Career Paths and Mobility Issues of Women Administrators in North Dakota Public Schools

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CAREER PATHS AND MOBILITY ISSUES OF WOMEN
ADMINISTRATORS IN NORTH DAKOTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of the
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for the degree of
Doctor of Education

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2002
This dissertation, submitted by Debra K. Schroeder Syvertson in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Department: Educational Leadership

Degree: Doctor of Education

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Date 4-16-02
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ABSTRACT

The higher one looks in the administrative hierarchy, the fewer women one observes. In North Dakota, men filled 98% of the public school superintendencies in 1994. Sixty percent of the school districts had both a male secondary principal and a male elementary principal. Despite these low proportions, various authors have demonstrated that women’s typical leadership styles are superior to those of men and are better suited to running effective schools. If women administrators have such natural leadership skills, why are there not more of them schools? The purpose of this study was to determine the career paths and mobility of North Dakota women administrators as well as their perceptions of obstacles to obtaining their professional goals.

The population of this study consisted of all women administrators working in the public schools in North Dakota during the 2000-01 school year. All of those individuals were asked to complete a questionnaire. Twelve women administrators representing small and large districts were selected to be interviewed. They represented elementary principals, secondary principals, and superintendents or central office administrators.

Traditional patterns in society, compounded with existing myths and attitudes, appear to have created an atmosphere in which few women seem to aspire to or succeed in obtaining administrative positions. Women are forced to resolve conflicts among family responsibilities, career aspirations, and the perceived characteristics of leadership as they aspire to administrative positions. This study provided information on career paths and
perceived obstacles facing women administrators in North Dakota as well as throughout the United States.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Women historically have been an unheralded force in public education. While women have dominated the teaching field since the late 19th century, they have seldom dominated in positions of leadership (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). In the first colonial schools, women were deemed fit only to teach young boys. As soon as the boys grew older, men took over their educational process. The 17th century dame schools at first excluded girls completely and later permitted them to attend, but only to occupy vacant spaces. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the development of female academies where girls were trained “separately, but equally.” During the Civil War, women assumed the majority of the teaching positions. After the war, except in the early grades, they were displaced by men (Jackson, 1980). A look at the number of women in school administration since 1905 uncovers a consistent pattern of male dominance in all areas of leadership except in the early days of the elementary school principalship. From the beginning, women teachers have been treated less favorably than male teachers, whether such treatment is measured by salary or status. In common schools, men were the masters or principals, whereas women were the assistant teachers. In high schools, males were called “Professor” and females were addressed as “Miss” (Shakeshaft, 1989).

The years between 1900 and 1930 have been referred to as the golden age for women in school administration (Shakeshaft, 1989). In 1928, women held 55% of the
elementary principalships, 25% of the county superintendencies, almost 8% of secondary school principalships, and nearly 2% of the superintendencies (Shakeshaft, 1989). Female elementary principals were so common in the approximately 100,000 school districts in 1926 that the United States Office of Education published an article entitled "The Woman Principal: A Future in American Schools" (Schmuck, 1989). However, it should be noted that the elementary principalships and county superintendencies of that time were administrative positions with low pay and low status. Since that time, with the advent of uniform salary schedules, improved benefits, and better working conditions, women have again been displaced by men. In the United States in 1928, 55% of the principals were women while, in 1968, about 23% were women; in 1970, 21% were women; and, by 1973, the percentage had dropped to around 19%. In 1960, there were 90 women superintendents in the public schools in America, while in 1970 there were only 80 women school superintendents (Jackson, 1980).

According to Jones and Montenegro (1993), 71% of elementary and secondary educators in 1990 were female; 88% of all elementary teachers were female. However, only 34% of principals were women, 24% of assistant superintendents were women, and only 7% of all public school superintendents in the United States were women.

Schmuck (1989) suggested that five social and cultural events have restrained women from holding administrative positions. The first event was the decline of the early women's movement, which was very strong in the early 1900s when the movement was advocating equal rights for women. Once women received the right to vote in 1920, that women's movement began to decline. World War II brought the second event, an
end to the prevailing nationwide practice of not hiring married women as teachers. As it became necessary for women to be employed in wartime, more and more married women sought teaching positions. However, women eventually were pushed out of their positions by the returning soldiers. The GI Bill was Schmuck's third event. Through that program of support for veterans seeking college degrees, many men entered the field of education. That led to a social distinction between men and women in education. Public school teaching became a career ladder for men, while, for women, it was simply one of the few occupations which were open to them. The fourth event was the urbanization of society which led to school consolidation. In the years after World War II, 100,000 school districts were consolidated into about 16,000 districts. Small, rural elementary schools, which often had been led by women, were consolidated into larger schools, which were more likely to be led by male principals. Schmuck's fifth factor was the concept of leadership based on scientific management that tended to separate the principalship completely from teaching. Schmuck suggested that, by 1970, women administrators were on the road to extinction. However, the second women's movement and the passage of Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments began a slow trend of encouragement for women to assume leadership positions. Title IX led to the Women's Educational Equity Act in which educators received grants to develop nonsexist curricular material and programs. This caused an increase in athletic opportunities for females, as well as graduate educational opportunities as women entered the traditionally male areas of medicine, law, and business (Sadker, Sadker, & Klein, 1991).
Statement of the Problem

Despite the second women's movement, the higher one looks in the administrative hierarchy, the fewer women one observes. In North Dakota, 98% of public school superintendencies were filled by men in 1994. Sixty percent of the school districts had both a male secondary principal and a male elementary principal; another 32% had a male secondary principal and a female elementary principal (Collay & LaMar, 1995). Nationally, 93% of superintendencies were filled by men, and 66% of all elementary and high schools were led by male principals (Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). Those statistics represent the dominance of males in educational leadership positions.

Various authors have asserted that women's typical leadership styles are superior to those of men and are better suited to running effective schools (Brunner, 1998; Charters & Jovick, 1981; Collay & LaMar, 1995; Edson, 1980; Grady, Ourada-Sieb, & Wesson, 1994; Jackson, 1980; Sadker et al., 1991; Shakeshaft, 1989; Temmen, 1998). Those studies portrayed women administrators as possessing leadership traits focused on concern for others; a greater focus on teaching and learning; a more democratic, participatory leadership style; greater effectiveness in representing the school and working with the community; enhanced ability to use outside resources to apply new ideas to improve instruction; and increased attention to monitoring and assessing student learning.

If women administrators have such natural leadership skills, why are there not more of them in the schools? Females and males will lead differently. According to Brunner (1999), they differ for two reasons. First, males and females live in different
realities in our gendered society. Because of this, males and females learn differently in regard to socially acceptable behaviors. Public school administration is one of the many professions that underutilize the potential of their pools of female candidates.

The purpose of this study was to determine the career paths and mobility of North Dakota women administrators as well as their perceptions of obstacles to obtaining their professional goals. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. What are the career paths of women administrators in North Dakota schools?
2. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own career paths?
3. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own careers in administration?
4. How do family and personal issues affect the career paths of women administrators?
5. Do women administrators perceive that they have the same mobility and ability to take advantage of job opportunities as their male peers?

Significance of the Study

A study conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000) found that 72% of all elementary and secondary school educators were women. However, the percentage of women administrators was much smaller. In fact, only 1,984 of the 13,728 (14%) American superintendents were women. Women made up 83.5% of the elementary teachers but only 16.9% of the elementary principals. While up to 50% of the secondary teachers were females, only 3.5% were secondary principals (Glass et al., 2000). According to Shakeshaft (1989), women made
up almost two thirds of all school personnel, but only three percent of the superintendents were women. As educational leaders, women experience a landscape in which they are strangers. This landscape is dominated by a culture of white, male leadership that sets the standards and norms of the education profession (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995). Public school administration is the only profession in the human resources area in which women were found to have been losing ground (Wheatley, 1981).

The typical woman administrator not only does not look like the typical male administrator, the path that was taken and the obstacles to achieve the position differ as well. Shakeshaft (1989) described the women administrators in the following manner. They tended to be in their mid-to-late 40s. Women who held higher administrative positions were older than women who held lesser positions. Women administrators were more likely to have been raised in rural areas and were often the firstborn or only child in their families. They came from two-parent families and more often were married than single, and 65% of women administrators also were mothers. While virtually all school administrators began their careers by teaching, Ortiz (1982) found that there was a difference in the way the careers of males and females developed. White males moved into administration early in their careers, whereas the few women who became administrators did so much later.

Schmuck (1975) stated that women administrators were found mainly in rural schools. Since North Dakota is considered a rural state, one would expect more women administrators in this state. However, in 1999, only 18 (8%) of the 232 superintendents were women; 8 (22%) of the 37 middle school principals were women; 24 (12%) of the
206 high school principals were women; and 199 (52%) of the 380 elementary principals were women (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1999). Nationally, the percentage of female principals had risen from 13% in 1977 to 34% in 1993, but that was mainly at the elementary level (Jones & Montenegro, 1993). In North Dakota, more than half of the elementary principals were women. However, at the national and state levels, the glass ceiling had not been broken in the high school principalships and superintendencies. Much research has been conducted nationally or in other states regarding issues unique to women administrators. However, only one study has been conducted in North Dakota. One of the purposes of that study was to identify women principals’ perceptions of barriers to the advancement from the principalship to the superintendency (Gjovik, 1998).

Traditional patterns in society, compounded with existing myths and attitudes, appear to have created an atmosphere in which few women seem to aspire to or succeed in obtaining administrative positions. Women are forced to resolve conflicts among family responsibilities, career aspirations, and the perceived characteristics of leadership as they aspire to administrative positions. This study may provide information on career paths and perceived obstacles facing women administrators in North Dakota as well as throughout the United States. It is expected that the data from this study will provide current and aspiring women administrators with an understanding of their own career paths and opportunities.
Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to women administrators employed in public schools in North Dakota. All such administrators constituted the population for the survey phase of this study.

Twelve of the women administrators were interviewed in the second phase of the study. Those subjects included four elementary principals, four secondary school principals, and four central office administrators, two superintendents and two assistant superintendents. Six of the women administrators represented districts of more than 600 students, and six represented women administrators from districts with less than 600 students. Half of the women administrators had less than five years of administrative experience, and half of the women had over five years of administrative experience.

It was assumed that the survey answers and interview responses provide realistic descriptions of the perceptions of the career paths and goals of women administrators in North Dakota. It was assumed also that the administrators’ responses during the interviews and in the questionnaires represented their actual perceptions of issues pertaining to women as educational leaders.

Definition of Terms

**Career development:** The process of growth and learning over a period of time that underlies the sequence of vocational behavior as it relates to the mastery of successive developmental tasks (Jackson, 1980).
Career path: A pre-established, total pattern of organized professional activity, with upward movement through recognized preparation stages, and advancement based on merit and bearing honor (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Gatekeeper: Those who have influence in the hiring and evaluation of school administrators. In the area of the superintendency, gatekeepers are usually established superintendents who have influence at local, state, and national levels (Bell & Chase, 1993).

Gender: The social meaning given to being female or male (Brunner, 1999).

Mobility: Mobility requires movement along three dimensions. Such movement may be vertical, when one's rank or level in the organization is increased or decreased. Movement may be circumferential, when one's function or division of the organization is changed. Movement may also be radial, when one's centrality (closeness to the organizational leaders) in the organization is increased or decreased (Ortiz, 1982).

Personal roles: How persons perceive themselves as they really are (Weber, Feldman, & Poling, 1980).

Roles: Sets of normatively determined behaviors and characteristics attendant to categories of employment or responsibility either in professional or personal settings (Weber et al., 1980)

Social roles: Elements of the status quo that reflect normative attitudes towards modes of conduct for particular roles (Weber et al., 1980).
Upwardly mobile: The desire to experience success and achievement within one’s profession by holding positions of increasing importance, influence, and power (Jackson, 1980).

Summary and Overview

The woman administrator is still a mystery. Wherever there are public schools, there are women holding positions of leadership. However, the majority of those leadership positions are concentrated on the lower rungs of the career ladder (Shakeshaft, 1989). When women enter teaching, they are expected to remain there for a number of reasons Ortiz (1982). This study was designed to determine the perceptions of women administrators in North Dakota public schools regarding their careers, aspirations, and experiences with such restraints or barriers to advancement.

The second chapter of this study contains a summary of and review of pertinent literature. The research design is described in Chapter III. Findings are reported in Chapter IV. The final chapter contains a summary, conclusions, recommendations, and a commentary.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While the sexes are distributed more or less equally among students across educational levels, women as teachers and administrators are concentrated at the elementary level and decrease in proportion to men at the middle and secondary grade levels. Although women comprise a majority of the nation's public school teaching force, most school administrators are men. This is the case even though administrators are chosen from the teaching ranks and women have made up at least half of the enrollments in the educational administration programs since the middle of the 1980s (Bell & Chase, 1993). School administration at the highest level, the district superintendency, is particularly resistant to the integration of women. The proportions of women in public school superintendencies rose from 2.8% in 1986-87 to 4.2% in 1989-90 and 5.6% in 1991-92 (Bell & Chase, 1993). According to 1992 statistics, as reported by Bell and Chase (1993), the overall picture of school administration is one of white dominance (96.6%) as well as of male dominance (94.4%). Even though women are present in the superintendency and other administrative positions in greater proportions than ever before, the change in the past century has been quite small.

In preparing the review of the literature, extensive research was found to have been conducted on the reasons for the lack of women in educational administration in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During the next decade, however, relatively little research
was conducted or published on this topic. In the middle to late 1990s, that issue again surfaced in the research literature. This review of the literature was focused on issues of women administrators in the following areas: career paths, obstacles faced while pursuing administrative positions, and recent trends for women seeking administrative positions as well as for those women who hold positions in educational administration.

Career Paths

Sadker et al. (1991) found that women’s aspirations increased when they perceived genuine opportunities in educational administration. In 1958, only nine percent of women surveyed were interested in educational administration. In 1977, 50% of women surveyed indicated an interest in that career.

According to Shakeshaft (1989), many women began their careers committed to education. Most such women knew they wanted to be teachers as early as the beginning of high school. After undergraduate school, women began teaching. A few years later, many took leaves of absence from teaching to have and raise children. Whereas not all women have had children, and not all of those who had children took leaves of absence, most who did take childcare leaves did so while in their 20s. Shakeshaft found that leaves for childcare served a dual purpose for the women who took them. Women often pursued graduate education at the master’s level during those periods of leave. Even if not on leave, most women began work on graduate degrees while in their late 20s or early 30s. The majority of those women focused their graduate study on their teaching fields, although a few women majored in educational administration.
In their 30s, women turned to administration, almost always at the urging of persons in their school districts or buildings. Shakeshaft (1989) cited studies that indicated that it takes very little to turn a woman’s attention to administration; however, it does take some overt act to cause most women to begin thinking of becoming school administrators. If the woman seeks a position on her own, rather than being sought for it, and she doesn’t get it, she will try again only once or twice and then cease pursuing administrative positions. Those who were recruited for or otherwise succeeded in getting administrative positions generally moved into one of two kinds of positions: as elementary principals or as central office subject matter specialists. The typical woman administrators then remained at that level.

How do women obtain administrative positions? Ortiz (1982) conducted a study of 350 school administrators in California. She found that one method was to excel in teaching a particular subject or grade level. An example of this would be reading specialists who get the attention of principals through their exceptional skills in teaching reading. The consequence of this, however, is that such excellence may lead to assignments as curriculum specialists in the district offices rather than as principals.

The bureaucratic systems within school districts have clear career ladders, although the entry rungs are few in number at the lower levels. From the viewpoint of teachers, the positions of specialists and department heads represent entry-level administrative positions. However, most such positions exist only at the high school level (Wheatley, 1981).
Ortiz (1982) found that the first administrative position for white males was usually the principalship. Women, however, were more likely to be assigned to administrative positions at the district office. Some women were encouraged to accept principalships by mentors who assisted them in achieving those positions. Another path women followed to the principalship involved achieving the position by fortuitous accident such as taking over the leadership role in a school during the illness or sudden departure of the regular principal.

Glass et al. (2000) conducted a study of superintendents throughout the United States. Of the 2,260 respondents to their questionnaire, 297 (13%) were women. A majority of those women served as superintendents in small districts and came from elementary teaching backgrounds. The authors found that elementary teachers had less access to administrative positions than did secondary teachers. There usually were few assistant principalships or department chair positions available in elementary settings. Most elementary teachers usually needed to move from teaching positions to principalships or central office positions before reaching the superintendency. As did Ortiz, Glass et al. found that women often got their first administrative experience in the position of coordinator. The second most likely entry-level administrative position for women was the principalship.

Shakeshaft (1989) described three different career paths to administrative positions. In the first, the path was from specialist to administrator of curriculum and instruction to assistant superintendent to superintendent. A second career path moved from assistant secondary principal to secondary principal to assistant or associate
superintendent to superintendent. Women rarely achieved the superintendency through that latter path. The third mobility pattern was the one most likely to be demonstrated by women and one that seldom led to the superintendency. That path began at the assistant elementary principalship and moved only to the elementary principalship.

Bell, Chase, and Livingston (1987) conducted a study of women superintendents in Oklahoma. They found that half of the women moved into the superintendency from central office administrative positions. Some of the women had held elementary principalships but also had been high school principals prior to moving into their superintendent positions. Extra-curricular activities, coaching, and experience as department chairs provided opportunities for advancement. Bell and Chase (1993) found that the elementary principalship, the position most of the women held, rarely led to further promotions, while the high school principalship was often a stepping stone to higher positions, including the superintendency.

Jackson (1980) conducted interviews with 34 women superintendents throughout the United States. She found that the career ladders of those women fell into two main patterns: those who achieved the superintendency by first serving as building administrators, and those who achieved the superintendency by advancing through various central office positions. Jackson found that the majority of women began their administrative careers at the elementary level or in central office positions. Most administrative positions were obtained as a result of outside influence, and geographic mobility was seen as an important factor in the careers of the superintendents. Jackson also found that successful women administrators were sensitive; related well with people;
were visible, energetic, positive, and hard workers; used their families as support bases; and had good conflict resolution skills. Half of the respondents in Jackson’s study, when looking back on their career paths, reported that they would have handled their careers differently. They would have taken more graduate courses earlier in their careers; filled in experiential gaps, particularly in regard to principalships; and spent a shorter period of time as teachers.

Promotion for its own sake was not at the top of the career agenda for women in Grant’s (1989) study of 38 female administrators. Career moves for those women had been prompted by concerns relating to job satisfaction and factors outside their control. The women’s attitudes regarding career and planning were characterized by these themes: (1) uncertainty about the development of personal life events and their possible effects on career progress, coupled with overriding personal factors such as ill health or family responsibilities which made career planning inappropriate; (2) lack of awareness of career stages and promotion routes; and (3) alternate career commitments which ran counter to a notion of career success built on advancement through the promotional hierarchy. All of the women described their roles and responsibilities as daughters, wives, partners, and mothers as well as their roles as teachers, and it appeared that the interaction of the different role sets had potentially important consequences for the development of their careers.

In Grant’s (1989) study, 14 of the 38 women administrators were mothers, and this had played a significant role in their career planning. For them, long-term planning seemed inappropriate.
One woman said, "I think it comes to a lot of women who've sacrificed – and I do mean that – a lot for their families. 'What can I really achieve on my own?' And the fact that at each stage, I actually found out that, I could do it. I wouldn't say I had a tremendous amount of confidence every time I took on the next step. I didn't. It was always very pleasant when I found out that I could actually do it. So my career actually stole up on me." (Grant, 1989, p. 117)

Changes brought about by parenting, and other personal, domestic, or family factors made it unrealistic for some women to construct and abide by specific career plans.

Jackson (1980) found that women stopped their advancement in a career or abandon a career altogether at almost any stage. Women tended to choose professions idiosyncratically rather than through any planned sequence or with a great deal of forethought. Over half (53%) of the women interviewed in Jackson’s study indicated that they had neither consciously nor subconsciously formulated a definite plan in order to advance their careers. Jackson found also that women advanced through an “internal process.” Sponsorship was seen as highly important in seeking administrative positions. Career goals were usually formulated as an outgrowth of teaching experiences, and most positions were secured either accidentally or without decisive planning. Grant concurred with Jackson in finding that few women in her study had clearly developed career plans. Instead, the respondents indicated that they were constantly reviewing and revising their careers as they struggled to fulfill their other role obligations as daughters, wives, and mothers.

Schmuck (1975) conducted a series of interviews with 10 men and 30 women in administrative positions in Oregon. Schmuck found that half of the women interviewed had been persuaded to take their administrative positions by male supervisors and 14 of the 30 women had never even gone through a formal process of application. Schmuck
stated that "many women were pushed, cajoled, persuaded or even driven to their
managerial positions by male administrators" (p. 343).

Edson (1988) studied 142 women across the United States who were actively
seeking administrative positions. Two thirds (68%) of the respondents identified mentors
in their work settings who encouraged them to pursue administrative positions. Those
mentors usually were male principals. One respondent stated,

I got into administration because I was pushed. After fourteen years in education,
I never really thought about administration until my principal made me
department chair. I said, 'No thanks,' but he said I didn't have any choice. It was
a headache, but I was challenged. (Edson, 1988, p.74)

Two thirds of the women superintendents in Jackson's (1980) study sought
administrative positions as a result of external influences. Only 4 women of the 34
interviewed had made conscious decisions to enter administration as part of an overall
career plan or pattern. Career advancement for the majority of those women was not
achieved through planning but rather in reacting to opportunities in a haphazard way. For
the nearly half (47%) of respondents who did admit to either consciously or
subconsciously planning their careers, the strategies they utilized were as follows: (1) set
goals, achieve them, and move to the next level; (2) obtain advanced degrees and
certification; (3) display talents and abilities; (4) work with supportive groups; (5) obtain
community support; (6) take on responsibilities normally identified with men; (7) become
visible in a positive way; and (8) work hard.

In conclusion, a review of the literature unveiled that women's career paths are
varied and usually unplanned. Mentors or other male administrators usually have a
significant impact on the career path of women educators. The next part of this chapter is focused on the obstacles women face as they seek and enter administrative positions.

**Obstacles**

Women in school administration are members of both a majority (women as educators) and a minority (women as administrators). Their positions as female leaders put them on the fringes of groups of teachers and administrators. Women administrators’ experiences encompass both authority and influence as leaders and isolation and exclusion as women in a male-dominated occupation (Bell, 1995).

Women enter schools and colleges as “the other.” As outsiders, women in administration thus face pressures due to their gender, their position as token women in a predominantly male world, their tenuous status as organizational members, and their role as leaders in the top levels of organizations (Cooper, 1995).

Jackson (1980) identified several reasons why women did not seek administrative positions. Some of the reasons were fear of failure, uncertainty about their ability to handle conflict effectively, lack of mobility, and reluctance to adopt policy-making decisions. In addition, many women had fewer opportunities to acquire administrative experience and evidenced insecurity with their own decisions. Women did not seek administrative positions due to conflicts of interest between career and family roles. Married women in leadership roles reported having to bear the pressures of simultaneously being the “perfect leader,” “perfect wife,” and “perfect mother.”

Schmuck (1975) found that women, regardless of marital status, were more place-bound than males. Only 4 of the 30 women interviewed had been administrators in other
school districts. All of the men in Schmuck's study had worked in at least two other school districts. Women reported that they did not have the societal approval or option to move their husbands and families to obtain additional schooling or to new job locations.

Jackson (1980), in studying 34 superintendents throughout the United States found that the majority (70%) of the respondents indicated that a woman had to be geographically mobile if she wanted to advance her career. One respondent stated, "I think being place-bound is deadly. I think your experiences on the east coast or west coast are apt to be more productive than your experiences in a small, rural district in the Midwest" (p. 158). Another respondent commented:

I've talked to several administrators who have moved upward. They've been hundreds of miles away from their homes and consumed by loneliness. You have to know yourself. I know what I need to be happy. I need to be with my family and friends. This is not to say I wouldn't move, but before I move, I'm going to really know that is what I want. A job won't be worth it if I'm going to be miserable. Even if there was a job that paid five times what I'm getting right now, it would not be worth it, if I was going to be unhappy at it. (Jackson, 1980, p. 157)

Edson (1988) conducted a study of 142 women across the United States who were actively seeking administrative positions. There were two phases of that research: the initial data collection in 1979-80 and a second career update in 1984-85. Edson published the results of this study in her book, *Pushing the Limits*. One chapter of that book dealt with the issue of mobility as an obstacle for women in educational administration. Three fourths of the women in her study indicated that they were willing to move out of their districts to further their careers. This differed from the finding in Paddock's study (1981) that less than half of the respondents were willing to move to new districts.
Due to the limitations or specific requirements attached to career advancement in particular schools or districts, many women must reassess their initial plans and goals (Edson, 1988). As they advance in their careers, they must alter their feelings about mobility in order to move into leadership positions. When a woman is single or divorced, the issue of job mobility may not carry the same weight as for a married woman. While single women seemed to be more open to future moves, they did admit to their own special concerns and insecurities. For example, personal friendships may act as traditional support systems for such persons; while married women often obtain such support from their husbands and children. Even though single women expressed a willingness to move, they also realized that they did so at a personal cost. They usually were not able to bring their support systems with them.

Married women must deal with whether or not they can move without negatively affecting either their husbands’ jobs, their children’s schooling, or, in some cases, their parents’ or in-laws’ well-being (Edson, 1988).

I interviewed for a position about a four hour drive from here and ended up in an interesting female dilemma. I had just remarried and had joint custody of the kids and couldn’t move. So I told myself I was just doing this for the experience. But I became a finalist, and the job got more and more attractive. At the end I would have given my right arm for that job, but I could see even commuting would endanger my marriage and interrupt my son’s high school experience. The job became a question for my whole family to consider. (Edson, 1988, pp. 56-57)

I’ve been recommended for some jobs out of the county and even out of the state, but I am not one who can pick up and leave my family. I am sort of like Ruth in the Bible as far as my husband is concerned. This is his home, so it’s my home. Some of the job opportunities I heard of were just not in the right places, so I didn’t apply. (Edson, 1988, p. 57)
Whether because of family responsibilities or just because they are not persons who can pick up and leave the home, the women who pass up such career opportunities, even temporarily, suffer frustration.

An assistant principal said, my family has been supportive up to a point, but they don’t want to move. They figure I should be patient, and that if I’m good enough, the district will find something for me. But so far, no one’s retiring. As for commuting to a job, are you kidding? My husband would just remind me that my money is not putting food on the table!” (Edson, 1988, p. 57)

For some women in Edson’s study, career choices produced major conflicts between husbands and wives.

I’ve already delivered an ultimatum to my husband. If my principal gets hired as superintendent and I am passed over again for his job, I am leaving whether my husband comes or not. I really did my best to make it here, because he wants to live in this town. But if they don’t hire me for this opening, I’m leaving. (Edson, 1988, p. 58)

Some couples may work out a commuter marriage in which dual residences are maintained. For others, the husband’s career may be subordinated to allow the wife to accept a new career opportunity.

In a study of 199 female administrators, Crandall and Reed (1986) found two patterns of mobility for women. They described public school superintendents and assistant superintendents, along with middle and high school principals, as “career-bound.” That is, they were willing to move to new districts, to change responsibilities, and even to vary from administrative to nonadministrative activities (such as attending executive school board sessions when invited) to further their careers. On the other hand, they described elementary district superintendents and principals, district office personnel and, to some extent, K-12 assistant principals as “place-bound,” individuals who wait in
the same district or position until the positions they want come along. The authors cautioned female aspirants to anticipate the consequences of their career moves if reaching the higher levels of school leadership was important to them.

Whether single or married, the issue of job mobility is central to the careers of women administrators and cannot be pushed aside with wishful thinking that success will come without moving (Edson, 1988). When asked to reflect back on their careers, 45% of the women from Edson's study reported being impressed with how far they had come. Over 50%, however, responded in terms of the future, rather than the past. For those women, past accomplishments were less important than understanding how far they still had to go. To achieve their goals, therefore, they realized that moving was frequently a requirement for success in educational administration.

Women with children face more personal obstacles than unmarried women with no children or males, regardless of their marital status (Schmuck, 1975). As stated earlier, there are multiple expectations of women in educational administration. Valentine (1995) stated that "women feel compelled to be successful in so many areas: they have to be successful in their job, they have to be wonderful mothers, wonderful wives, and wonderful homemakers" (p. 345).

Most women must balance their careers with their families and personal lives. Family members and friends usually were given first priority (Valentine, 1995). Lack of aspiration or motivation in women actually may be an accurate reflection of reality in light of home and family responsibilities versus career opportunities. It is not internal obstacles that keep women from aspiring to administrative positions but the reality of a
world that expects that, if she works outside the home, a woman will continue still to do the major portion of work inside the home as well (Shakeshaft, 1989).

For most men, family responsibility is work responsibility. In other words, their perceived primary obligation to their families is to bring home a paycheck. For most women, work responsibilities are added to home tasks. Not wanting to take on two jobs says nothing about aspiration level but reflects an accurate understanding of the number of hours in the day and the very real limits of the human body. Some women even questioned whether they were as willing to pursue a career geared to helping other people's children at the expense of their own (Edson, 1995).

Home and family responsibilities provide obstacles for women in administration in two ways, (Shakeshaft, 1989). Women must not only effectively juggle all of their tasks, they must contend also with the majority of school board presidents and superintendents who believe erroneously that not only are women unable to manage the balancing act, but that it is inappropriate for them to even attempt it.

Paddock (1981) found that marriage could be an obstacle for women in educational administration. The study found that marriage affected careers differently depending on whether the subject was a man or a woman. Male school administrators were expected to be married, but not necessarily women.

As noted, a major barrier to women’s career aspirations is the divided role of professional and homemaker (Paddock, 1981). One woman told Pollock, “My own feeling [was] that I needed to give primary attention to my family until the youngest was in school. This took 17 years out of my professional activities.” (p. 191). Schmuck
Grant (1989) found that the association of women with the “caring role” was a strong theme in a number of her interviews. She found that women’s career plans were affected not only by their perceived responsibility for the care of children but also the care of elderly parents. Grant also found that women’s career paths were heavily dependent on such other factors as marriage, parenthood, separation and divorce, and personal and family illness. Only a small number of the women interviewed were able to direct their energies wholly toward the pursuit of their career goals.

Edson (1988) stated that women administrators received support from their families as long as home routines remained somewhat constant. Another concern related to family responsibilities was the distance many female graduate students were required to commute to attend accredited graduate programs. Women’s roles as mothers and wives often took precedence over their needs for further schooling in a way not experienced by most men. Men did not need to justify further schooling because it was expected by others that they would prepare for advancement in their careers. For women attempting to reach beyond the teaching role, this was not the case. Many of the women Edson (1988) interviewed would laugh and say, “If I only had a wife.”

Teaching has been a socially acceptable occupation for women as well as a traditional supplementary occupation (Weber et al., 1980). Women have been expected
to sustain both their careers and the responsibilities of maintaining homes and families. Because of the competing demands between the professional and mothering roles, women's career status traditionally has been secondary to that of males. Therefore, women are twice victim to conflict, within their roles as professionals and mothers and between themselves and their partners with respect to parental and career roles.

Because they have more self-doubts and lack confidence about their abilities to perform in administrative positions, women have been reluctant to aspire to or accept positions of responsibility and influence (Schmuck, 1975). Schmuck suggested that both men and women probably are afraid of the heights of ambition, achievement, and accomplishment along with all of the responsibilities that are involved. The major difference in handling this dilemma is that men are forced to face their fears and, if they are successful, they gain symbols of success. Women, however, are not challenged to face these same fears and, in the process, remain self-doubting. Part of the anxieties associated with success may be attributable to the fact that, for women, that can be a scarce commodity. With all scarce commodities that have value, women worry about wanting success, feel guilty about having it, and do not quite know how to cope with it when they get it. Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) describe women's reluctance to accept authority when they finally earn a position of authority. The old norms of society that women should not be given power, continues to cause women to feel uncomfortable when given a position of authority.

Women who work in male-dominated occupations are often thought to be sexless, and those who really take their work seriously are often held to be the antithesis of the
feminine woman (Jackson, 1980). Being the first or the lone female administrator in a district carries added burdens. The few who achieve such success experience greater pressure to do outstanding jobs (Edson, 1988). Schmuck (1975) found that almost every person she interviewed, whether male or female, agreed that a woman must be smarter, more competent, and more capable than a man to obtain leadership positions in school districts.

Women have serious role conflicts to consider (Ortiz, 1982). Many persons within educational or other organizations have been socialized to expect certain behaviors and attitudes from women. Wanting to administer and lead is a departure from the expected focus on children and teaching and may represent characteristics which are problematic for organizational superiors to accept. This also may be disturbing to other women who believe that women and teaching belong together. Women who view themselves within the cultural expectations of being feminine may experience role conflict in accepting women who do not behave within the cultural norms. Women, who wish to advance professionally, are still facing the stigma of old social norms which dictate that a woman’s primary goal in life is to marry and raise a family. Women, throughout history, have been identified with the body and emotions, while men are identified with their minds and accomplishments (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988).

Researchers have found several interrelated processes that impede women’s integration into educational administration. First, gender stratification in schools is maintained by differential access to opportunities for advancement. Elementary teachers are less likely than secondary teachers to have access to leadership opportunities. Bell
and Chase (1993) found that high school teachers had more opportunities to participate in leadership activities such as coaching and serving as department chairs. Researchers have also found that there are both subtle and blatant forms of sex discrimination that prevent women from obtaining positions in educational administration (Bell & Chase, 1993).

Several studies have been designed to identify barriers that prevent women from seeking administrative positions. Shakeshaft (1989) described three models which she used to explain those barriers. The first is the Woman’s Place Model, which is based on the proposition that women’s nonparticipation in administrative roles is based solely on social norms. The second model is the Discrimination Model, in which institutional patterns are a result of effects by members of one group to exclude participation of another. The third model, the Meritocracy Model, proposes that most competent people are promoted and, therefore, women must not be competent since they rarely are promoted.

Ortiz (1982) found that one of the most severe barriers to administrative advancement by women was the initial departure from teaching as it is perceived by others that teaching is an appropriate profession for a woman. Other barriers involved occupying those positions which don’t provide opportunities for upward mobility, losing out to white males in the competition for positions, and moving along the wrong career path, such as being a specialist rather than a principal.

Lynch (1990) described three research theories that might explain why women are not represented in administration in proportional numbers. First, women may be deemed
to be unsuited to administrative work due to their early socialization; therefore, they need to be socialized to perform more effectively in administrative roles. Second, structural barriers prevent women from advancing in their careers. Male dominance in society is the focus of the third theory.

In a study of 116 women administrators in Oregon, Edson (1980) found that 71% of the respondents perceived that certain barriers were a hindrance to their ability to reach their career goals. The two barriers cited most frequently were lack of experience and discrimination. Some respondents also reported that men were selected for their potential, whereas women were required already to have demonstrated their competence. Eighty percent of the respondents to that study indicated that they needed to be more qualified than men if they were going to obtain administrative positions. One newly hired principal said, “Women have to be very good and work twice as hard” (p. 178).

Schmuck (1975) found three predominant deterrents among the 30 female administrators she interviewed. The first deterrent was women’s traditional role in the family, which restricted their freedom in seeking career changes. The second deterrent was women’s lack of confidence in their abilities to perform effectively in leadership roles. The third deterrent was the view that women who did pursue administrative careers were exceptional; that perception also kept women from seeking leadership positions.

Jackson (1980) identified seven areas that prevented her subjects from achieving their career goals. They were being a female, not having a doctorate, not having a power base, being seen as too soft, receiving inadequate support from other women, living in
one community, and not being political. According to an American Association of School Administrators (AASA) survey of school superintendents (Glass et al., 2000), the two most widely cited reasons for the lack of women in the superintendency were that women were discouraged from preparing for that position and school boards were reluctant to hire them. The AASA study found several reasons why few women were seeking the superintendency. Women usually were not in positions that normally led to the superintendency. Of the 297 women who responded to the AASA survey, 130 were former elementary teachers. Research indicated that high school and middle school teachers had more opportunities to move into administrative positions. A second reason presented in the study was that women were not gaining superintendent credentials in their graduate preparation programs. Nationwide data indicated that women made up more than half of the students enrolled in educational administration programs. However, only 10% of those women were opting to earn the superintendency credential when working on a specialist or doctoral degree. The AASA study also noted that women were not as experienced or as interested in the fiscal part of the superintendency. School boards did not want to hire superintendents with little experience in fiscal management. In addition, most women tended to demonstrate more skills in instructional programs than for fiscal or other administrative tasks. Women also were not interested in the superintendency for personal reasons. The average work week for a superintendent was 50 hours, including attendance at sports activities and evening meetings. That job description was not as appealing to persons who preferred a better balance between work and family. Women administrators recognized that the time and pressure of the
superintendency frequently interfered with family life and chose to spend nonworking
time with their families instead of with school board members and citizen groups.

Gjovik (1998) conducted a study of women principals in North Dakota. She
found that 79% of the women principals who responded to her survey were not interested
in advancing to a superintendent position. Only 12% of the women principals indicated
that they were interested in pursuing a superintendency. The most frequently cited
barrier to advancement was a perceived inability to move or relocate. Other barriers
suggested by Gjovik’s respondents were home and family responsibilities, lack of an
established network to share information regarding job openings for career advancement,
and few women role models. However, those women did not perceive barriers related to
gender or lack of administrative experience.

Superintendents usually were hired for their first such positions from within their
school districts and tended to have three different superintendencies during their 15 to 17
years as superintendents (Glass et al., 2000). This indicated that the superintendents
families made approximately four moves after those individuals left their roles as
classroom teachers. Many women administrators perceived that it was difficult to move
if they were confronted with the problem of a trailing spouse. In addition, school boards
were reluctant to hire women superintendents. Nearly 82% of the women
superintendents in the AASA study indicated that school board members did not see them
as strong managers, and 76% reported that school board members did not view them as
capable of handling district finances. Over half (61%) of the women perceived that a
glass ceiling existed in school administration, an effect that lessened their chances of
being promoted to the superintendency. Women also appeared to have less developed mentoring systems compared to men.

Women found themselves to not be rewarded for academic and career success in the same manner or extent that men had been. Many women found themselves to be rejected because of their successes (Jackson, 1980). Women usually had to obtain doctoral degrees to have the same opportunities as men with master’s degrees (Edson, 1988). American society traditionally has not given much support or guidance to women administrators (Jackson, 1980). Women must decide if they wish to pursue the rewards that men usually take for granted: money, prestige, power, and work satisfaction.

Recent Trends

Women traditionally have had to choose between a traditional female role and a career. Historically, there have been two societal rules governing women and work. Women only worked when there was a need for economic survival, and their work had to duplicate as closely as possible their domestic situations. Three major patterns regarding careers emerged from the review of the literature. The pattern of revocability assumes that, as she proceeds through her career, a woman has the choice of stopping her advancement or abandoning it altogether at almost every turn. The patterns of ambivalence and ambiguity emerge from the interactions among a woman’s traditional role, an occupational and professional role, and the American values of equality and achievement. The stresses that result when those factors conflict create conditions that act to limit women’s participation in prestige occupations. Ambivalence and ambiguity
can undermine training, aspiration, and planning and make it difficult to define future roles (Jackson, 1980).

In 1970, women earned 20% of master’s degrees in educational administration and 8.6% of doctorates in that field (Sadker et al., 1987). By 1988, women earned 57% of the master’s degrees in educational administration and 48% of the doctoral degrees. An estimated 50% of the graduates of administrator assessment centers have been female, as were 50% of the assessors and 65% of the participants in the assessment center development programs. Those findings indicated that there were many women qualified for educational administrative positions, but they were not being hired in equitable numbers.

Many women traditionally entered education because it was one of the few occupations open to women who wanted or needed work outside the home and the hours meshed well with the demands of marriage and raising families. Many women did not think in terms of long-range goals, or even of their careers. However, after years of classroom routine and a growing skepticism concerning women’s roles, many began reconsidering their earlier career choices (Edson, 1988). Women in 2000 had more career choices, and many chose to be teachers, not administrators (Glass et al., 2000).

Ortiz (1982) stated that, when women enter teaching, it is generally accepted that they will remain there. Ortiz identified three reasons for this. The first reason is the expectation that women will continue their prominent role as teacher, especially at the elementary level. Second, it is perceived that women are more appropriate for teaching children than men. Third, women who aspire to administrative positions are restrained in
various ways or another. Ortiz found that 30 of 55 aspiring women administrators reported some difficulty in obtaining tenure. One woman “learned early on that women aren’t expected to aspire to administrative positions. I decided to keep quiet, get experience, and an administrative credential; and wait for a position somewhere” (Ortiz, 1982, p. 58).

According to Ortiz (1982), the typical female administrator usually portrayed a conservative image. According to Shakeshaft (1989), she was a woman who did not have children; whose children were grown; or who procured private childcare in the form of a full-time housekeeper who often was the administrator’s own mother.

Brunner (1999) found that many women administrators had been teaching for 15 to 20 years, so they were experienced teachers before they became administrators. At the age of 55 or 60, women were seeking their first superintendency, while males of that age were usually retiring. Glass et al. (2000) found also that first-time women superintendents were older than the average first-year male superintendents. One reason for this is that many women waited until their children were older before pursuing such positions which would make heavy demands on their time. As a result of that trend, most women entered their first administrative positions later than men. The AASA study (Glass et al., 2000) also found that more female superintendents than men were single. While 22% of women were single and 78% were married, almost 95% of male superintendents were married. Shakeshaft (1989) found that women superintendents were older than their male counterparts and were less likely to be married. They were more likely to be members of minority ethnic groups, to have come from urban backgrounds,
backgrounds, to have been teachers for longer periods of time, and to be earning less for
doing the same jobs as male administrators. Gjovik (1998), provided this profile of a
woman administrator in North Dakota: she is white, married with two children, between
the ages of 41-55, has taught at the elementary level for over 17 years, began her
administrative career between the ages of 31-40, and has served as a teacher and
administrator in one school district.

Research results have indicated that a difference exists between the academic
training of women administrators and their male counterparts. More women than men
(19% versus 12%) completed their graduate studies with majors in their teaching fields
(Paddock, 1981). More than twice as many men as women had specialist degrees in
educational administration (47% versus 26%). However, significantly more women
superintendents than men superintendents (33% versus 13%) had obtained doctoral
degrees. In the 2000 AASA study (Glass et al., 2000), more female superintendents
(57%) held doctoral degrees than did males (44%). Bell et al. (1987) found that all of the
female participants in their study had earned or were pursuing doctoral degrees. The
studies suggest that training for administrators appears to serve different purposes for
women and for men. For men, a degree was seen as a tool needed in order to obtain a
position. For women, degrees enabled them to retain positions and improve their
performance in positions already attained.

Female superintendents spent longer periods as classroom teachers than did men.
Fifty percent of the men surveyed in the AASA study (Glass et al., 2000) indicated that
they had spent five years as teachers. Sixty percent of women had at least 10 years of
experience in the classroom. As noted previously, women were most often appointed to their first administrative positions later than men. Nearly 55% of men were appointed to their first administrative positions before the age of 30. Only two percent of women had obtained their first administrative positions by age 30.

Paddock (1981) stated that all school administrators began their careers as teachers. Women had 9 to 10 years of teaching experience while men had 7 or fewer years of experience. Ortiz (1982) found that males taught 5 to 7 years, while females had 15 years of teaching experience before assuming their first administrative positions.

Shakeshaft (1989) identified a similar difference between men and women administrators. Men moved more quickly than women into graduate study where they tended to major in different specializations than did women. Paddock (1980) found that, among secondary school principals, the majority of men (71%) held graduate degrees in educational administration, whereas fewer than half of the women had such a major. Men began work on their first graduate degrees while in their mid-20s; women were more likely to enter graduate school in their late 20s and early 30s. Women tended to plan for career advancement less than men. Men in administrative positions found steady paths up the traditional hierarchy. From teaching positions, they moved to assistant principalships or principalships, from principalships to assistant superintendencies, and then to superintendent positions.

Ortiz (1980) stated that, in order to create and maintain the existing culture in public schools, enculturation processes began during the early years of teaching experience. When women entered teaching, they were expected to remain there. Three
features aided in the perpetuation of that expectation. First, women were prominent in schools, particularly at the elementary level. Second, it was perceived that women were more appropriately suited for teaching children. Third, those women who expressed desires for administrative positions were restrained in one way or another.

The first means by which expectations for women were actualized was through the granting of tenure. The second means was through the provision of movement from less desirable teaching positions to those in better schools. The third means involved requiring women to excel in some content area in order to move out of the classroom. Finally, women departed from the classroom as specialists rather than as principals. Female specialists who wished to advance did so by becoming supervisors. That practice showed that the greatest proportion of women in educational administration was in the central or district offices. They were engaged in administration of pupil personnel services, of instructional and supervisory areas, and in general administration. Those women who became principals tended to be assigned most often at the elementary level. They were likely to be situated in the larger cities, and they were also older than their male counterparts (Ortiz, 1980).

According to Ortiz (1980) women principals decided on teaching careers much earlier than men. Teaching often was their first career choice. Women also entertained the idea of becoming principals at a far later age than men did. In contrast to males, females frequently were pushed into the principalship by sponsors who encouraged them professionally, or else they arrived there by a fortuitous accident. Males, on the other
hand, actively sought the principalship for reasons related to occupational and social mobility and increased income.

Women in educational administration reported that they found themselves disproportionately underrepresented (Ortiz, 1980). As members of a minority, women in educational administration responded in a variety of ways. One was to overachieve and therefore publicly perform in a manner intended to minimize organizational and peer criticism or concerns. Those women were seen as outstanding, exceptional, and able to perform well under close observation. They were able to maintain a delicate balance between always doing well and not generating peer resentment. As a result of those excruciating demands, the successful women were slightly older than their male peers. In addition to their strong technical backgrounds, they had extensive experiences as a minority among men.

Ortiz (1980) found that few women were socialized in the company of males. That resulted in specific, different attitudes and behaviors. First, those women strongly resisted admitting that they had been discriminated against. They resisted describing their careers and the manner by which they had obtained their positions. In short, they had become very cautious individuals. Second, those women were highly achievement-oriented. They personally had set out to prove that they could do something. Third, they were keenly aware of their support within the organization. Most of those women were supported strongly by powerful organizational mentors. The mentors usually were principals, superintendents, or university professors. Fourth, those women were accustomed to difficulties at each level of advancement. They learned to expect
challenges, accepted them, and were prepared to battle for their advancement. Fifth, women administrators were reluctant to express further career aspirations. They spoke in terms of “doing their best.” Furthermore, their coworkers could not cite instances in which those persons had complained, asked for promotions, or expressed higher aspirations. The women were perceived to be highly competent, exceptional, dependable, and capable of being superintendents.

Edson (1988) asked 142 women aspirants why they were interested in becoming administrators. All of the women responded that they believed they were the best choices to be the future leaders in America’s schools. Over 70% of the women said that they wanted the professional growth and challenges inherent in school administration, and 66% reported their belief that they would be good administrators, when given the opportunity. Over half of the respondents (53%) wanted to do something more positive in schools than what they presently saw being done.

In addition to the desire for change and challenge, a second major reason cited by women who sought administrative careers was their strong belief in their own abilities (Edson, 1988). A third motivating reason women mentioned for aspiring to administrative careers was a concern for children in the public school system. The predominant belief that emerged from the wide range of women interviewed was a sense that they needed to be more dedicated and clearer about what they wanted to achieve in the field than did the average male candidate.

Jackson (1980) found in her study that some women attributed their entrance into administration to the fact that they found themselves in rapidly growing districts, were
caught up in the momentum of that growth, and moved from area to area in response to needs and personnel shortages. Four of the superintendents who were interviewed became administrators because they saw such career changes as natural progressions in life-long careers in education. They specifically had set goals for those experiences early in their teaching careers. Others became administrators because they began to feel that they wanted to play greater roles in influencing and/or controlling the education process. Some women saw administration as an expression of their own personal qualities and an answer to their personal needs. Those qualities and/or needs were identified as leadership ability, ability to make a contribution, the need for a challenge, and the need for additional income.

Two powerful movements were identified in American public schools in the 1990s: the reform movement with its emphasis on restructuring schools and the paradigm shift in leadership that was characterized by collaboration and consensus building (Grady et al., 1994). Grady et al. conducted a study of 21 women superintendents in urban areas and 30 women superintendents in rural areas in 1993. They found the following reasons why women entered administration: they wanted to make a difference, they wanted a change in their professional lives, they wanted to meet children’s needs, and they enjoyed working with people. Grady et al. found that women superintendents in both urban and rural areas had defined their leadership roles in ways that were different from the command and control, hierarchical model favored by male superintendents. Their roles emphasized collaboration and cooperation. Lynch (1990) found that women were being appointed more frequently to principalships because the desired approach to
management had shifted from the traditional male stereotype to a more people-oriented, curriculum-centered, consensus-driven style more typical of women (Lynch, 1990).

There have been claims that women's typical leadership styles are superior to those of men and better suited to running effective schools (Sadker et al., 1991). Sadker et al. portrayed women as typically possessing valued traits such as concern for others, greater focus on teaching and learning, more democratic and participative styles, greater effectiveness in representing the school and working with the community, more emphasis on using outside resources to apply new ideas to improve instruction, and increased attention to monitoring student participation and evaluating student learning. Matthews (1995) found that women brought the following strengths to administration: sensitivity to other people, ability to read behaviors, willingness to negotiate, patience, empathy, and human relation skills.

Brunner (1998) studied 13 women superintendents from various parts of the United States and identified five significant findings about the practices of women superintendents in America's public schools. First, she confirmed the belief that a number of women in positions of power used the social production, or power with/to, model of power because they were uncomfortable with a social control, or power-over, model of power. Second, Brunner made clear that one reason the women in her study used a social production model of power was their strong beliefs that relationships were important and the social production model of power valued the voices, opinions, and input of other people. Third, the research revealed that the women in the study focused primarily on two areas of care: taking care of relationships and caring for children.
Fourth, it was their caring for children that focused women superintendents who participated in that study on issues of curriculum and instruction in ways viewed as atypical for men in the same office. Finally, the study showed that, when they defined and practiced power as social production or power with/to, women also practiced an ethic of care, the feminine model of ethics. In no small measure, the collaborative model of power supported an ethic of care.

Women more than men tend to be concerned with local and immediate relationships, remaining loyal to the local work group even as professionals, rather than identifying with the field as a whole and aspiring to promotions which might cause them to leave the local environments. (Kanter, 1982, p. 54)

Jackson (1980) provided the following advice to women aspiring to administrative positions. A woman should be able to visualize herself in the role of an administrator. She should have a commitment on the part of her family to the fulfillment of her goals. She should be competent and knowledgeable. She should be sensitive to and aware of other people’s feelings. She should have the proper administrative credentials and, preferably, a doctoral degree. She should show a willingness to work, become involved in school projects, and take advantage of every opportunity for formal and informal leadership. She should have a mentor willing to support her career. She should have competent interviewing skills, know the district, answer interview questions honestly and openly, and dress appropriately. She should learn to handle disappointment and how to grow from each interviewing experience. She must realize that, at some point in her career, she will have to make a decision as to whether she will be geographically mobile.
Sadker et al. (1991) made the following recommendations for those interested in achieving equity in educational administration. First, an equitable proportion of women and minorities should be selected to fill projected administrative vacancies. Well-qualified women and minorities should continue to be prepared and certified in educational administration; be trained and selected without experiencing either overt or subtle discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation; and receive pay and prestige at least equivalent to their male, nonminority peers. Second, all administrator preparation support and evaluation activities should take advantage of school restructuring opportunities and increased societal needs for achieving educational equity. This can be accomplished by decreasing educational hierarchies and increasing participative decision making associated with school restructuring. Finally, the authors suggested that educational administration should be used as a primary mechanism to promote greater equity for traditional and restructured schools. In addition to establishing and using policies intended to eliminate discrimination and decrease stereotyping, administrators, and those who hire them, should be accountable for assessing success in achieving the desired equity outcomes.
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to identify the career paths and perceived mobility of North Dakota women administrators, as well as their perceptions of obstacles to obtaining their professional goals. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. What are the career paths of women administrators in North Dakota schools?
2. What are women administrators' perceptions of their own career paths?
3. What are women administrators' perceptions of their own careers in administration?
4. How do family and personal issues affect the career paths of women administrators?
5. Do women administrators perceive that they have the same mobility and ability to take advantage of job opportunities as their male peers?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all women administrators working in the public schools in North Dakota during the 2000-01 school year. Information regarding those women administrators in North Dakota was obtained from the North Dakota Educational Directory (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 1999). In most instances, the researcher knew the woman administrator. If the researcher did not
know the administrator and he or she had a name which could serve either gender, the researcher contacted that person or someone within that district to ensure that all women administrators in North Dakota were surveyed. All of those individuals were asked to complete a survey instrument.

Respondents were asked to volunteer for interviews; a total of 38 women administrators responded affirmatively to that request. Of the 38 women who responded, 28 were elementary principals, 6 were high school principals, and 4 were assistant superintendents or superintendents. The data provided by those respondents were disaggregated based on demographic information. Twelve women administrators then were selected for interviews: four elementary principals, four middle or secondary principals, and four central office administrators. Those women were selected also to represent a cross-section of women from both small and large districts and across the range of administrative experience.

The women administrators were randomly selected in the following manner: First, the postcards were grouped into elementary principals, high school principals, and assistant superintendents or superintendents. Next, the three groups were divided into groups based on the size of the district. Another group was formed based on number of years of administrative experience. If the researcher did not have this information, the administrator was contacted via e-mail to obtain this information. Postcards were then drawn randomly from the elementary and high school principal groups. Since there were only four respondents in the assistant superintendent and superintendent group, they were all selected to be interviewed.
Research Design

This study was designed in two parts because one method of data collection was not considered to be sufficient for a descriptive study of this nature. The researcher assumed that quantitative data from a survey instrument would be informative; however, more extensive detail could be gained through the addition of face-to-face interviews. For that reason, both a questionnaire and interviews were used in a research design similar to those used in studies by Edson (1980); Jackson (1980); and Weber et al. (1980). By summarizing questionnaire data and then providing depth through the comments from the women who were interviewed, it was expected that a clearer understanding of women administrators and their backgrounds and career paths could be presented. The data from the questionnaires provided information on the general characteristics of female administrators. The interviews yielded further information that could not be gathered from questionnaires and provided personal detail to complement the statistical data in this study.

Jackson (1980) also conducted a study on women superintendents in the United States. Her method of research was to distribute a written questionnaire to all of those women. Data were collected regarding demographic information such as age, marital status, number of children, highest degree held, number of years in education, administrative positions held, and district enrollment. After those data were gathered, Jackson then interviewed 34 superintendents who represented approximately 49% of the women superintendents in the United States.
Survey Instrument and Interview Protocol

A questionnaire was developed for this study based on the design of a survey instrument used by Weber et al. (1980) as well as one developed by Edson in 1980. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) is divided into three parts: demographic information, career paths, and perceptions of educational administration. The demographic portion was designed to provide information regarding age, family status, number of children, current and other personal information such as salary and commuting distance. The majority of those items were provided in a multiple choice format. The section dealing with career paths sought information regarding teaching and administrative experience, size of districts, and professional organizations to which the women administrators in North Dakota belonged. The majority of those questions were also formatted for multiple choice responses. The section of the questionnaire used to identify perceptions of educational administration also employed multiple choice items and dealt with job satisfaction and positive and negative aspects of educational administration.

The interview protocol for this research study was based upon the interview questions used in the study by Jackson (1980). Interview questions were based on four themes: career information, personal and family information, and beliefs and attitudes about educational administration (see Appendix B).

Data Collection and Analysis

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB). A packet was mailed at the end of April 2001 to each woman administrator employed in a public school in North Dakota. The packets
each contained a copy of the instrument (see Appendix A), a cover letter to explain the study (see Appendix C), a postcard (see Appendix D) by which the respondents could indicate their willingness to be interviewed at a later time, and a prepaid return envelope. Each of the return envelopes was marked with a code to assist in determining the identity of non-respondents for follow-up. Approximately six weeks later, another second packet was mailed to each woman administrator who had not responded by that time. Of the 174 individuals to whom packets were mailed, 131 (75.2%) responded.

Thirty-eight respondents returned the postcards, indicating a willingness to be interviewed for this study. Twelve women administrators were chosen to be interviewed based on the criteria listed previously in this chapter. All of the interviews took place in the administrators' offices or classrooms during late May and early June. Each subject was asked for, and granted, permission to use a tape recorder to ensure accurate documentation. The researcher also took written notes. The audiotapes were transcribed throughout July and August by the researcher. A copy of the appropriate transcript was mailed in September to each interview subject to allow for clarification. This provided the respondents with an opportunity to analyze and clarify their answers to the interview questions. Allowing the transcript to be reviewed by the interview subject followed Shakeshaft's (1989) recommendation that the participants in a study be allowed to review what they said to ensure clarity and accuracy. All of the transcripts were returned by the interview subjects within three weeks of the mailing. Each interviewee had reviewed the transcript and noted any suggested changes.
The quantitative data were analyzed with the assistance of Dr. John Hoover, Director of the University of North Dakota’s Bureau of Educational Services and Applied Research. Data were coded, entered, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A cross-tabulation of frequencies, percentages, and means was used to explain the demographic data. Written responses to the questionnaire were sorted for themes relevant to the research questions.

The narrative data from the interviews were sorted for themes relative to the research questions in this study. The data were examined to identify dominant themes, variations from those themes, and descriptions of any outriders or counter-positions.
CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine North Dakota women administrators’ career paths and mobility as well as their perceptions of obstacles to obtaining their professional goals. The following questions were used to guide the study.

1. What are the career paths of women administrators in North Dakota schools?
2. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own career paths?
3. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own careers in administration?
4. How do family and personal issues affect the career paths of women administrators?
5. Do women administrators perceive that they have the same mobility and ability to take advantage of job opportunities as their male peers?

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis of the data that were collected through two methods: questionnaires and interviews. This study was designed in two parts because one method of data collection was not considered to be sufficient for a descriptive study of this nature. The researcher assumed that quantitative data from a survey instrument would be informative; however, more extensive detail could be gained through the addition of face-to-face interviews. For that reason, both a questionnaire and interviews were used in a research design similar to those used in
studies by Edson (1980), Jackson (1980), and Weber et al. (1980). By summarizing questionnaire data and then providing depth through the comments from the women who were interviewed, it was expected that a clearer understanding of women administrators and their backgrounds and career paths could be presented. The data from the questionnaires provided information on the general characteristics of female administrators. The interviews yielded further information that could not be gathered from questionnaires and provided personal detail to complement the statistical data in this study. The demographic data are presented first, followed by the survey and interview data organized by the content of the research questions.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

A survey instrument was distributed to 174 women administrators serving in North Dakota public schools during the 2000-01 school year. From those subjects, 131 questionnaires were returned, providing a 75.2% response rate. While most (104 or 79.4%) of the respondents were elementary principals, 11 (8.4%) of the respondents served as secondary principals, 3 (2.3%) were superintendents, and 13 (9.9%) of the respondents designated "Other" as their present position. Those other positions included assistant superintendents, curriculum coordinators, a human resource administrator, and special education coordinators (see Table 1).

The range of ages for the respondent women administrators was 21 to 66 with a mean age of 47.32. One hundred and fourteen women (87.0%) indicated that they were married and 17 women (13.0%) identified themselves as single, widowed, or divorced. One hundred twenty-four (94.7%) of the women were Caucasian, six respondents (4.5%)
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Principal</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Principal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Positions/Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were Native American, and one (0.8%) checked “Other.” Of the 130 administrators who responded to the pertinent survey item, 102 (78.5%) indicated that they were from rural school districts and 28 (21.5%) were from urban districts. Seven women (5.3%) held doctoral degrees; 4 (3.1%) had earned specialist degrees, and 77 (58.8%) held master’s degrees. Forty-three respondents (32.8%) reported that they had obtained baccalaureate degrees but had not completed any graduate degrees.

Table 2 contains data on the number of years of teaching experience accumulated by respondents before entering educational administration. The range for the number of years of teaching experience was from 1 to 31, with a mean of 11.55. Almost half (55 or 41.9%) of the respondents had 10 or fewer years of teaching experience before becoming administrators. However, 11 (8.4%) of the administrators had over 20 years of teaching experience prior to entering the administrative field. The most often cited numbers of
### Table 2

**Years of Teaching Experience Before Entering Educational Administration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>131</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

years of experience were 10, 12, and 15. The average number of years of administrative experience was 7.57 and the range was from 1 year to 29 years of administrative experience.

More than one third (48 or 37.5%) of the respondents who provided data on their salaries were in the $30,000 to $39,000 range and over half (70 or 54.7%) received less than $40,000 in annual salary (see Table 3). Four respondents received salaries over $70,000.
Table 3
Respondents’ Yearly Salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over $70,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-69,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000-59,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000-49,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-39,000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000-29,000</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals: 131

Demographics of Interview Subjects

As noted in Chapter III, the packet that was distributed to all women in public school administrative positions in North Dakota contained a postcard by which respondents could indicate their willingness to be interviewed. While 131 questionnaires were received, 38 postcards were returned. From those 38 postcards, 12 women were selected on the basis of their current positions, the size of their school districts, and the number of years of administrative experience they reported. Six of the women were administrators in districts with less than 600 students; the other six women represented districts with enrollments of more than 1,000 students. Six women each had less than five years of administrative experience, and six women each had more than five years of
administrative experience. The range of administrative experience was from 2 years to 24 years, with an average of 9.6 years of administrative experience. The number of years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 23, with an average of 11.8 years; this compares closely to the results from the questionnaire for which respondents had a mean of 11.5 years of teaching experience. Four of the women who were interviewed held central office positions (two were superintendents, and two were assistant superintendents), four women were secondary principals (three full-time, one part-time), and four women were elementary principals (three full-time and one part-time teaching principal).

Research Question One

The first research question was focused on the career paths of women administrators in North Dakota public schools. According to both the questionnaire and interview data, women administrators tended to have been teachers for nearly 12 years before entering administration. Eight of the 12 women interviewed first became administrators in the districts where they had served as teachers. One woman had been a guidance counselor and assistant secondary principal before moving to a middle school principalship and then an assistant superintendency. All of the women said that they had been educational leaders as teachers. Five of the women indicated that they had been department chairs or team leaders, head negotiators, and/or presidents of their local education associations. Eight women stated that they had been active in curriculum development in their respective schools and school districts. Six of the women administrators had been teaching principals at some point in their careers. Of those six, four went on to become full-time elementary or secondary principals. Three of those four
women later became assistant superintendents or superintendents. Four of the women administrators moved directly from teaching positions to full-time principalships. Two women were currently serving as teaching principals.

One of the women administrators followed the career path of teacher to assistant principal to principal and then to assistant superintendent. The questionnaire data indicated that nine women had followed similar career paths. The rest of the women moved from teaching positions to either full-time administrative positions or teaching principal positions.

Five women, four of whom were from districts with less than 600 students, stated that they had been recruited for their first administrative positions by their superintendents. One woman administrator stated that had [the superintendent] not called me, I wouldn’t have applied. After I received the phone call to apply for the position, I thought, “sh*t, all my kids are all in college. I don’t have anybody at home, except the farm. Why not try a new adventure?” You know, I’m not old!

Four of those women first became teaching principals. Five of the 12 women had moved to different districts to obtain better administrative positions. Three women made that change within a 50-mile radius of their homes. Two women had moved to different positions around the state.

Research Question Two

What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own career paths? Nine of the women who were interviewed indicated that they had not aspired to administrative positions. One woman stated, “I kind of stumbled into it.” Five of the women were asked by their superintendents to pursue administrative positions and graduate degrees.
One woman administrator initially pursued graduate work in educational administration as an opportunity for personal growth. She had not planned to become an administrator. However, opportunities in her area and district allowed her to obtain administrative positions. Three women indicated that they had chosen to enter administration so they could have a greater impact on children.

When asked if there was anything they would do differently with their careers, one of the women administrators stated that she would have become an administrator "a bit earlier," so that she could have had the opportunity to become a superintendent. She said that she believes there are few women administrators in North Dakota because they begin their careers too late and cannot move through the traditional career path of teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. Nine of the women would follow again the same career paths, even though their paths had not been specifically planned. Two of the women who were also full-time teachers expressed frustration at being unable to feel competent in their dual positions. They indicated that their administrative duties were less important to them than their teaching duties.

Pursuing graduate work was a factor in women's perceptions of their career paths. Three women stated they never would have entered administration if there had not been distance learning graduate programs available. They were not able to leave their teaching positions to go to a campus full-time or even for a summer school session. One administrator obtained her administrative credentials by attending a five-week summer session. She was also a farm wife with a husband and hired man to feed, so she had to hire someone to come in and wash dishes and take care of other household duties while
she was taking graduate classes. Here is how she juggled her farming responsibilities along with her graduate work:

Last summer, I was gone five and a half weeks and I would come home on weekends. I would come home and cook for the whole week. I hired my niece who had just graduated from high school and I asked her to come out and work for me. I paid her what we pay our hired man. I made a chart on my spreadsheet, and she would just check off; I put the date, she would check off what she did. I said, "What I absolutely need you to do is laundry, cleaning, and the dishes." I did the cooking. The men got the dishes into the sink, and she would come on Wednesday or Thursday and wash the sink full of dishes. When she had extra time, she did other things. I got a lot of things done just because some people would not hire someone to do that, but I had to. That's what made the summer tolerable.

Another woman received her degree through a three-year, weekend program. Three women lived in areas where they could attend summer school. Only two women took time off from their positions to work on graduate degrees. Three women pursued graduate work within five years of beginning their careers in education. The rest had taught for at least 10 years before obtaining graduate degrees.

Two women earned doctoral degrees. One obtained that degree because she was given a scholarship that provided financial support and allowed her to be on-campus. She also had career plans for teaching at the college level. The other woman administrator stated that earning a doctorate degree would make it "harder to ignore me as a woman in administration." She also stated,

I didn’t think it was going to get me a job, but I thought it would be harder to ignore me. A lot of the research showed at that time, that women needed to have at least one degree more than a man to even be looked at in the same kinds of ways and taken seriously. I thought, well, it doesn’t mean they can’t ignore me, but it will make it harder for them.

Even though most of the women administrators did not have specific career goals, they would not have changed their career paths. As noted earlier, eight of the women
administrators each had over 10 years of teaching experience. Six of them stated that their extensive teaching experience was an asset to them as administrators. They believed that they were more credible and were still able to focus on students' needs as most of them perceived that they still viewed education through a teacher's perspective. The woman administrator who had taught for four years indicated that, if she could change her career path, she would have taught in the classroom for a few more years. She was 28 years old when she assumed her first administrative position. In contrast to her, one woman first became an administrator at age 58.

One woman described her career path as a series of "survival degrees." When she first began teaching, she found that she needed a degree in reading education to assist her as a teacher. She then went on to teach part-time at the college level and found that she was counseling many of her students, so she went and obtained a guidance and counseling degree. She then went to work in a public school as a secondary school guidance counselor, a position that led to an assistant principalship, a middle school principalship, and an assistant superintendent position within the same district. Each of her administrative positions was offered to her without formal application. When asked if she had ever had a specific career plan, she replied:

No. It was always the circumstances for me. I think I might have at least thought of being a guidance counselor somewhere down the line, but not seriously, because; remember, the first degree I got was a survival degree – I had to know more about the basics of teaching reading – as was the second one. I might have gotten to the second one anyway, because I’ve always been interested in more intimate relationships with kids. I would have people say to me that I ought to go into administration, but I would say, “Nah.” Sometimes, if you believe there is a larger hand controlling your growth and development than your own, then sometimes, you might say, “Why not?”
That woman administrator indicated that she had demonstrated exceptional leadership skills in all of her positions, so her superiors recruited her for further advancement. That was a similar theme throughout most of the interviews. All of the women said they had displayed leadership skills as teachers, so they were sought actively when administrative positions opened.

Of the 131 respondents to the survey, 104 reported that they had chosen to go into educational administration while teaching. Over 79% of the respondents indicated that their initial career choice was teaching. As shown in Table 4, “Other school administrators” appeared to be the most influential in urging those women to enter the field of educational administration, followed by mentors, principals, and fellow teachers.

Of the 37 respondents who checked “Other” on the questionnaire, 17 (45.9%) of them indicated they had chosen to go into administration. Four of these indicated they had made that decision because they were seeking new challenges.

Research Question Three

What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own careers in administration? According to the survey respondents, more than 80% of the women administrators indicated that they enjoyed their positions in educational administration either a “Great deal” or “Quite a bit” (see Table 5). Only seven respondents reported that they did “Not much” enjoy educational administration. Fourteen (10.7%) provided neutral responses.

Eleven respondents replied that they planned to remain in administration “Indefinitely,” while 28 women indicated that they would remain in administrative
Table 4

Sources of Influence or Encouragement to Become Administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Influence</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other School Administrator</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents could provide multiple responses.

positions for at least 10 more years. About one third (32) of the respondents reported that they would remain as administrators for 5 to 10 years, with 42 respondents planning to remain in administrative positions from 2 to 5 years. Ten of the women indicated that they would remain in administration for only one or two more years. Reasons for leaving administrative positions included retirement (40 respondents), school closing (5), stress (4), returning to the classroom (2), and leaving their positions for better paying ones outside of education (2).
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Enjoyment</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great deal</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a bit</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service to kids, personal challenge, and service to educators were cited as the most positive aspects of an administrator’s position (see Table 6). More than three fourths of the respondents cited each of those positive aspects. Those items selected by the fewest respondents included fringe benefits, prestige, authority, power, and no longer having to teach, with less than 10% of the respondents having cited each.

Table 7 is used to summarize data related to the women administrators’ perceptions of the most negative aspects of educational administration. As shown in the table, four items each was reported by more than one third of the respondents as a negative aspects of their positions: hours, pressure, parents, and discipline.

Of the 12 women administrators who were interviewed, 6 indicated that they had been interested in becoming administrators because they believed they could make a difference and could do as good a job as their own supervisors. One woman stated that
I like to be a leader. I guess I just saw things that I would do differently. As a female, when I grew up, I had a father that told me I could be anything I wanted to be. I just thought, eventually, I would like to be an administrator. When I look back on it, though, I should have maybe taught a couple more years. I was 28 when I got my first job as a principal. I thought I was ready to be one, but the reason I say that, is because I had a veteran staff where I was, and quite a few males on a staff that weren’t ready for a young administrator, especially a female one. That was a little difficult.

Table 6

Perceptions of the Most Positive Aspects of Educational Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Aspects</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to kids</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal challenge</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to educators</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to community</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative tasks</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fringe benefits</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer have to teach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents could provide multiple responses.
Table 7

Perceptions of the Most Negative Aspects of Educational Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Aspects</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressure</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of involvement with students</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School board</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of involvement with teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with community groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the women administrators who were interviewed indicated that they had specific career goals which included moving from teaching to administrative positions. One of the women lived in a rural area and said that she believed that an administrative degree would allow her to have more job opportunities. The rest of the women indicated that they initially had not had specific career goals besides entering the education field as teachers. However, since becoming administrators, many of the women had set specific
career goals. Three of the women indicated that they were planning to obtain doctoral degrees and would like to teach at the college level. Three women stated that they would like to return to teaching. Only those women who were currently serving as assistant superintendents had thoughts about pursuing a superintendency. However, that was not a specific career goal for them at this time.

As mentioned earlier, three women had followed their specific career plans. One woman went from teaching to a middle school principalship to a secondary principalship to two superintendencies. She was just beginning a career as an assistant professor. She stated that she had thought she would have remained as a superintendent for a few more years before entering higher education. However, when the opportunity arose for a faculty position at a university, she believed she should apply. Another woman had been a teacher and teaching principal and was a full-time secondary principal at the time she was interviewed. After four years of teaching, she went back to graduate school to obtain an administrative degree. The summer following that, she went out to 20 interviews before finally being hired in August. Male applicants had been hired in all of the other districts in which she had interviewed. The third woman with a specific career plan was a teacher who, upon completing her administrative degree, was offered a position as a secondary principal. She indicated that her career aspirations are to obtain a position in a private school or in a larger district within 40 miles of her home.

Most of the women administrators' career paths evolved due to fortuitous circumstances; they happened to be in the right place at the right time. One woman described how she had assumed a teaching principal position: "It was just kind of 'get a
job' as we had recently returned to North Dakota; and then 'whoops, I guess I will also be
an administrator, too.'” One woman entered administration despite the fact that her
“mentor,” her former teacher and principal, had discouraged her from entering
administration. While he had told her that he still wanted her to be a teacher, he said he
had chosen to enter administration for the increased salary because he had a family to
support. The woman was a single parent at the time and had similar reasons for pursuing
an administrative position. However, her mentor still discouraged her.

All 12 women indicated that they enjoyed the challenges of their positions. They
believed that, as administrators, they could influence the education of children. However,
the two administrators who were teaching principals did not express as much satisfaction
with their positions. They did not believe that they were able to handle both jobs
satisfactorily. Ten of the 12 women indicated that they had encouraged teachers to go
into the field of administration and one reported specifically that she tried to nurture
talented teachers within her district.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question was focused on how family and personal issues had
affected the career paths of women administrators. In the questionnaire, women
administrators had an opportunity to respond to the question, “What do you believe
accounts for the relative lack of women in educational administrative positions in North
Dakota?” Thirty-three women responded that commitment to families kept women from
pursuing administrative positions. Those women stated that the time spent away from
families to pursue graduate work was an obstacle as well as the time spent in performing
administrative duties. One survey respondent described her experiences with family and personal issues in this manner:

I chose to enter administration when my family was grown. To take on this responsibility and commitment with a young family would have been too stressful. I was a mother first and I believe most North Dakota women feel strongly about family.

One woman described the impact of family by writing, "I believe stress is higher for women administrators with young or school-age children due to the second shift at home (laundry, meals, homework, etc.). Even women with helpful husbands typically do far more than 50 percent of household and childcare tasks."

Sixteen respondents indicated that the financial burden of obtaining an advanced degree was a factor. Related to this are the relatively low salaries of many female administrators, especially in rural areas. One administrator stated that she was offered "not enough salary. School boards think that, since I am a woman, I do not need a big salary as my husband has a job, too." The respondents also noted issues related to living in rural areas. Women who live in those areas have difficulty obtaining administrative degrees. They usually are required to drive long distances to attend classes. Many administrators in rural areas are also half- to full-time teachers. That combination does not usually attract many applicants. The two teaching principals who were interviewed both indicated their frustration with not having enough time to do both of their jobs competently. They also said they had difficulty obtaining administrative credentials.

Eighteen respondents from the survey portion of the study indicated that the responsibilities and job pressures were reasons why women did not pursue administrative positions. One respondent explained her response in this manner:
I think women teachers see the job as putting out a lot of fires and dealing with conflict daily. Most are happy or content with the pressure of the classroom. They are also the primary caregivers for their own children so to put in extra hours getting a degree and the extra hours an administrator puts in, is not appealing.

Family and personal issues were factors also for the women administrators who were interviewed. Five women who had been teaching outside of North Dakota returned to North Dakota because of their husbands’ jobs. Three of those women moved to family farms. Two became administrators because those were the only positions available to them. The other administrator obtained an administrative degree because she believed that it would offer her more job opportunities, and she thought she would enjoy those types of duties.

One woman administrator was single and indicated that she did not know if she could have a family and still be a full-time administrator. She said that she has days when she is in her building for 12 to 14 hours. The married women administrators described the methods they used in balancing family and such job responsibilities. All of them stated that they received support from their husbands and other family members. One woman described her situation, in which her husband left for work by 6:30 every morning, and said that she always had to get her two children up and ready for school and daycare. However, her husband was usually able to return home earlier, around 4:00 or so, and would make supper and handle after school activities. This allowed her to stay in her building until 5:30 or 6:00.

One woman described her experiences as an assistant secondary principal while being mother to her own elementary age children. Her assistant principalship position was her first administrative position and involved a variety of responsibilities, including
supervision of after school and evening activities. At one point, she said, she was so
overwhelmed that she stated, “I need a wife!” She and her family resolved the issue by
hiring a college student who would pick up the children after school, take them to their
after school activities, and make supper. When she had evening supervisory duties, she
would take her children with her to the games and programs. Each woman administrator
had developed her own method for dealing with such family issues. One woman’s
husband had to drive their children 60 miles to their daycare provider.

Only three women indicated that they had outside help in cleaning and caring for
their homes. The rest of the married women with children at home stated that they shared
job responsibilities with their children and spouses. One woman responded, “If my
husband didn’t know how to wash a load of clothes or start supper, we would be in
trouble. He definitely did that, and he never questioned it.” Another family issue dealt
with children who attended the school where their mother was an administrator. Three
women were elementary or middle school principals in schools that their children
attended. They found this to be positive as well as challenging. One woman
administrator who was a principal in a district her children did not attend said that she
preferred that situation.

Family and personal issues appear to be factors in all of the women
administrators’ lives. Attending graduate school was challenging for four women
administrators. One woman was on campus full-time, while her husband and son (age 6
at the time) lived in a community almost 300 miles away. She spent weekends
commuting, as her husband also was a coach and could not always travel to the
university. Others had to extend their graduate work over long periods of time, as they could take only one class a semester or one class during the summer session.

Research Question Five

Do women administrators perceive they have the same mobility and ability to take advantage of job opportunities as their male peers? Only one of the women administrators had a spouse who was able to move with her as she pursued her administrative career. Ten women indicated that they were in positions that allowed both spouses to pursue their own careers. One woman was single. One woman indicated that she would be interested in relocating after her children graduated from high school. Four women indicated that they were willing to seek different positions, but only within a 40- to 60-mile radius of their homes. Those women were married to farmers; therefore their mobility was limited. All 12 women who were interviewed believed that mobility is a limiting factor for women administrators and that educators have better opportunities for advancement if they are willing to move. Ironically, only two of those women said that they were able to move to different positions, if necessary. The rest indicated that they were tied to the areas in which they resided due either to their spouses' jobs or plans for their own retirements, which would take place within the next five years. One woman described a mobility-related incident that occurred while she was attending graduate school. One of her professors told her and her classmates that they would need to move from their present homes to obtain administrative positions. She and her classmates did not wish to move, as they all were employed in a large, relatively urban district. They eventually were able to obtain positions in their area. However, she did state "that there
is no doubt if you are willing to move, you can move faster because you are not having to
wait around for something to open up.” The respondents to the questionnaire also cited
mobility as a reason for the lack of women in administrative positions. Five women
believed that being tied to spouses’ jobs prevented women from pursuing administrative
positions.

Table 8 contains a comparison of women administrators’ perceptions of the
degree of difficulty encountered in obtaining specific administrative positions. Those
data came from Question 25 of the survey instrument: “Compared with men, how
difficult do you think it is for a woman to obtain the following positions in educational
administration in North Dakota?” The superintendency was perceived to be the most
difficult position in educational administration for women to obtain. Nearly two
thirds (64.2%) of the respondents indicated that the superintendency was either “very
difficult” or “difficult” to obtain by women. Half (49.6%) of the women perceived
the secondary principalship to be very difficult or difficult to obtain and nearly half
(46.6%) reported those perceptions of the assistant superintendency. No respondents
perceived either the superintendency or the assistant superintendency to be “very
easy” to obtain. On the other hand, over 40% of the respondents noted that the
elementary principalship was either very easy or easy for women to obtain.

Thirty-four survey respondents reported that males were expected to have the
leadership roles, especially in small communities and rural areas. One respondent
stated, “The current set-up with mainly male administrators with female employees is
so sexist. It is too much like a marriage or family environment in which men are at
Table 8

Perceptions of Women Administrators Regarding Difficulty in Obtaining Administrative Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Difficulty</th>
<th>Superintendent N %</th>
<th>Assistant Superintendent N %</th>
<th>Secondary Principal N %</th>
<th>Elementary Principal N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>34 26.0</td>
<td>17 13.0</td>
<td>10 7.6</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>50 38.2</td>
<td>44 33.6</td>
<td>55 42.0</td>
<td>7 5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>21 16.0</td>
<td>35 26.7</td>
<td>40 30.5</td>
<td>59 45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>5 3.8</td>
<td>6 4.6</td>
<td>8 6.1</td>
<td>35 26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>1 0.8</td>
<td>19 14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>17 13.0</td>
<td>24 18.3</td>
<td>0 0.0</td>
<td>5 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>4 3.1</td>
<td>5 3.8</td>
<td>4 3.1</td>
<td>5 3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>131 100.0</td>
<td>131 100.0</td>
<td>131 100.0</td>
<td>131 100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

work behind the closed, office door, while the women stay home to care for the children.”

Another respondent stated that it is difficult to earn respect from the male members who serve on the school boards and from some fathers of school-age children. In her community, she wrote, “a woman’s place is in the home.” One of the secondary principals who was interviewed described how she received phone calls about once every two weeks or so in which the caller would think that she was the school secretary rather than the administrator. One elementary principal indicated that she did not believe the
male secondary principal and superintendent treated her as an equal. The secondary principal and superintendent frequently would make decisions without consulting her or seeking her opinion. "The high school principal and superintendent would discuss things and I was more of an afterthought. I don't know if it was because I was a female or that it was just the attitude of a smaller community." Another woman administrator had similar thoughts.

Many people don't see a female in this position [a superintendency]. How do you get them to understand where you are coming from? Board members and some of your influential people out in the community need to seriously look at female applicants. Yes, you would be able to discuss finances; yes, you would be able to discuss that the building is falling down and this is what needs to be done with the roof and we're going to need to repair the bus because it needs a new transmission. I think that sometimes people tend to take a look and say, "Well, you're not going to be interested in that anyway, so, we'll let you work on curriculum and those other things and give those other duties to the building level principal or head custodian or something like that." So, until those changes occur, women in administration won't be taken seriously.

Male networking, also called the "good old boys' club," was mentioned by both interview subjects and survey respondents. Thirteen respondents described the lack of networking among women and the presence of networking among males as a reason for a lack of women in administrative positions. Four of the women who were interviewed reported that they felt uncomfortable attending regional and state administrators' conferences, as they were not a part of the male network. Many women did not attend regional meetings because they took place during the day, and they did not wish to leave their buildings. Three of the women described how their male colleagues had spent afternoons of meetings playing golf and networking. They did not feel comfortable in participating in such activities, as they believed their responsibility was to stay in their buildings or to engage in administrative-related conference sessions. One woman stated
that men were better at promoting each other than women. In her experiences, male coaches, especially, would recommend a fellow coach for a position. She did not see women doing that.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND COMMENTARY

In North Dakota in the year 2000, only 18 (7.8%) of the 232 public school district superintendents were women; 8 (21.6%) of the 37 middle school principals were women; 24 (11.7%) of the 206 secondary principals were women; and 199 (52.3%) of the 380 elementary principals were women (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2000). Nationally, the percentage of female principals rose from 13% in 1977 to 43% in 1993, but the increase was mainly at the elementary level (Jones & Montenegro, 1993).

While more than half of the elementary principals in North Dakota were women, many of those women were teaching principals and spent the majority of their time as teachers. While there have been many national, regional, and statewide studies conducted regarding issues that are unique to women administrators, there has been only one other study (Gjovik, 1998) conducted in North Dakota that was focused on women principals advancing to the superintendency.

Cultural patterns in American society appear to have created an atmosphere in which few women aspire to administrative positions. In particular, women often must make choices between family responsibilities and career aspirations. The purpose of this study was to provide information on women's career paths and perceived obstacles facing women administrators in North Dakota. The data from this study can provide women
aspiring to positions as school administrators with an understanding of their own career paths and opportunities. The following research questions were used to guide the study.

1. What are the career paths of women administrators in North Dakota?
2. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own career paths?
3. What are women administrators’ perceptions of their own careers in administration?
4. How do family and personal issues affect the career paths of women administrators?
5. Do women administrators perceive they have the same mobility and ability to take advantage of job opportunities as their male peers?

The study was limited to women administrators employed in North Dakota public schools. The information for this study was taken from the 2000-2001 North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Educational Directory, which included the identification of administrators employed only as elementary principals, middle school principals, secondary principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents. Assistant or associate principals were not listed nor were those in other central office positions such as curriculum coordinator or technology director. The population for this study thus consisted of all women administrators working in those selected positions in the public schools of North Dakota during the 2000-01 school year. Questionnaires were mailed to 174 subjects, with 131 returned (75.2%). Twelve women administrators representing small and large school districts were selected for interviews. Those women represented elementary principals, secondary principals, and superintendents or assistant
superintendents. Six of the women each had less than five years of administrative experience, and six each had more than five years of administrative experience.

The survey instrument was based on questionnaires developed by Edson (1980) and by Weber et al. (1980). It was focused on three components: demographic information, career paths, and perceptions of educational administration. The interview questions were based on a 1980 study conducted by Jackson. The questions were based on the following themes: career information, personal and family information, and beliefs and attitudes about educational administration.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB). A cover letter was mailed with the questionnaire to every woman in the specified administrative positions and listed as working in a public school in North Dakota. The packets also contained a postcard with which the women administrators could indicate their willingness to be interviewed.

The interviews took place in the administrators’ offices. Audiotapes and written notes were used to enhance the accuracy of the documentation. After the interview tapes were transcribed, each transcript was mailed to the appropriate interviewee for her verification and clarification.

The questionnaire and narrative data were sorted for themes related to the research questions of the study. The data then were examined to identify dominant themes, variations from those themes, and descriptors of any outriders or counterpositions.
The data indicated that the majority of women administrators had not established specific career plans to follow. Women administrators in North Dakota reported that they had obtained their positions due to the exceptional leadership skills they demonstrated as teachers and through recruitment by other administrators. Once they had obtained administrative positions, eight of the women who were interviewed indicated that they then had specific career goals in place. However, family issues were a priority and moving to another district was not an option for 10 of the 11 married women.

Women’s responses to both the questionnaire and interview questions indicated that, as women, they brought a different perspective to educational leadership. They perceived that they were able to connect better with students, to work more collaboratively with others, and to use the power they had appropriately. The respondents also described North Dakota’s rural areas as being exceptionally male dominated and found it difficult to be accepted as leaders in those areas.

Conclusions

1. Women enter the education field to teach, not to become administrators. Ten of the 12 women who were interviewed stated that they had entered education to become teachers; an administrative position had not been considered initially as a career goal. Data from the survey instruments indicated that 104 women had decided to pursue administrative positions after becoming teachers, while only 23 respondents had decided to pursue an administrative career while in high school or college. This is similar to Gjovik’s study (1998) in which she found that all of the women principals in North
Dakota had entered education to teach. The decision to become an administrator came after teaching for several years.

2. Women administrators do not plan a specific career path. Only two women began their careers with specific career goals in mind. They both attended graduate school early in their careers and obtained principalships while in their late 20s. The rest of the women did not follow a specific career path. They became administrators for a variety of reasons, including having developed leadership skills as teachers, seeking an opportunity to influence change within education, wanting to make a difference, and working with supervisors who did not demonstrate educational leadership skills.

3. Mobility and family issues impact women administrators’ career paths. Only 2 of the 12 women administrators who were interviewed indicated that they were able to move to different districts. One of those women was single and did not have concerns regarding family issues. The other woman administrator had a spouse who was able and willing to move to different districts for his wife’s career. The rest of the women administrators perceived that they were tied to their current or nearby districts because of family responsibilities and their spouses’ jobs. Five of the women indicated that they were limited to a 50-mile radius from their homes, and they were unable to relocate. There were urban districts within that radius for three of those women. They indicated that, if an opportunity arose, they would seek positions in the larger districts. Thirty-three respondents to the questionnaire indicated that commitment to family issues was a factor in the lack of women administrators in North Dakota. Nine women described the importance of not accepting particular positions because of the ages of their children.
One woman did not seek a teaching job when her children were young, and two women stated that they had taught only part-time when their children were preschoolers. Two women became administrators after their children were grown.

4. Women administrators perceive that they bring different skills to their positions. All 12 women described their leadership styles as participatory and collaborative. They stressed the belief that decision making is a collaborative process, and they said that they often sought feedback from others when making decisions. All 12 women perceived themselves to be very student-centered and that all of their decisions were based on what would be best for the students. They all reported a belief that being a woman allowed them to deal with issues differently. Two administrators shared examples of defusing student discipline issues. They approached those situations as counselors, not as disciplinarians. Another administrator described two events in which a male employee had cried while in her office. She did not think that those men would have done that with a male administrator. All 12 women indicated their commitment to education and demonstrated that commitment by describing specific events. Some of those included superintendents and assistant superintendents who sought opportunities for substitute teaching in their districts and women who drove three or four hours each week to attend graduate school.

5. There is still a perceived tendency to think only of males as educational leaders. Respondents to the questionnaires indicated that this was a concern. They stated that men had a monopoly on administration in North Dakota schools. Men were the superintendents and the majority of school board members, so they tended to continue to
hire males. One respondent wrote, “The men are not ready to accept us, and school boards are mostly men. They perceive women administrators as a threat and think of women, in general, as inferior.” The women who were interviewed, however, did not express such strong views. Most of them indicated that gender had not been “much of an issue” for them. However, only three of those women had had women administrators as mentors, and the others described male colleagues as persons who had assisted them in obtaining administrative positions. Even though gender did not appear to be a concern for the women who were interviewed, one woman found out, after being hired as a teaching principal, that the superintendent had held a meeting with the staff to solicit their thoughts regarding a woman administrator. She stated that she spent her first year proving to them that she was capable of doing the job. Three women described situations in which they believed their opinions were not sought by their superintendents and/or other administrators. All three of those women were teaching principals and, therefore, were juggling multiple responsibilities. Two of them were in charge of their buildings, as their superintendents were in other buildings several miles away. Those women had many duties, including supervising cooks and bus drivers and coordinating activities within their buildings; yet, their superintendents did not acknowledge their leadership skills.

Recommendations

1. Women administrators need to create regional and statewide networks. One of the women administrators, when serving as the president of the North Dakota Association of Elementary School Principals in the 1980s, created a women’s group which served as
a support and networking mechanism for women administrators. She stated that she had not created the group because of her own situation. She really did not believe that she was discriminated against and said she had adequate support as an elementary principal. However, she was shocked at how isolated many of the elementary principals were and at the low wages they received. She thought that providing a network for those women would enhance their positions in their districts as well as provide other assistance as needed. That group met at the principals’ state conference. Speakers were sometimes brought in or discussions occurred regarding the issues the women faced. While that group is no longer in existence, the data from this study indicated that women administrators still need support and the opportunity to network with each other.

Women must set specific career goals based on input from colleagues and family members. Most of the women who were interviewed did not have specific career goals. Women should follow the advice of Jackson (1980) when contemplating career decisions. She recommended the following actions.

- A woman should be able to visualize herself in the role of an administrator.
- She should get a secure commitment on the part of her family to the fulfillment of her goals.
- She should be competent and knowledgeable.
- She should be sensitive to and aware of other people’s feelings.
- She should have access to opportunities to obtain proper administrative credentials.
• She should show a willingness to work, a willingness to become involved in school projects, and a willingness to take advantage of every opportunity for formal and informal leadership.

• She should have a mentor who is willing to support her career.

• She should have competent interviewing skills, demonstrate knowledge of the hiring district, answer honestly and openly, and dress appropriately for interviews.

• She needs to learn to handle disappointment and how to grow from each interviewing experience.

• Finally, she must realize, at some point in her career, that she will have to make a decision as to whether she will be geographically mobile.

3. Women administrators need to act as role models and serve as mentors to aspiring women administrators. Six of the women administrators described their experiences as role models and mentors for teachers in their districts. They indicated that this was an important and essential responsibility for all women administrators. One respondent to the questionnaire addressed this topic. “We need more female superintendents at high school job fairs, so they can be role models for young girls.” In small districts, there is a lack of networking and communicating with other principals. New administrators need mentors. All of the women who were interviewed had mentors and colleagues they could contact. They believed that this gave them opportunities to gain new perspectives as well as having persons with whom they could share their concerns.
4. There is a need to educate women on gender issues and women's unique roles as educational leaders. Workshops and graduate courses should be developed to deal specifically with those issues. One woman administrator indicated that such sessions should be attended also by males so they, too, could begin to develop an understanding of women as administrators. Currently, there are few courses or workshops offered in North Dakota which deal specifically with those issues. Graduate courses focused on gender issues that are offered are not required for degrees in educational leadership programs.

Commentary

All 12 women who were interviewed were dynamic, highly competent educational leaders. They demonstrated dedication and commitment to students and to education. Whether those women were from large districts, which have garnered state and national recognition, or from smaller districts, which do not always have adequate resources or personnel, those women were committed to improving education.

Being an administrator is not an easy task in public schools today. Administrators must be knowledgeable in a variety of subjects ranging from personnel issues to legal issues to financial issues. Women administrators face additional challenges as they usually represent a minority in their profession and are not taken seriously. One woman commented that, “I've been an administrator for 13 years and I still don't make $40,000. I'm overworked and underpaid. I'm quitting this spring.” Another woman stated that “determination, confidence, and challenge are excellent words to describe what is necessary in order to become an administrator.”
Another challenge that women face is planning their career paths. The questionnaire and interview data indicated that women tend not to set specific career plans. This research aligns with other research which found that women tend to choose professions idiosyncratically rather than through any planned sequence or great deal of thought (Jackson, 1980). Changes brought about by parenting and other personal and domestic factors make it unrealistic for some women to develop and abide by specific career plans.

The women in this study also followed national trends of being in the classroom for longer periods of time than their male peers. A study conducted for the AASA (Glass et al., 2000) stated that 50% of the male superintendents who were surveyed had spent an average of five years as teachers in the classroom, while 60% of the women surveyed each had at least 10 years of teaching experience. The data from this study indicated that the women administrators had had an average of 11 years of experience in the classroom. North Dakota women administrators also followed national trends in regard to age. Women tend to be older than men when entering administration. Nearly 55% of men were in administrative positions by age 30, while only 2% of women had obtained their first administrative positions by age 30 (Glass et al., 2000). Three of the 12 women interviewed became administrators before age 30, and all of them were teaching principals at that time. The rest of the women became administrators in their 30s and 40s, except for one woman who entered administration in her 50s.

Ten of the 12 women indicated that they enjoyed their administrative duties and would encourage others to pursue school administration as a career. They perceived that
more women were entering the field of administration, especially at the secondary level where there were few women administrators. Both the respondents to the questionnaires and the interview subjects reported that women are competent and make exceptional educational leaders. They also stated that women tend to work harder to demonstrate that competency.

Women administrators need to nurture each other and celebrate their contributions to this world. They also need to be treated equally and be given equal opportunities for advancement. Networking and mentoring are two methods that can accomplish those goals. One woman administrator who was interviewed summed up her thoughts regarding women in administration in the following manner.

I believe women have a critical role to play. I think the difficulty for women is that they always have multiple roles and they tend to take all of them seriously, at the same time. That's always going to make it difficult for women to make choices that make them feel satisfied. I think they can make choices easily, but are they going to be satisfied with those choices? I think that is the deeper question.
APPENDICES
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

1. Age: to nearest year ______

2. Marital or Relational Status
   Single____ Married_____ Divorced____ Separated____ Widowed____
   Other____

3. Race/Ethnic (check the best description of your status)
   Caucasian____ African American____ Asian American____
   Native American____ Hispanic____ Other____

4. Number of children living with you or for whom you are financially responsible____

5. Of the number of children listed above, how many require others’ care while you are at work?________

6. How old was your oldest child when you became an administrator? (if applicable)________

7. Check the highest degree held (check only one)
   High School_____ BS/BA_____ MA/MS/M.Ed._____ Specialist/Ed.S._____ Ph.D./Ed.D.____

8. Grade level of teacher licensure?
   Early Childhood_____ Elementary_____ Secondary_____ K-12____

9. Areas of administrative certification?
   Elementary Principal_____ Secondary Principal_____ Administrative____
   Other________

10. What is your present administrative position? ___________________
Number of years ________
District Enrollment (please estimate) ________
Setting: Rural _______ Urban ________

11. Please list any other teaching and administrative experiences you have had
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade Level and/or subject area</th>
<th>Number of years</th>
<th>Estimated District Size</th>
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12. Please list the professional organizations in which you presently hold membership.


13. When did you first decide to enter the field of educational administration?
   While in Elementary school _____ While in High School _____
   While in College _____ While teaching _____ Other _____

14. How many years of teaching experience did you have before beginning to prepare for an administrative career? ________

15. Was teaching, school administration, or some other field, your first choice as a career?
   Teaching _____ Administration _____
   Other (please specify) ___________________
16. Who influenced or encouraged you to become an administrator? (Check all that apply.)

Parent_______ Spouse_______ A Professional Mentor_______

Friend_______ My child(ren)_______ A Fellow Teacher_______

My Principal______ Another School Administrator__________

Other (please specify)_____

17. Please circle the one choice in #16 (above) that was most influential in our becoming an administrator.

18. Please check the one best response that reflects the degree to which you enjoy educational administration.

A great deal______ Quite a bit_____ Neither enjoy it nor dislike it_____

Not very much_____ Not at all_____

19. How long do you plan to remain in the education profession as an administrator?

1-2 years____ 2-5 years____ 5-10 years____ 10 or more____ Indefinitely_____

20. What factors would cause you to leave educational administration? (Check all that apply)

Better job opportunity____ Marriage____ Children____

Spouse's transfer____ Other____

21. What is your yearly salary?

$20,000-29,999____ $30,000-39,999____ $40,000-$49,999____

$50,000-59,999____ $60,000-69,999____ Over $75,000____
22. In what way does your salary support in maintaining your family lifestyle?

Primary support_______ Partially support_____

Supplemental (used for vacations, savings, etc.)____

23. What do you perceive to be the most positive aspects of being an educational administrator? (Please check all that apply.)

Power_______ Personal challenge_______

Salary_______ Administrative tasks_______

Prestige_______ No longer have to teach_______

Fringe benefits_______ Authority_______

Visibility_______ Service to community_______

Service to children_______ Serve other educators_______

Other(s)________________________

24. What do you perceive to be the negative aspects of being an educational administrator? (Please check all that apply.)

Hours_______ Pressure_______

Dealing with parents_______ Responsibility_______

Discipline_______ Lack of involvement with students____

Dealing with board_______ Dealing with community groups____

Lack of involvement with teachers_______

Other (please specify) ____________________________
Compared with men, how difficult do you think it is for a woman to obtain the following positions in educational administration in North Dakota?

**Superintendent:**
- Very difficult ____
- Difficult _____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy ______
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______

**Special Education Director:**
- Very difficult _____
- Difficult ____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy ______
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______

**Vocational Director:**
- Very difficult _____
- Difficult ____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy _____
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______

**Assistant Superintendent:**
- Very difficult _____
- Difficult ____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy _____
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______

**High School Principal:**
- Very difficult _____
- Difficult ____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy ______
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______

**Middle School Principal:**
- Very difficult _____
- Difficult ____
- Neither difficult nor too difficult ______
- Easy ______
- Very easy ______
- Don’t know ______
Elementary Principal: Very difficult____ Difficult____
Neither difficult nor too difficult____ Easy____ Very easy______
Don’t know_____

27. What do you believe accounts for the relative lack of women in educational administrative positions in North Dakota?

28. Any other comments regarding women administrators in North Dakota?
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Career Information

1. Would you please relate/summarize your career background before becoming an administrator?

2. When did you first begin to formulate goals to pursue a career in educational administration? Did you have a specific plan to follow? If you did have a plan, please describe it.

3. Who helped you in attaining your first position? Your current position?

4. Please describe your career path. What factors do you think have helped you to be successful in your career? What has hindered you?

5. On the basis of what you now know regarding administrative duties and responsibilities, if you had to do it over again, would you handle your career differently? If so, how?

6. How important is mobility to a successful career?

Personal and Family Information

7. What kind of bosses have you had? How have they contributed to your career? What was your relationship with them like?

8. Who, excluding your business contacts, has influenced your career the most? How?

9. If you are married, how long have you been working before you married? Did marriage affect your career? If so, how?

10. Have you ever not applied or taken a position because of family considerations? Have you ever left a position because of family considerations?

11. Do you believe that being a woman gives you an advantage? A disadvantage? Please explain.

12. What are the problems you have encountered, if any, in handling home and work responsibilities?
Beliefs and Attitudes about Educational Administration

13. How would you describe your style of leadership?

14. What do you believe to be your primary administrative strengths? Why?

15. Do you believe the qualities necessary to a woman administrator’s success is different from those required of a man?

16. What do you believe accounts for the relative lack of women in educational administrative positions in North Dakota?

17. What advice would you give to a young woman as how to best succeed in educational administration?

18. What program components in your administrative preparation best prepared you? What changes would you recommend be made which would enhance women’s opportunities for aspiring to educational administrative positions?

19. Is there anything else you would like to add relating to your career, career development for women or any other area we have not mentioned, but that you feel is important?
Date

Woman Administrator
Any Public School
Any City, ND

Dear:

My name is Deb Syvertson and I am a doctoral student in educational leadership at the University of North Dakota. As part of my program, I am conducting a research study regarding women administrators in North Dakota. The purpose of this study is to determine women administrators' career paths and mobility as well as their perceptions of the degree to which obstacles may prevent them from achieving their professional goals.

My research is being conducted by two methods: a questionnaire and interviews. This packet contains a copy of the questionnaire. I would appreciate your taking the time to fill out and return the questionnaire to me in the pre-addressed envelope. The questionnaires are coded to allow me to engage in a follow up to those who do not return the questionnaire. If a questionnaire is not returned within four weeks, a reminder will be mailed. After that mailing, the identifier and coder will be destroyed to preclude later identification of subjects or linking identification to survey responses. At no times will names be placed on surveys. All
responses will be confidential and all survey data will be reported in aggregate form. I have enclosed a postcard by which you may indicate your willingness to participate in a personal interview which would be scheduled later at your convenience. The interviews will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half. You are free to end the interview at any time and may choose not to answer a particular question. I will provide each subject with a transcript of the interview and then conduct a brief follow-up session to ensure accuracy. No names will be associated with interview data used in this study. Your responses will remain anonymous. The data that will be collected, including the audiotapes, will be kept in a secured place for three years and will then be destroyed.

I will assume that your return on the completed survey will convey your consent to use the responses in my study. If you have any questions regarding this study, please call me at 701-228-3743 or e-mail me at dsvyverts@ndak.net. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Jerry Bass (701-777-3577 or gerald_bass@umd.nodak.edu). Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Sincerely,

Deb Syvertson

Enclosures
APPENDIX D

POSTCARD
Please return this postcard if you are interested in being interviewed for this study. Your responses will be kept confidential and you are free to end the interview at any time. You are also free to choose not to answer a particular question. The interview will last for about an hour and will be held at your convenience. A copy of the transcript will be sent to you to review for accuracy. A brief follow-up interview will be held, if necessary.

——— Yes, I am interested in being interviewed.

Name ________________________________

Address ________________________________

Phone ___________ E-mail Address ________________

Best day & time to reach me to arrange interview __________________________
REFERENCES


