that because husbands either don't want them to or are intimidated by it. It never bothered him that I worked 11 months. He's really secure enough in himself that he doesn't have to because I make more money than he does. (Rachel)

My husband has always been real supportive of what it is I've wanted to do, and we've both recognized that at some point there might be a time period when we don't live in the same city, and that doesn't seem as fearsome as it did when we first realized that might happen. He values scholarship a lot and intellectual achievement, so it didn't threaten him that I finished my doctoral degree a year before him. He doesn't seem to be bothered by the amount of hours that I put into work. He really can be a solitary person much better than I can. (Patricia)

I do have the ability to move. I'm very fortunate that my husband is supportive and would be willing to move to another community for me to pursue a superintendency. I have an advantage that a lot of women don't. (Sandra)

I've just taken eight years to get my master's. In the process, I had two children and walked across the stage expecting my third. I do have a very traditional husband who believes that the woman is the primary person to raise children and take care of the household, and that has altered a little bit, but still is not as flexible as I

would like it to be. I think if you would ask my husband if he is real supportive, he would say, "Yes, I'm very supportive." Yes, I think he is based on what he believes that level of support is. However, there are times when I would really wish for more help, especially around the household. . . . Although spouses profess support, there's often a lack of understanding what that takes.  
(Fran)

An African-American administrator described the support from extended family members as a common pattern for black women working on leadership opportunities:

Female leadership might be one of the things where it may be a little different because I am a minority. As an African-American female, it is the predisposition that leadership and the role of black women in leadership has always been so strong. The phenomenon of "females needing to be at home" may be extended more into European family culture than in mine. Even my mother was supportive. She made it possible, helped make it possible for me to do those things. She would cook dinner for my husband, or she would help take care of the kids. I think that's true in extended families, African-American families. It's that extension of a role I didn't know anything about. That's something I've learned as I've gotten older, about how men perceive women's roles a lot more limiting.  
(Elaine)

Financial gain. Money was both a motivator and a deterrent for outstanding female administrators. Some professed that financial gain was the reason for desiring career advancement:

I was willing to work hard in administration to receive some different type of financial rewards. I enjoyed my work in the classroom, but in 1981, I was making \$12,500 in the best paying district in the state. I just wanted to advance myself. (Jane)

Maybe the money issue comes to the forefront for some men. The money issue is there for me. (Vivian)

A male being the primary responsible bread winner in the family, money might be more of a motivation factor than for a female who is sharing the responsibility of family income. But I see more of that individual

because there are a lot of females too that money would be a motivating factor, and I see males with their commitment to education would be a motivating factor. (Vivian)

Some people may be motivated by the money that allows them some financial gain. (Sandra)

Some females saw money as an obstacle to seeking a school superintendency, due to the pay cut they would assume in moving to a small district superintendency and the small financial gain for the increased hours. A few females suggested that public stereotyping of primary "breadwinner" roles caused feelings of insecurity for some husbands:

Salary might be a deterrent. There are a lot of places I couldn't be a superintendent because I'd take a twenty thousand dollar pay cut. (Cynthia)

In a college course there were four superintendents from various small districts, and I looked at what they were doing and I thought, "I'm making more money than they are by a lot." And I thought, I wouldn't take this. (Mary)

I think the desire to influence what's going on in the educational arena is a strong motivator. I think there's some status and money that comes with it, but I don't think that the hours that you have to put in can compensate for the money. (Kathryn)

As I read "Education Week" or any billboard that's advertising jobs, they're having a difficult time getting people. This just goes fiscal, just the money between an administrative position and a classroom teacher with their doctorate and number of years of experience are extremely close. And yet the number of hours required in that administrative role and the stresses! (Elaine)

I think at times it is very tough on him [husband]. When I first started making more money than he does, and it's been that way for quite awhile, I think he realized that we needed to have the money. It was whether to save his ego or not the salary. It was kind of a difficult blow that first year, but it's not that great an amount that he feels

that bad. It's a different generation than their fathers' and whatever of our age level. (Betty)

I make good money, and when you start to make money, people see I work real hard, but it sometimes makes a person mad that they criticize that you can make money. My husband handles all the kidding. When I got this job, I got quite a pay raise, or have over the last couple of years. So he gets some ribbing about the wife and her travel. That's pretty atypical for women in our circle of friends, almost unheard of, but he's handled it all pretty well. (Cynthia)

Female administrators who aspired to higher administrative positions were motivated by the challenge of change and making a difference in the lives of individuals, both staff and students. They responded positively to encouragement and mentoring from professional and personal peers to pursue greater leadership roles. Role models created interest in the higher administrative positions, and leadership experiences gave females added confidence in their ability. When family support was evident, many females chose career advancements.

#### Factors that Inhibit Female Administrators from Pursuing the School Superintendency

Research question 3b. What factors inhibit outstanding female administrators from seeking the school superintendency?

The female interviews provided the data on the issue of inhibitors to the position of superintendent for female administrators. The nominated outstanding female administrators shared their views on factors that discouraged women from actively pursuing the school district's top leadership position. Queries solicited open-ended, honest responses to females' low representation in the superintendency.

The ten inhibiting factors that emerged from the interviews were: public stereotyping, nature of the superintendent's job, undeveloped career plans, family considerations, networking access, restricted mobility, limited opportunity, financial inexperience, scarce role models, and job instability. The sections that follow reveal the perceptions of the respondents regarding each theme that was found to be an inhibitor to female professional advancement.

Public stereotyping. The majority of the interviewed female administrators believed that the public still maintained certain expectations for females in today's society that often conflict with the roles required in management positions. The traditional values and attitudes of the public toward female leaders had a generalized negative influence on the inclusion of women into power circles and management job opportunities. The effect of this stereotyping was strongly perceived by female administrative aspirants:

There are certain administrators that feel that men are superior, and I sometimes sense that. They don't look at people as people and jobs as jobs and who is doing the job or who is not capable of doing the job, which are not related to what sex you are at all. (Harriet)

Some spoke of their perceptions of the public's expectation that women would be incompetent in some leadership roles:

The business men in this community, and I use that term deliberately, think that I don't know very much about budgets, and they don't know that they can trust me to manage the budget. Most of them just die when they figure out that the instruction budget is 82 percent of the total district budget. That's about 100 million dollars and they just blanch at the idea that I'm in charge of that. (Patricia)

I remember replacing a male administrator in my building, and one of the first things a parent said to me was, "You know we were a little worried when he heard a woman was coming and taking his place." (Vivian)

I've heard people be concerned about a fear that they won't be able to handle the job. They never give the reasons. A superintendent told me in his district the elementary principals who are women are by far the strongest because they were willing when there was a tough situation that had to be tackled, to tackle it, rather than just sort of shuffle on. (Nora)

I think some people, particularly like boards of education or some of the old guard, really wonder what the level of commitment is, and I think they view women as divided between family and career. There is also the stigma of emotionalism and not being able to make difficult decisions. They just don't have that trust factor yet, and most of it is because they haven't had enough examples of women who have been able to do that. There aren't enough of us yet. I'm hearing more and more comments from male administrators that they really prefer female elementary principals. (Anna)

Probably not a lot of females have been encouraged to enter. Probably nationwide, there haven't been a lot of boards of education who have been real responsive to wanting females as much as they give lip service to that fact. When the bottom line comes, I think most boards of education still feel that a man can do a better job, just in terms of strength. I'm not sure in terms of competence. But they're perceived as being able to weather the storm and the criticism and stand firm. (Gail)

A few females challenged the public perception that administrators should use aggressive strategies in matters of discipline; they reported they were criticized by others when they, as females, enforced a tough leadership strategy:

There is a perception that we're not mean enough sometimes. Secondary people sometimes would rather have kids show blood for a mistake. I can see that you can't keep giving them the extra chance because they blew the system, and females tend to find another way to help them out sometimes. On a particular case

that's gone to juvenile court, the teachers think I'm not going after that kid that much. I may have made the home visits and done all that stuff. I think sometimes they see the home visits or the group counseling or the different things as letting them off, versus getting them the help they needed. (Diane)

There have been men on our administrative staff that females have probably complained about saying, "He put his arm around me" or something that's probably not that big of a deal. It didn't mean anything. But when they complain about me, it's more, "She's uncaring because when. . . ." For the most part, I am a real, "Hi! How are you doing? What can I do to help you?" type of person, you know, caring, supportive, nurturing type of person. When I get into the mode of "You really screwed up!" and I have to come down hard on somebody, and when I do, people sometimes find it offensive. I have a couple staff members that really detest me. (Betty)

It doesn't really take a macho leader at secondary. There are many successful secondary school principals who are female, but I think the public perception is still there that we need somebody that can take a kid and put him against the wall. (Anna)

I've had a couple of comments made to me that I didn't appreciate before I became an administrator. In an administrative class I had one of my professors tell me that a woman who was assertive was very unbecoming. In one point they're saying you need to be more assertive and directive and then when you are, it's perceived as unattractive. (Anna)

Some female administrators experienced gender discrimination in their administrative roles. One female respondent surprisingly reinforced the biases against women because of personal experience with female leaders:

Some of the teachers that have been fellow teachers for quite a number of years are not too willing to accept that now I'm the administrator and I make some decisions that they might have to comply with. Women have accepted it better than males. One male challenged, "Who do you think you are? What are you trying to do?" (Yvonne)



A couple of guys in my building did not want to work for a female administrator. They would come in and stand over the top of my desk, real assertive types of behaviors. A secretary said one day, "I just thought it would be awful to work for a woman." An adult male walked in as I was sitting at a desk and started ordering me around. An elementary parent asked to talk to the person in charge. (Betty)

I've only known one superintendent that does not, in my perception, like working with female administrators, but I've only met one in all of my career. (Isabel)

People are convinced that they don't want to work for female administrators. I'm guilty of that thinking. After one negative experience, it was like I will never work for another female. So I'm very much aware of what I didn't like about the principal that I worked under and hopefully, I'm not doing the things that I did not like about that situation. (Olivia)

Several females believed a public expectation exists for female administrators to be extremely competent, better than their male counterparts if they seek a superintendency. They suggested females would be judged more critically than men in their job performance:

It seems like Nebraska is the last state. We're going to have to be damned good. And we are going to have to be better. Anytime we make a mistake, it's going to be magnified. So we have to be twice as good and do more good things, more positive things than have ever been done before. I think you have to have really worked a lot harder just for the visibility factor and maybe they've got the capability to work twice as hard as many of the men who are leading some public schools, hands down. (Betty)

You're always evaluated a little differently than somebody else would be. There's an assumption that you've got to win their respect, whereas a man may have that already and then he screws up to lose it. Women can't afford to screw up very often. You're still trying to fill your basket with eggs. I think guys have it already filled and it's just a matter of tossing them out now and then. (Leanne)

Female administrators tend to have negative stereotypes happen to them faster. If they're authoritative, they get too "bitchy," if they're dictatorial, they get too "bitchy," if they're persistent or don't let things die, they "nag." Women tend to be judged, judged a lot quicker . . . . Women may have to prove themselves a little bit more than men, maybe never make a mistake or say they don't understand anything, prove you're capable once you're there. (Cynthia)

I see women who are working their tails off and they feel they have to work so much harder, not that they're upset or complaining, but they're always in there, working, working, working. I don't sometimes see that kind of drive in some male administrators. (Sandra)

Budgeting, working with students, staff, supervision of school, community involvement--in my mind, women have to do it better and more effectively because they're going to be looked at more carefully. (Leanne)

One respondent suggested that a successful female administrator was considered a threat:

Those people that see women as capable in all professions are going to see women administrators that way. I think there are a lot of men and women who are threatened by capable women. (Rachel)

Some females experienced gender-related discriminatory comments which they de-emphasized simply as examples of human behavior by both genders:

There were some negative comments toward [name]. She really had to blaze a trail. I think the comments hurt her credibility. (Jane)

There are things they say to me like, "Well you're sure a lot better looking than the other administrator." I can't take that personally, but at the same time I know they wouldn't say that to a male. But, then again I know they really don't mean a whole lot by it. I don't know, maybe they do. (Betty)

You'll hear people sometimes talk about women being too nurturing or not being able to step up and take it sometimes

and maybe that's the one I hear the most, not getting really tough when I need to. I try not to take issue. I think eventually there'll be a better feeling of equity, but right now it's just we're the minority and minorities take the brunt of the jokes. That's just the way it is so we just live with it. (Rachel)

I don't think women are immune from that too. We can make some kind of cutting remarks about some of our male colleagues. We have to be careful of that. (Vivian)

He makes statements that are sexist but I don't think they mean it. We have to be careful too that we don't translate humor into saying those are sexist statements because we all make statements that are humor that's not meant. (Kathryn)

A minority female administrator experienced discrimination that was both gender and racially directed. From this negative experience, she internalized some positive learning:

I had one family that withdrew their children from school because I was black. The dad would call me throughout the three years that I was there and say very racial derogatory things about, "Why don't you go back and work with the children that are your own kind?" and that sort of thing. It was the first time that I had ever heard that directly. I had it in other ways, but never that directly directed totally towards me, so that was a great learning experience. And actually, I treasured that because I learned that there are people that believe that out there and I also learned how to work and cope with that. By the end of the third year, the dad brought the children back to school and he told me he thought I was the best principal the school had. It was disappointing because I had to experience it, but in the end it came out all right. The superintendent was very aware of what was happening because we had to start having a policeman around at night when I would leave because of the harassment. Based on that, the superintendent was able to see that I could handle heat. (Fran)

Administrators brought up the issue of physical appearance as an influencing factor for those who aspire to top leadership positions. Being judged by age was a big concern of some respondents:

Being attractive helps everyone in America. America likes pretty people. You can be attractive without being a physical beauty, very well kept and poised. If you're slovenly at all, that detracts from your credibility. I think it's different for a man than a woman. That's even evident in our media. It's "Jake and the Fat Man," not "Jake and the Fat Woman." So men can get away with that. I'm not saying it's right, just more acceptable. (Jane)

I think that if you're in a top leadership position, if you are the superintendent, you can allow yourself to wear maybe a brightly colored blouse or maybe even a dress, nothing too crazy. But as a middle manager, if I came in with big hoop earrings and a bow in my hair and a low cut blouse on, it would hurt my credibility, just as it would a man who came in with a plaid sport jacket. But if you come in with a three-inch open-toed sandal, three-inch heeled fuchsia sandals, and a coordinated blouse, people aren't going to take you seriously. No one asks the man what he did in any unscrupulous fashion to get where he got, but if a woman is too cute, too pretty, and I'm an ex-homecoming queen, you can't do cute and have people assume you're still professional. (Jane)

I think it helps to be somewhat attractive and articulate to a degree, and competent because you may get notices for one or the other and then you can pull it off. (Cynthia)

I think physical appearances may come into play as an obstacle in a negative sense in that aging is more commonly accepted, I perceive, among men. Gray hair on a man makes him distinguished; on a woman, it makes her an old hag. We hair color and so forth, but we don't remove the lines that nature puts there. (Harriet)

If I were to apply for a superintendency, one obstacle would be, even though my age is . . . , my looks reflect somewhere in the 30s. There would probably be people who would say, "She's too young for that," not knowing my true age. I think I would need to take regular career steps, a traditional pattern. (Isabel)

Being young, I wear a conservative blue or gray suit every day. I wear a high neck collar. I don't wear anything open or low. I'm very professional. (Jane)

Some women shared their perceptions related to the elimination of public stereotyping of females in education:

I'm thinking back to some research that says in the 40's there were more women in administration than there are now. So that leads me down the road of sexism. When men came back from World War II, there were GI bills and they got their education free. Many of them became teachers and saw where the money was. There's an undercurrent of professions in this country with a fair amount of women in them where men are typically in management. The vision of women, being fearful of doing it; all those are pieces. But to me, they're kind of symptoms, not the cause. The social stereotyping still exists because of all the occupations that have not yet been fully integrated. I heard somebody say regarding child care, the problem is that women are mainly involved in child care and anything that involves a fair amount of women is not given much attention, nor seen as a respected field, cause it's a single sex issue. (Leanne)

If public believed females were as capable, we'd have more of them. It's the same with presidents and senators. Women's credibility is never given. It has to be proven. I've read in the research women who make identical presentations as men, the men's speeches are ranked higher. Resumes with a female name on top, identical to a man's, are sent out to employees and the man's is ranked higher. (Jane)

I feel that we need society to be more conscious and more sensitive to the needs of all people, and the more we become more diverse and more pluralistic, the more we know and hope that our children are not going to stay within the bubble that we might raise them in, and we need to be sure that as we educate our children so when through with school, they are going to be able to work with any and all kinds of people. (Sandra)

I'm annoyed with a female friend who works in another state. They've been forced to go through all this anti-discrimination training and a fair amount of it is on women. She's getting really tired of that and it's demeaning and da da da. It's almost like a backlash on the very thing that got us where we are. That makes me uneasy. Now even women who've benefited from sexual laws that give us a chance to at least have a position are tired of it. It's kind of like walking away from Viet Nam, saying, "Hey, I don't want to do this anymore." So it may be cyclical. We may go through a period where it's not seen as important. (Leanne)

Two females were optimistic about change:

I'm not sure the public is quite as critical as maybe we think they are. The stereotype may be changing.  
(Mary)

The number of females is expanding. So I think people's ideas about women in a leadership position like that are changing. I think they're more open to it. (Theresa)

Undeveloped career plans. Females tended to be present-oriented and focused on the positions they currently held. They derived satisfaction out of present job assignments and did not target positions that would be considered administrative "advancement." The inconstancy of society was a factor:

There's a lot of ambiguity. Anymore, life just isn't so cut and dried. You don't just grow up to be this and you don't spend your time studying to do this. Things change as you move along and you go through life and all the experiences. I've got a lot of time to do things yet, a lot of time to make changes if I want to and it will be my decision to do that. (Vivian)

I've not applied. I remember when I first started teaching and thought, "I will be a junior high teacher all my life and this is the most wonderful job in the world. I can't imagine doing anything else." Almost every job I've had, that's what I've said to myself and later decided there was something else I wanted to do that would give me another opportunity. (Patricia)

I kind of fall into things. I don't necessarily make big plans or long-range kinds of plans. I don't know if that's good or bad. It's typical of me to explore if something looks interesting. I'm trying to take a few more risks than I've taken over the years and do some different things in the position I'm in right now.  
(Vivian)

Principalships were the end career targets for many of the female administrators interviewed:

I made a conscious choice to be a principal of an elementary school because if I'm going to be a junior high principal or middle school or central office position, I really need to have the principal title. Even though I feel like a principal, and my principal calls me his co-principal, application people don't see that. So it becomes important to me to be an elementary principal for awhile. (Diane)

The only thing I'm potentially looking at is I'm convinced my strength probably lies in the principalship. I'm very sure about that. I like being in a building with the teachers. I've briefly experienced working in the central office. It's so still, being removed from the action. That at this point isn't particularly intriguing. I like where I am. I'm real interested in looking at middle or high school, simply because I have some real strong feelings about how they might be restructured. I'd take some of the things we've done at elementary and translate those into developmentally appropriate practices for grades 7-12. (Gail)

I'm sincerely going to look at principalships in outlying districts and a director job that's coming up in this district. I feel like I have both a building background plus a special education background, and I may give a shot at that one. (Mary)

If I'm not a principal within the next couple of years, then I will probably either seek an administrative position in another district close by, or my husband and I will be in a position to leave the area. (Betty)

I can't always predict where my interests are going to take me. I'm not quite sure where I want to be. I definitely want to stay in the principalship for several years. I need to learn a lot more about that, and I would also like the opportunity to work in another school or another system. . . . There aren't very many women who aspire to anything outside of the elementary principalship. (Anna)

A teacher who's a coach is seeking an administrative position because he says he knows he can't go any farther as a coach and wants to do something else. That's real scary. Not having him identify what he means, it's hard to judge the two. I'm not a big ten-year planner of goals. I even hesitate planning five years ahead because I don't do a five-year plan. I do a one-year plan, and it may be I'm going to be a principal in one year, and I think I've been saying

that for the last three years. I don't do five-year plans because I have to wait until I feel comfort and success in what I'm doing in order to make a change. I need personally to become a principal, a high school principal. After that I wouldn't mind being a superintendent. I also took a lot of higher ed classes so that may be an option too. (Betty)

Several females had considered the school superintendency:

I think I would apply for a superintendency. I don't think that I would be qualified or people recognize me a qualified candidate without being a principal. (Betty)

In five years I could still be a principal or could possibly do the superintendency. I also have an interest in early childhood education. I really would like to work with developing some preschools within businesses. (Isabel)

There is a possibility of a superintendency/high school principalship at [school name] because the gentleman who has that position now wants to make one more career move. So if I really want a change, I think that the town and the community and the board like me and respect me well enough that I could apply for that and I could probably do that. (Isabel)

The thought of superintendency has crossed my mind now and then, but then lots of things have crossed my mind. (Nora)

I did apply for the superintendency here this time because after the last two, I knew I could do it. I was not interviewed by the board, but I had just gone on a trip with the whole board on site-based management and we had spent a lot of time talking about the importance of breaking paradigms and looking at women. I really attribute some of the conversations we had about women and being superintendents and breaking paradigms to the fact that a female got hired, because some of the men were macho men. It happened to our current superintendent as well. So I think if I'm going to move on, it needs to be to move on. But there is a lot of speculation. We've just transferred several teachers and there's a lot of upheaval. I've heard several people say our superintendent will be gone in two years and you'll be our new school superintendent, but I really would like to go somewhere else. (Diane)



My ultimate plan is to be in central administration, whether it be as an assistant superintendent, or as a superintendent, or a director. My immediate goal is to be an elementary principal with the hopes that leads into central administration. (Theresa)

I do plan on moving to the superintendency, but I have some very strong feelings about it. It is extremely important to have administrative experience on the level of principal. All through my career I've made an attempt; in my resource work I worked with high school students and teachers, to keep contact through the levels and I think that's important preparation for a superintendency. It gives one an understanding of school functioning. (Harriet)

Three or four years ago, I would have said absolutely not because I'm not interested, but I guess the more I've been involved in a site-based decision making model and doing some things like that, I can see eventually where I might be really intrigued by doing that, being able to pull a cluster of schools together under one umbrella and see what you can do with that. (Gail)

I'll probably apply for a superintendency. I either want to do that or teach at the college level sometime. I don't see superintendents lasting more than five years, so before I go to superintendent, I'd like to work in a central office position first. (Diane)

At one point I thought very strong in wanting to be a superintendent and have not given up that idea at all, but at the same time I can see myself doing other things. I just want to allow myself to be ready when certain doors may open, so I am just preparing myself for whatever might come along. (Fran)

I will not say that I will never be a superintendent. I will say at this point, I really like working with principals and teachers, and a superintendent needs to work much more with the board and has fewer opportunities to work with staff. (Patricia)

Some females spoke of the secondary principalship as being the fast track to the superintendency:

Most superintendents come from the secondary administrator force. Most of them were secondary principals, and there have not been very many female secondary principals.

Secondary principals have often come from the coaching regimens and just the habitual way it was always done made it difficult. I think now women have perceived that this is an objective that they might want to go for. They are starting to prepare themselves and having more opportunities in that superintendents are more willing to look at them for secondary administration. I think the public, the school boards are looking at people that have not gone through the traditional route to get there. (Anna)

For females to apply now for secondary positions is another step toward applying for superintendency. I think that as the number of females in secondary positions increase, there will be more females in superintendencies because of that career pattern that's worked in the past. (Elaine)

Certification for the superintendency was a variable that affected career possibilities for some females:

I didn't ever consciously think about what are the experiences that you need in order to do any of those jobs. I did make sure I sort of had the certification in place and tried to keep up on the reading and research. It's ongoing. You're analyzing your situation and you've moved based on what's there and what has attracted you at that time. (Patricia)

I think if my credentials were in place right now, I'd probably apply for the [school] job. So I think the only thing that inhibits me right now are my credentials. (Kathryn)

I think we haven't gotten ourselves ready through certification and getting some of the experience. We've taken time out for child raising. (Mary)

One administrator's career aspiration was to view the long-term results of her leadership tenure:

I plan to be in not the largest building in the school district. I plan to be working with a staff that I have recruited, trained, and joined me in a philosophical belief on how kids learn, and we're attempting to put that into practice. (Vivian)

The perceived nature of the job. A great obstacle to enticing female administrators into the school superintendency was their perception of the nature of this leadership position. Most females interviewed insinuated that the top job was not better than other positions they held or could choose. The activities of the superintendent were not seen as rewarding tasks by the interviewed female administrators. Females preferred other educational ventures that provided daily human interactions. Some women were satisfied with their current positions:

They may be comfortable with the way they've always done things if they've been in the principalship for a long time. They may be satisfied where they're at. They may not feel they're good at money management or PR. I think knowing what you're good at is important. (Yvonne)

The higher you go, the less likely you're going to be able to make decisions that are going to be acceptable to a variety of people. Working with boards of education is real discouraging to a lot of people, always changing, nothing constant about it. (Gail)

Some people just stop where they feel comfortable. There isn't great aspiration, that great need to continue to achieve. I think it becomes comfortable. Age enters into it sometimes. The opportunities didn't present themselves and time passes you by. Some people do not want the ultimate responsibility. One thing that upsets me is I think it should be OK to be a career assistant principal if that is what you want to do, and I don't know if we've given that enough credibility. (Betty)

I'm a people person. I believe in people and I'm very motivated by children. I need to improve appreciating paper work. I don't mind doing it, but I would much rather be out and about. (Fran)

Some female administrators questioned the desirability of the superintendency and pointed out the job tasks that they did not prefer

that were a part of the superintendent's responsibilities:

I don't always know if the superintendency is seen as a positive position. I think it's basically viewed as a real shit job! (Betty)

A male made a good point at a conference regarding secondary principals. Women don't want to go to those smaller communities and be in charge of all those athletic events and basketball games where they have to deal with some of the obnoxious parents or drunkenness or have to be physically able to back up what they say to a group of kids. That policing role just doesn't fit. (Kathryn)

A lot of responsibilities in terms of decision making are fairly similar. It's just the audiences you're working with are different. At this point, I guess my interest in working with boards of education and legislatures and things hasn't really been there, and the finances are not as much my areas of interest, but I think if I would pursue that more, I guess I would feel more comfortable with that. (Rachel)

You need to consider whether everybody views the superintendency as desirable. Supposedly it is, but I don't know that it is. I don't know what's so desirable about it. I don't equate it to a business where you're like a president. I don't know that the satisfaction is there, and if you're going for a quality of life and fulfillment, I don't know that the superintendency fulfills it. It's just problem upon problem upon problem. If anything, a superintendent needs a wife. As a female, you would need a wife too. (Elaine)

I wouldn't hesitate to look at a position in a larger district because I could do a great job, but if I had to go to a real small district that did not have a budget director . . . . I could deal without a curriculum director, because curriculum is my long suit, but if I had to do everything, the PR, the curriculum, their personnel and be in charge of the entire budget, that's more than I want. (Diane)

I wonder if the kinds of things that women want to do as far as being involved in curriculum and those kinds of instruction and staff development things is just not there for the superintendency. (Rachel)

Two females suggested quality of life and time with family were stronger influences in career decisions. They felt those would suffer in a superintendency role:

There are some females who would prefer not to take on the top or the primary leadership role. They don't mind being a leader, in fact maybe really enjoy being a leader, but not wanting that total responsibility of being in charge of a whole school district, therefore, may be very willing to accept the assistant's position or the associate position, but not really wanting the total superintendency position based on the fact that they still have so many primary responsibilities at home. (Fran)

We're going through a phase where people are making a determination about the quality of life that they lead and they're weighing the amount of stress and problems that you have to deal with in a lot of positions. They're having a difficult time getting principals, and one of the things is just the money between an administrative position and a classroom teacher with their doctorate and number of years of experience are extremely close and the time on the job, and yet the amount of hours that are required in that administrative role and the enormous stresses are great. You're not dealing with nice little two-parent families, mother at home. You're dealing with people with parents who are under pressure and all of the needs, the enormous amount of needs of kids. If they're not careful, they're going to be getting fewer people who are willing to go through all of the other things. They're doing less of education. (Elaine)

The aspect of distance from daily contact with teaching staff and students made the superintendency undesirable to some aspiring females:

My vision of it right now is that it's too far removed from kids and the classroom and the teachers. I don't think it has to be. A superintendency at a smaller district might be something that I might look at at some point in time. (Anna)

There are some social concerns of moving into a level where the social group that you're real comfortable with, you leave. If you're a teacher in a school and the other

teachers are part of your peer group, and you move into an administrative role, then it doesn't seem real comfortable or doesn't appeal to a lot of women, especially if there are no other women administrators around. (Nora)

My one concern about the superintendency is that I'll lose some of the kid contact, and I really enjoy that. I fear being so involved with the budgetary process and the building and grounds that I won't have the kid contact. (Sandra)

The political nature of the position of superintendent added stress and pressure that was not perceived worth the minimal and sometimes indistinguishable rewards of the job:

A lot of times I hear assistant superintendents say for the ten thousand dollars more he makes a year, let him take the heat on it, and the hours on the negotiations with the board or those kinds of things. It's not worth the work and effort. (Jane)

A few years ago it was just a natural kind of thing. You were a principal for awhile, then if you wanted to do something, the superintendent or central office, you just naturally went into it. But I think most people now, women and men, really have to consider all of the things that are going on in education, and some of those things are not real positive, and so they have to think about whether they are going to be able to withstand the pressure, and the pressure is on. We have to be accountable. There isn't a lot of money and isn't going to be. Whatever dollars we have, we better spend them as wisely as we possibly can, because I don't know how much the public is going to want to give us. We will be judged. (Isabel)

The superintendent was required to play different political roles with the diverse groups he or she represented as an educational leader. Females spoke disparagingly about these roles:

I wonder if the kinds of things, those kinds of instruction and staff development and some of those kinds of things, as an opportunity, is just not there for the superintendency level. They may be interested in different rewards from their profession. I'm not sure women are used to really thinking of the superintendency as far as a career path. There seems to be more confinement, more people watching

you, in a sense of watching and trying to control what you're doing, whereas in the job that I'm in right now, I really have a lot of latitude and freedom to be creative and that's just real important. (Rachel)

The amount of time it takes. In addition to your work related to school, including school board meetings and committee work, there are so many community responsibilities that you're expected to be visible and around: Rotary, the Chamber, or whatever civic groups. I would guess a superintendent in the metro area probably spends five nights a week, at least four, away from home. A lot of those are perceived as social, but they're not. It's very political, always image making, just a real burden, and I think difficult for the spouse. You're kind of like a secondary role. You're shaking hands, remembering names. (Kathryn)

Some would view it as a political job, and they don't want to get in the middle of a political squabble. There is just a lot of nitty gritty grief that you have to take with the superintendency, like heat at and snow day decisions. Those are no-win decisions, no matter what you decide, your phone's going to ring; people that are angry because the bus is late or people upset because the teacher gave their kid a C+ instead of a B-. Some people don't want to deal with that. (Patricia)

The male can go down for coffee at 10 o'clock and be fine with the good old guys, and it will take more effort on the female's part to do that. (Olivia)

One female contemplated how she would need to learn to deal with the political nature of the position:

There are times on really controversial issues when I just have to work really hard to screw up my courage to do what I know needs to be done, and I think I would have to be . . . . I would just have to practice that. I would need more of this kind of experience to feel confident and able to do that. (Patricia)

Family considerations. Family status had a definite impact on career decisions for female administrators. For some women, career development time had been sacrificed for building cohesion within the family:

We've taken some time out for child raising, so I think we're older and we lag behind. (Betty)

I have been working towards administration a number of years. I have a lot of personal drive. I also have some very strong feelings about the importance of family and family unity, and while my children were at home I felt very strongly that that was important to keep the family unit together. I was pursuing education all of that time. I was growing as an educator. Some people would look at that and say sidetracking. I tended to think that I was not sidetracking, but I was broadening my experiences as an individual and as a professional. At the same time I was keeping the family together until my children had left home. (Harriet)

I had an encouraging spouse. I think that probably raising children slows you down some and that you just don't have time. I didn't get seriously interested in doing a whole lot until my kids were in junior high. Parenting was plenty at the time, and I didn't need to be doing a whole lot of other things then. I very much enjoyed raising my kids and working. (Anna)

I wonder if the time commitment that it takes, raising a family and doing all of those kinds of things, that maybe makes it difficult to do, because women that I see, it's been a sacrifice for things that they've had to do. (Rachel)

The ability to be mobile is important. I have always told my husband that if your career takes us any place, I'm willing to go. However, when my career was about to take us someplace, he wasn't ready to go and I understood because there are very few men that are willing to leave their positions for their spouse--their wife's career. I think women, especially married women with children, are less mobile. (Fran)

Taking college courses, you saw the husband taking courses if he had a three or four-year old, but very seldom did you see women with young children. (Sandra)

Some women made hard choices between professional career goals and personal/social goals:

I think that women who are married that their husbands' occupations, jobs or professions have a whole lot to do with why they don't apply. . . . The nature of the family.



is the male has been the leading breadwinner and women typically go where their husbands' careers are established. Men have been paid more than women. Women are often in a situation where they have to make decisions between marriage and professional ambition. It's my perception that these people that are very progressive are either single, divorced, or with no children. So I think that must say something about the demand of the position--the time you're going to invest and the support you need from a close one.  
(Kathryn)

Women I talked to are not as focused. They acquiesced to their spouse's position. "Jim's got a job here or I need to stay because the kids are in high school." The male priority is career first which would be pretty much what mine is, but most women don't put career first. They put spouse and children first. You just have to negotiate deals between you and your spouse to make things work.  
(Jane)

A few females professed putting career goals first and felt they lost relationship time:

I think I've always really been interested in having a career first. That has been my primary focus. (Leanne)

My career has probably affected my marriage more than anything. That's probably a weakness that I have. I have a real hard time balancing career and personal life. I want to do too much careerwise and my personal life suffers. (Sandra)

When you become real involved in a school district, they begin to call on you more and more, so you give an awful lot of time to the school district. That does limit the contacts you have with the outside world if you don't put balance in your life. My goal is to put more balance in my life. It's real difficult for me to entertain taking on a job that I would have to marry again in order to become competent and established. Right now, I'm valuing balance. (Kathryn)

One women believed it almost impossible to keep both family and career growing:

A majority of the women I know closely are not prioritizing, even though they would like those things. They want them in addition to keeping the family and spouse happy. And

I just think that's not always possible. You need to have somebody willing to support you, instead of you supporting them and your own career. (Jane)

Decisions on career opportunities created conflict for some families and necessitated compromise:

Whether a spouse agrees with your promotion or agrees with being moved to or applying to another city is an issue . . . . I have to be a superintendent in a community that can also support my husband. (Betty)

If there were a superintendency ten or twenty miles from my husband, that would be a possibility. But I do not mean to imply that both feel very strongly that my career must be my career. He chooses to be where he is for his own particular reasons, and I am probably going to choose to work in a larger school system than he has. (Harriet)

It does seem somewhat subservient. Women are expected to go along [to interviews] as the package. It's difficult for my husband to drag along to my conferences and not be in the limelight as far as the conversation that I carry on, or just not be one who has the relationships with the people that make us feel good together. It's simply hard to be the outsider. Females have always played that role. (Sandra)

Women have done double duty with home and job and have willingly accepted the challenge in order to show administrative competence. One single female felt she was able to participate in more professional activities since she had no other obligations:

I usually do school work at home. The older my kids get, the later I stay and the less I bring home. Every year I add another half hour. I don't think women are very good at doing whatever they need to lighten the load. They always seem to take on whatever someone else gives them. (Cynthia)

It was very important to me that I did not allow my family obligations to hinder me in doing the job that was necessary in the superintendent's cabinet, and I wanted to pull all my weight along with the other individuals. He would remind me, "When I go home, I can put my feet up, but when you go home, you have another whole job to do." (Fran)

Females with family are as capable. You have to be a time manager and a good organizer. I don't have the responsibility to pick anyone up or prepare a meal. I don't know if you couldn't be just as efficient taking the work home. I think having children would be very hard. I've had lots of advantages in being able just to go to things and out of town without making arrangements. I just got back from speaking in San Francisco. (Jane)

Networking access. Female administrators spoke of the administrative network as a source of job opportunities for males regardless of their proven competence, but suggested the network was not as available to women:

There is a certain network where the same people are repeated or recycled, and it's hard to break into that cycle, but I think the opportunities are there, and it's interesting how once you become a superintendent, you can go from superintendency to superintendency. Your credibility factor's there. I've seen people who have not been that successful when you analyze what they've done, but they were willing to take it on and put their time in and now they're rewarded. (Elaine)

We've had a really hard time breaking into any administrative job. I really do think there is still a good old boy network alive, and I guess I've seen recently men hired who have been out of education for a long time, but they're part of that network, and very qualified females who have spent their lives in education who are making a difference in the community, etc., being overlooked. I'm looking at people applying for my job and heard the teachers saying, "That's a woman who hasn't had enough experience," and they're not seeing that they just had me who also taught third grade. They can't draw the parallel. (Diane)

A dynamic female high school principal was never included by the other high school principals. She's an exceptional leader, yet when they'd go off to a conference, nobody asked her to sit in their car and carpool, and she'd take a separate car and all those other things that happen when you're not a part of the club. She's overcome that. (Jane)

One female spoke of the network being as equally inaccessible to young progressive men as it was to women:

I see more obstacles when I talk about good old boy that are just as tough for men, progressive men. My husband is in his early forties, but for the longest time was not recognized because he was not part of the good old boy network. It was just as difficult for him and some of his peers. Now they are. They have kind of like a changing of the guard. Principals needing to do some of these things is becoming more and more important. It just is no longer a criterion just to be good. I don't see that as a gender issue. (Rachel)

The network was appreciated as a source of information to aspiring administrators. Females voiced frustration at not being able to comfortably participate in the network's informal social setting:

One obstacle is not being a part of, since you're a minority when you're in administration, the majority network for getting information and learning about what is a primary issue, the opportunity to share professionally and personally with other people because they are mostly males--personally more so. The guys can go together and sit in a bar and just talk all night and that's fine, but if I really enjoyed one of those people professionally and liked their minds, I couldn't ask him to sit in a bar with me all night or even have coffee together. This is still something that's a little taboo. (Nora)

The boys can go out and beat around the golf ball and drink beer and play cards. And lots of times, moms have to go home and wash dishes, put bandaids on knees, and there isn't time to work out stress. (Yvonne)

Men tend to network. Women are just beginning to network a lot better than we've ever done in the past. I think men knew how to network and knew how to use the good old boy channel to get information. When they got in the position, they could reach for someone who had the experience and who could help them, and women are beginning to do that because they're beginning to be enough women who you can call upon for them to lend their expertise to the situation. An example is at a meeting with only two females, we'd be in the middle of discussing an issue and take a break, and the men went to the restroom and when they would come back out, the discussion would move on. It was almost like the discussion had ensued. I brought it up. The other thing is that a lot of things are done on the golf course. Educators are golfing more and more. Females are not always invited. Information is powerful, and even though you don't make a decision, your access to information is enormous at these times. (Elaine)

We have a district golf league which is male. I golf. As a matter of fact, I've won several tournaments and this is to my chagrin, I'm not in the golf league because I don't really care to be the first woman to break into the good old boys' group, and I probably should because somebody should. I know that even though they would be taken aback, no one would keep us out. That would be a non-issue. A new principal came from outside the district, and he golfs in the league with our superintendent. You can just see that he's immediately a part of the good old boy network. He didn't have to spend four years being competent. He just kind of walked into it. (Jane)

Some females have developed strategies to access the network's information system:

Males seem to have some network where they get information from one another. We don't seem to have that. My principal doesn't have that either so he's not much of a source. I'm a political creature. I think you need to know what's going on. We had a required meeting called this afternoon with no reasons given. I told my principal I'm getting on the horn. I have males that I network with because they seem to have a better post than I do. (Mary)

I make it a point to go in and when I'm sent in I sit in with the other two male administrators of the school. And we talk football and we talk hunting. I can do all those kinds of things and it never bothered me because my father also included me in a lot of those things and my husband and I do so many things together that I can talk hunting. I remember one female administrator saying that, "Go in and sit down and talk rough with them." I'm aware that's a conscious thing that I do. I think that's a good strategy, but there's some criticism to say that we've had to fit into the male culture for too long. We need to see the female role models so we can just be who we are. I don't know that I support that argument because there's nothing wrong with going in and just trying to blend in. It doesn't bother me because those are the things that I enjoy doing. At parties I oftentimes find myself in the room with the men and not off in the kitchen with the women. I don't enjoy cooking. I don't enjoy housekeeping. I don't have children. I have very few of the kinds of things that I enjoy talking about. I'll look around all of a sudden and realize that I'm the only women in the room so after awhile, I move on to the other room. (Rachel)

A female administrator who was invited into the male network advised other females to strongly reinforce the risk-taking behavior of those who open doors:

We still live in a male-oriented society and there still is a "good old boy" network and those that hire many times hire people very similar to themselves, and you have to have individuals hiring with flexibility in their vision to be able to go out on a limb and bring in somebody new. The superintendent that brought me into the superintendent's cabinet, me being the first female and the first minority ever in the superintendent's cabinet in the history of the district, means that this individual went out on a limb and had more flexibility in his vision and in his paradigm in reference to what he believed a female could do. However, it was very important for me and very important once we're there to be able to help that person who went out on that limb to feel good about making that decision. It was important that we do an outstanding, extraordinary job. (Fran)

Limited job opportunities. Females felt the limited number of available positions in the area of superintendency was a contributor to females' lack of representation. One female believed the conservative nature of Nebraska administrators who stayed in jobs over a long time period kept positions from opening up:

An inhibiting factor is the competition because there are fewer superintendents. I'm having trouble with the word inhibit because people may be trying, interviewing for those kinds of positions, but the law of averages or statistics says there aren't going to be as many because there are fewer of those positions. (Rachel)

Nebraska people stay. When you get in a spot that you like, the conservative concept of the community and the state is "stay there," and I don't know whether there have been many openings for a lot of females to get into. I don't think they're really applying either and that may be because they're not really used to it. (Betty)

There are a lot of teachers and there are fewer principals and there are even fewer superintendents. (Sandra)

Females spoke of the job limitations in small communities and a perceived difficulty in advancing beyond the assistant position:

I'm not sure there's a lot of small communities in the state of Nebraska that are willing to hire single women. (Vivian)

We still live in Nebraska and have a small Nebraska mentality at those Class D schools. I'm not sure we're ever going to break through . . . . Around our district there are more of us all the time, and we all seem to be in assistant positions, can't seem to rise beyond that. (Mary)

Some respondents suggested that females simply were not offered top administrative positions, and they needed to consider other job options:

I think females are not offered the top positions. They may get an interview for the top position, but it eventually comes back to people who are superintendents, are white males, and they're going to promote an assistant superintendent who will then become a future superintendent somewhere. (Jane)

The next step would be an assistant superintendency which is held by my boss who is about the same age that I am, and unless he would go into something else, there would not be an opportunity here. So I find myself doing some consulting outside that allows me to extend myself that way. (Elaine)

Sometimes females had administrative opportunity due to last minute hirings:

I was hired for an administrative position three days before school started. The person that hired me was taking a big risk, but probably would have never taken it if he'd had a month to advertise, but he didn't want some unknown that was still left. He knew that I would be willing to take a cornfield agreement to get in. (Diane)

Lack of job opportunities in Nebraska and not wanting to move held some females in current positions:

I have been considered for a superintendency but they were outstate and when I would weigh the moving and the system I think I really like where I am and there are opportunities here. (Elaine)

You have to get a superintendency to get a superintendency. Even if you go away and do it in some little bitsy place and then come back. You need that title. You need to have done it to do it now. If my major goal were superintendency, then I suppose I would do it. I would take a small superintendency, just do it if that was my direct goal, but it is not. My direct goal is probably as an educator, not as a superintendent. To me they're different. It's like that Catch 22. Without the experience, you're not considered, but how do you get the experience? Females would rather settle for bringing about real change than just the title. (Elaine)

One respondent spoke determinedly about the need for society and public education to open up doors for women by investing more in their potential to grow on the job and not waiting until they have the equivalent experiences of males:

Sometimes it's hard for women to get a chance because the men are still in the mindset of "you haven't had these kinds of experiences, therefore we can't hire you." That's clearly ruling out a lot of women applicants. I think men are going to have to respect different kinds of experiences as equal to what they have historically thought were the only experiences to have. I think they're going to have to risk some things on women and say, "OK. I know you seem to have those skills and we may have to mentor that person more." The problem a lot of times is we want somebody that's already got all the skills for the job because we don't have to mentor them. It may take more time. If they hire this person, they're going to have to put a little more energy into it, a lot more support system, because it's a unique situation. The reality is that they may be able to tailor them more as to their way of thinking. Whatever you want we try to be it. We're wide open on how to do some of these things . . . . That women are not applying is clearly the most black and white response. You didn't apply, so how can you possibly be it? That's the concrete philosophy. That's right in terms of something we can measure, something we can see and touch. The problem is that it's not the problem. It's a manifestation of the problem.



It's deep rooted and it is societal and that's depressing. There's a lot of stuff that happens and we're not getting at that issue. (Leanne)

Mobility. The ability or desire to move to the available positions was a great inhibitor for aspiring female administrators. Some shared that they did not want to move their family too often for the job opportunities:

I don't want a lot of changes for a lot of years. I'm looking out for my family's best interests too. I don't want my family moving from place to place because I'm looking for bigger and better. I want slow, steady upward movement. (Yvonne)

I think partly females are few because of location. You've got to move and you're not guaranteed you're going to stay there very long. Women don't want to move that often. They can't. They usually are the nurturing person in their family or they may feel that they are. It's not as acceptable for a husband to move for his wife. But I don't think we're all just going to go anywhere. It's so unfair, because my husband wouldn't even dream of moving unless it's good for me, but people our age wouldn't ever dream of moving for their wives. (Cynthia)

In Nebraska, you're going to be looking at a small school district which in itself could be a detriment. (Mary)

One female shared that mobility may be a necessity for those who must take unpopular administrative action and then move on:

I had done a lot of cleaning up so to speak. After you do quite a bit of that, you have to go. You cannot be place-oriented. You have to be willing to go because there's a point in time that you can no longer work with your staff and that's the only way you can affect changes in school is through staff involvement and working with the staff. (Isabel)

Several females spoke of limitations to pursuing the best available leadership positions due to family compromises on the issue of moving:

I don't have the freedom to go wherever to get the job. I look at bulletins and stuff and I think, wow, I want to . . . . My husband's work is right here and so here I am. I don't have the flexibility to go where the job is, so that's been one of the things that's been holding me back. I'm kind of limited in the area out here.  
(Theresa)

My husband has a definite career goal in mind too, and he sees himself being advanced within his department. But we also recognize that both of us are at a point where there are very few positions with very many people interested and qualified. We may not be those that are chosen, then we are both willing to go with the other person somewhere else. (Betty)

Probably flexibility in being able to move is an issue. I had applied for an area superintendency in a large city and was encouraged to apply by the superintendent there. I told him I really was not looking for a job move at that point, but based on his encouragement, I decided to go ahead and apply. I wanted to find out what was being offered and more about that particular position, plus I thought it was a learning experience just to go through the interview process. I was offered the position. I didn't take it. I had to look at the fact that my husband did not want to relocate to the area. I had to look at, would I get an apartment in the city and move my children there, because there was no way I was going to leave my children here, and it was just really heavy decision making. The money was double what I was making, so if money was the primary motivator, I'd probably be gone. I had to look at family responsibilities and obligations. (Fran)

Oftentimes, it's the small districts that are available, so I think it's sacrificial if you want to go down to a D. And then the geographical issue and the mobility--so those are some of the sacrifices some females can't make or don't want to make due to their spouse/companion career.  
(Betty)

I think you're getting females who are in my position who can move and take administrative jobs and know they can move every two or three years. They may be willing to do that with less responsibility for family, but most of the time, a female is with a family and a husband, and how many husbands are just going to pull up from their job to go with you? (Elaine)

If I wasn't married and I was flexible, I'd look in other places. I'm starting to know people all over the United States. When someone from California says to me at a conference, "You call me when you're ready," I'm sorry. But I will probably call when I'm ready to look for a new position. (Cynthia)

I always want to stay around close to my family. I'm real family-oriented. I would like to move on to maybe out of state, but right now my family's more important. (Yvonne)

Some females with the support of their spouses, however, had moved to acquire a new position:

I have already moved for this position. As a first-year principal, they gave me one year to find housing and to sell our house and move as part of the contract. We would do that. (Yvonne)

My husband was very supportive and would move to whatever location I could find a job. I had the ability to move wherever I wanted to move. (Sandra)

Some females had placed parameters on their career search in terms of location:

I drew a circle around . . . of 150 miles, and I decided I would apply for anything that fell in there that was appealing to me. And I wanted the biggest town I could find because I just didn't know how well of a fit I would be in a small community because I'd never lived there. This was the first position I applied for and I was lucky enough to get it. I felt pretty lucky to start in a big district. (Anna)

I don't want to go to a small community and start as a superintendent. As a single person, I don't want the lifestyle of a small community. So that's real difficult for me. I'm working with one of the best school districts in the midwest and as a single person, my network, my support group is right here and my family's not very far away, and I value both of those things. I know life can be lonely and so to pick up and go to Seattle for a career opportunity is not motivational. Money is not a driving factor. (Kathryn)

I don't ever see myself, my husband or I, in a town any smaller than the metro area, so there's not a lot of opportunity to move to a superintendency position.  
(Rachel)

In my case, I think as I hear people comment on that, I think it's because they don't want to go to a small town or be out in the middle of nowhere. When I talk about a geographical circumstance, I'm maybe talking about a whole state. There are some areas of the country that appeal to me and some that don't, and I don't know that I would necessarily discount a place. There might be some fascination in some place that was kind of remote. So the geographical factors might not be any different than they would. (Nora)

I didn't really care to move to a small community that's too isolated. It's real important to me to either be in a large district or a district that's real close to a larger city, just for personal enjoyment of culture and theater and my free time. I'm real interested in recreational activities. (Jane)

Financial inexperience. The majority of female administrators stated concerns regarding their knowledge of budget matters, and some were concerned about dealing with legal issues:

Probably my weakest area is budget, and it's only because I haven't taken the time. It's kind of boring to me. I figure at some point if I need to learn it, I can.  
(Mary)

I would need to acquire more information on the budgeting process and finance. I am weak there. It's just a lack of experience. Budgeting is an issue that we all need more information on as does every male administrator who's never dealt with it. (Kathryn)

I'd focus more on things like budgets and the financial aspect. I would really bone up, but I don't feel that would be a concern. But I would really reacquaint myself with that. (Nora)

I would have to work with the budget a lot. I would have to find someone who would be a mentor for me. I would really, really have to work with that. Budget figures are not something that I really, really like working with. If you're the superintendent, that is what you have to do.

That's one of the major things you have to do.  
(Isabel)

It goes down to the fact that we weren't encouraged to take a lot of math. I did take two classes on budgeting and financing, but it is not an area at this point that I have a whole lot of knowledge about. (Olivia)

My grasp of finances without a doubt is a need. That's the area that I would definitely need to spend more time in. Honestly, up to this point, I haven't the interest in doing it. (Gail)

Another part where my eyes begin to glaze over is when we talk about budgets and mill levies. My eyes just glaze over on that. I don't pay very much attention to that, and I would need to really learn that before I could even begin to think about a superintendency. (Vivian)

I do read a lot and keep as current as possible, but I think I need to be more informed, especially with legislative matters. I'm not good at that. (Yvonne)

Sometimes I think I'm hesitant in thinking I could ever be a superintendent. I don't know the law. When the superintendent says something like da da da da, I'm going, "Oh no! I didn't know that one." I can't quote laws. (Betty)

I never feel like I know enough or am well-versed about all of the laws in the state and all the financial things. I make myself read it and end up skimming an article in the newspaper about what's going on with funding. (Cynthia)

An administrator suggested that superintendents must be careful to not spend all effort on budget matters at the expense of other educational expectations:

I want to make a difference for kids. I don't want to spend 99.9 percent of my time figuring out budget. I think you have to be well-versed on budget, but to spend all that time. . . . I think it's easier for a female to assume a superintendency in a bigger district because of those issues to have to be everything and budget person as well as the right politician to all groups in smaller towns. I've watched good people fail because they either were spending all their time in budget and didn't attend to

the people or the PR or the curriculum, or they really worked on curriculum and got in trouble for some other little thing. (Diane)

If the superintendent's primary duties were curriculum and instruction, rather than budgetary matters, one female administrator would be more interested in the position:

To apply for a superintendency, it would have to be in a school system that curriculum and instruction were really important, and the expectation of the superintendent would be allowed. I don't mean that in a controlling way, but that would be what would be expected of the superintendent, and somebody else would do the budgeting and the finance and the bond issues and all those kinds of things. But my view of what a superintendent does is often colored by the superintendents I've seen and people will always say to me, "Well, you don't have to do those kinds of things either." (Rachel)

Scarce role models. Females suggested that a major obstacle in attracting female administrators to the school superintendency was the lack of female role models in the position. There were too few women to observe and to emulate in this position. Many respondents attested to this fact, yet they could not explain the cause of underrepresentation in the superintendency:

There aren't very many counterparts, so there aren't very many women to look at and say, "Well, how does she do that?" There just aren't very many of us, and that's another fact of life that we deal with . . . . We don't have role models in the superintendency so it could be a part of the difficulty. . . . I do think that lack of visible models is a critical one. And a lack of role models that we see doing things in ways that women aren't particularly comfortable with, such as stopping at the local cafe for coffee with the guys and being comfortable in some of the confrontational issues that people get into. (Patricia)

They're critical. There aren't many and they may have gotten there in a different timeframe. What was true for

them may or may not be true. One lady I know has financial independence. That's a nice thing to have and gives you the chance to take more risks. Others got there from being in the right places at the right time. How each woman got there is enough unique that there's not a typical kind of pattern. Some research would bear that out that women are not using the traditional pattern of going through the steps, but at least there are some role models. We need more. (Leanne)

We have women that are lawyers and physicians. Those are always terribly responsible, time-consuming occupations. I can't perceive the responsibility end of it as being the blocker. (Harriet)

A critical concern was the lack of minority females in top positions to serve as role models for aspiring women educators who are minorities. A black administrator shared her perceptions:

In Nebraska and in other states where you have your numbers of minority not as large as your number of majority, having a female superintendent is one thing, but having a minority superintendent is something totally different, just a whole other challenge. And when people in certain cities don't have an opportunity to see minorities in any type of leadership position, it would be very hard for them to see a minority come in to be a leader, a superintendent of their school district, when many times they might not even see a minority in their city. (Fran)

Some of the leadership behaviors and authority symbols used by male administrators were viewed as negative or less authoritative when modeled by female administrators:

Sometimes the presence of women is perceived sometimes differently than men. We are perceived as bitchy and demanding. We tend to be almost over-qualified sometimes when we come into roles. We've probably been in the classroom longer than men have, and we've probably taken a lot more courses, and we sometimes don't get all the recognition for the work that we have done and the effort that we have put into it. (Vivian)

I'm trying very hard to role model for high school students. There are parts of me that say I don't care, but maybe I do. I don't know. Parts of me say I don't care, you can call me . . . . When the males are called doctor, and I'm not, when it's obviously stereotypes which is what we're trying to change in education, in many ways, gender and races and several different ways. I haven't solved that problem yet because I think a lot of people do feel like it's an ego thing for me. I talked with my secretaries and they understand, but they still mess up. When I get lumped into the Mrs. and everybody else is a doctor, that kind of ticks me off. (Betty)

Job stability. Female administrators recognized the lack of security that superintendents had in their job tenure. Some suggested this was a deterrent to attract female superintendent candidates who sought greater job assurance:

Principals can become tenured personnel. Superintendents do not. For people with a family, there's always that, "Am I going to have to pull up stakes and move next year?" I think those are real major inhibitors if one is in the child rearing years. It would be really tough to justify or to say you were doing justice to raising a family. It's socially more acceptable for men to be slaves to their jobs. (Harriet)

One of the big problems is that you have to look at it as a four to five-year commitment in any school and then move on. It's kind of like joining the military, but the retirement options aren't there. I have often thought we need to form a club of superintendents and call it kind of like the officer's club. If you leave your school at a certain age, you probably aren't going to get another superintendency. If you make the board unhappy or the teachers unhappy, you could lose your job. Why would people even want to do that then? I don't know if the financial rewards are great enough to take that risk. It's not like a CEO that made \$2 million last year and then can say I'll do what I think and move on, or I could retire if I had to on that amount. I think some of the guys in the big cities just pray their contract will be bought out and they'll get the money and out of the heat. Having a board to answer to, you're also afraid to try things. (Leanne)



It's time consuming and it's not necessarily very permanent. When we look at a superintendent's tenure across the state, it's not good. It's improving, but not really good yet, and that's a risk that younger people generally tend not to want to take, and by the time you're old enough to be willing to take those risks, then some other doors are closing for you: acceptance into doctoral programs, going out at 45 and being the first, doing this for the first instead of having 101 years experience already. Those are drawbacks. Those are negative. (Harriet)

What I look at is the fiscal soundness of a district in terms of its ability to sustain change and the subjectivity of change. Superintendencies are turning over so fast anymore. Two to three years is not enough time to bring about a change. Two years you've just established some of the kinds of parameters and set some goals and learned the organization, and yet superintendents, that's about what tenure they average. (Elaine)

Superintendents are the ones that catch all the really negative things, and I think that their job is not secure. Out of all the jobs in the school system, they are the ones that can just be cut real quick, here today, gone tomorrow. (Theresa)

You've got to move and stability--once you move you're not guaranteed you're going to stay there very long. . . . We're going to be selective because we want to be more stable because we've got too many things to move around with us. (Cynthia)

Some implied pleasing the board of education contributed to the insecurity of the position:

There's not the same kind of job security for a superintendent as there is for an elementary principal or someone who is more line. I think the board of education makes a difference in the community. . . . Election comes along and someone can really upset the apple cart for the superintendent. I suppose it's the job security that's a concern. (Vivian)

There's so much in the press about the rapid turnover of the superintendent. It's not because they choose to leave. The tenure is so short. In this job you could be talking about frequent moves and not very stable. For me that's pretty scary. The control of your job depends a lot on

the kind of board of education that you have. The bottom line is you can't pick who gets elected. You can't take an obsessive compulsive and make him a flexible guy.  
(Cynthia)

Several factors inhibit competent female administrators from pursuing a school superintendency. Public stereotyping of female roles in today's society remains a strong constraint. The perception of the job tasks of the school superintendent is somewhat unattractive to female administrators. Females tend to not create career plans, and family considerations often outweigh job possibilities. Mobility, financial inexperience, few female role models, few job openings, and job instability are factors that hinder the aspirations of female administrators for the position of school superintendent.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*"No one should have to dance  
backward all their lives."*

*--Jill Rickelshaus,  
Former officer,  
U.S. Commissioner on  
Civil Rights*

The purpose of this study was to investigate, through qualitative research, factors that motivate and inhibit outstanding female administrators in Nebraska to seek a school superintendency. Female administrators' perceptions on public school challenges and essential leadership needs of the school superintendent were studied as contributing factors to seeking a school superintendency. This investigation was designed to answer the following 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 school administrators to seek the school superintendency?

Female administrators are critically under-represented in the ranks of the school superintendent. Nationally, less than four percent of school superintendents are female (Schuster & Foote, 1990).

In Nebraska, three out of 261 school superintendents are female (Nebraska Department of Education, 1990). Yet females are highly represented in educational administration training programs (Grady, 1990).

Public schools need strong leaders who will work toward school improvement that addresses social concerns. Female administrators demonstrate a style of transformational leadership that focuses staff efforts on school improvement by including them in decision making while nurturing their personal and professional growth. In the school restructuring effort, female administrators who understand leadership for change would be valuable school leaders.

Participants in this study consisted of twenty-one administrators in Nebraska nominated as outstanding female administrators with promising potential for the school superintendency. They were nominated by twelve key informants who were recognized educational leaders in Nebraska. An indepth interview of seventy to ninety minutes was conducted by phone with each participant. The interview questions were open-ended and elicited perceptions on public school challenges, essential leadership behaviors for the school superintendent, and motives or inhibitors to seek a school superintendency.

The material from the twenty-one interviews was categorized and coded for the emerging themes which addressed the research questions. The themes were supported by the respondents' direct quotations. Certain propositions emerged from the collective impressions of the outstanding female administrators.

## Findings

The following propositions emanating from the collective data provide a discussion of the findings of the study. The propositions address the themes that relate to each research question.

### Research Question One

What are the challenges schools will encounter during the next decade?

Public school challenges. The themes reported by female administrators regarding challenges to public schools were: adapting to changing societal and family patterns, being accountable to students and society, coping with school change, promoting positive regard for education, and involving others in the educational process. The propositions relating to public school challenges that were supported by the respondents' answers are as follows:

Proposition 1.0. Female administrators are concerned about the changing nature of family and student needs in today's society and are striving to find new strategies that allow schools to change, so that all students have a chance for school success.

The respondents felt challenged by the student diversity and the lack of understanding by staff, parents, and community members regarding the need to provide education in new ways that better fit student learning needs. They perceived society changing into a system of "have and have nots" and were frustrated by the lack of proven educational strategies that serve diverse student needs.

Proposition 1.1. Accountability is a concern of female administrators as they prepare students for the twenty-first century.

The females felt challenged to propose expected student outcomes in a fast changing society due to the undetermined job definitions of the future. They were skeptical of the business community's expectations for students to be totally prepared to face the world of work after graduating from high school. Because the jobs of the future had not yet been defined, females believed that school, business, and community must collaborate to determine student needs and to be more accountable to students.

Proposition 1.2. Change is viewed as necessary and welcomed by female administrators, and they work to influence acceptance of change by staff, parents, and community.

Although the respondents supported change, they were frustrated in attempts to overcome staff and parent resistance to change. They felt challenged to create an accepting climate for change.

Proposition 1.3. Female administrators are challenged to change public attitudes from negative to positive toward public schooling.

The popular press has left the public with a lack of trust regarding public education. The respondents wanted to promote the public school's image by publicizing more of the successful efforts of public schools in helping students learn, rather than the perceived failures.

Proposition 1.4. Female administrators want to involve others in the educational process in a meaningful way.

Participants perceived a struggle in getting parents and community to participate in schooling in a way that would promote student learning and school improvement.

Results and related research regarding public challenges.

Findings in the literature suggested the ambiguity of expectations felt by school administrators as they try to lead school improvement (Bell, 1980). Schools were described as random, uncontrollable environments and products of diverse political cultures (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985; Timar, 1989). The female respondents confirmed that promoting change was the greatest challenge for the superintendent. They viewed the conditioned conformity of most schools (Timar, 1989) as an obstacle to change. They endorsed the need for innovative approaches and positive regard for diversity by staff to deal with changing familial/societal values (Schlecty, 1990). Female respondents agreed that the school leader was a mediator of social concerns (Timar, 1989). They accepted the challenge to involve all parties in school improvement efforts. They strongly supported the need to make staff aware and train them to serve diverse populations and provide time and support for collaboration.

The literature review suggested the need for responsiveness to many audiences in the irrational, political context of public schooling (Blumberg & Blumberg, 1985). The female administrators who were interviewed were proactive in their acceptance of the changing society and its impact on children. They emphasized the building of human connections and strategies to support such inevitable change.

In conclusion, the interviewed female administrators focused on challenges that dealt with the need to understand, accept, promote, and involve others in the change process in order to improve public education.

### Research Question Two

What leadership behaviors are needed by school superintendents to improve the quality of schooling in Nebraska?

Essential leadership skills of the school superintendent. The themes related to leadership behaviors of the school superintendent as reported by the outstanding female administrators were: empowerment of staff, collaboration, vision, the use of research, transformational leadership, and political tolerance. The following propositions emerged relating to essential leadership behaviors.

Proposition 2.0. Female administrators empower leadership behaviors in their staff to bring about school change. They use modeling, encouraging, nurturing, and rewarding to empower others.

Participants supported the professional and personal development of teachers into competent decision makers, believing that school change requires shared leadership.

Proposition 2.1. Females support participatory management and collaboration as part of the school culture.

The female respondents worked closely with staff to develop goals and achieve goals by listening to staff input, planting seeds of information on change issues, and encouraging mutual efforts toward school improvement.



Proposition 2.2. Female administrators support building vision to lead school improvement.

For female administrators, envisioning was the difference between leading and managing. The shared vision of the leader and followers focused and organized school efforts toward continuous school improvement.

Proposition 2.3. Female administrators use research and information sharing to develop school goals and direct school improvement.

The respondents spoke of the importance of collecting and sharing research with other staff members to influence effective school decisions. Information sharing was a behavior also used to build collegial relationships.

Proposition 2.4. Females use transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1989) to achieve school goals and to nurture the personal and professional growth of staff.

Females demonstrated transformational leadership through their continuous encouraging, nurturing, and rewarding staff's extraordinary commitment to school improvement efforts. At the same time, they established strong interpersonal relationships with their staff.

Proposition 2.5. Female administrators view political tolerance as a needed leadership behavior in dealing with diverse social concerns and community expectations.

While female administrators advocated the need to be responsive to the public, they were not enthused about working with

demanding, and sometimes negative, school boards and community members.

Results and related research regarding essential leadership behaviors. The literature reported that schools function most effectively in a climate of shared leadership where the entire organization becomes the leadership team (Gies & Willis, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1989). Staff become motivated when they share responsibility for school success. Sergiovanni's (1989) model of transformational leadership allows the school leaders and followers to hold a common stake in the success of the improvement effort. The interviewed female administrators described their use of transformational leadership to effect school change. They used the behaviors of empowering, nurturing, and rewarding to transform teachers into leaders. Bennis (1990) and Sergiovanni (1989) proposed building a shared vision and empowering staff to achieve results.

The interviewed female administrators suggested the important leadership behaviors of information sharing and use of research to achieve success in schooling efforts. Bennis (1989) proposed information sharing as a chief leveler of power which promotes organizational goals. The need for collaboration was strongly emphasized by female respondents. Schein (1985) saw continuous communication as a tool to support positive collaboration.

The outstanding female administrators identified the same leadership behaviors elaborated in the literature: empowering others, envisioning school goals, collaborating in school decisions, and

communicating. The respondents added political tolerance as another element of effective leadership. Their stories provided evidence of transformational leadership as a key strategy in empowering staff to achieve effective school outcomes.

In conclusion, the interviewed female administrators proposed the essential leadership skills of the superintendent to be: leading with vision, using research to improve education, and collaborating with staff, parents, and community to achieve school goals. They supported transformational leadership to achieve school goals through staff self-actualization, and they supported political tolerance in dealing with diverse educational audiences.

#### Research Question Three: Part A

What factors motivate outstanding female administrators to seek a school superintendency?

Factors that motivate female administrators to seek a school superintendency. The themes that emerged regarding female administrators' motives to seek a superintendency were: encouragement, the challenge to change education, role models, leadership experience, mentoring, networking support, family support, and financial gain. Propositions that address motivators for female administrators are as follows:

Proposition 3.0. Female administrators who are strongly encouraged and recruited tend to seek administrative advancement.

Encouragement was the factor most often cited by females in their decision to apply for higher administrative positions.

Proposition 3.1. Female administrators welcome the challenge to change education to make a difference in learning opportunities for all students.

Change was seen as a positive motivator by female administrators who believed that schools must show new efforts to serve the diverse needs of society and the student population. The interviewed females sought the opportunity to influence the change.

Proposition 3.2. Positive female role models in higher administrative positions are critical for more women to achieve top leadership jobs.

Female administrators who were interviewed spoke of the importance of the role models who had influenced their careers and the need for female superintendent role models for other women to emulate. They reported too few professional role models in rural areas who were female.

Proposition 3.3. Experience in leadership roles motivates females to seek higher administrative positions.

Females valued the experience gained through district committee work and other administrative roles and used this experience to gain access to higher positions.

Proposition 3.4. Successful female administrators have different mentors throughout their administrative careers. The mentoring relationships become mutually supportive and last over several years.

Female administrators suggested that as job targets change, new mentors closer to the new career goals are found.

Proposition 3.5. Female administrators spend little time networking with other professionals.

Although networking received little emphasis from the subjects, they endorsed the value of networking to support one another and to gain information on job opportunities.

Proposition 3.6. Strong family support is a factor in motivating female administrators to consider higher administrative positions.

All married respondents claimed spouse support for their career pursuits. This support allowed female administrators the freedom to do their jobs well, which sometimes required extended time at school and professional work taken home.

Proposition 3.7. Money is not the primary motivator to most aspiring administrators, but some females seek jobs for financial gain.

A few females reported that money was a deterrent in that some spouses had difficulty having a status of secondary breadwinner. Single females more often identified increased salary as a critical element in seeking advanced positions. The females suggested that salary would be a limitation of the superintendency in rural districts compared to earning power in lesser positions in suburban schools.

Results and related research regarding motivators to seek a superintendency. Encouragement was often cited in the literature as

a factor to influence females into new administrative positions. This was also a strong finding in the responses of the female administrators. Clement (1980) believed socialization from the early years influenced boys, not girls, to see themselves in leadership roles. Because of subtle messages from family, school, and community, females do not anticipate the leadership positions open to them (Epstein, 1970). Men grow up knowing and defining career interests. Females are socialized to choose between work and marriage. They do not receive strong encouragement from society or family, which affects a lowered self-concept regarding capabilities. Schmuck (1976) believed that females need encouragement to actualize their potential. The majority of interviewed females indicated that they moved to their current administrative positions due to the personal encouragement of significant persons in their lives. Encouragement proved to be the strongest motivator for this group of female administrators.

Mentorships serve men well in their professional aspirations (Walker, 1987). Female administrators also named mentorship as a motivator to considering a higher administrative position. The outstanding female administrators quite often had different mentors as they moved through administrative advancement, and, similar to Pavan's (1986) findings, the mentors were primarily male.

Some of the females had role models that encouraged their entrance into administration. These female role models portrayed exemplary leadership qualifications, supporting Crow's (1990) premise that females must possess superior skills to be accepted into school administration.

The interviewed administrators suggested that strong family support allowed them to actively pursue professional achievement. This was also a finding of Dias (1976). Family support was defined by the behaviors and various arrangements made with spouses. Some were personal encouragement, mentoring, sacrificing time together, physical care of the children, allowing the female time for professional meetings, accepting the political demands of the female's position, and living in separate towns in order to hold administrative careers. While money was a motivator to some female administrators, some had to consider the negative effect on the spouse's ego.

Leadership experience was named as a motivator by the female respondents. They often sought additional ways to accumulate leadership experience, along with the traditional career movement into administration. Most females had spent several years in the classroom, allowing for indepth curriculum understandings which prepared them well for contributions to district committees, a finding also reported by Whitaker and Lane (1990). The interviewed females demonstrated enthusiasm for serving the district through committee work and in other ways that bring about cohesive school improvement efforts.

A strong motivator found in this study that was not identified in the review of the literature was the female administrators' desire to effect change in public schools and make a significant positive difference in the lives of the children. Their emphasis was clearly on students and the possibility of influencing a better

school climate for student success. Some of the respondents used their research knowledge to restructure educational programs and provide better learning opportunities for all students. These females were interested in superintendencies where the board and community would allow them to restructure secondary education in a way that primary education is being redesigned, with a focus on student-centered curriculum. The challenge of change was a strong motivator to the outstanding female administrators who participated in the study.

In summary, female administrators reported the following job motivators: personal encouragement to seek a higher position, the challenge to improve education, successful role models, mentoring relationships, experience in leadership roles, strong family support, access to the administrative network, and possible financial gain.

#### Research Question Three: Part B

What factors inhibit outstanding female administrators from seeking a school superintendency?

Factors that inhibit female administrators from pursuing a school superintendency. The following themes emerged as inhibiting factors for female administrators to pursue a school superintendency: public stereotyping of female roles, the nature of the superintendent's job, undeveloped career plans, family considerations, lack of networking access, less mobility, limited job opportunity, financial inexperience, scarce female role models, and job instability.



The following propositions were supported by the female responses regarding inhibitors to the superintendency:

Proposition 4.0. Many female administrators believe that negative stereotyping exists regarding females' abilities to handle top-level administrative positions.

The respondents reported that societal expectations for females often conflict with the roles required in management positions and tended to exclude women from administrative power circles. Nebraska seemed to exemplify more stereotyping due to few females in management positions in small communities.

Proposition 4.1. Female administrators do not perceive the job of school superintendent, which emphasizes budget, public relations, conflict resolution, and separation from staff and students, as desirable.

The interviewed females preferred the responsibilities of curriculum development and staff collaboration more than the perceived isolating work and political obligations of the superintendency.

Proposition 4.2. Females do not plan for career advancements in school administration.

Female administrators reported satisfaction with current positions, whether teaching or administering. They immersed their efforts in perfecting job performance in present jobs, rather than preparing for future opportunities.

Proposition 4.3. Females make personal and/or professional sacrifices in order to balance home and career goals.

All female administrators related that professional career pursuits had a definite impact on personal or family lifestyles. Each women had to determine important priorities in her life.

Proposition 4.4. Female administrators do not feel included in the administrative network which is primarily white male. They perceive the system, however, as a useful source of job opportunities.

Females reported frustration at being excluded from the administrative network, but stated reluctance to aggressively pursue acceptance into the male network.

Proposition 4.5. Most females choose not to pursue administrative positions if the job entails uprooting or distancing the family, or moving to a less stimulating environment than they presently enjoy.

Very few of the interviewed females were either willing or able to move to seek a higher administrative position because of family priorities. Females working in an urban environment reported a desire to remain in an urban setting.

Proposition 4.6. Females observe limited opportunities for superintendencies in Nebraska due to the few openings in the states in areas that females choose to locate.

Unless females chose small districts, Nebraska had little opportunity for the superintendency. Most female respondents strongly rejected small town job opportunities.

Proposition 4.7. Female administrators feel unprepared regarding the budgeting aspect of the school superintendency.

Although presently uninformed about the budgeting process, the interviewed females stated they could easily learn the skill if it were a necessary part of their job.

Proposition 4.8. In Nebraska, there are too few female role models in the superintendency for other females to emulate and model for the position.

Although aware of the success of three practicing female superintendents in Nebraska, female educators did not see sufficient role models to entice other females into the superintendency.

Proposition 4.9. Females are disinterested in the superintendency because of the unstable tenure of the position.

Female administrators preferred and chose positions with job security to accommodate family needs and to see the results of their change efforts over time.

Results and related research regarding inhibitors to the superintendency. Public stereotyping regarding females in leadership positions continues to be a perceived obstacle in females' efforts to achieve top administrative jobs. The interviewed females substantiated the same biases evident in the literature regarding the public's view of female qualifications for the school superintendency, such as questioning their competence to lead the school and handle student discipline (Kanter, 1977; Weber, Feldman, & Poling, 1980). Respondents agreed that a female aspiring to a superintendency would

not only have to show superior aptitude for the position, but would also be expected to perform at a level of excellence beyond their male counterparts in order to be seen as successful by the public. Some respondents preferred not to be in such a telescopic, judgmental setting. Stereotypic public views, that women should not hold careers that interfere with traditional home/child care, were seen to limit females' presence in high administrative positions.

Supporting Crow's (1990) finding, female respondents suggested that the nature of the job of school superintendent was too removed from students. They preferred their current positions of central office staff or building level administration. Females did not prefer the symbolic leadership of the superintendency, but wanted direct influence and communication with their audiences: teachers, students, and parents.

Another obstacle was the females' perceptions of the budgeting process. The majority of the respondents validated research by Lea (1989), which suggested females' insecurity with financial matters. Most respondents, however, stated it was due to disinterest or lack of experience. They felt capable of learning the financial duties of the superintendency.

Funk (1986) suggested that female administrators do not aspire to the superintendency. The females in the study did not confirm this finding. Over 50 percent of the interviewed females said they might seek a superintendency, but their interest was quite tentative, which supported Paddock's (1977) finding that women do not plan for

future opportunities; rather, they accept them when they occur.

Female respondents agreed with Schmuck (1987) that career paths to the superintendency might be different for females because they have had different leadership experiences along the way.

The professional administrative network was seen as an obstacle for the female administrators' movement into superintendencies because of its male preponderance. Respondents agreed that capable female administrators are often overlooked, and inexperienced male candidates are invited into administrative positions (Schmuck, 1987). Ortiz (1982) suggested that sponsorship was the cause of fewer administrative opportunities and discrimination in hiring practices. The female administrators supported this finding.

Another inhibitor for females to consider a superintendency was concern that family needs may remain unfulfilled due to the demanding administrative schedule. Many researchers have named family concerns as a consideration faced more by females than by males in job selection (Gutek & Larwood, 1987; Rix & Stone, 1984). The females reported sacrifices that had been made by all family members, but particularly the female in order to fulfill job and home expectations.

The interviewed females supported the findings that most women do not want to move for the job (Krchniak, 1978). This limitation related mostly to family considerations, but several intimated that the perceived bland lifestyle of a small town was an obstacle. The factor of insecure job tenure was mentioned as an

inhibitor by females not wanting to move their families to different job locations.

Having few female role models was an inhibitor to females pursuing superintendencies and was supported by the interviewed females. Gilligan (1982) found distorted role models available to females who considered high leadership positions. She suggested most successful superintendent models were males who had leadership behavior patterns that may not work for females who have internalized different leadership values than men. Females are made to feel they must abandon their female style in order to achieve the high administrative positions.

Females in rural areas have not had female role models, as have other areas, to show them the leadership potential of the superintendency when a female is able to apply a transformational leadership style. Lack of models seriously limits the aspirations of outstanding female administrators.

In conclusion, practicing female administrators noted the following inhibitors to the decision to become school superintendents: the public holds negative stereotypes regarding the role of females as successful in management positions; the job of the school superintendent is not seen as a better job than their current positions as building or central office administrators; females have not developed career plans; family considerations sometimes preempt career aspirations; females are not promoted through the administrative network; females restrict their mobility in the job search; there are too few job openings for the superintendency; females have concerns related

to budgeting tasks; there are few female role models who entice females into the superintendency; and females reject the instability of the superintendent's position.

### Conclusions

According to the results of this study, Nebraska's outstanding female administrators possess leadership behaviors needed by school superintendents to embrace needed school improvement. They profess a contingent interest in pursuing those top level school positions. The female administrators' perceptions regarding the challenges to public education are well-focused on the restructuring of public education to better serve children in an ambiguous, changing society. Their insights have stretched beyond the tangible problems of schooling, such as budgets and buildings, to the more abstract tasks of educating others to see and understand the diversity in the society and what that means for education: convincing people to collaborate on the change efforts, blending ideas and perceptions into a common vision that influences school decisions, and creating a true system of shared leadership that focuses on success for all students.

Female administrators describe a theory of leadership that involves staff in school improvement. Transformational leadership (Sergiovanni, 1989) promotes collaboration of efforts, empowerment of staff, and communication through information-sharing. This leadership strategy builds a common vision that guides school improvement efforts. The empowerment aspect allows the leader to discover and

promote the special talents of staff and to use this pool of specialization in bettering services for students. Teachers, in turn, strive to grow personally and professionally as their efforts are recognized and rewarded. This leadership philosophy can facilitate the restructuring of education in Nebraska's public schools.

If there is a true desire for change in Nebraska's public schools, then female administrators who have the vision and the transformational leadership skills should be actively recruited into school superintendencies. Observing the current low representation of female superintendents in Nebraska, females may not be considering the school superintendency as a viable job market. Specific efforts to recruit females for the superintendency appear to be non-existent. The research suggests that available superintendencies are quickly announced through the informal, administrative network. Female administrators generally have not been a part of this network, and jobs are sometimes given on a person's ability to make the right connections. Recruitment efforts that are open and public might better catch the attention of outstanding female administrators.

The findings of this study suggest that encouragement may be the strongest motivator to recruit female administrators into the superintendency. Most of the female participants had moved into administrative positions, not previously considered, due to strong encouragement and recruitment efforts from significant others. Some may criticize the suggestion that females need more encouragement than males to apply for the superintendency. Wohman and Frank (1980),



however, argued that a "solo" gender must do more compromising to be accepted by the majority groups. Females may experience opposition regarding their leadership style and perceive that such style is not valued in a superintendency. Encouragement influences females to believe that their knowledge and ability have potential for top leadership jobs in public schools. Few of the interviewed female administrators stated they had direct encouragement to seek a school superintendency.

Another job motivator for females is the opportunity to influence real change in the school setting. Females who believe they can effectuate significant changes for more children through the superintendency are more apt to consider the challenge of top school administration. The freedom and support to direct change are strong enticements for female administrators to seek a school superintendency. As communities and school boards request change agents to influence school improvement, female administrators with a vision and a commitment to change may be among the best candidates. Female administrators in Nebraska who have influenced successful school change should be made highly visible to the public so that the image of females as change agents gains credibility.

For females to emerge as candidates for school superintendencies, external support is needed. Professionals who participate in the administrative network have the power to actively include females in access to information regarding jobs and other professional opportunities. Professional administrative organizations might review

their informal policies for female inclusiveness and show planned efforts to encourage applications and representation of competent female administrators in Nebraska superintendencies. Mentorships by superintendents could hone the leadership capabilities of females and give them more self-confidence, especially in the areas of finance and law, to apply for the top positions.

Role models are an influence in considering superintendencies. Females spoke with animation as they described behaviors of current female superintendents in the state and their successful efforts to improve schooling. As more female role models enter into the position of the school superintendency, aspiring female educators will learn that it is acceptable to lead public schools using the background, behaviors, and values that are a strong part of the female ethos. Of great concern is the lack of interest by urban female administrators in Nebraska with outstanding leadership talent to consider rural superintendencies. Many outstanding female administrators are in urban areas where professional training, role models, and job advancement are available. These talented females seem to choose not to move to small communities. This diminishes the number of practicing female administrators available to recruit for rural districts. Equity is left untreated. Rural areas are not able to draw urban female talent due to the stated preferred lifestyles of the female administrators currently practicing in big cities. This may be a problem found in Nebraska and other rural states.

The issues of family consideration and mobility continue to plague female administrators who value both work and home. Those

females who feel more support and duty-sharing from their spouses will feel more released to pursue greater job challenges such as the school superintendency. A pattern of two spouses commuting on weekends is emerging as a means for both parties to achieve their professional career goals. Younger female administrators with professional husbands and children at home perceive little recourse but to wait for available positions in their areas.

Female administrators continue to feel stereotyped by the public as not being capable to serve the demands of a superintendency. Most females believe they must prove they are more competent than their male counterparts in order to be considered for the position. Minority female administrators believed their opportunities for the superintendency in Nebraska were even more limited due to the predominance of white male norms. Some female administrators believed that the intensified quest for the superintendency was "not worth the hassle," as public support for gaining and retaining the position was not evident.

Most female administrators suggested that the superintendency, as they knew it, was not the administrative job they would choose. Their view of the position was that it was too distanced from the tasks they most enjoyed. They preferred working directly with people to share ideas on learning opportunities, conceptualize new programs and strategies, solve problems, and enjoy the successes of their mutual efforts. The interviewed females preferred social interactions to the individualized paperwork tasks of the superintendent.

Perhaps a greater problem is the perceived image of the superintendent as a "budgets and board" person. Also, females tend to focus on achieving expertise in their present jobs and generally do not set advanced career targets. They seem to like their current teaching or administrating positions.

Females have strong capabilities to lend to the leadership of the nation's schools. They understand the issues, the leadership needs, and the strategies to bring about restructuring, and they believe they could be good superintendents. Females, however, may not enter the market of superintendents until there is strong encouragement from professional peers and school boards, a genuine district commitment to change education, and public regard for the leadership approaches females bring to schools. Some formal action might be taken by professional associations to help females into the superintendency, but changing public attitude is an evolutionary process that may require much time.

The findings of this study were based on the perceptions of practicing female administrators in Nebraska who were nominated as outstanding female administrators. Inferences drawn from the stated views of this population may not necessarily be generalizable to female administrators in other states, where the conditions of schooling and the superintendency and the inclusion of females in the professional administrative network may be different. Findings from this study, however, may serve well to analyze the state of the female administrator's status as a school superintendent in Nebraska.

### Recommendations

The findings in this study open more possibilities for answering questions related to females in the position of the school superintendency. Females displayed a style of leadership that involves people in school change. Future research should explore the correlation between female leadership behaviors and success in change efforts.

The tasks of the school superintendent have not been portrayed as interesting duties to female administrators. Because the female administrators interviewed in this study did not perceive the role of superintendent as a satisfying job, research could be conducted to identify dimensions of the position that may be more appealing to female administrators, such as the challenge of building a common vision. If the perceived duties of the superintendent are analyzed and marketed in a positive way, the job could become more interesting to women who want to extend their leadership talents through advanced administrative positions.

Despite the concerns expressed by women's organizations and other groups about the need for equity, virtually no basic descriptive research has been done on the recruitment, screening, selection, and hiring of administrators in school districts (Schmuck & Wyant, 1981). Until such research is available, biases that work to the advantage of men and to the disadvantage of women in the superintendency are difficult to identify. Questions might be posed that identify strategies to promote and publicize female leadership capabilities for the superintendency to school boards.

The study was focused on outstanding female administrators in Nebraska. A replication of the study with outstanding male administrators in Nebraska would allay or support perceptions that females face unique obstacles in their administrative job pursuits. A study of male perceptions of essential leadership behaviors of the school superintendent would provide information on ways male administrators lead in an ambiguous, political school setting.

Replications of this study with female administrators in different regions of the United States would provide information on the receptiveness of diverse populations to females in leadership roles, as well as information on female aspirations for the superintendency in different geographic areas. Collectively, data from several studies would provide insights regarding successful cultures for females to practice superintendencies. The issue of strategies for recruiting female administrators to rural superintendencies could be addressed.

In addition, further investigation is needed regarding the professional growth activities that could be provided to aspiring female administrators to build confidence in administrative areas they consider to be weak, such as finance and dealing with legal matters. College coursework, professional workshops, and more personalized learning experiences with practicing superintendents may build skill and confidence.

In conclusion, female administrators offer leadership skills that should be implemented and visible in all levels of education in order to determine and guide holistic educational programs in Nebraska.

Female superintendents are needed to provide positive female role models of leadership for children and adults. The research efforts can aid educators in understanding the need for equity in administrative positions and determining strategies to achieve change to prepare the nation's schools and students for success in the twenty-first century.

## REFERENCES



## REFERENCES

- Abrams, M. (1981). The woman's world of Jesse Barnard. Graduate Woman, 75(4), 24-29.
- Adams, J. N. (1984, February). When working women become pregnant. New England Business, pp. 18-21.
- Athanassiades, J. C. (1977). The internalization of the female stereotypes by college women. Human Relations, 30(2), 187-199.
- American Association of School Administrators (1960). Profile of the school superintendent. Washington, D.C.: AASA.
- Atkinson, J. W., & Feather, M. T. (Eds.) (1966). A theory of achievement and motivation. New York: John Wiley.
- Baldrige, J. V., Curtis, D. V., Ecker, G., & Riley, G. L. (1978). Policy making and effective leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership and performance beyond expectations. New York: Collier MacMillan Publishers.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing. New York: Basic Books.
- Bell, L. A. (1980). The school as an organization: A reappraisal. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 1(2), 183-192.
- Bennis, W. (1976). The unconscious conspiracy: Why leaders can't lead. New York: AMACOM.
- Bennis, W. (1989). Why leaders can't lead. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (Eds.) (1985). Leaders: The strategies for taking charge. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Bernard, J. (1981). The female world. New York: Free Press.
- Block, P. (1987). The empowered manager. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blumberg, A., & Blumberg, P. (1985). The school superintendent: Living with conflict. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (1984). Modern approaches to understanding and managing organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bogdan, R., & Bicklen, S. K. (1982). Qualitative research in education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Borman, K. M., & Spring, J. H. (1984). Schools in central cities: Structure and process. New York: Longman.
- Brittenham, L. R. (1980). An ethnographic case study of the administrative organization, processes and behavior in an innovative senior high school (Vol. 196). Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin Research & Development Center.
- Burns, M. (1978). Leadership. New York: Harper & Row.
- Bush, T. (1986). Theories of educational management. London: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Canter, R. N. (1983). The change masters. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Carlson, R., & Schmuck, B. R. (1981). The sex dimension of careers in educational management: Overview and synthesis. In P. Schmuck, W. Charter, & R. Carlson (Eds.), Educational policy and management: Sex differentials (pp. 117-130). New York: Academic Press.
- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (May, 1986). A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century (Report of the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession). Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Forum.
- Clement, J. (1980). Sex bias in school administration. In S. Bilkin & M. Brannigan (Eds.), Women in educational leadership (pp. 131-137). Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath & Company.
- Cobbley, L. (1970). A study of attitudes and opportunities for women in six western states to become elementary school principals. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.
- Crandall, K., & Reed, D. (1986). Career patterns of female administrators in public schools. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.
- Crow, G. M. (1990). Perceived career incentives of suburban elementary school principals. Journal of Educational Administration, 28(1), 38-51.

- Cuban, L. (1988). The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Cuban, L. (1989). The district superintendent and the restructuring of schools: A realistic appraisal. In T. J. Sergiovanni and J. H. Moore (Eds.), Schooling for tomorrow (pp. 251-271). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Deal, T. E. (1990, May). Reframing reform. Educational Leadership, 47(8).
- Denmark, F. L. (1977). Styles of leadership. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 2, 99-113.
- Denzin, N. D. (1989). Imperative interactionism. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Dias, S. L. (1976). The aspiration levels of women administrative careers in education: Predictive factors and implications for effecting change. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California.
- Dill, W. R., Hilton, T., & Reitman, W. (1961). The new managers. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Dopp, B. C., & Sloan, C. A. (1986). Career development and succession of women to the superintendency. Clearing House, 60(3), 120-126.
- Edson, S. K. (1988). Pushing the limits. New York: State University Press.
- Edson, S. (1981). If they can, I can: Woman aspirants to administrative positions in public schools. In P. Schmuck, W. Charter, & R. Carlson (Eds.), Educational policy and management: Sex differentials (pp. 169-185). New York: Academic Press.
- Education vital signs (1980, December). American School Board Journal.
- Elmore, R. F. (1987). Early experiences in restructuring schools: Voices from the field (Results in Education Series). Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association.
- Ely, P. (1984). Eligibility and aspiration for the superintendency in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 4511A.
- Epstein, C. F. (1970). Woman's place: Options and limits in professional careers. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Ewel, Y. (1982). Rethinking leadership models: Perspectives of an associate superintendent in a predominantly black subdistrict. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Anaheim, California.
- Fishel, A., & Pottker, J. (1988). School board and sex bias in American education. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Fishel, A., & Pottker, J. (1975). Performance of women principals: A review of behavioral and attitudinal studies. Journal of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, 38(3), 110-117.
- Fong, E. (1984). Barriers to educational leadership aspirations as perceived by California Asian American women administrators (minority public school). Dissertation Abstracts International, 44, 4512A.
- Frasher, R., Frasher, J. M., & Hardwick, K. (1982). The female superintendent. Journal of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors, 47(1), 36-42.
- Friesen, L. (1983). Women in leadership. Contemporary Education, 54, 223-230.
- Fullan, N. (1982). The meaning of educational change. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Funk, C. (1986). The female executive in school administration: Profiles, pluses, and problems. Paper presented at the annual conference on Women and Work, Arlington, Texas.
- Gallagher, K. S. (1988). Field experiences in the preparation of educational administrators: Current practices. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Gibbs, N. (1991, Fall Special Edition). The dreams of youth. Time, pp. 8-10.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, C. (1979). Women's place in man's life cycle. Harvard Educational Review, 49, 431-466.
- Ginzberg, E. (1984). Career development. In D. Brown, L. Brooks, & Associates (Eds.), Career choice and development (pp. 169-191). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Grady, M. (1989, October). Women with administrative certification: Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Rural Education Association, Reno, Nevada.
- Grady, M. (In press). Women in administration: Certified but not employed. Educational Considerations.
- Greer, R. D., & Finley, E. A. (1985). The role of women in public school administration. Paper presented at the Association of Teacher Educators Workshop, Wichita, Kansas.
- Gross, N., & Trask, A. E. (1976). The sex factor in the management of schools. New York: Wiley Press.
- Gupta, N. (1983). Barriers to the advancement of women in educational administration: Sources and remedies. Austin: Southwest Educational Development Labs.
- Gutek, B. A., & Larwood, L. (Eds.) (1987). Women career development. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Hall, D. D. (1976). Careers and organizations. Santa Monica, California: Goodyear.
- Hall, R., & Sandler, B. R. (1983). Academic mentoring for women students and faculty: A new look at an old way to get ahead (Project on the Status and Education of Women). Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges.
- Hanson, E. R. (1979). Educational administration in organizational behavior. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- Harrigan, B. L. (1977). Games mother never taught you. New York: Warner Brothers.
- Hill, R. E., & Miller, E. L. (1981). Job change in the middle seasons of a man's life. Academy of Management Journal, 24, 114-127.
- Hollander, E. P., & Yoder, J. (1980). Some issues in comparing women and men as leaders. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 1, 287-280.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1975). Inside the clockwork of male careers. In F. Howe (Ed.), Women in power to change. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Holmes Group (1986). Tomorrow's teachers: A report of the Holmes Group. East Lansing, Michigan: Holmes Group.

- Hoyle, E., & McMahon, A. (Eds.) (1986). World yearbook of education in 1986: The management of schools. New York: Kagan Paul, London/Nichols Publishing Company.
- Hullhorst, A. J. (1984). A comparative study of the teacher career aspirations, job seeking patterns of male and female doctoral recipients in educational administration. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University.
- Joekel, R. (1991, February). Where are the women in educational administration? (Occasional Papers, No. 3). Lincoln: Bureau of Education Research Service and Policy Studies, Department of Educational Administration, University of Nebraska.
- Kahn, W., & Crosby, W. (1985). Changes and stasis: Discriminating between attitudes and discriminating behavior. In L. Larwood, B. A. Stromberg, & A. H. Stromberg (Eds.), Women in work: An annual review (pp. 215-238) (Vol. 1). Beverly Hills, California: Sage.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). Men and women of the corporations. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.
- Kane, R. D. (1976). Sex discrimination in education: A study of employment practices affecting professional personnel (Vol. 1). Washington, D.C. National Center for Educational Statistics.
- Katzell, M. E., & Byham, W. C. (Eds.) (1972). Women in the work force. New York: Behavioral Publications, Inc.
- Keim, A. S. (1979). Presentation made at AASA National Convention. In AASA Convention Reporter, New Orleans.
- Kelly, R. E. (1988, November-December). In praise of followers. Harvard Business Review, 6, 142-148.
- Kirst, M. W. (1989). Who should control the schools? Reassessing current policies. In T. J. Sergiovanni and H. J. Moore (Eds.), Schooling for tomorrow (pp. 62-88). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Knezevitch, S. J. (1975). Administration of public education (3rd ed.). New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Krchniak, S. P. (1978). Variables associated with low incidents of women in school administration: Toward empirical understandings. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Toronto, Canada.

- Kuh, C., Whitt, E., & Shedd, J. (1987). Student affairs work 2001: A paradigmatic odyssey. Alexandria, Virginia: American College Personnel.
- Larwood, L., & Gutek, B. A. (1984). In M. Davidson & C. Cooper (Eds.), Women working: An international survey. Chichester, England: John Wiley.
- Lawler, E. E. (1986). High involvement management: Participative strategies for improving organizational performance. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Lea, R. A. (1989). Career paths and perceived success levels of women superintendents of public schools in the State of Texas. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, North Texas State University.
- Lerner, N. J. (1975). The justice motive in social behavior. Journal of Social Issues, 31, 1-20.
- Lewis, A. (1989). Restructuring America's schools. Reston, Virginia: American Association of School Administrators.
- Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (1990, June). Restructuring schools: What matters and what works. Phi Delta Kappan.
- Loden, M. (1985). Feminine leadership or how to succeed in business without being one of the boys. New York: Times Books.
- MacCoby, E., & Jacklin, C. N. (1974). The psychology of sex differences. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Mansergh, G. (1976). Attitudes of teachers toward women administrators and the aspirations of teachers for administrative positions in the state of Minnesota. Catalyst for Change, 5(3).
- March, J. C., & March, J. H. (1977, September). Almost random careers: The Wisconsin school superintendencies, 1940-1972. Administrative Science Quarterly, 22, 377-409.
- McClure, J., & McClure, J. (1974). The case of the vanishing woman: Implications for the preparation of women educational administrators. UCEA Review, pp. 6-9.
- McCormick, J. J. (1987, June). The vaunted school executive shortage: How serious is it? The Executive Educator, pp. 18-21.
- McGivney, J. H., & Hought, J. (1972, Autumn). Policies of education: A view from the perspective of the central office staff. Educational Administration Quarterly, 83, 18-38.

- McGregor, D. (1967). Adventure in thought and action. The Management Review, 46(1) (Cambridge, Massachusetts), 22-28.
- McMillan, M. (1975). Leadership aspirations of perspective teachers-- a comparison of men and women. Journal of Teacher Education, 26, 323-325.
- Mertz, N., & McNeely, S. (1987, November). Secondary schools in transition: A study of the emerging female administrator. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.
- Meskin, J. (1974). The performance of women school administrators-- a review of the literature. Administrators Notebook, 23(1).
- Miller, J., Labovitz, S., & Fry, L. (1978). Inequities and the organizational experiences of women and men. Social Forces, 54, 365-381.
- Moore, J. H. (1989). Better schools for the 21st century: A school improvement proposal. In T. J. Sergiovanni & J. H. Moore (Eds.), Schooling for tomorrow (pp. 394-397). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Morrison, A. M. (1988, May). Comparing the career paths of men and women. Paper presented at the Conference Board's Conference on Women in the Corporation, New York.
- Morsink, H. (1968). Leader behavior of men and women secondary school principals. Educational Horizons, 47, 69-74.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). A nation at risk. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Governors Association (1989). Results in education: 1989. Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association.
- Nebraska Department of Education (1990). Nebraska education directory: ninety-third edition. Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Education Data Center.
- Neidig, M. (1980). The other half of the talent bank: Women administrators. Paper presented at the National Association of Secondary School Principals Conference, Miami Beach, Florida. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 181 600)
- Neil, N. (1989). The influences on the decision making of Pennsylvania school boards that have selected women superintendents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 49, 5006-8.



- Newman, K. K. (1980). Stages of an unstaged occupation. Educational Leadership, 37, 6.
- Nicholson, N., & West, M. A. (Eds.) (1988). Managerial job changes: Men and women in transition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Neil, M. (1990, April). Piecing together the restructuring puzzle. Educational Leadership, 47, 4-10.
- O'Reilly, R. C. (1985). Communication and performance: The female board member and the male superintendent. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Grand Island, Nebraska.
- Ortiz, F. I. (1982). Career patterns in education: Women, men in minorities in public school administration. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Ortiz, F. I., & Marshall, C. (1988). Women in educational administration. In N. Boyan (Ed.), Handbook of research on educational administration (pp. 123-141). New York: Longman Publishers.
- Osipow, S. H. (1983). Theories of career development. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Owen, W. F. (1986). Rhetorical themes of emergency male leaders. Small Group Behavior, 17, 375-386.
- Pacheco, B. A. (1982). Barriers to advancement in educational administration as perceived by woman administrators. Dissertation Abstracts International, 42, 4305-A.
- Paddock, S. (1977). Career paths of women administrators. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Oregon, Eugene.
- Paddock, S. (1981). Male and female paths in school administration. In P. Schmuck, W. Charters, & R. Carlson (Eds.), Educational policy and management: Sex differentials. San Francisco: Academic Press.
- Passow, A. H. (1989). Present and future direction in school reform. In T. J. Sergiovanni & G. H. Moore (Eds.), Schooling for tomorrow (pp. 13-15). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Pavan, B. N. (1986). Barriers to hiring and promotion experience by certified incumbent female and male public school administrators. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association meeting, San Francisco, California.

- Pitner, N. J. (1979). So go the days of their lives: A descriptive study of the superintendency. Eugene: Oregon School Study Council, University of Oregon.
- Pleck, J. H. (1977). The work family role system. Social Problems, 24, 417-427.
- Porter, N., Geis, S. L., & Jennings, T. (1983). Are women invisible as leaders? Sex Roles, 9(9), 1035-1049.
- Rix, S. E., & Stone, A. J. (1984). Work. In S. M. Pritchard (Ed.), The woman's annual (No. 4). Boston: G. K. Hall.
- Rosenholtz, S. (1989). Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools. New York: Longman.
- Rowan, B. (1981). The effects of institutionalized rules on administrators. In S. B. Bachrach (Ed.), Organizational behavior of school and school district. New York: Praeger.
- Rudolph, B. (1991, Fall Special Edition). Why can't a woman manage more like . . . a woman? Time, p. 53.
- Schein, E. H. (1985). Organizational culture and leadership. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Schlechty, P. (1990). Schools for the 21st century: The conditions for invention. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), Collaborative cultures: Creating the future now (pp. 233-255). Philadelphia: Falmer Press.
- Schlechty, P. & Joslin, A. (1986). Images of schools. Teachers College Record. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Schmuck, P. A. (1975). Sex differentiation in public school administration. Dissertation Abstracts International, 36, 5791A-5792A.
- Schmuck, P. A. (1987). Sex differentiation in public school administration. Arlington, Virginia: NCAWE.
- Schmuck, P. A. (Ed.) (1987). Women educators: Employees of schools in western countries. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Schmuck, P. W., Charters, W. W., & Carlson, R. O. (Eds.) (1981). Educational policy and management: Sex differential. New York: Academic Press.

- Schmuck, P. A., & Wyant, S. H. (1981). Clues to sex bias in the selection of school administrators: A report from the Oregon network. In P. Schmuck, W. Charters, & R. Carlson (Eds.), Educational policy and management: Sex differentials (pp. 117-130). New York: Academic Press.
- Schneider, G. T. (1988). Research for the top: Are women interested? A study of career aspirations of women in educational administration. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Schuster, D. J., & Foote, T. H. (1990). Differences about and between male and female superintendents. The School Administrator, 47, 14-19.
- Schuster, D. J. (1987). Male and female superintendents compared nationally: Career implications for women in educational administration. Dissertation Abstracts International, 47, 4807-A.
- Scriven, A. L. (1973). A study of women occupying administrative position in the central office of large school districts. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Florida.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1984). Cultural and competing perspectives in administrative theory and practice. In T. J. Sergiovanni & J. E. Corbally (Eds.), Leadership and organizational culture Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (1990). Value-added leadership: How to get extraordinary performance in school. New York; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Sergiovanni, T. J., & Moore, J. H. (Eds.) (1989). Schooling for tomorrow. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1986, March). A gender at risk. Phi Delta Kappan, 499-503.
- Shakeshaft, C. (1987). Women in educational administration. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Shieve, L. (1988, November). New rules for administrators in Rochester. Educational Leadership.
- Simpkins, W. S. (1982). Tensions of devolution in times of uncertainty. In W. S. Simpkins, A. R. Thomas, & E. B. Thomas (Eds.), Principal and task: An Australian perspective (pp. 41-56). Armidale, NSW: University of New England.

- Speizer, J. J. (1981). Role models, mentors and sponsors: The elusive concepts. Signs, 6, 692-712.
- Stockard, J. (1980). Sex equity in educational leadership: An analysis of a planned social change project. Newton, Massachusetts: Education Development Center.
- Stockard, J., & Johnson, M. (1979). The social origins of male dominance. Sex Roles, 5, 199-218.
- Super, D. E. (1984). Career and life development. In D. Brown, L. Brooks, & Associates (Eds.), Career choice and development (pp. 192-234). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Timar, T. (1989, December). The politics of school restructuring. Phi Delta Kappan.
- Toufexis, A. (1991, Fall Special Edition). Coming from a different place. Time, pp. 64-66.
- Valverde, L. A., & Brown, F. (1988). Influences on leadership development among racial and ethnic minorities. In N. Boyan (Ed.), Handbook of research on educational administration (pp. 143-157). New York: Longman Publishers.
- Walker, W. (1987). Mentor-protege relationships of male and female elementary and middle school principals. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 0514.
- Wallston, B. S., Foster, M., & Berger, M. (1978). I will follow him: Myths, reality, or forced-choice? Psychology of Women Quarterly, 3, 9-21.
- Weber, M. B., Feldman, M. R., & Poling, E. C. (1980). A study of factors affecting career aspirations of women teachers and educational administrators. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.
- Weber, M. B., Feldman, J. R., & Poling, E. C. (1981). Why women are underrepresented in educational administration. Educational Leadership, 38(4), 320-322.
- Whitaker, C. S., & Lane, K. (1990, February). Is a woman's place in school administration? The School Administrator, 47(2), 8-12.
- Wiley, S. N. (1986). Women administrators in the California public school system: Demographic, personal, and leadership characteristics and attributes. Dissertation Abstracts International, 46, 4707A.

- Williams, R., & Willower, D. (1983). Female school superintendents' perception of their work. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Montreal.
- Wissler, D. G., & Ortiz, F. I. (Eds.) (1988). The superintendent's leadership in school reform. London: The Falmer Press.
- Wohman, Z., & Frank, H. (1980). The solo woman in a professional peer group: Working paper number 138. Philadelphia: Department of Management, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.
- Wolcott, H. G. (1988) Ethnographic research in education. In R. M. Joeger (Ed.), Complementary methods for research in education (pp. 187-210). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Zehnder, E. (1988). A celebration of leadership. Egon Zehnder International.
- Zimmerman, J. N. (1971). The status of women in educational administrative positions within the central offices of public schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University.

## APPENDIX A

### Letter to Key Informants

January 29, 1991

x x  
x x  
x x

Dear

I would like to ask for your assistance in the collection of data for my doctoral dissertation which addresses the question, "What factors influence female school administrators to pursue or reject the position of public school superintendent?"

You have been nominated by school officials in Nebraska as an educational leader with insight regarding leadership talent and acquaintance with school administrators who might be very strong candidates for the position of school superintendent. In my study, I intend to interview a select group of female school administrators who have the potential to become excellent superintendents (as perceived by key informants), and to probe their perceptions, knowledge, and interests regarding leadership in public schools, particularly at the superintendency level.

I am asking you to be a key informant and to provide the names of two female administrators whom you believe could become excellent school superintendents. I also need your reasons as to why they are good candidates. The descriptive criteria you supply will be important to my data collection. A survey is enclosed for your responses.

Your professional input is valued. With your nominations, I will find the best female administrators to interview.

Please call me collect if you have questions (402-729-6104 - work, 402-729-6430 - home). Thank you very much for your helpfulness!

Sincerely,

Carol S. Renner  
Assistant Superintendent  
Fairbury Public Schools  
1121 8th Street  
Fairbury, NE 68352

enc

**APPENDIX B**

**Nomination Form for Outstanding  
Female Administrators**



Return survey to: **CAROL S. RENNER  
FAIRBURY PUBLIC SCHOOL  
1121 8TH STREET  
FAIRBURY, NE 68352**

**APPENDIX C**  
**Interview Questions**

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SELECTED OUTSTANDING FEMALE  
ADMINISTRATORS

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Tell me about your position with \_ \_ \_  
Schools/Agency.
2. I'm interested in early influences related to  
your professional development. Tell me about  
your family and events in your formative years  
that influenced your career.
3. How did you select education as a career?  
School administration? Do you have a career  
plan?
4. Are you married? How has marriage affected your  
career goals? Single - how has your career  
affected your social opportunities?

II. MOTIVATORS AND INHIBITORS

1. What are some of the things in your present job  
that you feel you have done particularly well or  
achieved the greatest success?
2. What are some of the things that have been  
disappointing?
3. Has any individual encouraged you because of  
your leadership skills to seek a higher  
administrative position?
4. Are you certified for the superintendency? Will  
you ever apply for that position?
5. What are some of the factors that might prompt  
you to consider applying for a superintendency?
6. What do you think motivates other administrators  
to seek a superintendency? Are motives  
different between genders?
7. What do you think inhibits other administrators  
from seeking a superintendency?
8. What particular qualities or abilities do you  
have to offer the position of school  
superintendent? Are there some things you would  
need to improve to be an outstanding  
superintendent?
9. What are some of the obstacles, if any, that you  
face as a female administrator?
10. How important is past experience to seeking a

- higher administrative position?
11. What rewards do you seek from your professional career?
  12. Probe: Mentor, role models, networking.

### III. PUBLIC SCHOOL CHALLENGES

1. What do you feel are two of the most challenging problems facing public school leadership today?
2. Can public schools guarantee the success of all students?
3. What do the following groups expect of public schools superintendent today? - parents, the general public, the business community.
4. Does the general public view female administrators as capable in meeting the challenges you have suggested?

### IV. LEADERSHIP NEEDS

1. Describe a women who exemplifies an "effective school leader." What important leadership traits does she display?
2. Describe the interactions that must take place between leaders and the people they are trying to involve in school improvement.
3. Do you observe differences in male/female leadership styles and behaviors? Nurturing? Stress?
4. What steps would you take to achieve a building or district goal?
5. Are you aware of any negative attitudes towards female administrators?

### CLOSURE

Why are so few females represented in the school superintendency?

What have I not asked that would help me learn more about females in the role of school superintendent?

Which age bracket would you fit you?

(Under 30) (30 - 39) (40 - 49) (Over 50)

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Demographic Data for Nominated Female Administrators**

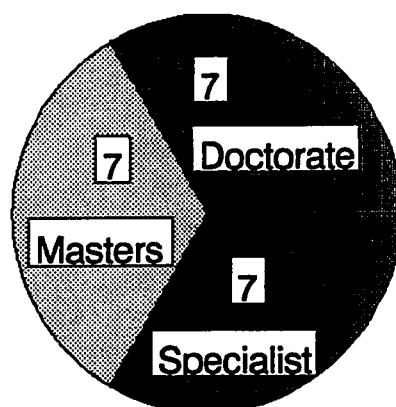
### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR NOMINATED OUTSTANDING FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS

The following graphs provide demographic information on the female administrators who provided the data for this study. The statistics are intended to present the professional and experiential background on the female respondents which might aid in the interpretation of their spoken comments and provide insights to their perceptions.

Professional credentials were evenly distributed among the respondents in three categories: doctorate, specialist and master of education. One should note that most of the participants at the master's level were working on a specialist degree, and several who held the specialist degree were pursuing a doctorate (see Graph 1).

GRAPH 1

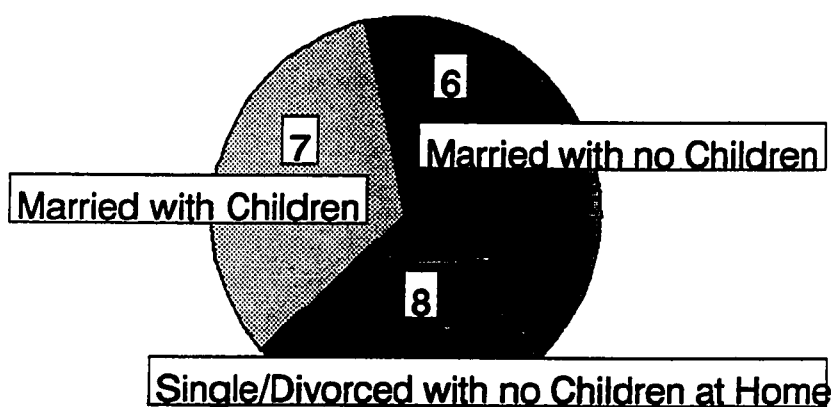
### Professional Credentials of Nominated Female Administrators



The female administrators were fairly evenly distributed into three categories of family status: eight were either single or divorced with no children at home; seven were married with children (some living at home and some living out of the home); and six were married with no children (see Graph 2).

GRAPH 2

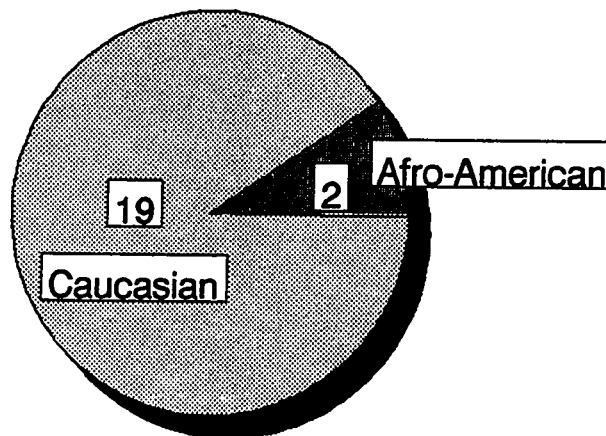
### Family Status of Nominated Female Administrators



Two minority females who were black were nominated as "outstanding female administrators" in Nebraska. Nineteen females were Caucasian (see Graph 3).

GRAPH 3

## Race Distribution Nominated Female Administrators

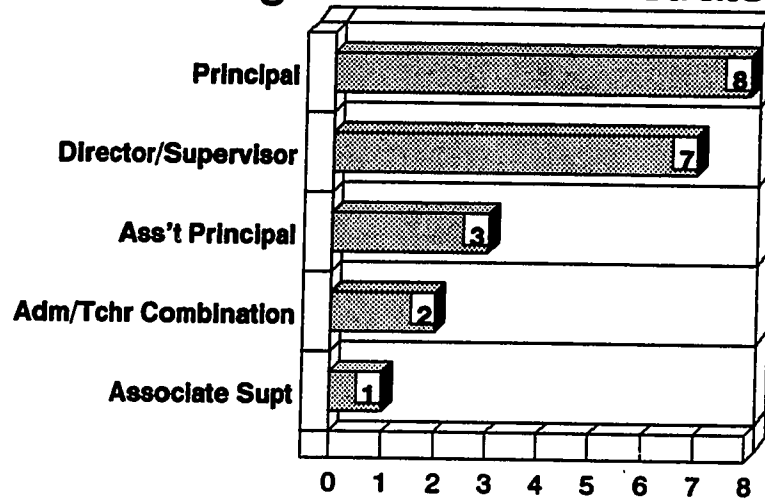


The various administrative roles of the outstanding female administrators included: eight principalships, seven director/supervisor roles, three assistant principalships, one assistant superintendent, and two who held a combined role of administrator/teacher (see Graph 4).



GRAPH 4

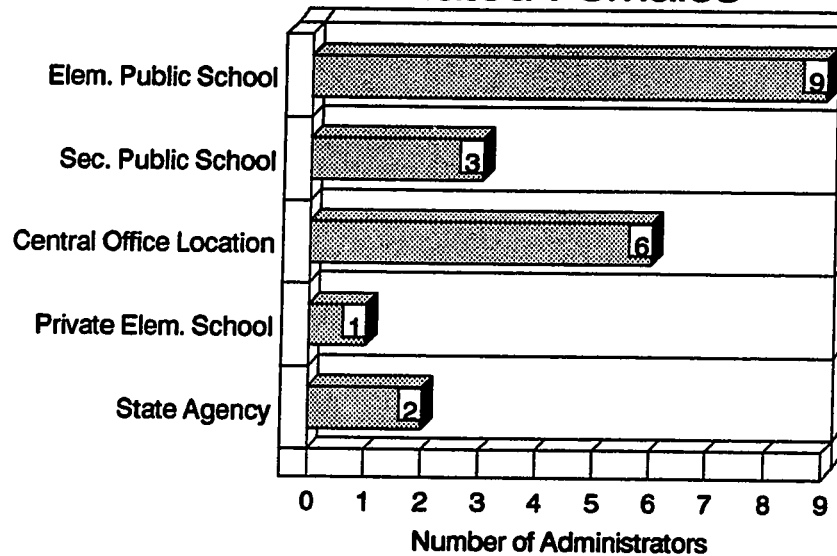
## Leadership Roles of Nominated Outstanding Female Administrators



The greatest number of nominated female administrators (nine) worked in elementary schools as principals. Central office representation followed with six representatives. Secondary schools had only three nominated administrators, and other agencies and a private school had three females who were nominated (see Graph 5).

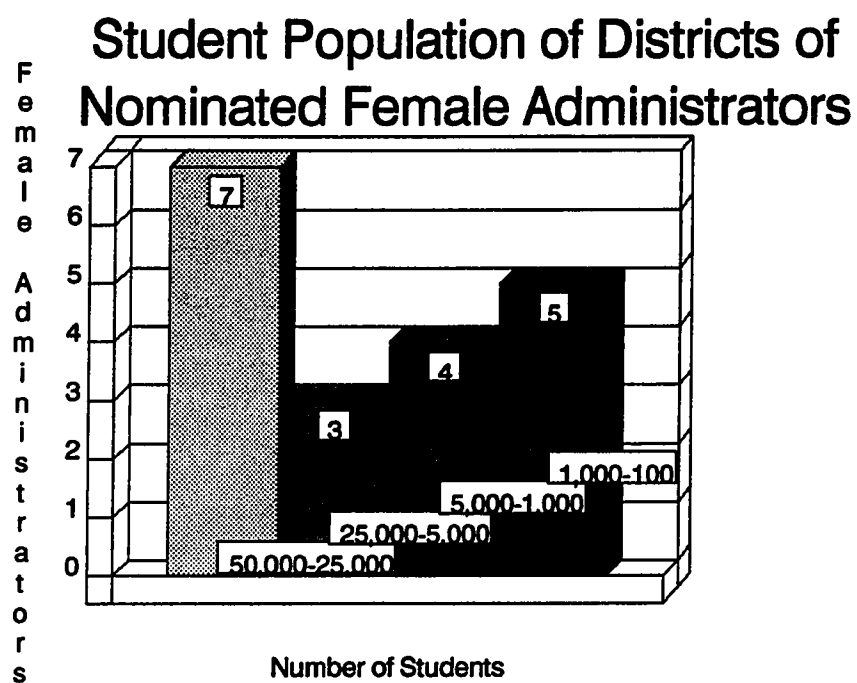
GRAPH 5

## Administrative Workplace of Nominated Females



Outstanding female administrators tended to be nominated from the largest districts in the state of Nebraska. The sample, however, was fairly even between representatives from districts of less than 5000 students (10) and representatives of districts of more than 5000 students (9) (see Graph 6).

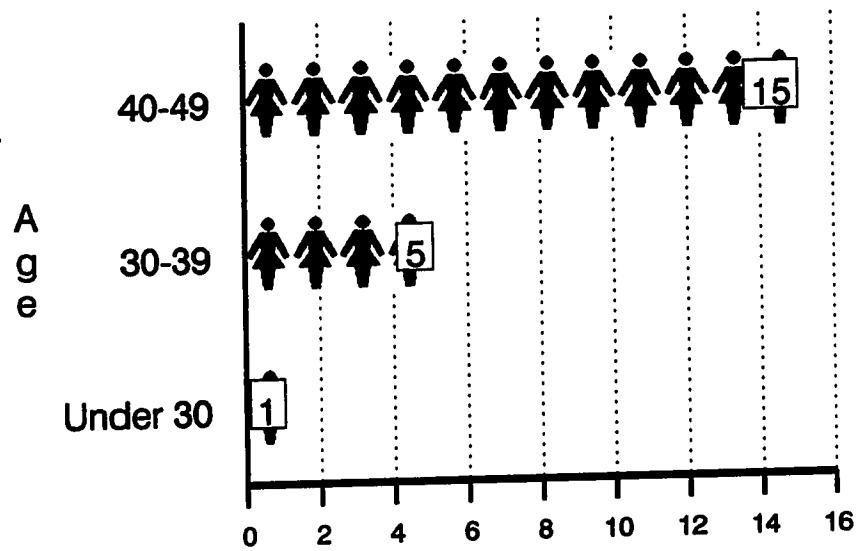
GRAPH 6



Seventy-one percent of the nominated females were from 40 to 49 years old. Twenty-four percent were in the range of 30 to 39 years, and five percent (1) was under thirty years of age (see Graph 7).

GRAPH 7

### Age Distribution of Nominated Female Administrators



## APPENDIX E

### Demographic Data for Key Informants

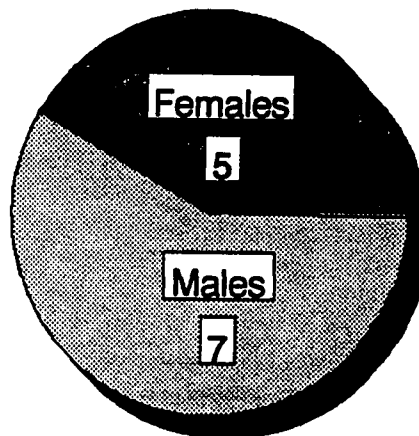
### KEY INFORMANT BACKGROUND

Twelve Nebraska administrators were selected as key informants to provide the names of outstanding female administrators in Nebraska to be used as the sample population. The informants were nominated by three educational leaders in Nebraska: The Dean of Teachers College, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; the Associate Commissioner of Education, Nebraska; and the Executive Director of the Nebraska State Education Association, Nebraska. The following graphs display the make-up of the key informants.

The key informants were comprised of seven males and five females (see Graph 1).

GRAPH 1

### Gender Distribution Of Key Informants



The sample of key informants included college/university professors, public school superintendents, one public school assistant superintendent, and one state department of education administrator (see Graph 2).

GRAPH 2

