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THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL  
BACKGROUNDS OF GEORGIA'S FEMALE  
HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Marjorie H. Hamilton





**THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL  
BACKGROUNDS OF GEORGIA'S FEMALE  
HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

A Dissertation

Presented to  
the College of Graduate Studies of  
Georgia Southern University

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Administration

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by  
Marjorie H. Hamilton  
December 2001

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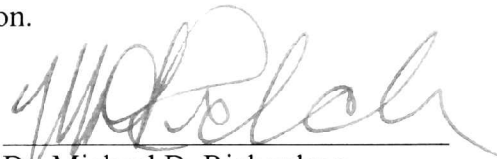
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October 5, 2001

To the Graduate School:

This dissertation entitled "The Personal and Professional Backgrounds of Georgia's Female High School Principals" and written by Marjorie Hamilton is presented to the College of Graduate Studies of Georgia Southern University. I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Administration.



Dr. Michael D. Richardson  
Supervising Committee Chair

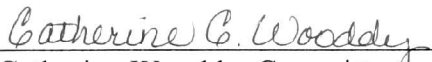
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Cathy Jording, Committee member



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Dean, Averitt College of Graduate Studies

## **DEDICATION**

With thankfulness to God for my loving family and supportive friends, I dedicate this dissertation, first of all, to my husband, Rick, and my father, Gaylord Hunt. Both of these very special men have shown absolute, unconditional confidence in my ability to complete this work and earn my degree.

Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Shirley, who helped me every time I asked for assistance or support and prayed for me daily. Thanks also to my sisters, Sherry, Debbie, and Robin, whose support and encouragement contributed greatly to the successful completion of the project. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my best friend, Malona, who has patiently listened to tales of woe and waited for me to detach myself from my personal computer and rejoin the ranks of the human race. I love you all very much.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This dissertation has been completed only through the efforts of many. I sincerely thank and acknowledge the invaluable assistance and guidance of the following individuals:

Dr. Mike Richardson, my committee chairman, has been my constant and patient advisor through the entire process of fulfilling the requirements for this degree. His expertise and counsel greatly assisted me in seeing this project through to completion.

The other members of my committee, Dr. Chan, Dr. Page, and Dr. Woody, are also greatly appreciated for their time, patience, and commitment to excellence in education. In addition, thank you to Dr. Jording for sitting in on my committee during the preprospectus defense.

I want to acknowledge my mother for the long hours she dedicated to this project by providing proofing and clerical skills. Without her, I would not have been able to finish in a timely manner. Thanks to my loving husband for his willingness to share his computer expertise with me as well as his diligence in proofing.

A special thank you goes to the eight female high school principals who graciously allowed me interview them. Having met these tremendously talented, dedicated, energetic individuals has renewed me and made me even more determined to put forth every effort to serve the children and meet their needs.

My cohort included a number of the most talented, hard working people I have ever met. To each of them, I say thank you for setting the pace and helping me to



complete the journey. Words cannot express my appreciation for your taking the time to coach me when I needed assistance and to encourage me when I needed a pep talk. I especially want to thank Mark Boyd for prodding me to enroll in the program and for easing my mind when the obstacles seemed insurmountable. Thank you also to Dr. Sandra Carraway, whose decisive and determined strides kept me moving and whose sage advice kept me grounded and focused.

## **VITA**

### **Marjorie Hunt Hamilton**

Marjorie Hunt Hamilton has spent most of her life in Augusta, Georgia, and graduated from Richmond County's Butler High School in 1977. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in English education from the University of Georgia in 1982. She earned her Master's degree from the University of Georgia in 1983. Her Educational Specialist's degree in educational administration and supervision was earned at Augusta State University in 1997. In 2001, she graduated from Georgia Southern University with a Doctor of Education degree in educational administration.

Ms. Hamilton taught adults at a private business college early in her teaching career. She also taught adults at Augusta State University (formerly Augusta College) in the Developmental Studies Department. Her public high school teaching experience includes two years at Butler High School, her alma mater, one year at Thomson High School in Thomson, Georgia, and nine years at Lakeside High School in Evans, Georgia. In the fall of 2000, Ms. Hamilton was appointed the assistant principal of North Harlem Elementary in Columbia County. She is a member of the Professional Association of Georgia Educators and Phi Delta Kappa. She now resides in Evans, Georgia.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF GEORGIA'S FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

**DECEMBER 2001**

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**B.S.Ed. UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

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The purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to conduct the research.

A demographic questionnaire, which included items addressing personal, educational, and professional background information, was mailed to all of the identified female public high school principals for the 2000-2001 school year. The quantitative data analysis resulting from the demographic questionnaire is presented in the narrative form with corresponding tables. The final item on the questionnaire asked whether or not the respondent would participate in a long, in-depth interview with the researcher with the assurance that the identities of the participants would remain confidential. Of the 56 female high school principals, 42 completed and returned the demographic questionnaire.



Twenty-two of the principals who responded to the questionnaire expressed a willingness to participate in the interview portion of the study. Eight interviewees were selected through stratified, purposeful sampling. In-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher with the eight principals to explore their personal and professional backgrounds using the qualitative technique of the long interview.

The qualitative data from the taped interviews were analyzed with the *QSR* NUD.IST 5 program, which aided the researcher in categorizing the interviewees' responses to the interview questions and, more importantly, identifying recurring themes, related ideas, and the responses pertinent to the purpose of the study. The intent of the analysis of the qualitative data was to utilize direct quotes to maintain the integrity of the richness and thickness of the female principals' "lived experiences" in their own words.

The findings of the quantitative portion of the study yielded an aggregate description of Georgia's female public high school principal. She was 50 years old or older, married for the first time, and had at least one child. Her most popular undergraduate major was English, and the highest degree earned was a Specialist degree in educational administration. She had been a principal, on average, for 4.6 years and had served in some other capacity in education for 19 years before becoming principal.

The qualitative portion of this study explored the principals' personal background, career paths, career barriers, mentoring experiences, and leadership traits. The women who participated in the study were strongly encouraged by their parents to attend college, however, becoming a teacher was not the first career choice of over half of them. The majority did not establish long-term goals early in their careers. All of the women had faced career barriers, including gender discrimination, and resistance to working for a

female from male teachers, coaches, athletic directors, and assistant principals. In addition, all of the interviewees believed that mentoring aspirants, male or female, was essential for maintaining effective school systems. The prevalent leadership trait the female principals ascribed to themselves was the empowerment of their staff through the use of shared decision-making. The results of this study are particularly pertinent to the female who is aspiring to become a high school principal and to educational leadership programs who help to prepare their female candidates for key leadership positions in the field of education.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **General Introduction**

A 1995 U. S. Department of Education report entitled “Women at Thirty-something” found that women consistently outperformed their male counterparts at both secondary and undergraduate levels; nevertheless, these same women faced a tougher labor market, experienced higher levels of unemployment, and suffered gross pay inequities (Daily, 1995). Stereotypes of women in the workforce have persisted, especially for women in the field of education (Hill & Ragland, 1995). In the past, female educators were unmarried, harsh prudes. These undesirable women lived their lives through their school existence.

“Decades of rules and regulations prescribed every aspect of female educators’ behavior, from the number of petticoats they must wear to their church attendance to permissible social engagements. Unless they survived off their father’s largess, they were also impoverished because the ‘divine calling’ nature of their occupation justified their meager salaries.” (Hill & Ragland, p.7)

Women were allowed leadership roles if they accepted the responsibility with none of the authority. The highest paying leadership roles were, and often still are, delegated to men with subtleties not in duties but in titles that serve to gain the men higher levels of compensation (Hill & Ragland). Contemporarily, men in education are recommended for administrative positions more often than women even though both male and female principals perceive women as more capable in school organizations regardless of their age,



experience, grade level, or size of the school (Richardson, Flanigan, Smith, & Woodrum, 1997). Women have to take on more challenges than men to get ahead and often teach for longer periods of time before becoming administrators.

Since the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote, the federal government has played a significant role in attempts to advance the state of gender equity in educational administration through legislation (Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997). In 1960, the Commission on the Status of Women was established by Congress, and in 1963, President Kennedy issued Executive Order 10980, prohibiting discrimination in the hiring and the promotion of women within the federal bureaucracy. During that same year, Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which required equal pay for equal work; in other words, if the requirements of the job and the working conditions are equal, the salaries must be equal, regardless of the gender of the employee (Gupton & Del Rosario).

Other measures at the federal level designed to ensure the equal treatment of women were the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title I and Title IX educational amendments, which prohibit gender discrimination in all educational agencies receiving federal funds or receiving federal financial assistance; and the Women's Educational Equity Act, which provides funds to develop educational equity materials to help support Title IX mandates (Shakeshaft, 1989). Despite attempts to legislate equality for women in the workforce, women are much less likely to be chosen for key corporate executive or top-level public school district leadership positions, and grappling to understand reasons for the underrepresentation has generated considerable research (Fisher, 1992).

Conditions have never been more favorable for females to ascend to executive management positions in all sectors of the U.S. economy, according to Townsend (1996). Women who are 45 to 54 years old, the prime age to attain senior management positions, will account for more than one-third of all net additions to the nation's workforce between 1994 and 2005, as projected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; yet most estimates suggest that women's representation in senior management in corporate America is at 5% or less (Townsend). According to the results of a survey of corporate CEOs for Fortune magazine, women's careers often stall out for lack of the kind of informal advice and sponsorship men get from one another (Fisher, 1992). Moreover, too many senior managers want to pass their jobs to someone who is the likeness of themselves. Stuart (1992) suggests that executives hire by the white male model, tending to select those to aid in their upward advancement who are more like themselves. A major blockade to the promotion of women is the fact that those who wield the power to recruit, place, and advance others favor individuals most like themselves--white males--for leadership positions (Stuart).

The underutilization of women in educational leadership over the past decades is especially surprising when one considers that the field of education is historically and presently predominately female; however, for female teachers, access to the educational administrative career pathway is often blocked by the small number of positions available in the administrative hierarchy and by gender-based barriers (Leonard & Papalewis, 1987). During the past two decades, research has been conducted to identify the barriers that deter the advancement of women in educational administration (Funk, 1986; Gupta, 1983;

Logan & Scollay, 1999; Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkinson, 1986). According to Hill and Ragland (1995), a number of barriers have created an educational system in which fewer women than men hold leadership positions; the barriers include the following:

1. Male dominance of key leadership positions
2. Women's lack of political savvy
3. Women's lack of career positioning
4. Women's lack of mentoring
5. Women's lack of mobility
6. Biases against women in leadership positions

The educational system has fostered the selection of new administrators who resemble their male sponsors in attitude, philosophy, deed, and even in some cases, appearance, hobbies, church affiliation, and club memberships, thwarting the efforts of women attempting to enter administration (Hill & Ragland). When Gupton and Slick (1996) surveyed 300 current female administrators, they discovered that some women believe they have to walk the fine line between having a "go for it attitude" and being perceived as too aggressive. "A woman who demonstrates the same aggressiveness [as a man] is called a bitch or a pushy broad" (p. 148). Administration in public education is male dominated and generally accepted as such by both males and females; therefore, many women never seek administrative positions simply because they do not see themselves in positions of leadership (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Today's women administrators are more likely to be well-qualified for entering executive level positions such as the superintendency, the assistant superintendency, or the high school

principalship, by having strong credentials (Gupton & Slick, 1995). However, despite their qualifications and their expressed desires for career advancement, women seemingly remain in staff rather than line positions, including elementary principalships or supervisory roles at the district level, positions that provide less pay, afford little power, demand long hours, and typically do not lead to the district's most prestigious and coveted position of superintendency (Gupton & Slick).

To examine some of the factors restricting females from secondary principalships and the aspirants' perceptions of restrictive factors, a stratified random survey was conducted by Asbury (1993), targeting the population of males and females who were qualified to serve as secondary principals in Alabama but were not yet serving in the position. Women listed as their top three inhibiting factors for not holding a secondary principalship as (1) not being interested, (2) believing that many male superiors think that women should not be high school principals, and (3) lacking experience in leadership activities. Further analysis of the data revealed that 66% of the female respondents were not interested in a secondary principalship, and 71% of them had never applied for a position (Asbury).

Contrary to Asbury's findings, Leonard and Papalewis (1987), purport that gender discrimination, both personal and institutional, has been the major condition inhibiting the access of women and minorities to leadership roles. Perceptions that female characteristics and managerial job demands do not coincide create an extrinsic barrier, preventing women from advancing. In addition, Leonard and Papalewis cite resentment by

others, family responsibilities, and lack of sponsorship or role models as inhibiting factors for women in their career advancement.

Sponsors' subconscious tendencies to select protégés personally and professionally similar to themselves also work against the inclusion of women on career advancement paths. The importance of mentor/protégé associations has been highlighted in a number of studies (Collins, 1998; Ehrich 1995; Hill & Ragland, 1995). The generic meaning of a mentor is a father figure who guides a younger individual, known as a protégé (Ehrich, 1995). Scanlon (1999) synthesized many of the major findings from the literature that address mentoring and applied the work to the career development of women in academic administration. The researcher states that literature which is derived from both research and theoretical perspectives underscores the value of having a mentor for those wishing to advance their careers. When compared to women who lack mentors, women who have mentors move to higher career levels, according to Scanlon. Marshall (1985) suggests the sponsor--protégé relationship is a close and personal one. As a result, male sponsors may be reticent to invest their efforts in women because close male/female relationships often are seen as unprofessional (Marshall).

Gupton and Slick (1996) make numerous recommendations to political and social organizations to create true equitable treatment of women in the educational workplace setting:

1. School districts must move from writing good policy to practicing fairer treatment of women seeking and attaining administrative positions in education.
2. School board members should broaden their perceptual image of school leaders.

3. Communities must view male and female leadership potential and ability equally.
4. Communities must nurture politically and financially the preparation of women for leadership.
5. State departments must set a precedent of modeling nondiscriminatory policy making and personnel practices that demonstrate inclusivity.
6. State legislatures must provide funding and support to local school districts for nurturing the inclusivity of underrepresented groups of people in leadership positions.
7. The federal government should provide more adequate funding for research and development of projects and programs related to the advancement of women in educational administration.
8. Higher education must provide better programs of training and education that are expanded to include the female as well as the male perspective regarding organizational theory and practice.
9. Higher education faculties must recruit more female professors of educational administration and should actively seek to promote more females into positions of leadership (e.g., department chairpersons or deans).
10. Professional organizations need to promote a persona of leadership in the profession that focuses on ability, preparation, experience, and/or potential, rather than gender. (pp. 154-155)

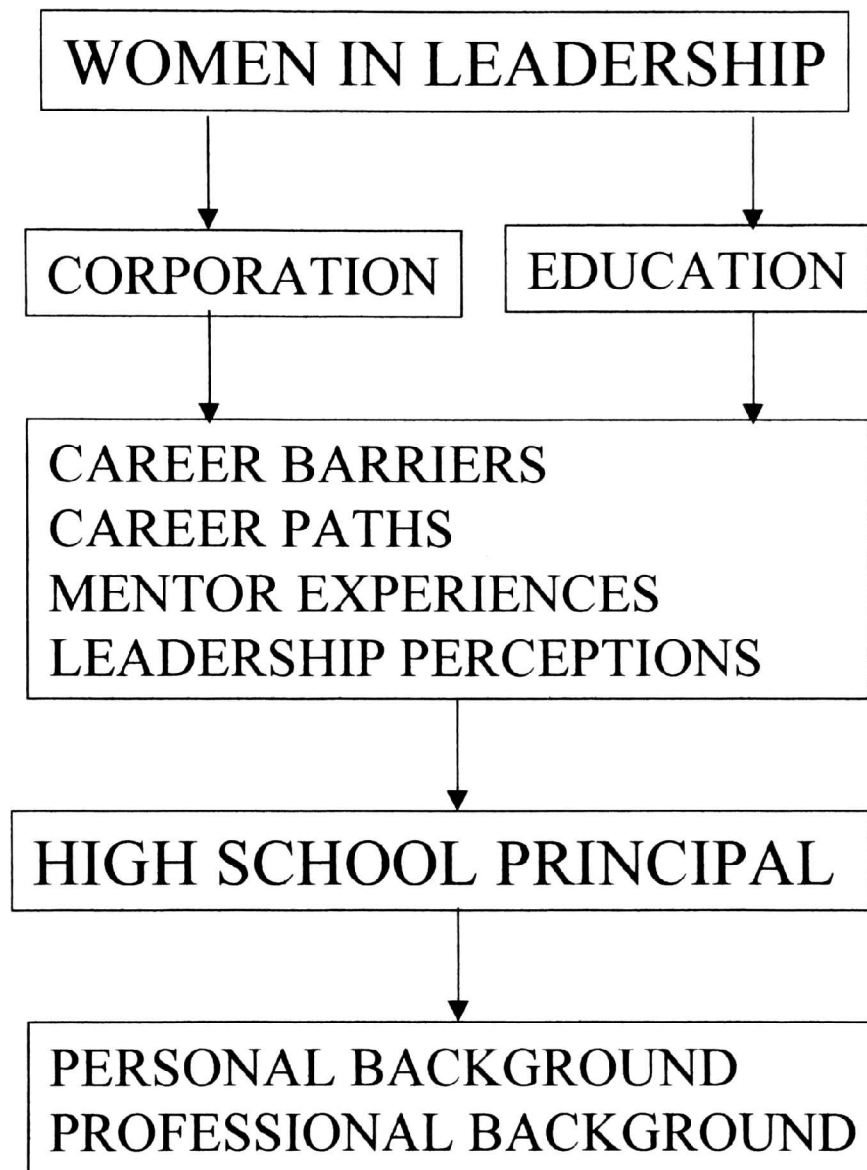
Because of the relatively low representation of female high school principals, they have drawn the attention of a number of researchers in many areas of the U.S. (Cwick,

1999; Emmert, 1998; Henderson, 1997; Robinson, 1996). There is some evidence that women are making strides in leadership positions at the secondary level. For example, in his study, Asbury (1993) found that females were slowly moving into secondary principalships in the state of Alabama, increasing their percentage share from 8.5% during the 1983-84 school year to 14.2% during the 1992-93 school year.

Studies involving the barriers for women trying to advance in management and studies that address career paths for women suggest that there may be common threads for gaining entry to administrative positions (Ehrich, 1995; Gupta, 1983; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Hubbard & Robinson, 1998; Pavan & D'Angelo, 1990). Additionally, remedies designed to provide women with equal opportunities for furthering their careers have been explored (Carden, 1990; Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997; Johnson & Douglas, 1995; Mertz & Venditti, 1985; Riehl & Byrd, 1997). The Framework of Literature Review (Figure 1) provides a visual representation of research that addresses career issues for women in the workforce. An examination of these issues provides insight regarding the unequal representation of women in key leadership positions, such as the public high school principalship. Richardson, et al., (1997) suggest that studies need to be conducted on female administrators in equivalent locations and settings to create a true picture of educational leadership by females who have broken through the barriers and obtained coveted administrative positions, including the high school principalship. An analysis of the personal and professional characteristics attributable to those women in high school leadership positions may provide additional information for discerning the elements necessary for the advancement of females in the field of educational administration.

Figure I

Framework of the Literature Review





### Statement of the Problem

Over the course of many decades, women have continued to face barriers that have inhibited their upward mobility. Laws and policies, which should have opened up all avenues for women wanting to advance in the American workforce, have not created the equal representation of women and men in leadership positions such as the high school principalship (Mertz & McNeely, 1998). Women are not moving into the most-sought-after positions of leadership in private industry or in public schools. Although there is a fair representation of women in the elementary school principalship role, very few women are given the opportunity to assume the role of high school principal (Nogay & Beebe, 1997). Today, fewer than 20% of the high school principals in Georgia are females. Women have invaluable administrative attributes, yet they are often passed over or overlooked when career advancement opportunities arise.

Career path and career advancement strategies to aid women in overcoming the barriers to their career goals have been studied (Pavan & D'Angelo, 1990). A specific career advancement strategy, having a mentor, has been given much consideration when examining common characteristics in the lives of those who have acquired key leadership roles (Collins, 1998). The leadership styles of women in positions of authority have also been explored (Emmert, 1998).

The women sitting on the sidelines waiting for an opening in high school administration need information on how to enhance their own career advancement opportunities. More inroads need to be discovered so that the ongoing trend of men being

given the positions of authority, power, and promise in the public school districts in Georgia can be reversed.

Some women in Georgia have broken through the invisible barriers and have been given the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership skills as high school principals. What are the personal and professional backgrounds of these women? Are there commonalities in their personal backgrounds or career paths that have enhanced their chances of becoming one of the select few granted the responsibilities of running a public high school in Georgia? Do these women perceive that they have had to overcome barriers to achieve their current positions? Do they feel a sense of personal obligation to assist other women in the advancement of their careers in educational leadership by serving as mentors? Moreover, what do they consider their key leadership attributes? The major purpose of this study was to discover and describe the personal and professional backgrounds of successful women in educational leadership, thus providing information that may afford insight for female aspirants who can then replicate the patterns for success if such patterns become evident through the study's findings.

### Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following overarching research question: What are the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year? In addition, the study explored the following research subquestions:

1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?

2. Are there any commonalities in the career paths of these women?
3. What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive that they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their careers?
4. Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?
5. What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?

### Importance of the Study

The belief that educational administration is a politically neutral, technical practice focused on efficiency and hierarchical control persists. Clearly, men dominate school administration, and efforts in previous decades have not brought forth significant change in their domination, especially in our public high schools. The separation of education into two professions, based considerably on gender, placed status and power in the hands of a few male administrators. Allowing women expanded participation in school leadership could undermine the exclusive power and values of incumbent male administrators. Informal socialization and selection systems and strict adherence to masculine styles as “ideal” hinder women’s entry into the high school administrative hierarchy.

The attitudes of policy makers and the lack of commitment to the enforcement of Title IX mandates contribute to the low level of female representation in public school administration. Conventional approaches for identifying potential within school districts have resulted in the continuing exclusion of women. Although some women attain

administrative positions at the elementary level, the unofficial criterion of maleness hinders the acceptance of women at both the elementary and the secondary levels.

Removing existing barriers in the workplace, and especially in the field of education, is an issue that confronts both men and women. To manage inequities effectively, organizations must alter practices to eliminate overt and subtle barriers that may prevent employees from reaching their full potential. In the interest of all concerned with education, as well as the children who adopt many of the beliefs about how the world functions from schools, hiring and promotion practices and policies should be implemented to ensure equity in opportunity and access to leadership positions. Women still appear to be burdened by perceptions depicting them as unfit for effectively enacting managerial roles, perceptions that are extremely costly to career advancement if they are allowed to persist. Aspirants need to study the career-path progression in their own geographic regions and districts need to formulate steps to allow women to reach their administrative goals.

A close examination of the women who do break through the barriers may afford other females hoping to obtain coveted secondary principalships with guidelines for becoming viable candidates in their own organizations. The probability that women will become high school principals in Georgia remains far below that of men. In this study, factors that may be associated with women reaching the position of public high school principals in Georgia were explored. Are there personal characteristics, career paths, or leadership characteristics of the females involved in the study that have contributed to their success in becoming administrators? Have they faced and overcome similar barriers

to obtain their leadership positions? Are they willing to mentor other women who are trying to follow in their footsteps? Do they have common leadership characteristics, that when modeled after by aspirants, could enhance the aspirants' careers? Aspiring women can gain invaluable insight by examining the lives of their predecessors.

Over the course of nearly two decades in public education in Georgia, this researcher has far too frequently seen a man rather than a woman who is waiting in the ranks be appointed to the position of high school principal. Often in the past, this researcher believed that the woman would have worked harder and been more committed to the overall mission of the organization; however, perhaps, she was overlooked by the selection committee, the superintendent, or the local board of education because of the societal expectation that effective leadership is a predominately male trait. Through the findings of this study, the researcher attempted to convey the potential for leadership that can be tapped in women if they are given the opportunity to assume the role of the high school principal. Additionally, the researcher, who has twelve years experience as a high school English teacher and who is now gaining administrative experience in an elementary school setting, may want to reenter the high school setting as the organization's educational leader; realizing how to accomplish the goal of obtaining a high school principalship was an important potential outcome of this study for this researcher.

### Procedures

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were selected to meet the objectives of the study. The quantitative data was collected by the use of a demographic questionnaire, which was mailed to all of the female public high school principals in

Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. This researcher used the Georgia High School Association Directory 2000-2001 and the 2000 Georgia Public Education Directory: State and Local Schools and Staff to identify the female public high school principals in Georgia. The questionnaire includes typical demographic items concerning the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations on the responses to items on the demographic questionnaire were calculated, and the results were compiled and reported in narrative form and in tabular form. Any unusual or noteworthy responses were also reported and discussed. In addition, the last item on the questionnaire asked if the recipient was willing to participate in an in-depth interview session with this researcher.

From the list of participants who responded positively to being interviewed, eight female public high school principals in Georgia during the 2000-2001 school year were chosen through stratified, purposeful sampling to be the participants in the qualitative aspect of the study.

The primary form of data collection for the study was the long, in-depth interview because, “The rigorous methodological approaches of empirical inquiry often preclude larger interpretations of the forces that shape both the researcher and the researched” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 273). The researcher traveled to the school site of seven of the participants and to the residence of the other participant to conduct the interviews. The same set of guiding questions was used during each semi-structured in-depth

interview in order to obtain a comprehensive description of the participants' personal and professional backgrounds (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 602).

This researcher used the description of the in-depth interview provided by Marshall and Rossman (1999) as the guidelines for conducting the interviews:

Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's frames and structures through the responses. This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. (p. 108)

The interview questions were based on questions prompted by the review of the literature which led to the development of the research study questions. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes as recommended by Seidman (1998), was taped, and was further documented with handwritten notes taken during the interviews. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The computer program *QSR NUD.IST 5* was used to identify, code, and categorize the data. The researcher was, thus, able to discover the personal and professional backgrounds of eight female public high school principals in Georgia.

### Assumptions

Because a qualitative research design was employed to conduct this study, a number of assumptions were made concerning the findings. The researcher assumed that the eight female public high school principals participating in the in-depth interviews were honest, open, and accurate when responding to the interview questions. Additionally, the researcher's biases and values were a natural element of the emergent findings because the

researcher was the primary instrument for the data collection and data analysis of the study. The reality constructed by the individuals involved in the study was subjective and interpretive. That the sample of eight female public principals in Georgia high schools was representative of the population of female public high school principals in Georgia for the purposes of the study was also assumed.

#### Limitations

The researcher relied on the long, semi-structured, in-depth interview as the primary method of data collection. The qualitative research process is an evolving process rather than a static one; consequently, the researcher anticipated modifications and adaptations to the initial plan for conducting the study. The findings from the study are not generalizable; the intent of qualitative research is to form unique interpretations of the data, not to generalize findings. The replication of the research design in another context will be limited by the nature of the design and its use of the qualitative approach.

#### Delimitations

The participants being female high school principals in Georgia rather than in the Southeast or in the United States was one delimitation of the study. Interviewing only high school principals, not assistant principals or principals in middle or elementary schools, was another delimitation of the study. Also, surveying and interviewing only those women who were employed at the time the study was conducted and not those who were formerly employed as high school principals was a delimitation. Finally, the exclusion of private high school female principals was a delimitation.



### Definitions of Terms

Career barriers are defined as intrinsic or extrinsic factors that inhibit females from advancing in their professional careers.

Career paths are defined as strategies or activities that may have assisted in the career advancement of female high school principals.

Educational background is used to identify the types of degrees awarded in undergraduate and graduate programs (i.e., English, elementary education, educational administration, etc.) and the highest level of college degree, master's degree, specialist's degree, or doctoral degree, that has been earned.

High school is defined as a secondary school that houses grades 9 through 12 or grades 10 through 12.

Leadership characteristics are used to describe the actions or behaviors of an organization's leader(s) which cause individuals or groups to move toward common goals.

A mentor is defined as a more experienced person at a higher level in an organization who takes a promising person under his or her wing as a protégée (Ehrich, 1995). The mentor helps the protégée advance in his or her career.

Personal background includes age; race; marital status; number of children; husband's occupation; and parents' occupations and levels of education.

Principal is defined as the chief executive officer of an individual school organization.

Professional background is used to describe the positions in the field of education occupied by each individual before becoming a high school principal.

### Summary

This study explored the personal and professional backgrounds of female public high school principals in the state of Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. Some women have allowed past societal trends to continue to inhibit their professional growth in the field of education. An important step in deconstructing the barriers and providing women with equal access to career advancement strategies is adding to the body of knowledge concerning the personal characteristics, barriers to advancement, career paths, and leadership characteristics of successful women in school administration. Only then can strategies be designed to ensure equal and fair consideration of all who have the potential to lead in America's public schools.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of reviewing the literature concerning several aspects related to the careers of women in corporate America and in public education, especially during the past two decades, is to identify, describe, and understand factors that deter or enhance the advancement of women to upper-level management positions, including the sought-after administrative assignment of high school principal. A decade ago, Shakeshaft (1989) suggested that if all players in schools were males, androcentric research would not be problematic or misleading for understanding the behavior of people; however, there are differences between the ways men and women behave in groups. "Looking at the world as females experience it and trying to document those perspectives will help to expand the knowledge base of the practice of educational administration" (Shakeshaft, p. 335). A review of the research and related literature to identify relevant issues for females in leadership roles leads down two distinct yet parallel paths.

Primarily, this chapter addresses the past societal trends and laws, the career barriers and the significance of mentoring experiences as they are associated with the female business executive and the female school administrator. The research and related literature on female high school principals and perceptions of feminine school leadership

attributes and expectations are explored. A discussion of studies targeted specifically at female high school principals in Georgia concludes the body of the review.

The first section of the review describes some of the significant history of women in the workforce. Included is the literature that details the laws that were designed to ensure the equal treatment of females in business, industry, and education. The second section presents the literature related to women in corporate America. The themes include their career barriers and experiences with mentors in the business world. The third section deals with the career advancement of women in educational leadership. The barriers they face, the career paths they take, their experiences with mentors and mentoring, and the perceptions of their feminine leadership are addressed. The fourth section focuses on the female high school principal and narrows to examine research conducted on female high school principals in Georgia. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research and literature reviewed in this study.

### Historical Background

Until very recently, women were largely considered a reserve workforce used to supplement positions that were needed in time of crisis, such as war, or to fill positions that were either undesirable because of low pay or low status (Daily, 1995). In the early 1900s, Jane Addams, an activist for women's rights, spearheaded the suffragists; however, any strides were obliterated by the Depression when unemployment rose to 25%, and few were interested in women's social or economic gains. According to Daily, the growth of the service sector and the onset of World War II, during which women made up 35% of the workforce in America, provided relief from the backlash of the Depression.

Nevertheless, as men returned home, they rapidly displaced women from the higher-paying jobs that women had filled during the war. The most recent strides occurred as a result of the social unrest in the country during the 1960s. However, Faludi (as cited in Daily) documents evidence of the societal backlash occurring whenever women appear to be achieving the still elusive goal of workplace equality. Every push forward has been answered with resistance.

The resistance to the involvement of women in the arena of educational leadership dates back to 1892 when the Committee of Ten, which drafted proposals on the superintendency, was made up of men only (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). The committee stressed the importance of adopting a business model for running schools and employing professional experts as administrators, limiting the field at the time to men. In 1915, when women took control of the National Education Association (NEA), the men responded by strengthening the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which promoted the female teacher's subservience to male administrators and school boards and the acceptance of hierarchical control (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988).

The Women's Bureau was created by Congress in 1920 and given the mission to formulate standards and policies which would promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment (Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997). Currently, the Bureau has 10 regional offices, working to implement national programs and policies, develop local initiatives to address local needs, and to disseminate information and publications that support the fair treatment of women in the workplace (Gupton & Del Rosario).

Evidence shows that equal consideration and equal treatment of women have not accompanied the laws and policies designed to advance the status of women in American society (Owen & Todor, 1995; Stuart, 1992). The implementation of Title IX mandates and more recently the U.S. Congress' enactment of the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991, which encourages employers to remove barriers to aid the advancement of women and minorities in leadership positions, have not ensured the equal representation of women in leadership positions in corporate America or in America's public schools (McDonald & Hite, 1998; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission's 1995 report detailed a number of barriers to the advancement of women in organizations. Although the "glass ceiling," the label commonly given to the invisible barrier keeping women from the top of the corporate world, is recognized widely as a serious concern, little has been done to rectify the problem; therefore, gender inequities persist in many organizations (McDonald & Hite).

By the early 1990s, women made up more than 50% of the American work force, and the trends indicate that through the year 2000 the majority of the 25 million new entrants into the job market will be women (Wentling, 1992). Many women have entered the work force in the past three decades and are striving for career advancement because of their changing family structures and greater economic needs (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990). To support themselves and their children, women are being forced to work; the growing divorce rate, the increased number of single parent families, and the increased costs of living have resulted in larger numbers of female blue and white collar laborers. As more women join the labor pool, more want to use their resources and talents to advance

in their careers to executive, administrative, and management levels (Naisbitt & Aburdene).

### Women in Business

In the early 1990s, women were nearly half the American workforce, yet men occupied all but one chief executive's chair of the Fortune 500 list, and less than 5% of senior executives were women, up from a meager 3% in 1979 (Bunis, 1991). A 1995 U.S. Department of Education report entitled "Women at Thirty-something" found that women consistently outperformed their male counterparts at both secondary and undergraduate levels; nevertheless, these same women faced a tougher labor market, experienced higher levels of unemployment, and suffered gross pay inequities (Daily, 1995). In 1992 (Fisher) when 201 chief executives of the nation's largest corporations were polled for Fortune magazine, only 18% reported that they believe it is "very likely" that even after 20 years a woman would be picked to run their companies.

The working women in Wentling's (1996) study on career development and advancement indicated that they have difficulty conforming to company norms, fitting in, adapting to the organization's culture. The women believed they struggled when trying to locate the best person to approach for support or to determine the organization's informal power structure; in addition, they believed the established political systems and networks are composed of men and are, therefore, not available to women. The women also indicated that perceiving the organization's politics accurately was a challenge because they did not have access to information and had trouble learning the legitimate means of operating within the organization's informal power structure (Wentling).

In a recent study, using matched samples of 69 female and 69 male executives, their careers were compared by examining perceived barriers and facilitators for promotion, self-reported developmental experiences, and career histories (Lyness & Thompson, 2000). The women in the study reported greater barriers to career advancement, primarily being excluded from informal networks and a lack of ability to fit in the corporate culture. Developmental experiences and career histories for female and male executives were the same, according to the findings, but the successful women, as determined by organizational level and compensation, were less likely than successful men to report that mentoring facilitated their advancement (Lyness & Thompson).

#### Career Barriers for Women in Business

Today, women represent nearly half the total labor force, yet discrimination based on sex continues to occur in such areas as performance, appraisal, mentoring opportunities, pay, and access to career paths (Owen & Todor, 1995). Owen and Todor surveyed 284 human resource professionals and 237 undergraduate business students to assess their stereotypes of women in the role of manager; the results of the study indicate that the potential for discrimination against women as managers will not disappear when the “good ol’ boys” retire. The researchers suggest that companies make serious efforts to dispel preconceptions about how men and women differ in their abilities to manage.

Extrinsic Barriers. One widely accepted explanation for the small number of female executives is the persistence of negative stereotypes about women as managers (Owen & Todor, 1995). The negative stereotypes include the following: (1) Women tend to place family demands above work considerations because they have children to care for.



(2) Women work for a supplemental income, and as a result, lack the drive necessary to succeed in business. (3) Women take negative feedback personally rather than professionally; they may run from the room in tears. (4) Women are unsuitable for top positions because they are too emotional and lack aggressiveness. Attitudes about the role of women in society may have changed dramatically, but women are still perceived as less well-suited than men for managerial positions (Owen & Todor).

Surveys of executive men and women and research by business experts have found that many of the reasons women do not move up remain subtle (Bierema, 1996; Bunis, 1991; Fisher, 1992). For example, women managers are passed over in favor of men for special assignments and projects that get the men noticed; or women are not included in networking activities such as golf and informal dinners; or women are told that they have not been in the workforce long enough, that they have to pay their dues. Also, women tend to be assigned to so-called staff positions, such as director of human resources or communications, rather than being assigned line jobs which lead to further promotions (Bunis).

Wentling (1996) conducted case studies of 30 women middle managers in Fortune 500 companies. The women were interviewed and the data were content analyzed. According to the findings, having direct supervisors who do not guide or encourage progression or career advancement is the major barrier women face in the quest for advancement. The researcher also suggests that getting constructive feedback from a male superior to improve job performance ratings, which is crucial for improving the chances for promotion, proves to be difficult. Other findings from the study include the

participants' perceptions that they advance more slowly than men, have to work harder to prove themselves, are not taken seriously, are treated with less respect, do not receive equal pay for equal work, and are banned from certain desirable managerial jobs (Wentling).

Lack of career strategy is another major barrier preventing women from obtaining leadership positions (Wentling, 1996). Women often do not obtain technical training and do not identify what is important for their careers. Wentling suggests that women are not taught to seek recognition and status, to take initiative, to think early about their aspirations and careers, or to invest in getting returns on their capabilities.

Intrinsic Barriers. Corporate American women experience intrinsic barriers, barriers unrelated to the culture of organization, which are self-imposed through their own expectations of themselves or through societal expectations (Daily, 1995). These intrinsic barriers hinder their advancement into leadership positions. A woman faces competing responsibilities if she is a wife, a mother, or both, as well as a member of the workforce. As indicated by Daily, the biological fact of childbearing has provided a basis for an occupational segregation that has persisted. Parenting is perceived as a primarily female role, and a full-time, uninterrupted career is seen as a male role. Women have confusion about life goals because they are expected to put others' needs, especially those of their husband and children, above their own (Funk, 1986).

Other intrinsic barriers are psychological. They include low self-image, lack of confidence, lack of aspirations or motivation, lack of aggressiveness, and a reluctance to take risks (Leonard & Papalewis, 1987). Hugh McColl, CEO of Nationsbank in Charlotte,

North Carolina, said women often believe that things will be done fairly, whereas men do not believe that. In reality, that things are done unfairly is often the case (Fisher, 1992). In other words, women are not savvy to the way things really are in the workforce, and their naivety works against them.

### Mentoring Experiences

According to the results of a survey of corporate CEOs for Fortune magazine, women's careers often stall out for lack of the kind of informal advice and sponsorship men get from one another (Fisher, 1992). Moreover, too many senior managers want to pass their jobs to someone who is the likeness of themselves. Stuart (1992) suggests that executives hire by the white male model, tending to select those to aid in their upward advancement who are more like themselves. A major blockade to the promotion of women is the fact that those who wield the power to recruit, place, and advance others favor individuals most like themselves--white males--for leadership positions (Stuart).

Ninety percent of the 30 female middle level managers in Fortune 500 companies who participated in Wentling's (1996) study had mentors during their professional careers. Most often, the mentor was a boss or a top manager and the majority, 83%, were men. The mentors provided the women with work opportunities and challenges to prove their capabilities and skills, offered feedback on the subordinate's performance, encouraged high performance standards, acknowledged skills and talents, and encouraged career advancement. The study participants reported that their mentors assisted them in their career progress and in handling gender barriers more effectively.

Hite and McDonald (1995) posed the following research question concerning women's career advancement: How does the lack of support from role models, mentors, or peers influence the tendency of women to let self-doubt dissuade them from pursuing training as a preparation for promotion? The researchers advise that women who may be isolated from mentoring networks within organizations do not have the encouragement or the guidance to plan their careers strategically by taking advantage of training opportunities, and, therefore, remain in low or middle level management positions.

#### Women in Educational Administration

The Mini-digest of Education Statistics reported that 72.9% of public school teachers were females and 27.1% were males in 1997 (National Council for Educational Statistics [NCES], 1997). However, the number of male principals, 52,114, was nearly double that of the number of female principals, 27,505. From 1984 to 1994, female representation in school administration increased from 21.4% to 34.5% (Zheng & Carpenter-Hubin, 1999). Yet these gains are still not significant enough to offset the gap in distributions between male and female principals; there is a continuing under representation of women public school administrators (Zheng & Carpenter-Hubin).

According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP's) report The K-8 Principal in 1998 based on a comprehensive survey mailed to a randomly selected group of 3000 principals in schools that enrolled any of the kindergarten through eighth grades, women occupied 42% of principalships in these schools in 1998. This was a dramatic increase of more than 20% since 1988 (Doud & Keller, 1998).

However, only 12% of the nation's superintendents are female (Keller, 1999), yet 72% of all elementary, middle, and secondary school educators in this country are women, according to the U.S. Department of Education (Glass, 2000). In Pennsylvania in the year 2000, 14.8% of the superintendents were women, compared to 11.8% in 1991 ("Top Post Has," 2000). New York and Texas have also seen only minor gains in the past 10 years, 17.7% and 13% female superintendents reported for these states respectively. In each of the three states mentioned above, women make up more than two-thirds of the teaching force ("Top Post Has").

Public and Private School Principals in the United States: A Statistical Profile, 1987-88 to 1993-94 suggested demographic characteristics may have contributed to the appointment of certain types of leaders in the 1980s (NCES, 1994). For example, when Calabrese (1987) conducted a study to compare the demographic characteristics of male and female high school principals and assistant principals in four midwestern states, he discovered that the typical respondent was male (96.0%). In the 1990s, women are earning more public school principalships (Hamner & Rohr, 1994). From the 1984-1985 school year to the 1990-1991 school year, the percent of women public school principals rose from 21% to 30%. The increase in the proportion of women principals occurred in elementary and combined schools; however, no change in the proportion of secondary school female principals occurred from the 1987-1988 school year to the 1990-1991 school year (Hamner & Rohr).

In the field of education, a number of pieces of legislation, including Title IX, the Equal Pay Act, and the Women's Educational Equity Act, have been designed to raise the

level of women's participation in the decision-making process in education and to increase the number of female administrators at local, state, and national levels (Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997). The Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) was designed to take proactive steps toward making education more equitable for girls and women by offering incentives and training to schools and communities. The U.S. Department of Education provides funds through the Act which pay for projects aimed at developing programs, materials, and research to promote gender equity and to transform educational systems (Gupton & Del Rosario).

The Southeastern Desegregation Assistance Center (SEDAC) is a federally funded, nonprofit organization which, among a variety of other tasks, is supposed to provide women educators with professional development in order to enhance their visibility and increase their numbers in educational leadership in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina (Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997). Even though over 24 million dollars has been provided for SEDAC in the past 30 years, according to Gupton and Del Rosario, there is little evidence that progress has been made for women in terms of quantitative or qualitative placement in educational leadership. For example, the state of Mississippi had two local district female superintendents in the mid-eighties; in 1997, the same women held the positions, and no other women had been hired for the superintendency.

According to Leonard and Papalewis (1987), the underutilization of women in educational leadership is especially surprising when one considers that the field of education is historically predominantly female. For female teachers, access to the

educational administrative career pathway is often blocked by the small number of positions available in the administrative hierarchy and by gender-based barriers. Research has been conducted to identify the barriers that deter the advancement of women in educational administration (Funk, 1986; Gupta, 1983; Logan & Scollay, 1999; Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkinson, 1986). Moreover, remedies designed to provide women equal opportunity for furthering their careers have been explored (Carden, 1990; Gupton & Del Rosario, 1997; Johnson & Douglas, 1995; Mertz & Venditti, 1985; Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

#### Career Barriers for Women in Educational Administration

Gender discrimination, both personal and institutional, is the major condition inhibiting the access of women and minorities to leadership roles (Leonard & Papalewis, 1987). Perceptions that female characteristics and managerial job demands do not coincide create an extrinsic barrier, preventing women from advancing. In addition, Leonard and Papalewis cite resentment by others, family responsibilities, and lack of sponsorship or role models as inhibiting factors for women in their career advancement. Sponsors' subconscious tendencies to select protégés personally and professionally similar to themselves work against the inclusion of women on career paths. The researchers recommend that efforts designed to expand opportunities for the entry of women and minorities into administration focus primarily on changing the selection behaviors and attitudes of the gatekeepers, those individuals or groups in organizations who allow others to move into the ranks or up the ranks in an organization.

While investigating the impact of assessment centers on the career opportunities for women in education, Johnson and Douglas (1995) discovered a number of deterrents

to the advancement of women into educational leadership. Among the deterrents are the perceptions that women are not good disciplinarians, women cannot devote themselves fully because of family obligations, women are hired on the basis of their appearance, and women do not have upper-level degrees. The researchers found that reasons for not hiring women are often couched in the belief that it would be more efficient to hire a man. The female respondents in the Johnson and Douglas study reported most often a concern for the lack of opportunity to prove competency. The women regarded continuing unfairness as a reality that will slowly change, if it changes at all. Female school officials in Texas surveyed by Funk (1986) suggested that women in education face the adversities of being seen as a threat to men; having difficulty with male parents, maintenance men, and male board members; and in not being trusted by other women.

Data from a study that included male and female principals in two major urban school districts indicated the following: (1) Males dominate the junior high and senior high school principals' ranks. (2) They are selected with fewer years of experience. (3) They earn higher salaries as a group than the female administrators (Tashkandi, 1991). These disparities existed despite the fact that a greater percentage of the females held more advanced credentials than their male counterparts.

Factors cited in the research of two decades ago may continue to account for the low representation of women in the principalship, particularly at the high school level. Among these factors that are mistaken beliefs are the following: (1) There are not enough trained women available. (2) Women have too many career breaks. (3) Women are not as effective at administration as men. (4) There is a need for more males in what is a female-



dominated field. (5) The public does not want female administrators. (6) Both men and women prefer to serve under male principals. (7) Women do not aspire, or, when they do, their commitment is lower than that of men and insufficient to attain the principalship (Lovelady-Dawson, 1980). Lovelady-Dawson states that the structure of the “good ol’ boy” sponsorship system excludes minorities and women from promotions on the basis of their deviation from the white male norms rather than on the basis of their competency. Even fully qualified women have been denied access to administrative positions because they were unable to obtain suitable sponsorship (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988).

In an article analyzing a paradigm from Virginia’s Woolf’s “Society of Outsiders,” Swoboda and Vanderbosch (1983) call the woman administrator an anomaly, faced with values and codes of behavior designed to perpetuate and accommodate masculine behavior. As her foremother secretaries had to, the female executive must first wedge herself in the office door. Then the ideal female administrator attempts to support and subvert the status quo; she makes her own way and uses her intelligence to become indispensable while remaining skeptical enough to want to alter the institutions that scoff at her intelligence and trivialize her endurance. She must become a proud but secretive fighter for changes that benefit herself and other female administrators in the future, remembering that she is an outsider working in the world of insiders (Swoboda & Vanderbosch, 1983).

### Career Paths

Summarizing a number of the findings of the latest American Association of School Administrators (AASA) study of American school superintendents, Glass (2000)

suggests that an analysis of the data recently published in the report Where Are All the Women Superintendents? sheds light on the lack of better representation of women in the superintendency. One finding is that women are poorly positioned in jobs that do not normally lead to the superintendency. Nearly 75% of the superintendents who participated in the survey research did not teach at the elementary level, yet the vast majority of female teachers in the public schools are at the elementary level. Elementary teachers who are aspiring to be administrators may find moving up difficult because frequently elementary schools do not have assistant principals, which is often the first career path step to principalships and superintendencies. In addition, although women constitute more than half of the enrollees in graduate educational administration programs, only 10% of women in doctoral programs are opting to earn a superintendency credential along with their education specialist's or doctoral degree. Other elements that may keep women out of the office of superintendent include less experience with district-wide fiscal management than men, not being interested in the superintendency for personal reasons, the school board's reluctance to hire a female to head the school district, entering the field for purposes other than career advancement, and entering the field of education too late (Glass).

Four hundred and fifty top women educational administrators were described in Woo's (1985) composite profile, which was derived from a study conducted by the Center for Women in Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina. According to Woo, one characteristic of the composite successful female administrator was that she grew up in a two-parent household where the mother did not work outside the home. Another characteristic was that she received encouragement from her parents to go to

college and to become successful, thus indicating the importance of certain personal background experiences that might have initiated career growth.

Recommendations to educational organizations to address gender discrimination are recurring themes in the literature. Mertz and Venditti (1985) conducted a study to examine the effects of one intervention strategy and training institute on the advancement of women in administration, concluding that school districts should focus on the selection of women, provide them with visibility, build their membership groups, and design internships for them. Keels (1996) surveyed 250 women administrators employed in the positions of assistant superintendent, director, or coordinator/consultant in central offices of school districts in South Carolina during 1995-1996. Among the researcher's findings were that participation in formal leadership training activities, acquiring advanced educational credentials, and working long hours (averaging 50 hours per week) appeared to be significant factors in the career advancement of the women who were involved in the study. Keels recommends women's participation in career management and development be encouraged by organizations, which should offer structured development and training activities. In addition, women who are pursuing administrative positions need to be aware that advanced educational credentials and participation in formal leadership training programs are critical components for promotion (Keels).

According to Angulo (1995), women who aspire to be superintendents have prepared themselves for administrative positions through education and are willing to relocate in order to get the position. However, they lack mentors and those who could help them "position" themselves for a superintendency. In order to make the

superintendent's office more accessible for women, Angulo recommends that in-service training on women's leadership styles, on their strong educational backgrounds, and on the value of their years of service be provided for Board of Education members and others involved in the selection process. Moreover, women should be candidates from the beginning to the end of the search process and should be paid the same salary as the men at their level if they are selected.

In California, high school principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents who were women were surveyed to determine the impact of networking on their career paths (Rawles, 1995). The results indicated that networking was perceived to have an escalating influence on successive promotions, yet the majority of the participants did not use networking beyond a limited scope. In addition, of the three administrative positions, the assistant superintendent used networking to a higher degree than the other levels, and all three types of administrators felt the level with which someone networked was not important; half chose to participate in networking at their own level. These findings compared favorably to the findings of Collins (1998), who discovered that women perceived positive effects on their being promoted when they participated in informal mentoring relationships with other women in high school administration, and frequently, these relationships were developed through networking activities.

Using data collected from the National Center for Educational Statistics' 1987-1988 Schools and Staff Survey, Riehl and Byrd (1997) examined factors associated with career moves from teaching school to becoming building-level administrators. The findings suggest that the positive effects of having a degree in administration, having part-time

administrative experience, and having aspirations do not counteract other negative factors, and, as a result, a woman's predicted probability of becoming a school administrator remains far below that for a man. The researchers advocate that school districts establish guidelines for the selection of administrators that make standards and criteria explicit public knowledge and that districts are clear about intentions toward gender equity in administration. Logan and Scollay (1999), after surveying educational leadership department heads, call upon university faculty to design and implement strategies to eliminate barriers for women attempting to advance into public school principalships.

After surveying principals and teachers in a Wisconsin school district concerning the relationships among leadership style, gender, and personality attributes of school principals and the work satisfaction of principals and staff, Koll, Robertson, Lampe, and Hegedus (1996) state that the study has direct implications for practice in the following areas: (1) Organizations should aggressively hire, train, and promote women. The pool of female administrators should be increased because women bring valuable styles and characteristics to leadership. (2) Administrators and faculty should be educated about the chilly climate that does not encourage women to seek positions in administration. Staff development programs discussing the problems concerning the lack of opportunities for the advancement of women would help heighten the awareness and show genuine concern for creating a more affirmative environment for females. (3) District and building-level leaders should identify, recruit, and train women who show potential for leadership. Also, women who are in teacher education programs could be redirected to consider administrative education, or women could be given opportunities to move into leadership

by being appointed to entry-level leadership positions such as department chairs or heads of committees (Koll et al., 1996).

A high degree of academic competency combined with networking strategies proved to be useful for the career advancement of a group of female principals who were the subjects of a qualitative study in the Pittsburgh Public School District (Weinrich, 1994). The researcher concluded that the women who had participated in the study were highly motivated leaders who experienced very few discriminatory barriers to advancement.

Edson's (1988) qualitative study involved 142 women across the country who actively sought at least a principalship in the public school system. The purpose of the study was to understand fully the participants' motivations and to share their insights with others who are aspiring to be administrators and who might be feeling isolated and invisible in the world of educational administration. According to Edson, the data from the study would help women make enlightened career choices about whether or not to go into administration. The data was collected with mailed questionnaires and face-to-face interviews in the 1979-1980 school year. During the 1984-1985 school year, a career update questionnaire was sent to each participant to discover her progress and her updated opinions about the field. The original advice of the respondents to female aspirants included the following: (1) The aspirant must demonstrate a seriousness of purpose about her career goals and be able to articulate that seriousness to others, not assuming that others know her strong desire to become an administrator. (2) She must gain the acceptance of her male colleagues. (3) She must be willing to work in positions

that she dislikes or finds tedious. (4) The candidate must coordinate her educational experiences with her career goals and decide whether she is willing to return to the classroom if she does not gain a position after earning her credentials. (5) The aspirant should study the career path of progression in her own district and create a long-range plan for meeting the intermediate steps to her administrative goals. (6) She should pursue advanced degrees in administration because it is difficult for a district to casually dismiss a candidate with a doctoral degree in administration. (7) Finally, the aspirant should be willing to entertain alternative goals, maintaining flexibility toward career goals in school management. When the five-year update was completed, 60% of the women who participated still considered themselves active aspirants five years into the study although the others no longer aspired to principalships or had temporarily put their careers on hold. Some women were content with their attainments to date or were deferring their desire for further advancement in the interest of their young children. Others, nearly a quarter, were planning to leave education and had abandoned their administrative goals altogether (Edson).

Marshall (1984) examined one graduate program which offered educational administration degrees and certification during 1976 to 1980. Using a written survey mailed to all the students who were enrolled in the program, the researcher obtained data regarding the status, goals, and university and life experiences of the participants. Substantial differences between the male and female respondents in age, career decisions, aspirations, support, and obstacles were found. Participation in the educational administration program was different for women and men. The women were older, had

encountered sex discrimination, had less financial support, held lower positions in school systems, and had lower career goals. The findings suggest that those involved in educational administration should study the role of the university in supporting and providing effective training for women. That educational administration programs, according to Marshall, lead in providing equal access to the females enrolled in their graduate studies is very important.

After analyzing the data from the AASA's year 2000 study of the American school superintendency, Glass (2000) suggested that more women would be attracted to the superintendency if the following occurred: (1) The oppressive workload of the superintendency was altered. (2) The job was geared to allow women to spend a greater degree of working time focusing on curriculum and instruction and less on budget and fiscal planning. (3) States and higher education institutions provided incentives to women to gain the superintendent's certificate. (4) Financial incentives were given by states to school districts that hire women or minority superintendents.

### Mentoring Experiences

The sponsorship or mentorship system does not allow the equitable inclusion of minorities or females on the basis of their competency. Scanlon (1999) synthesized many of the major findings from the literature that addresses mentoring and applied the work to the career development of women in academic administration. The researcher states that literature which is derived from both research and theoretical perspectives underscores the value of having a mentor for those wishing to advance their careers. Compared to women



who lack mentors, women who have mentors move to higher career levels, according to Scanlon.

When Collins (1998) explored the ideologies of women in secondary administration in urban Atlanta school districts to discover their shared beliefs on mentoring, she found that spontaneous and informal mentoring relationships were more productive than formalized mentoring programs and the possibility of achieving higher positions was greatly enhanced if an aspirant was involved in a mentoring relationship. The researcher suggests that organizations and individuals should be made aware of the importance of mentoring opportunities for women who aspire in the field of secondary educational administration (Collins).

A number of participants in Edson's (1988) study of 142 female aspirants in the field of education purported that women not only face opposition from potential male mentors, but they also confronted jealousy and negativism from their female colleagues. Female aspirants must realize that some female teachers and even some female administrators will not actively support their pursuits, according to the respondents. If a woman gains rank and power, she may become subject to a phenomenon called the Queen Bee Syndrome. In other words, she may neglect supporting the advancement of other women into management. A Queen Bee tends to fear competition for her job, particularly if she is the only one among a host of men, because a second woman would destroy the first woman's uniqueness. The irony is that the Queen Bee is in the ideal position to sponsor other women up the career ladder because of her access to male favor and power but is the least inclined to do so (Edson).

In a 1996 study Turoczy, explored the experiences of 33 aspirants who participated in a 2-year training program for male and female teachers wanting to become administrators in a Phoenix school district. Turoczy believes that the promotion of individuals in school districts occurs primarily because of contest mobility--upward mobility based upon competition between aspirants--or sponsored mobility--the adoption and elevation of an aspirant by someone in a position of leadership in the district. Although the program studied was essentially a contest arena which allowed the participants the opportunity to learn about district policies while they demonstrated their abilities to key district leadership, the importance of sponsorship is evident in the findings. Six of the 13 males and 9 of the 20 females who agreed to be interviewed became administrators. All but one of the successful participants identified a mentor, and the majority of the aspirants who did not become administrators did not have a mentor. However, despite the acknowledgment of a mentor, 5 of the 9 women earning administrative positions believed they did so through contest rather than sponsorship while 4 of the 6 men attributed their upward mobility to sponsorship. Some of the success of the female aspirants in the program can be attributed to their mentorship by the director of the program since the male director was named as the mentor by 7 of the 9 women who advanced (Turoczy).

Academic researchers agree that access to a mentor, an older more experienced professional, is a prerequisite for men's and women's career success (Beason, 1992; Collins, 1998; Ehrich, 1995; Hubbard & Robinson; 1998). The importance of mentor/protégée associations is discussed by Ehrich (1995), who designed a formal

mentoring program geared to assist in the advancement of female administrative aspirants in Australian public schools. Ehrich defines a mentor as a father figure who guides a younger individual, known as a protégée. The research indicates that male mentors, who comprise the majority of mentors available to aid others, males and females, tend to elect same-sex mentoring relationships to a greater extent than to elect cross-sex mentoring experiences. Ehrich conceptualized his sponsorship program to redress women's under representation in educational administration in the government schools.

Koll et al. (1996), who studied the correlations between work satisfaction and leadership style, gender, and personality attributes of administrators in 97 schools in a Wisconsin district, recommended that a formal mentoring program be created for women educators. In schools, administrators, predominately males, tend to act as mentors to junior professionals that look like themselves. This perpetuates the promotion of men into administration. If districts wait for women to be mentored naturally by men, the movement into positions of administrative leadership will continue to be slow, and schools will continue to be denied the benefits women bring to leadership, according to the researchers.

### Female Leadership in Schools

In Women in School Leadership: Survival and Advancement Guidebook, Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) explore the possibility that by design or by accident in our society, women have been socialized to become helpers, men to become leaders. Because a leader is often defined using masculine traits, women confronted with this dilemma have two options; they can redefine leadership from the female perspective, or they can be

resocialized. Adding the female perspective to leadership requires both institutional and social change, which requires considerable time and drastic shifts in attitudes. Therefore, the authors suggested that attempting to be resocialized and developing skills necessary to gain entry in “a man’s world” may be a more viable option. After gaining acceptance, the women can then work to redefine leadership from a feminist perspective so that the next generation of aspirants will not be subjected to the process of resocialization. Because some women are unwilling to pay the high price of adopting masculine behaviors, many opt to limit themselves to traditional roles and bypass opportunities for professional growth (Pigford & Tonnsen).

Ozga’s research on leadership illustrates the extent to which its concepts are stereotypically masculine (1993). Leadership is often believed to be authoritarian, competitive, charismatic, or entrepreneurial. Women’s leadership style tends to be more democratic. Women, for example, on average, communicate better with teachers and run more closely knit schools. They use less dominating body language and invest time fostering an integrative culture and climate. Female leaders, according to Ozga, cope more readily with routine stress, emphasize cohesiveness, and value group activities much more than men. Women may be more sensitive and flexible, and often more successful. However, post-Equal Rights Amendment management structures favor masculine efficiency, entrepreneurialism, and competitiveness over feminine humane and integrative educational leadership--differences in leadership approaches predicated on different organizational values (Ozga).

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The issue of female leadership in schools is a global one. One group of researchers investigated how a sample of female Singaporean secondary school principals perceived their leadership styles and then compared their responses to a similar study conducted on female English head teachers--the equivalent of the American principal (Morris, Tin, Coleman, 1999). The discussion focused on whether or not the styles of the principals as they were related to masculine and feminine stereotypes of leadership were similar to those of the English head teachers. Comparison was also made of the leadership attributes of the two groups of principals, including visions, values, decision-making, and work environment. The Singaporean principals and the English head teachers preferred a participatory rather than a collegial management style. They blended the feminine leadership characteristics of a consultative listening style with the masculine characteristics of decisiveness and the willingness to take ultimate responsibility for making the final decisions. All of the principals had an open-door policy for staff and students, trying to role-model the behaviors of being available, listening to problems, and helping others. The researchers conclude that in England and in Singapore are women educational leaders who espouse a participatory management style and have management characteristics that can be considered a blend of masculine and feminine traits, also called androgynous. Furthermore, they value integrity, trust, commitment, discipline, graciousness, a passion for learning, and a respect for one another, which are likely to support effective schools (Morris, Tin, & Coleman).

A content analysis of the written evaluations of 108 female teachers by 5 male principals and 3 female principals was done to determine whether male and female

principals focused on different aspects during teacher evaluations (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991). Women in the study were more likely than men to encourage the empowerment of their teachers and attend to their feelings, look for the effects of the teachers on the lives of the students, attend to the emotional and social development of the students and their relationships with one another, establish priorities for instruction and emphasize curricular programs, and focus on involving teachers in decision making among other things. On the other hand, men were more likely than women to focus on organizational structure and to avoid conflict. Although, according to the researchers, the study was in no way definitive, the researchers concluded that teacher evaluations written by female principals focused on more items concerned with teaching and learning, supporting the literature that suggests women may approach leadership roles valuing different characteristics for teacher effectiveness and, indeed, may concentrate on a different set of criteria than do their male counterparts (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry).

Another study was designed to investigate the perceptions of teachers and superintendents toward leadership characteristics of female principals. In their discussion of the results, Nogay and Beebe (1997) found that women suffer from stereotypes, and promotions into administrative positions continue to be associated more with gender, political clout, and district visibility than with instructional leadership potential. In addition, though some women benefit from male encouragement and attempt to advance through male networks, other candidates do not have the advantage of that sponsorship (Nogay & Beebe).

### The Female High School Principal

Women continue to outnumber men in the field of education, yet the administrative positions of power and influence are still dominated by men. In a 1996 survey of 14 school systems in the Atlanta area, only 15 of the 94 high schools were led by female principals (Collins, 1998). Because of relatively low representation of female high school principals, they have drawn the attention of a number of researchers in many areas of the U.S. in the past decade (Cwick, 1999; Eckman, 2000; Emmert, 1998; Hale, 1994; Henderson, 1997; Hilliard, 2000; Madson, 1999; Robinson, 1996; VanHuss, 1996; Woo, 1985). The studies center on questions surrounding the phenomenon of the female high school principal, including their leadership styles, experiences with mentoring, their personal backgrounds, the career barriers they have faced, and their career paths.

To investigate the underrepresentation of female high school principals in one Connecticut county, extensive interviews were conducted with four women and four men, for purposes of contrast, who held high school principalships during the 1992-1993 school year (Edwards, 1994). In addition, the superintendent of the principals was interviewed. The study concluded that women often experience sex discrimination even though they do not acknowledge it and recommended that women establish a good ol' girls' network, use mentors and networks as men do, and push for quotas until high school administration is gender balanced. A quantitative study in South Carolina investigated the same issue of the underrepresentation of female high school principals (McGaha, 1992). One hundred female and 100 male high school assistant principals were surveyed as well as 12 female and 12 male high school principals. Significant differences were found between the male

and female assistant principals concerning their aspirations, the age when they were first appointed assistant principal, their years of teaching experience, and the belief that socialization and discrimination are contributors to female underrepresentation. Also, the female high school principals believed significantly more strongly that socialization is a contributing factor to the unequal representation of women in high school administration (McGaha). In her study of the female secondary principal, Beason (1992) found that the typical female secondary principals were Caucasian, in their mid-40's, and married with one to three children. Some had interrupted their careers to rear children. These women, on the average, had more years of teaching experience and were older than their male counterparts when they assumed their first administrative positions.

According to Robinson-Hornbuckle (1991), in rural education, women continue to dominate the teaching ranks, while men continue to be the managers. The researcher designed and carried out a phenomenological study to begin to profile rural female administrators who occupy the positions of high school principal or superintendent, finding similarities and differences between the rural female administrators who were interviewed and reported results from other studies involving female principals in urban or suburban areas. One notable difference was that even though the rural female administrators reported having been reared in gender integrated families, as adults they seemed to accept more tightly bound traditional roles of a woman at home and at work than their suburban or urban counterparts. Moreover, though sexual discrimination seemed blatantly obvious to the researcher, the 12 women in the study denied having experienced it at work (Robinson-Hornbuckle).



Pavan and Robinson (1991) documented in their study of 18 Pennsylvania female school administrators that the women became teachers because of their love of children and/or because of societal expectations. In Illinois, Cwick (1999) investigated the career paths and leadership experiences of three female high school principals, using the questionnaire and in-depth interview. Gender-related factors seemed to be prevalent in the women's experiences. They stayed in the classroom longer than their male counterparts, they lacked definite career goals, and they acquired their principalships much later in life than their male counterparts. The female participants' leadership profiles were characterized as assertive, dedicated, curriculum-driven, and resilient. Also, they believed in developing open, trusting school environments and striving to meet the needs of their staff and students (Cwick). The leadership of the female high school principal was the thrust of a study conducted by Emmert in a large urban Indiana school district (Emmert, 1998). To gain insight into the lives of the two participants, the women were interviewed and observed through the methodology of interpretive interactionism. The findings suggest that these women challenged the traditional assumptions of leadership by valuing educational leadership over management, collaboration over control, care over neutral objectivity, and community building over organizational isolation.

One Iowa high school female principal was the focus of research carried out by Robinson (1996). The study explored and described the subject's career, including perceived career barriers, her view of her role as principal, her strengths, and her limitations, as well as her perception of her own leadership style and the description of her leadership by those who worked with the Iowa female high school principal. The study

provides a thick description of a woman's administrative career for those who aspire to the principalship and for the practicing principal. The study also introduces a new term, "stroft," for describing female leadership that has both strong and soft traits (Robinson).

The data source from a qualitative study of female administrators' leadership experiences and perceptions in Tennessee included 14 elementary, middle, and high school principals (Henderson, 1997). The purpose of the study, which used semi-structured interviews, was to identify specific leadership perceptions female principals have concerning their careers in administration and to identify certain variables that they perceive as career barriers. A major conclusion of the study was that the principals did perceive leadership challenges because they are female but have overcome the stereotypical boundaries that have disillusioned many women from trying to attain the role of principal; these women grew from their experiences by making personal strides forward and by breaking glass ceilings.

Another qualitative study similar to this researcher's proposed study conducted in Tennessee involved only female principals at the high school level (VanHuss, 1996). The researcher designed the study to give an insightful and in-depth description of the personal and professional worlds of 17 participants. Specifically, the researcher delved into the women's personal backgrounds, their career paths and goals, their recollections of others who had been personal influences, their possible career barriers, their roles as principals, and their job demands. Commonalities among the participants were discovered in their perceptions of their "femaleness" being a career barrier. In addition, the women acknowledged the existence of the "good ol' boys" system and highlighted the importance

of mentors, networks, and visibility to their career advancement. The researcher believes that the study is pertinent in the field of education for female aspirants and educational administration preparation programs (VanHuss).

Hale (1994) surveyed all the female secondary principals in Alabama to discover the women's personal and professional traits, also termed their aspirations and frustrations. The females were 13% of the total number of secondary principals in that state. Fifty percent were 46 years old or older, most had 11 or more years experience teaching before moving into other administrative positions. A "desire to make a greater contribution" was the most often indicated motivation for going into administration followed by "increased salary" and then "encouragement from supervisors."

Boyer (1997) conducted a study focusing on male and female principals in Georgia to compare his findings to a similar study conducted by the Professional Standards Commission conducted in 1983. The findings from the portion of study detailing principals' personal and professional demographics indicated that only 19.4% of the high school principals were females, and that overall, the typical high school principal was married (98.4%), white (87.3%), male (80.6%), between ages of 45 and 49, and held a Specialist's Degree (70.3%). Also in Georgia, a qualitative study was conducted to explore women's shared beliefs about mentoring and its implications in regard to career advancement (Collins, 1998). The 24 female high school assistant principals and principals from 14 Atlanta area urban school districts who participated in the study believed that spontaneous and informal mentoring relationships were more effective for promotions than formalized mentoring programs. Another qualitative study examined what internal

and external factors female administrators in Georgia higher education departments perceived as the key contributors to their leadership potential and related personal power throughout their lives (Leimeister, 1996). Mertz and McNeely (1998) studied two female high school principals in Georgia using in-depth interviews and observations, deriving themes and descriptions from the participants' words and actions. The researchers suggest about their findings, "Their [the participants'] experiences, and the meanings to be drawn from those experiences, may well be idiosyncratic and unrepresentative of female principals" (p. 221).

Recently, Hilliard (2000) conducted quantitative survey research in Georgia to examine the perceived barriers to women becoming high school principals by surveying female high school principals and assistant principals. The typical female high school principal in Georgia was 50 to 54 years old, was married (72.1%), had an Ed.S. degree (79.1%), and had been in her position for 1 to 5 years (Hilliard). The respondents believed a number of barriers existed that hindered women from becoming high school principals, including the perception that women could not handle high school athletic programs and that the "good ol' boys" network was a hindrance to females trying to acquire the position. A study using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of the current female high school principals in Georgia was not found in the literature.

### Summary

Women make up half of the American workforce today; however, they are underrepresented in corporate executive suites and in public school principals' offices.

Over the course of several decades, the government has attempted to use laws and policies to ensure the equitable treatment of women in the workforce as well as the equal representation of women in upper level administrative positions. Nevertheless, any gains women have made in obtaining upper level management positions in business and in education have been subtle.

The identification of organizational factors which hinder the career advancement of women is fundamental in explaining the underrepresentation of women. Androcentrism, sex-role stereotyping, and gender discrimination are among several barriers that have been identified as extrinsic inhibitors to women's career progress. Intrinsic barriers such as low self-image, lack of confidence, and a sense of obligation to family responsibilities over career advancement have also been identified as impediments to the growth of women in industry and education.

To combat the barriers that female administrative aspirants face, strategies have been designed and implemented. For example, the literature suggests networking, being allowed to participate in training opportunities, and mentoring among other things are effective means by which women can advance in businesses and school systems. Unfortunately, women are not as likely as men to be involved in networks on the job, to be recruited for training opportunities, or to become a protégée to someone who can guide them and help them advance in their careers.

In order to reverse the trend of disparity in the promotion of females, understanding how some women overcome the barriers and become leaders in coveted positions such as the high school principal is imperative. A number of studies have been

conducted to explore various aspects of the female administrator; however, no study addresses the topic of the female public high school principal in Georgia through the use of demographic information and the results of in-depth interviews with women who have beaten the odds and become high school principals. This study adds to the existing body of literature concerning the phenomenon of the female high school principal and fill the aforementioned gap in the existing literature as this researcher acquires a more complete portrait of the Georgia female high school principal. By exploring the personal and professional backgrounds and the gains these women have achieved through their leadership experiences, the findings of research in educational administration for aspiring and practicing women administrators will be expanded.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Studies concerning women in leadership roles or aspiring to leadership positions in business and industry can be found in the literature (Scanlon, 1998; Wentling, 1996). The literature also addresses the career barriers women in corporate America face (Logan & Scollay, 1999; McDonald & Hite, 1998) as well as the career paths they take (Bierema, 1996; Johnson & Douglas, 1995). In the arena of educational leadership, literature addresses the career barriers (Nogay & Beebe, 1997; Pigford & Tonnson, 1993), the career paths (Cwick, 1999; Ozga, 1993), and the leadership styles of the women who pursue career advancement in the schools by moving from the classroom to administrative positions and the women who advance to the central office level (Emmert, 1998; Henderson, 1997).

However, the literature lacks research that gives insight into the personal and professional backgrounds of the current female public high school principal in Georgia. Thus, the purpose of this study was one of discovery. By employing primarily qualitative research techniques, this researcher attempted to make meaning of the lives and experiences of the eight participants in relation to their professional status as public high school principals in Georgia.

### Research Questions

The study was designed to address the following overarching research question:  
What are the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year? In addition, the study explored the following research subquestions:

1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?
2. Are there any commonalities in the career paths of these women?
3. What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their careers?
4. Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?
5. What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?

### Participants

All female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year were the participants in this study. Two sources for data collection were used in this study. A list of all the public female high school principals in Georgia was not easily generated. The researcher used the Georgia High School Association 2000-2001 Directory as the primary source for collecting the principals' names, school names and addresses, school size, i.e., AA, AAA, etc., the school telephone number, and the school web site if published.



The work using the directory began in early October of 2000 after the Georgia State Department of Education web site had been thoroughly searched, and an E-mail was sent to determine if a comprehensive list of the female high school principals in Georgia was available through the agency. No such list was accessible through the Department of Education. The public and private schools had to be segregated from one another; then the names of any potential female principals were recorded as well as the other information listed above. Because some of the names could have been male or female, i.e., Lyn, Chris, Marty, Tracy, etc., the gender was determined by calling the school and asking if the principal was a male or a female. A telephone call was also made to the president of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP) to find out if a comprehensive list of current female high school principals in Georgia was available through GASSP so that the working list could be verified. Again, the answer was negative. A last attempt to determine the exact number and names of the female principals in Georgia occurred through the use of the 2000 Georgia Directory of Public High Schools. Using this directory and the directory furnished by the Georgia High School Association, a final list of names, schools, addresses, etc., was compiled. Fifty-six female public high school principals were identified for the study.

### Research Design and Procedures

One method for data collection was a qualitative research technique termed the long, in-depth interview (Seidman, 1991). In addition, quantitative data collected through the use of a demographic questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) Base 10.0 computer program, a comprehensive statistical software

program that aided the data analysis. Descriptive statistics yielded frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to responses from a preliminary demographic questionnaire. After the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board granted approval to conduct the study (Appendix A), a cover letter (Appendix B) explaining the study and requesting the women's participation, a copy of the questionnaire (Appendix C), self-addressed, postage-paid postcard (Appendix D), and a self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to the 56 female principals. The cover letter emphasized the importance of the women's willingness to respond and the assurance that their responses will be confidential. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a postcard was sent (Appendix E), reminding the participants that they had recently received a questionnaire and requesting that they complete it and return it. Ten days later, another cover letter (Appendix F), the questionnaire, the prepaid postcard, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to the principals. The cover letter (Appendix F) explained the study and emphasized that the materials were a follow-up to an earlier mailing.

The data collected from the demographic questionnaires were analyzed using the descriptive statistics to yield frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. From the responses to the question concerning whether the recipients would be willing to participate in the in-depth interview portion of the research, a list of potential participants was generated. A stratified, purposeful sample of eight female public high school principals in Georgia was created by the researcher and a panel of experts, including the dissertation committee members and the president of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP). The goal of the researcher and the panel of

experts during the interviewee selection process was to insure that heterogeneity in the areas of personal background, educational background, and professional background would be accomplished. The female high school principals' responses to the demographic questionnaire helped to determine who would be included in the interview portion of the study. Personal demographics, such as age, ethnicity, and marital backgrounds were taken into account. Each female's educational and professional background information was also taken into consideration, as well as the size and the type of school (urban, suburban, or rural) run by the potential interviewee. After the selection process was completed, the participants were then contacted by telephone to set up a convenient time and place for their interviews. A letter of appreciation (Appendix G) was mailed to the principals who had agreed to be interviewed but were not chosen to participate in the interview portion of the study.

Each 90-minute to 2-hour interview with the interview participants was tape recorded. Before leaving the location of the interview, the tape recording was reviewed to insure that the interview record had acceptable quality for accurate transcription. For any clarifications after the tapes had been transcribed by a professional stenographer, phone calls were made.

According to Seidman (1991), "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning that they make of that experience" (p. 3). The intent of this researcher was to discover the meanings that the female public high school principals in Georgia made of their experiences using the in-depth interview. In-depth interviews, also called long interviews, are designed within a

wide range of interviewing practices, from the “tightly structured, survey interviews with preset, standardized, normally closed questions...[to] open-ended, apparently unstructured, anthropological interviews that might seem almost...as friendly conversations” (Seidman, 1991, p. 9). Marshall and Rossman (1999) call in-depth interviewing “a conversation with a purpose” (p. 108).

The nature of the phenomenon being studied was well-suited for a qualitative rather than quantitative research approach. The paradigms that undergird qualitative research as outlined by Creswell (1994) reinforce using the in-depth interview to explore the personal and professional backgrounds of the subjects rather than using a quantitative method such as a survey. One assumption was that “reality is subjective and multiple as seen by the participant” rather than “objective and singular apart from the researcher” (p. 5). Another assumption was that the value-ladenness and biases of the researcher who was the instrument of data collection were expected and accepted elements of qualitative inquiry. Informality, evolving decisions, and personal voice were accepted, even necessary, qualitative terms. There were mutual, simultaneous shaping of factors, emerging designs that led to categorizations identified during the research process, and patterns developed in the process which led to an overall understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Additionally, verification rather than the validity and reliability used in quantitative research was the basic element of quality assurance when a qualitative method was employed (Creswell, 1994). This researcher used the description of the in-depth interview provided by Marshall and Rossman (1999) as the fundamental guideline for conducting the interviews:

Typically, qualitative in-depth interviews are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories. The researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's frames and structures through the responses. This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. A degree of systematization in questioning may be necessary in, for example, a multisite case study or when many participants are interviewed. (p. 108)

The need for systematization of the instrumentation in this research project is explained by Miles and Huberman (1994) in Qualitative Data Analysis: "A single-case study calls for less front-end preparation than does a multiple case study. The latter is looking forward to cross-case comparison, which requires some standardization of instruments so that findings can be laid side by side in the course of analysis" (p. 35). "Instrumentation comprises specific methods for collecting data: They may be focused on qualitative or quantitative organized information, and may be loosely or tightly structured" (p. 36).

Each in-depth interview lasted approximately 90 minutes to 2 hours. The interviews were held at a time and a place convenient for the participants. The women involved were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix H) prior to the actual taping of the interview. The researcher tape recorded each session as well as recorded observations in handwritten notes of body language, nonverbal reactions, tone, gestures, impressions and other nuances. This researcher had each interview transcribed for the purposes of analyzing the data. Telephone calls were made to the participants if clarification was necessary. The tapes and transcriptions were audited by two members of the faculty at North Harlem Elementary in the Columbia County school system in Georgia for accuracy

(Appendix J). Remuneration was given to the transcriber and the auditors upon completion of their tasks.

### Instrumentation

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) was designed by the researcher after a thorough review of the literature to discover those items most often included in literature on female principals. It included 17 questions concerning the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants and a final question asking whether or not they would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview with the researcher. The personal background questions included age, race, marital status, number of children, and husband's and parents' educational background and occupation. The professional background questions included undergraduate major, highest degree earned, current enrollment in a degree program, positions held prior to becoming a high school principal, number of years as a high school principal, participation in leadership training other than college course work, and mentoring experiences. An Item Analysis, Table I, was created as a means of insuring that the items included in the questionnaire were related to the extensive review of the literature and the study's research questions. Additionally, the questionnaire was reviewed and approved by a panel of experts. A postcard, also designed by the researcher, was enclosed with the questionnaire so the participant could provide the researcher with her home address, home phone number and school's enrollment if she were willing to participate in the interview portion of the study.

For the in-depth interview, open-ended grand tour and mini-tour questions in the form of an interview guide (Appendix I) were employed (Seidman, 1991, p. 63). The

interview guide, which was also analyzed to insure that the questions included in the interview were related to the review of the literature and the study's research questions (Table 1), was designed by the researcher after the participants' responses to the demographic questionnaire had been studied and noteworthy or inviting themes or patterns had emerged. The interview guide then was a combination of the researcher's questions as suggested by the review of the literature, by her personal observations, by the input of a panel of experts in the field of educational leadership, and by the responses of the participants to the questionnaire.

Table 1

Item Analysis of Demographic Questionnaire (DQ) & Interview Guide (IG)

Item #	Research: Personal Background	Research Question(s)
1-7B DQ	Edson (1988); Edwards, (1993); Emmert, (1998); Funk, (1986); Gupton & Slick (1995); Gupton & Slick (1996); Henderson (1997); Hill & Ragland (1995); Keels (1996); Leonard & Papalewis (1987); McGaha (1992); Mertz & McNeely, (1998); Nogay & Beebe (1997); Ortiz & Marshall (1988); Pigford & Townsend (1993); Robinson (1996); Robinson-Hornbuckle (1991); VanHuss (1996); Weinrich (1994)	Overarching Sub. 1
1-3 IG		
Research: Educational Background		
8-10B DQ	Cwick (1999); Edson (1988); Edwards (1998); Gupton & Slick (1996); Keels (1996); Leimeister (1996); Leonard & Papalewis (1987); Logan & Scollay (1999); Marshall (1984); McGaha (1992); Pavan & D'Angelo (1990); Pigford & Tonnsen (1993); VanHuss (1996); Weinrich (1994)	Overarching Sub. 2
4&7 IG		

Research: Professional Background		
11-13 DQ  5,6,9 &10 IG	Asbury (1993); Beason (1996); Cwick (1999); Edwards (1998); Funk (1986); Gupton & Slick (1995); Hill & Ragland (1995); Lovelady-Dawson (1980); Mertz & McNeely (1998); Ortiz & Marshall (1988); Pavan & D'Angelo (1990); Pigford & Tonnsen (1993); Riehl & Byrd (1997); Turoczy (1996); VanHuss (1996); Weinrich (1996)	Overarching Sub. 2
Research: Leadership		
14 DQ  8,20 &21 IG	Beason (1996); Cwick (1999); Gupton & Del Rosario (1997); Gupton & Slick (1996); Hite & McDonald (1995); Johnson & Douglas (1995); Keels (1996); Koll, Robertson, Lampe, & Hegedus (1996); Leimeister (1996); McDonald & Hite (1998); Mertz & Venditti (1985); Wentling (1996); Weinrich (1994)	Overarching Sub. 5
Research: Mentoring		
15-17 DQ  14-19 IG	Carden (1990); Collins (1998); Ehrich (1995); Gupta (1983); Gupton & Slick (1996); Hill & Ragland (1995); Hubbard & Robinson (1998); Lyness & Thompson (2000); Pigford & Tonnsen (1993); Rawles (1995); Scanlon (1998); Turoczy (1996); Wentling (1996); Weinrich (1994)	Overarching Sub. 4
Research: Professional Barriers		
11- 13,20 IG	Beason (1992); Bunis (1991); Edson (1988); Funk (1986); Gupta (1983); (Glass, 2000); Hilliard (2000) Logan & Scollay (1999); VanHuss (1996).	Overarching Sub. 3

A pilot interview was conducted, and the results were analyzed by the researcher. The interview guide was modified; a few questions were reworded, redundant questions were eliminated, and a few questions were added. Thus, the final version of the guide used for each of the eight interviews was created.



## Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze data for this research project. The data from the demographic questionnaire, which included the personal and professional background information of those principals who responded to the questionnaire, were analyzed through the use of the SPSS Base 10.0 version of the statistical software program owned by this researcher. Frequencies, percentages, means, or standard deviations were computed and reported in narrative form, and tables were created to depict the findings of the responses to the questionnaire items (Appendix C). In addition, unique or noteworthy responses to any of the items were reported and discussed.

The research project primarily employed qualitative data collection and data treatment techniques. Using the transcribed copies of the eight in-depth interviews, the researcher sought to identify categories and find patterns in the responses of the interviewees. According to Patton (1987), "Sitting down to make sense of pages of interviews...can be overwhelming. Just dealing with all those pieces of paper can seem like an impossible task" (p.146). A computer software program, *QSR NUD.IST 5* was used to code the raw data, categorize it, and analyze the results, thus making the data analysis process less formidable (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis is the process of ordering the data, organizing the content into patterns, categories, and basic descriptive units (Patton, 1987). Patton suggests that the interpretation in qualitative research is as important as the analysis of the data. Interpretation "involves attaching meaning and significance to the analysis, explaining descriptive patterns, and looking for relationships and linkages among descriptive dimensions" (p. 144).

First, in order to analyze the in-depth interview data, the transcribed documents were formatted and then imported into the NUD.IST program. Each participant's responses to the actual interview guide questions were carefully scrutinized, reviewed, and coded in text segments by the researcher for assembly into the category or categories of the question, i.e., for Question 3, "Describe, if any, the barriers in your personal life, including family responsibilities, that you perceive you have had to overcome as you have advanced in your career," the first category established was "RQ 3," representing the relationship of the response to Research Subquestion 3. Succeeding subcategories coded to explore commonalities or identify significant themes in the responses were "children," "husband," "personal time," or "friends." In addition, text searches were used to explore all of the documents for multiple uses of words or phrases. The documents were also explored for common themes and patterns beyond the scope of the initial interview guide questions and for intersections of text segments to discover relationships among descriptive dimensions established by the researcher. The work of exploring the interview documents and searching for recurring themes, patterns, terms, and phrases was less difficult with the *QSR* NUD.IST 5 software that this researcher used. To report the qualitative data, the format of cross-case analysis was used. Patton (1990) explains that cross-case analysis allows the researcher to synthesize the responses to central questions by individuals rather than using a case study approach for each person. Thus, the data from the interviews with eight female public high school principals in Georgia were analyzed and then reported in a format suited to qualitative research.

### Ethical Considerations

Issues of ethics were appropriate to discuss in terms of this primarily qualitative research project. Some of the concern centered on the issues of harm, consent, privacy, and confidentiality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). First, this researcher did not infringe on the rights of the participants; the interviewees participated on a voluntary basis, and the meeting times, dates, and locations for each volunteer's interview were arranged at her convenience.

Second, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), "informed consent" ensures that the subjects are aware that they are being researched and have been apprized about the nature of the research. Also stipulated was that the participant may have withdrawn from the research project at any time. Each principal being interviewed was fully oriented and asked to sign a consent form (Appendix H) required by Georgia Southern University. The written consent form was prepared ahead of time as required by the Institutional Review Board of Georgia Southern University.

This researcher maintained the confidentiality of the participants by doing the following: (1) coding the interview data and maintaining the code separately, (2) assigning numbers in conjunction with the word "respondent" instead of using the interviewees' real names to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, (3) allowing only those directly involved in the research to access the data, (4) publishing the specific steps to be followed if a participant wished to withdraw from the study at any time, (5) publishing a notice that participation was entirely voluntary, and (6) obtaining formal consent, including the participants' signatures of agreement.

### Summary

The study focused on the personal and professional backgrounds of public female high school principals employed in the state of Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. What commonalities did they have in their personal and professional backgrounds? Were there commonalities in the career paths of these women? Did they perceive that they had faced any personal or professional barriers as they attempted to advance their careers? Had they served as mentors to female administrative aspirants? Finally, did they share certain self-ascribed leadership traits?

The methods of discovery in this research project were both quantitative and qualitative. Demographic information was collected through the use of a questionnaire on the 42 female public high school principals in Georgia who were willing to participate in that portion of the study. The results of the questionnaire were quantitatively analyzed, and the findings reported. Then 8 women among those who agreed to be interviewed were selected to participate in a qualitative, in-depth interview. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and cross-case analyzed. The analysis of both the quantitative and the qualitative data generated during this research project yielded common themes and patterns and significant dimensions reflecting the personal and professional backgrounds of the participants.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF THE DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

The public female high school principal in Georgia is a member of a group residing in minority ranks. Only one in five high school principals in the year 2000 was a woman. Even though an increasing number of women are earning advanced degrees in educational leadership, few have assumed the primary leadership role in Georgia's public high schools. According to the 2000-2001 Georgia High School Association Directory and the 2000 Georgia Directory of Public Schools: State and Local Schools and Staff furnished by the Georgia Department of Education, only 56 high school principals of 287 were females.

#### Introduction

In 1909, John Franklin Brown made the following observations regarding the high school principalship:

Generally speaking, men make better principals than women, especially in large schools; they possess more executive ability; they are more likely to command confidence of male citizens; they are more judicial in mind; they are more sure to seize upon the essential merits of a question; they are less likely to look at things from a personal point of view; they are likely to be better supported by subordinates; and simply because they are men, they are more likely to command fully the respect and confidence of boys. (quoted in Hicks, 1996, p. vii)

Almost a century later, the underrepresentation of women in high school principalships still persists. Some women have broken through the barriers and obtained the position of leadership in the public high schools. What are the characteristics, personal and professional, of these women?

This study was designed to gather information about the personal and professional backgrounds of the female high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. The purpose of the study was to identify commonalities, recurring themes, or significant dimensions of their personal lives, career paths, career barriers, mentoring experiences, and their leadership styles so that other female aspirants might gain insight and discover inroads to the principalship. The quantitative data for this study were collected by surveying the entire population of female high school principals in Georgia. The qualitative data were collected by conducting interviews with eight of these women. A demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) was mailed to the 56 current female high school principals in Georgia who were listed in the Georgia High School Association Directory or the 2000 Georgia Public Education Directory: State and Local Schools and Staff. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: (a) personal background, (b) educational background, and (c) professional background. The questionnaire's final question asked if the respondent would be willing to participate in an in-depth interview conducted by this researcher.

Eight interviewees chosen by purposeful, stratified sampling were contacted by telephone to arrange the interview appointments. The stratified, purposeful sample of eight female public high school principals in Georgia was created by this researcher and a panel of experts, including the dissertation committee members and the president of the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals (GASSP). The goal of the researcher and the panel of experts during the interviewee selection process was to insure that the female high school principals would have various backgrounds in the area of their personal lives

and in their educational and professional experiences. The female high school principals' responses to the demographic questionnaire helped to determine who would be included in the interview portion of the study. Personal demographics, such as age, ethnicity, and marital backgrounds were taken into account. Each female's educational and professional demographic information were also taken into consideration, as well as the size and the type of school (urban, suburban, or rural) run by the potential interviewee. Seven were interviewed at their schools, and one was interviewed at her home. Each principal participating in the interview portion of the study read and signed the Informed Consent (Appendix H) as did the researcher before the interviews were conducted. The participants were assured that their identities would remain confidential. The interview guide (Appendix I) used to conduct the long, in-depth interviews included questions addressing the following areas: (a) personal background (b) career paths, (c) personal or professional barriers, (d) being mentored, (e) mentoring, (f) and leadership.

Chapter IV describes the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis of this study. The quantitative findings are reported in narrative form, and tables are used to report the statistics. Quantitative data analysis was accomplished utilizing the computer program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 10.0. Analyses yielded frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations for the items on the questionnaire. Additionally, the qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed using the program *QSR NUD.IST 5* to categorize and code the data to search for commonalities, recurring themes, and significant information from the interviewees' answers, comments, and anecdotes.

The following overarching research question was addressed:

What are the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year? In addition, the study explored the following research subquestions:

1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?
2. Are there any commonalities in the career paths of these women?
3. What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their career?
4. Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?
5. What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?

#### Return Rate

All female high school principals for the 2000-2001 school year in Georgia (N = 56) were mailed the demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). Of the 56 questionnaires sent to principals, 31 were returned after the initial mailing, yielding a 55.4% rate of return. A reminder postcard (Appendix E) was then sent to the non-responders, after which five more surveys were returned. A second mailing was conducted. The final rate of return was 75.0%; 42 of the 56 surveys were returned and deemed usable for the study. Of the 42 respondents, 22 were willing to be interviewed, from which 8 were selected to participate in the interview portion of the study.



## Principals' Personal and Professional Demographics

### Personal Background

Table 2 reports the age of the female high school principals in Georgia. The age bracket most frequently represented was 50 to 54. There were 45.2% ages 50 to 54. The second most frequently represented age bracket was 55 and over with 23.8% falling in this age bracket. Twenty-nine or 69% of the female high school principals were 50 years old or older. Thirty-one percent were under the age of 50, although none of the respondents reported being in the under 30 age bracket.

Table 2

### Age of Georgia's Female High School Principals

Age Range	N=42	Percentage (%)
under 30	0	00.0
30-34	1	02.4
25-39	1	02.4
40-44	3	07.1
45-49	8	19.0
50-54	19	45.2
55 and over	10	23.8

The ethnic makeup of principals shown in Table 3 revealed only Caucasian (73.8%) and African-American (26.2%) ethnicities. No other ethnic groups were represented in the current population of high school female principals who responded.

Table 3

Ethnicity of Georgia's Female High School Principals

Ethnic Groups	N=42	Percentage (%)
African-American	11	26.2
Hispanic	0	00.0
Caucasian	31	73.8
Other	0	00.0

Concerning the marital status of the female high school principals, the majority (54.8%) reported “married, first time.” The next highest percentage (23.8%) were “separated or divorced.” A low percentage (7.1%) of the respondents were “single, never married.” The vast majority of the participants, 35 of 42, had children. The results also revealed that approximately half (47.6%) of the principals had 2 children. Table 4 presents the principals’ marital status and Table 5 depicts the number of children.

Table 4

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Marital Status

Marital Status	N=42	Percentage (%)
Single	3	07.1
Separated/Divorced	10	23.8
Widowed	0	00.0
Married-1st Time	23	54.8
Married-2nd Time or More	6	14.3

Table 5

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Number of Children

Number of Children	N=42	Percentage (%)
0	7	16.7
1	11	26.2
2	20	47.6
3	3	07.1
4	0	00.0
5	1	02.4

The occupations and the highest degree earned of the principals' husbands are depicted in Tables 6 and 7. The number of participants responding to the questions concerning their spouses' occupations on the questionnaire was 32; the 3 single women and 7 of the women who reported that they were "separated/divorced" did not answer the questions. One other participant did not respond to the question regarding the husband's "highest level of degree earned," making the total number of respondents for that question 31. The highest percentage of women (23.0%) reported that their husbands were retired from their jobs. Of those still in the workforce, the highest percentage (18.8%) were educators. Other professions represented by this group are bankers, corporate executives, civil servants, military men, salesmen, and engineers. Five of the husbands (16.1%) did not have education credentials beyond a high school diploma. Only three (9.7%) of the spouses' highest degree earned was a doctorate. Thirteen of the husbands

(41.9%) had earned an undergraduate degree and 8 (25.8%) had earned a Master's degree. That only one husband had not graduated from high school is noteworthy.

Table 6

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Husbands' Occupations

Occupation	N=32	Percentage (%)
Retired	8	23.0
Educator	6	18.8
Executive	4	12.5
Self-employed	4	12.5
Civil Service/Armed Forces	3	09.4
Sales	3	09.4
Banker	2	06.3
Engineer	1	03.1
Farmer	1	03.1

Table 7

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Husbands' Highest Degrees

Highest Degree Earned	N=31	Percentage (%)
Less than High School	1	03.2
High school diploma	5	16.1
Technical School	0	00.0
College/2 years	1	03.2
College/4 years	13	41.9
Master's	8	25.8
Doctorate	3	09.7

Many of the mothers of the women who responded to the questionnaire were housewives (36.6%). For the ones who worked outside of the home, the most prevalent occupations were teacher (14.6%), office worker (14.6%), or blue collar worker (14.6%). Three (7.3%) were nurses or nurse assistants, 2 (4.9%) hairdressers, and 2 (4.9%) paraprofessionals or substitute teachers. One was reported to be a novelist. One participant filled in the blank as “not applicable.” Table 8 presents the data concerning the mothers’ occupations.

Table 8

Georgia’s Female High School Principals’ Mothers’ Occupations

Occupation	N=41	Percentage (%)
Housewife	15	36.6
Teacher	6	14.6
Secretary/Bookkeeper/Cashier	6	14.6
Blue Collar	6	14.6
Nurse/Assistant	3	07.3
Hairdresser	2	04.9
Parapro/Substitute Teacher	2	04.9
Novelist	1	02.4

Mothers’ highest degrees earned are presented in Table 9. The majority of the principals’ mothers (53.6%) graduated only from high school. Five (12.2%) did not graduate from high school. Seven mothers (17.1%) earned four-year degrees, while 3 (7.3%) had their Master’s and 2 (4.9%) had completed training in a technical school. In addition 2 mothers (4.9%) had completed two-year college programs. Twenty-seven

mothers (64.3%) had the equivalent of a high school education or less. According to the responses, none of the mothers held a Specialist or a Doctorate degree. Again, one respondent answered “not applicable” to the questionnaire item.

Table 9

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Mothers' Highest Degrees

Highest Degree Earned	N=41	Percentage (%)
Less than High School	5	12.2
High school diploma	22	53.6
Technical School	2	04.9
College/2 Years	2	04.9
College/4 Years	7	17.1
Master's	3	07.3
Doctorate	0	00.0

Twelve of the principals' fathers (30.8%) were blue collar workers, as shown in Table 10. The next largest category of workers were military men or civil servants (25.6%). Those identified as professionals (15.4%) included a lawyer, an accountant, and a minister. Seven of the fathers (17.9%) were in sales. None of the principals had fathers who were employed as teachers. Three participants completed the item concerning father's occupation as “not applicable,” and one participant reported that her father was “disabled.”

Two of the principals did not respond to the item concerning the father's education, making the number of respondents 40. Twenty-one (52.5%) of the fathers had

earned only a high school diploma, and 8 (20.0%) did not graduate from high school. Five fathers (12.5%) had a Bachelor's degree, and 2 (5.0%) fathers had Master's degrees.

None held Specialist or Doctorate degrees. Table 11 depicts the fathers' highest degrees.

Table 10

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Fathers' Occupations

Occupation	N=39	Percentage (%)
Blue Collar Worker	12	30.8
Military/Civil Service	10	25.6
Sales	7	17.9
Professional	6	15.4
Farmer	2	05.1
Fireman	1	02.6
Disabled	1	02.6

Table 11

Georgia Female High School Principals' Fathers' Highest Degrees

Highest Degree Earned	N=40	Percentage (%)
Less than high school	8	20.0
High school diploma	21	52.5
Technical School	1	02.5
College/2 Years	3	07.5
College/4 Years	5	12.5
Master's	2	05.0
Doctorate	0	00.0

### Educational Background

Table 12 depicts the undergraduate majors of the participants and the principals' highest level of college degree. The most prevalent undergraduate major for the female high school principals was English (26.2%) followed by elementary education (19.0%). Five principals (11.9%) majored in special education, 5 (11.9%) in business or business education and 4 (9.5%) in physical education. Also represented were the majors of history (7.1%), math (4.8%), science (4.8%), foreign language (2.4%), and music (2.4%). The vast majority of the principals (71.4%) held a Specialist's degree, while only 3 (7.1%) had a Master's degree, and 9 (21.4%) had earned a Doctorate, shown in Table 13.

Table 12

#### Georgia's Female High School Principals' Undergraduate Majors

Undergraduate Majors	N=42	Percentage (%)
English	11	26.2
Elementary Education	8	19.0
Business/Business Ed.	5	11.9
Special Education	5	11.9
Physical Education	4	09.5
History	3	07.1
Math	2	04.8
Science	2	04.8
Foreign Language	1	02.4
Music	1	02.4



Table 13

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Highest Degrees

Highest Degree Earned	N=42	Percentage (%)
Master's	3	07.1
Specialist's	30	71.4
Doctorate	9	21.4

The dominant field for advanced degrees of the participants as shown in Table 14 was educational leadership, also termed school administration or educational administration by the principals. Twenty-two had Specialist's degrees in educational leadership; 7 had Doctorate degrees in educational leadership or supervision; 1 had a Master's degree in leadership, while the other Master's degrees had leadership as an add-on. Two Specialist's degrees were identified as "Middle School with Leadership," 2 as "Education," and 1 as "Counseling with Administration." English, special education, and business education were also fields for the Specialists. The other doctorates were earned in the fields of elementary education and educational psychology.

Of the 42 principals, only 2 were enrolled in a degree program, both of whom were enrolled in doctoral programs. One noted that she was "ABD" but did not specify that she was in a program. The data are presented in Table 15.

Professional Background

The most commonly trod career path to the high school principalship, as shown in Table 16, occurred from the ranks of teacher to high school assistant principal then to the principalship (52.4%). The second most common career path moved from teacher to

assistant principal to principal at another building level (elementary or middle school) to high school principal (23.8%). A few (9.5%) moved from teacher to the Central Office or a RESA office to the high school principalship. Others (7.1%) were teachers, then counselors, then assistant principals, and then high school principals. Two (4.8%) reported going directly from the classroom to the high school principalship.

Table 14

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Fields of Highest Degree

Field(s) of Highest Degree	N=42	Percentage (%)
<u>Doctorate</u>		
Educational Leadership	7	16.7
Elementary Education	1	02.4
Educational Psychology	1	02.4
<u>Specialist's</u>		
Educational Leadership	22	53.4
Middle School/Leadership	2	04.8
Education	2	04.8
Business Education	1	02.4
Counseling/Administration	1	02.4
English	1	02.4
Special Education	1	02.4
<u>Master's</u>		
Educational Leadership	1	02.4
Special Ed/Leadership	1	02.4
English/Leadership	1	02.4

Table 15

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Enrollment in Degree Program

Enrolled	N=42	Percentage (%)
Yes	2	04.8
No	40	95.2

Table 16

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Path to the Principalship

Career Path	N=42	Percentage (%)
Teacher/Asst.Prin/H.S. Prin	22	52.4
Teacher/Asst. Prin./Prin. (Other Level)/H.S. Prin.	10	23.8
Teacher/Central Office or RESA/H.S. Prin.	4	09.5
Teacher/Counselor/Asst. Prin./H.S. Prin.	3	07.1
Teacher/H.S. Prin.	2	04.8
Teacher/Vocational Supervisor/H.S. Prin.	1	02.4

Regarding how long the participant had served in another capacity before becoming a high school principal, 7 responses were omitted from the data analysis because the respondents reported only the number of years they had served in the position which immediately preceded their appointment to the high school principalship. The fewest number of years a principal had served in another capacity was 6 years, and the greatest number of years was 31. The average number of years served in another capacity was 19.0 as reported in Table 17. The average length of service as high school principal for the

participants was 4.6 years. The maximum number of years in the principalship was 25 and the minimum was 1 year, reported in Table 18.

Table 17

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Years Prior to Principalship

Fewest # of Years	Greatest # of Years	N	M	SD
Prior to Principalship	Prior to Principalship			
6	31	35	19.0	6.4

Table 18

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Years of Experience

Fewest # of	Greatest # of	N	M	SD
Years in	Years in			
Principalship	Principalship			
1	25	42	4.6	4.1

Fifty percent of the principals indicated they had not participated in any leadership training programs that were not part of a college degree program. Table 19 identifies the various programs which those who had leadership training other than college course work attended and the number participating in each. Several of the respondents listed more than one leadership training program in which they had been involved. In addition, one principal wrote "too many to list."

All 42 of the participants responded to items on the questionnaire concerning mentoring as shown in Table 20. A greater percentage (66.7%) had been mentored by a

male than by a female (52.4%) in their professional career. Regarding whether or not the participants had mentored a female, 90.5% of the principals responded they had mentored a female to assist her in the advancement of her career.

Table 19

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Leadership Programs Attended

Leadership Training Program	N
Art & Craft of the Principalship (Harvard)	1
Emory University's Extern/Intern Program	1
Georgia State Leadership Academy	2
Governor's School Leadership Institute	5
Governor's Leadership 21	2
Illinois Leadership Institute	1
Lamar University Principal's Academy	1
Leadership Academy - Leon Co., FL	1
LEAP	1
Local Staff Development Leadership Training	3
Missouri & Illinois Leadership Academy	1
New Leader's Institute	5
Principals' Workshop	1
RESA Principals' Leadership Academy	2
Trailblazer Leadership Training	1

Table 20

Georgia's Female High School Principals' Mentoring Experiences

Mentoring Experiences	N=42		Percentage (%)	
	yes	no	yes	no
Mentored by Male	28	14	66.7	33.3
Mentored by Female	22	20	52.4	47.6
Served as Mentor for Female	38	4	90.5	09.5

## Summary of Principals' Personal and Professional Demographics

The results of the demographic questionnaire indicated that the typical public female high school principal in Georgia was 50 years old or older, Caucasian, and in her first marriage. She had at least one child, and her husband had a college degree. Her parents did not attend college, and her mother worked outside the home. Regarding her educational background, typically, she had earned an Ed.S. in educational leadership, and she was not enrolled in a degree program. The career path taken by her to the high school principalship was from the classroom to assistant principal to high school principal. Her years of service prior to becoming a high school principal ranged from 6 to 31 years. She had been in her position of high school principal on average for 4.6 years. Fifty percent of the time, she had experienced leadership training other than that afforded through degree work. She had a mentor, more often male than female, in her professional career, and she had served as a mentor to another female to assist her in her career advancement.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Eight public female high school principals were chosen through purposeful, stratified sampling from those who agreed to be interviewed by responding affirmatively on the demographic questionnaire. The women were chosen by the researcher and a panel of experts. The personal, educational, and professional background information from each principal's demographic questionnaire was reviewed to assure that heterogeneity and variety of perspectives would be achieved. The resulting interviewees included three of the women were from urban school districts (one on the fringe of the district in a small community), two from suburban school districts, and three from rural school districts. Their high schools' student populations ranged from 1000 to 2600 students. All of the interviewees had earned Specialist's degrees, at minimum. Four of the women were native to Georgia, and four were from other states. All were 45 years old or older. Two were divorced and six were married. All of the interviewees had children. Two were African-American, and six were Caucasian. Their years of experience as public high school principals spanned from 1 to 11 years.

The qualitative research data resulting from the analysis of the long, in-depth interviews are presented to correspond with the research questions of the study, which are followed by a brief general discussion of the recurring themes or patterns, noteworthy or unusual responses, and especially, the insights as afforded through the interviewees' own words concerning their personal and professional backgrounds. The data in the form of text selections corresponding to each research question are subdivided by the most prevalent topics and themes resulting from the data analysis. The eight women

participating in the interviews were assured that their identities would remain confidential; therefore, the researcher made every effort to maintain the integrity of the female principals' responses and to capture the thickness and richness of these women's "lived" experiences and perceptions concerning their personal and professional backgrounds in their own words by recording their own descriptions without disclosing their identities. Each interviewee was assigned a number, 1, 2, 3, etc., and their responses are represented by the assigned number throughout the presentation of the findings of the qualitative data analysis. In addition, the researcher edited the contents by omitting any references to actual school districts, geographic locations, colleges, actual persons, etc., with generic terms to insure that none of the women's identities would be revealed. Occasionally, an interviewee asked that certain background information or comments not be included in the findings, and these stipulations were adhered to. The researcher also edited passages to avoid repetition or to circumvent asides that were unrelated to the primary content of the text by using ellipses (...) instead of the actual text of the transcripts. Words or phrases that have been placed in brackets [ ] were inserted by the researcher in the text selections to avoid ambiguities for the reader.

### Personal Background

Research Subquestion 1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?

Parents' Influences. In the following text selections, the interviewees discussed the degree of influence their parents had on their decision to attend college. Contained in the



texts also are some descriptions of their mothers and/or fathers “modeling behavior” or offering advice that helped to mold the women’s self-perceptions and self-expectations.

College was a requirement in our household. It was not something that was even talked about in terms of there being other alternatives. From the time that I was aware of going to school beyond high school, college was a natural extension of school, and we never talked about anything else. My parents were very indulgent in terms of my getting to decide where to go, but there was never a question about whether or not I was going. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 2)

As long as I can remember, my parents, particularly my mother, said, “All of my children will go to college.” I guess the caveat with that is that she wanted her girls...to get a good education so that if they married poorly, they would be able to support themselves...She thought her father was a chauvinist, and I guess she knew her mother had given up a school teaching career. She wanted to make sure we had an education. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 1)

College was probably not an option. It was probably insisted upon. My mom finished high school and my dad was still going to college the day he died...He was always going to school, and like I say, the day he died he was still taking continuing education courses with (a college) that were free to seniors...so I guess that is where I got my drive for education was probably from him. My mom was basically a stay at home mom....She died in 19--, but she had been living the year that I opened (a middle school). So she had seen what I had done but was not alive when I came to the high school...I think she was a pretty progressive person herself even though she stayed at home. Like I say, college wasn’t an option. I knew I was going to go. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 1)

I went to college right out of high school and I got my degree...My mom and dad said whatever you do, you are going to do well, and I knew that living off them was not an option...Things were tight when we were growing up...My options were to flip hamburgers somewhere and didn’t have the personality to do that work or work in a factory, and poverty didn’t look appealing to me, so I knew that I had to go to school. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 1)

It was expected that I go to college and I get my PhD, and it was talked about when I was little so it was just like when you were expected to get your driver’s license at sixteen. It was just an expectation, so you didn’t think anything about it. And never did it get to be any pressure until I got my first Master’s in 197-, and my father said to me at graduation, “I don’t know why you even stopped to get a Master’s. You should have gone through.” He didn’t take into consideration that I was raising a family at the time. I had one child and my husband was going back to

pursue further graduate studies. He just never thought about that, and because he never considered that, I never considered that, so I was always on that path and I realize that was always part of a goal. So everything that my sister and I did when we were younger, the bottom line was “when we finished college...” My mother was a homemaker and a teacher at heart. She was always taking people and teaching them to read and teaching them to write, like the postman...My father was a perfectionist, and he felt as though good, hard work always paid off...We were very fortunate to be at an economic stage where it [college] was a given...Everybody was always reading a book or attending a book fair or going to hear a lecture at the university, which was right across the street, so the university kind of took part in our lives. We lived all over the country...but my father always made us reside near a university. So I think my parents did have [an influence] because they set the example and they set the expectation, and my mother prepared my sister and I to be independent women. Sometimes, I think she prepared us to be too independent. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 1-2)

It was always an expectation that you would go to college, never any question. My mother worked outside the home. My mother never went to college but she worked all her life, but the expectation was you would go to college. There was no question about it, and my father had one year of college, I believe, after the war, actually was all it was. It was just pure expectation--you would go to college. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 1)

It was pretty much assumed that I would go [to college]. I had a time line...I was given four years to go to college. I graduated in June; my brother started in August. It took him seven years, but that was okay because he was a boy, and see there is a difference in the whole generation of the girls coming up in the sixties and seventies. There was a big difference in how you were treated...I always planned on going to college. My parents wanted me to get my Master's, but since I was only given four years to go to college, that didn't work out.... My dad never told me, “(Name), you cannot do something. If you want to do something, you can do it. Just because you are a girl does not enter into it...You might have to be more discreet, but you can do whatever you want.” (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 1-2)

Impact of Husbands. The responses concerning the impact of husbands varied, although four principals remarked on the support they received from their husbands that afforded them the encouragement or the opportunities to earn advanced degrees or to move up in their careers.

My husband is a very supportive man. He is very supportive in this. I think that is a real plus. I think that a lot of husbands could not put up with the lack of connection there, you know, and it gets to be a problem sometimes. But he is patient about it and that helps. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 2)

If I had been married at the time [going in administration] and been married to the person I was married to, who had a difficult time dealing with school competing with his time, it would have been horrible. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 3)

I have to say that during the time that I started in administration had it not been for my husband, who took up the majority of the slack, I never would have done this--because just going to classes...and then having a family--he just took up the slack and that made a world of difference. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 2)

Fortunately, I had a husband that was understanding, and he was one, like my children's first day of school, he was at the corner with all the moms waiting for them to catch the bus...because the first day of school, I had to be at school. And those sort of things I missed. Quite frequently, if their [the children's] nighttime activities were to coincide with some of my activities at school, he was the one who went..And, of course, going back to get another degree and another degree, he was there. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 2)

Others might say...She's overcome divorce, she's overcome working with her...(children) and being active in their lives. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 2)

I don't think they [men] take responsibility for the other parts of the family. I mean I know from my husband--what did he do when he had a busy career--he didn't worry about the part of the family; that was my job. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 19)

He [ her husband] has pushed me. He has always wanted me to try to do different things.... One reason is that (husband's name) is older than me and here was somebody who did not expect me to cook, clean, do all the little domestic things. He could have cared less...He kind of knew the value of a person versus domestic skills...There is more to it. Just because you can cook and clean doesn't mean you are a valuable person.... And he always encouraged me to go back to school. He encouraged me to apply for an assistant principalship, encouraged me to apply for a principalship. He is just happy floating along. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 2-3)

### Career Paths

Research Subquestion 2. Are there any commonalities in the career paths of these women?

The actual career path of each interviewee is outlined in Table 21.

Table 21

Female High School Principal Interviewees' Career Paths

Respon. 1	High School Teacher	Dept. Head	Middle School Assistant Prin.	Elem. Principal	High School Principal	
Respon. 2	High School Teacher	Middle School Teacher	High School Teacher	High School Assistant Principal	High School Principal	
Respon. 3	High School Teacher	High School Assistant Principal	High School Principal			
Respon. 4	Elem. Teacher	Elem. Asst. Principal	Elem. Principal	Middle School Asst. Principal	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
Respon. 5	High School Teacher	Dept. Head	District Director	High School Principal		
Respon. 6	High School Teacher	Elem. Teacher	High School Teacher	Dept. Head	High School Asst. Principal	High School Principal
Respon. 7	Elem. Teacher	Middle School Teacher	Lead Teacher Middle School	Elem. Asst. Prin.	Middle School Principal	High School Principal
Respon. 8	High School Teacher	Dept. Head	High School Asst. Principal	High School Principal		

Becoming a Teacher. All of the participants' decisions to become teachers are related in the following text selections. Becoming a teacher was a life-long goal for two of the principals; for one, her ambition to become a teacher surfaced in high school. Two of the other principals considered going to law school before they decided to teach. Five opted for a career in education out of necessity after considering continuing their education beyond the undergraduate level and/or contemplating another career path.

When I was in high school, I think I had a number of teachers that really pressed me to do that [teach]. If I had had unlimited funds, I probably would have gone in a different direction. I probably would have gone to law school. That was my real interest. But in the long run, I am really glad that I didn't. I think I have been able to make a much bigger difference in this, doing what I have done than I would have if I had gone to law school. At the time, that was just out of the question for me. I couldn't afford that, and we didn't have the HOPE and all kind of things like that at that time in my life. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 3)

I did not go to college to become a teacher. I went to college to become an engineer and that lasted all of about six weeks--got that far in calculus and decided this was not going to stick...A counselor said, "Why are you here?" And I said, "I don't know." He said, "If you look at what you have done well in terms of grades and in terms of best performance, that's not your area of strength. You need to be somewhere else." So I moved somewhere else and eventually I ended up in education because there is not a lot you can do with English degrees and political science degrees and philosophy degrees unless you go into teaching, or least there wasn't in 1970...The next-door neighbor was a high school principal and as I was struggling with what I [was] going to do, he made the suggestion that I try education, and it gave me something to do that would allow me to do what I love doing, which was telling other people about literature and language. It just seemed to be a fun way to earn a living. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 2)

I have always wanted to be an educator. I jokingly tell--when I meet parents at PTA--I tell them I have been teaching since I was four, and they laugh and say, "Four years old?" I said, "Yes, but remember that in order to teach all you have to know is a little bit more than the people you are teaching..." So at four, I knew my ABC's, and I would get the younger kids and teach them the ABC's...and that is what I would do in the summer. So I always taught. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 3)

I went to school with a major in art and my senior year I realized that, you know, I am going to starve to death when I get out of here, and my dad was not going to support me because I wanted to be a pure artist...So I got to thinking about it, you know, everybody might not think my work's as good as I do and I'll probably starve to death. I better come up with something that I can make a living at also. So that's how I got into education. I loved kids in other settings, whether it was at church or in the neighborhood--never had any intentions of being a teacher until my senior year in college. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p.2)

I had a teacher, a psychology teacher...Back then, he was really out there. He was not the traditional teacher at all, and we were studying a unit on abnormal psychology so he arranged a field trip to (a mental hospital). [When] we got back on the bus...I went and sat right beside the teacher and started asking questions. I couldn't get it off my mind...The next week or two after we were back and on another topic, I would still ask questions about that...My friends were saying, "You got to get a life. It wasn't that bad." One day after class, he [the teacher] said, "I've worked out something that is going to be good for you and good for all of us. You don't have to come back to class. They've just formed a class at the elementary school, and you can go over there during my class time and be an aide or assistant..." I'd go, I'd plan, and go back and teach the next day, and she (the teacher) really let me do a lot of teaching. I knew that's (teaching) what I was going to do. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 3-4)

I was going to be [a teacher]. I played school. I'm that typical person from the story book. I always played school, and I was always the teacher, always the leader. I knew I was going to teach. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 4)

No, I didn't go to college with the intention of becoming an educator...At the time there were few careers that were open to women. Really, there was education and where I went to school...it's a very strong religious community, very strong, straight morals, close society and my intent was to get out. I could find a couple of ways.... When I got out of college, I was leaving, no question. I found I had a job with the airlines and I got offered a job in (city) and the job was in the schools in (city). So I had two options...I decided to take the job in (city)...based at an inner-city school. So it's all rather a fluke how it happened, my career...It was quite an incredible experience, the only white person in an all black school...very, very interesting and I had a ball. And I absolutely loved it. Just one of those remarkable experiences impacting me. I was totally accepted and just loved it...just fell in love with the whole thing and that's what just made me decide this [teaching] is what I wanted to do. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 2)

I graduated in 197-. Things were changing but not much in the South as far as what women could and could not do. There were certain occupations that you



could go into, teaching or education, nursing, not medicine but nursing, as well as support personnel. There weren't a lot of choices. It was very difficult to break those boundaries that were there. My degree was in history. It was not in education. I took five education courses...I took just enough to be certified. My intentions had been to go the law school or to work in the intelligence portion of the government...I had always liked teaching...My grandfather had been a Head Master in private schools...And it was just kind of a natural thing for me...I can remember all the way as far as elementary school saying, "I want to be a history teacher...I didn't want to major in education because education was looked down upon. Because that was where you went to look for a husband, so I did not want to be associated with the school of education...As it was, the Vietnam war was going on and, believe me, the colleges were quite full of young men who were maintaining very good grade point averages so they would not be drafted...The competition was not the issue. It's just that women, why should they [law schools] let you in when here is a man whose life might be at stake if they don't let him in. So you've got that going on. Also, I was raised to hold an ashtray and carry on very nice cocktail conversation. It was not that you would have a quote "career." You would have a job and you would play at that. But on the whole, you really needed to plan on getting married and having children. Those were the standards and that was real hard for me because my parents were at odds. My mother thought I should get married, my dad didn't think I should. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 4)

Moving Into Administration. Only one of the respondents expressed that contemplating becoming an administrator surfaced early in her career as an educator. One principal, a single parent, became an administrator to provide more income for family. Four of the principals suggested that going into school administration was not a goal. The encouragement from a supervisor seemed to influence the decision to seek administrative credentials in the cases of two of the principals.

I really had not set my sights on administration at all. I have always felt that a teacher is the most important person in the school, and I taught for [many] years before I became a principal...I love teaching; I still think I could go back any day and be a teacher. That wouldn't be a problem for me, but I think I began to see what I would like to do with the school--what I wish I could do with the school, so I decided I would go back and get my degree in administration. I did that and got a job in the middle school here as an assistant principal. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 3)

I moved into administration, not because it's the thing that I've always had an ambition to do, but because as a single parent, it was the place to go in order to provide my [family] with the lifestyle to which I had accustomed them and to which I was accustomed.... I moved into administration [when] assistant principal for instruction came open, and I applied for it on a whim as a class assignment...I needed to apply for a real job and do a resume and go through an interview. I got the job without intending to. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 3)

I had been teaching for [over ten] years, and I knew I was, and I am not just bragging, I knew I was really good at what I was doing. I felt like there was something else I needed to be doing. I started thinking about it, and I realized that when you teach you have an impact on 150 or so kids you have, but if you are in administration and any good, you can have an impact on a whole lot more. So I started thinking in terms of instruction, specifically. I never wanted to do anything except instruction and how I could have an impact on a wider range of students.... I had a principal who kept saying, "(Respondent's name), you need to go into administration." At that time, I was working on my Specialist's. I felt like I was at the top of my game in the classroom, and I really had no urgency to go, but he kept saying, "I'm going to have a vacancy. You need to go on and get your leadership." So I got my leadership, and he had a vacancy, and I was able to get that spot [as an assistant principal]. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 2)

It [going into administration] was never a goal. My goal had always been that I would get my Master's degree--that was something I really wanted. When we lived in (city), I had the opportunity to do that, and so I went to (college), and at the time I could either go into special education or administration--well I knew special education wasn't for me. So I went into administration, never thinking that I would necessarily be a school principal. I thought maybe curriculum director or lead teacher in a school--never thought beyond being in a school, so I graduated and got the paper, and then one day after I got to (school system), I happened to be in the right place at the right time with the right paper work, and that's how I got into administration. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 3)

I didn't want to be one of them...I don't like authority very much and never wanted to be an authoritarian type person, and I thought to be an administrator you had to be like that. I never chose--matter of fact, the first time I was offered (a high school)...to be the assistant principal, I said, "Oh no." (The principal) said, "Go home and think about it." "No, I haven't got to think about it. No, I'm not going to be the assistant principal...Just leave me right here where I am." But I did start seeing if I had controls here I could do even more, and I realized I had taken the program as far as I could with the district level administration...[Later on] politics changed, superintendents changed--I helped get the bond issue



passed...They asked me to apply for the position of the principal here, and I did, and the rest is history. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 4-5)

I was teaching speech in (city), and I was promoted to department chair. When I was promoted to department chair, they would have department chair meetings, and, of course, I was coming up with ideas and being creative...One day (the principal) called me in and he told me--in 2001 people would think this is so sexist, but he called me "little girl"--he said, "Little girl, you need to go and be an administrator because you have good ideas, and you know how to bring people along." When he said bring people along, that's what got me. And I like to bring people along--beside me. He said, "I want you to go to school and take administrative courses and maybe get a Master's or a Specialist." So I did and it just moved on from there. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 5)

[A fellow teacher said], "You can't do that because what will we teach them next year." I said, "I don't understand this. It doesn't make sense." That was the beginning of my seeing, "You can't hold this child back." We got into some real scraps early on, and I think that's where I got it--I'm not going to do that--these kids can't live like that. That was also the beginning of where I thought, "I'm not going to be content just being a teacher. I need to be the leader." I think that was probably one of my first things where "This has got to change; this is not going to be this way." Maybe that's where the idea of being an administrator came around. It couldn't be the way it was...It's one of those things, seeing a need and knowing that the only way to create change was to be the leader. It happened--it happened just by being in the profession. You know, it surfaced with a need. It was there. I'm not a good follower. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 3-4)

First of all, to go back to school, and secondly, to go into a field [administration] that I didn't know if I wanted to do anything with or not. But I figured I couldn't do any worse job than a lot of the men that I had observed. And at that time, there had been only one woman in high school as an assistant principal that I had ever come in contact with.... I went into administration because I thought, "Lord knows I know a lot more about what's going on than a lot of the folks that have jobs, and if they can get one, why can't I?" So I became an assistant principal. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 5)

Acquiring a High School Principalship. All of the principals delineated the circumstances surrounding their acquiring a high school principalship. Four of the interviewees described their resistance to the proposition that they assume the administrative leadership role. One took the reins because she felt like someone else

coming in would not understand the needs of the students, teachers, etc. Another was recruited by a parent group interested in her depth of knowledge in the area of decision making, and another had specifically set her sights on her community's high school rather than attempting to become a high school principal in any setting.

The first time the superintendent said something to me, I said, "Oh no, not me! I'm not going." So we talked about it over a long period of time, a year or so, more than a year...and when I got here, I was very glad to be here. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 6)

[Being a high school principal] was not my first choice...Our principal left at Christmas...and the superintendent asked me if I would take the interim principal's position until the end of the year and they didn't find anybody...They still don't have anybody interested in this position and knows how to do it. There are a lot of people interested in doing it, but they don't know "diddly squat" about high school, and they don't know anything about high school instruction, so I told her [the superintendent] I would continue to do the job. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 4-5)

I went to this new school [as assistant principal]....didn't want to be there--did not. I went kicking and screaming. It is kind of funny story because the deputy superintendent called me into his office and gave me this long story about how he thought he was going to a certain school and he didn't get that promotion and another promotion didn't come and so on--that kind of thing. At that time, I had interviewed to be a...coordinator, which is what I thought I really wanted to do. So he kept talking about how things work out, just to trust him. I said, "Excuse me, sir, but where will I report to work on Monday morning?" He said, "(a high school)." I just got tears in my eyes, and I just did not want to go. I knew what it would do to my life, and it really did what I thought it would do to my life; it just changed it completely.... All of a sudden, I had basketball games, football games, the whole nine yards. Plus, I had to be accountable to parents...I am in this high school where I have to deal not with just one or two parents--I'm talking about an entourage...I made the adjustment, and I assisted my principal in the moving and the transition. [Then] they named me interim principal and then full-time principal. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 5)

I came kicking and screaming.... I had six weeks notice--I always swore I would never go to high school...I just felt like high schools were not student oriented enough. Then one day during the summer I came back to school from lunch and there sat the Board of Education and the superintendent...They needed a principal

and they needed one fast and one that they knew could take this building and open it. I wasn't concerned about opening the building. I knew I could do that...but it really did concern me instruction wise and curriculum and everything because I wasn't a high school--I just wasn't a high school person...but I think we have established a really good school, one with a fine reputation.... I thoroughly believe the Lord looks after fools and drunks. I think he opens and closes doors with a reason, and so I really do feel blessed and really thankful that this opportunity was presented because I have enjoyed it. It has been a valuable experience.  
(Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 5-6)

I wanted to be principal of this high school...It was here, and I wanted to come home and I wanted to help mend fences and build our community back. So to just be a principal wasn't interesting to me. To be this principal was...I kept saying, (Name), you ought to apply." and I'd say, "Nah, I like where I am. I have so much autonomy. I don't live in a fish bowl here..." I finally said, "Okay, I'm going to ride by the school...the kids are coming and going. The teachers are coming and going. It's operating and you're not principal." I can truly get into those roles and imagined that. I felt regret, and I don't believe in regret. If there is any way to avoid feeling regret for something, act on it ahead of time so you don't have to. So I decided, "Yep, I'm going to apply." (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 7)

No, I knew that I would [be a high school principal] but it wasn't [a long term goal]. I always felt the way schools were coordinated in (a state) to be an assistant principal in a high school--that was just as prestigious as being the principal. And because you had all the responsibilities--it was a shared decision making model--the principal was more the head master.... So that wasn't on my mind, and like I said, my family--and then it just happened so quick when I applied. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 8-9)

Good parents at (a high school)...had been looking for someone who had done a lot of work--and I had done a lot of work...with shared leadership. They were looking for somebody to try to revitalize and get (the high school) going. So they banded together and anyway, it was almost like a "calling." I went over there and it was a very, very interesting school to run...The only thing was that it was (board of education), which was a difficult board to work with. The superintendent was very supportive, but at the same time, they had the bureaucracy...They said the main thing they wanted me to work on was shared decision making and bring that about...The first month they gave me this 30 page packet--no--things just didn't work out. At that point I was into high school; I liked high school. I loved the kids. I realized I loved the kids and loved the challenges of working with the kids...but I realized the situation there was not going to work because I'm just too strong headed. I called back over to (another system) and he told me this [high

school] would be open. I actually knew in January I'd be coming back here [as principal]. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 6-7)

When the principal [of the high school] said he was retiring, it was one of those situations where it was, "Okay, do I let somebody else come in who doesn't know the school, who doesn't know the teachers, who doesn't know the kids, come in and start telling me what can be done and what can't be done and how it needs to be done." I had been here (#) years. If I don't know what needs to be done, nobody does, so why not me... There were middle school principals who put in for the job, but for whatever reasons, they decided I would be the one. I had a lot of support as far as the parents and the kids were concerned. And that is kind of an odd thing, too, because things change dramatically going from a male to a female principal. The expectations are a little bit different. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 8)

Setting Goals. Three of the principals stated that they were not long-term goal oriented individuals in regard to their careers beyond the classroom experience.

I am not a long-term goal oriented person. I have become more so--the more involved you get in education and the older I have become, but I never was a long-term goal oriented person... I mean things just happened. Opportunities just fell. A lot of people probably have told you they always had this dream to be a school teacher or a principal or something--always played school when they were little and stuff. Things just happened, and it's been good. I've been very fortunate. (The school system) has been good to me. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 2)

I've just kind of gone along and I don't know if I set long term goals. I don't have this big picture of where I am going to go--what I am going to do. I'm even now kind of thinking, "Is this it or do I want something else?" (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 8)

I was perfectly content where I was. I hate to say this, because it sounds like you have no control over your own future--had no plans--you had no career goals. Really, I didn't. I was happy doing what I was doing [teaching]. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 5)

Envisioning the Future. Three of the respondents expressed aspirations beyond the level of high school, two of whom alluded to a superintendency. Three emphatically stated that they had no desire to be part of the office administration. Two discussed a desire to

complete a doctoral program, which they considered out of the question while they are serving as high school principals.

My board has already asked me. My superintendent is going to retire next year, so they have asked me if I would do that. In actual fact...I had rather stay right where I am, but I would like to stay with him there as superintendent. I can't imagine doing this and having somebody else as superintendent, so I assume I will do it.... I have some things left that I want this system to have achieved, so I guess I will do it. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 16)

I can't imagine being an administrator beyond this level. I've been asked. I want no part of the central office administration because you don't have contact with the students. You deal with unhappy adults all day long. As it is now, if I've had an awful day dealing with unhappy adults, all I have to do is to go to the lunchroom--or go to the hallway during change of classes and I can be restored, renewed, invigorated. I can't do that if I'm not in a school building. So I never want to be any farther away from the kids than I am now. I don't have any ambition to do that. I don't want to be superintendent. I can't think of anything that would be more miserable than dealing with the board and dealing with unhappy parents and dealing with bus drivers and maintenance folks and all that all day long. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 4)

I never wanted to be a high school principal. It's too hard; it's too much work. My long-term goal had been to have the greatest positive impact on the greatest number of students. As a matter of fact, when they (central office personnel) told me I was going to move...to the...high school, they said, "What are your long-term goals?" I said, "Just have the greatest impact on the greatest amount of students." They said, "In order to do that you have to be a principal...Because if you take, like to be a coordinator, that is kind of a dead end without being a building level administrator. So that is the ticket you have to punch." If I have to punch that, then I will do that. But that is not where I want to end up. Right now, I don't know where I want to end up but that it is not necessarily to be a high school principal. I know people who have spent their whole lives saying, "I just want to be a high school principal," but I never felt that way. My thing is that I want to do it well, and I want to see children achieve, and then I want to go to something else, and I can't tell you what that is. I would love to be in school--a doctoral program--but I have to have one that allows me to work more flexibly than just having to go a [routine] because it just doesn't happen. I knew I couldn't do it...as principal. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 6-7)

That [doctoral degree] is something I have always wanted...but I knew being at the high school there was no way because I did not have a high school background

when I came, and I knew I had to give every ounce that I had to this high school to learn it and to do a good job...I'm thinking maybe when I retire I will go back and do that. I'm still not ready to say that I won't do it. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 5)

I would not mind doing the last three years as a...superintendent. There is a time and a place that you can be of more help in other areas to principals, and I think at that time I could be a really good--I could be a (former superintendent's name). A leader of leaders, so yeah, I aspire to do that. I can even see myself going on. What I really admire so much is the college presidency...I think there is a time in my life that I could do that. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 7)

I've never wanted to be superintendent, and I've never wanted to be in the central office because I want to be where the kids are, and I want to be where the people are. If you are in the central office, then you are not connected with people. I don't like that. I like being where the action is, and the action is in the schools. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 8)

Most high school principals have no desire to go downtown...You have more power where you are. If you are in the central office, there is one person who is ultimately responsible and that is the superintendent. If you are the assistant director of whatever, you've got the director, the assistant superintendent, [and so on] above you. I sit where the only two people above me are the deputy superintendent and the superintendent. Why, unless you make me a deputy superintendent, would I want to give up what I am doing? I'll stay where the power is. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 18)

Gender Discrepancies in Length of Time From Teaching to Administration. Three of the interviewees made observations concerning the career paths of other administrators the interviewees had known over the course of years, particularly males with coaching experience. The respondents suggested that having a brief teaching career hinders a person from being effective in a school leadership position. One respondent also described the “female career path through curriculum” in contrast to the “male career path through the coaching ranks.” Another suggested that a good candidate for administration must have



strength in academics as well as discipline, and yet another believed that the future holds great promise for the female high school aspirant.

For a person to become a principal after a couple of years in education is foolish, and I think that a person who works for a principal who has done that suffers because of it. I think a good career in teaching is the best background you can get. I do think it is very important that a person who has been in the classroom go into administration. I think, sometimes, particularly in the old days, people would come into teaching with that in mind, that "I'm going to be a principal in 3 years," and they would be. But I don't think that those are the people who were the best principals. I was a teacher in this school for many years.... Some administrators become administrators because they didn't like the classroom. That's the wrong thing to do. You ought to leave the field and do something else if that's the case. I think people that have learned to be good administrators are people who have been successful in the classroom.... In the old days, coaches became principals. That is still true to some degree--both of my male assistant principals were coaches--one of these is more so a coach than the other one. Females in administration, for the most part, come up through the curriculum part of it. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 1)

The thing that I still see in my administrative colleagues distresses me to no end, and we meet as administrators at least once every two weeks if not more often, and one of the things I have to remind them of because they came straight out of the classroom after a year or two--I've got some people working for me that were in the classroom a year, two max, before they moved into administration, and they don't have a sense of the rhythm of the school...And their teaching careers were very short and so as a consequence, they don't understand that people out there are talking about them and about their short-sightedness and their poor decision making that don't reflect what is happening in school. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 14)

When you go to NASSP, it's the greatest collection of bald, white guys you've ever seen...There are few women; there are few minorities and that's a reflection of that pattern of leadership development in secondary schools in the last 30 years. It's changing so that we are recruiting from high school faculty, not just high school coaches...but until the right set of circumstances is there for an individual, it is not going to change that much. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 30)

I'm appalled at these young people--mostly men--three years and they want to be principal. I have told some of them in my building, because I have had some who after three years of teaching were already in the leadership program, "Well, what can you tell somebody who has been teaching for twenty-two years successfully?

What instructional strategies can you give somebody?" and then, more important, "What have you lived? What wisdom do you have? Don't you think you need to perfect your craft before you go on to be somebody's administrator? And they look at me like I'm crazy. And there are some that I have told, "I think you need to work at being a good teacher first...." I have one administrator who got his degree in counseling and he has never been in the classroom one day. You give him paperwork and he does it wonderfully...but having a sense of what you need to do to support a teacher--when you discipline, you have to have sense--if a teacher comes to me distraught, and I have not received one referral all year long from her, then that is when I need to do everything I can to help this teacher and let her know I appreciate the job she has done. And if you have not been in the classroom, you don't have the sense about that. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 15-16)

I think we are on the cutting edge of the beginning--a female can come into this position--that you can have a female administrator. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 19)

If you are going to be in a school, you better know academics and you'd better know how to deal with discipline, and I never hire people if I can help it--I "take" somebody--but I never hire somebody whose strength is discipline. I think you better know academics and you better be a well-rounded person. And like I said, what I am looking for are people who can be principal someday, and if you don't know the whole picture, I don't think you can be principal. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 16)

### Career Barriers

Research Subquestion 3. What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their careers?

Having Children. For some of the interviewees, postponing career advancements until their children were older was a conscious decision. Other participants related the difficulties of having a demanding career and family obligations. Two of the principals explained strategies they employed to run a family and have a career concurrently.

I could clearly say that I was in the right time of my life to do this. I could not have done this job when my children were small. I have...children that are grown now--even when they were teenagers, I couldn't have given this kind of time...I wouldn't



have let my children suffer to that degree; therefore, I think I did this at the right time in my life. I went back, started back on my Master's when my children were in high school. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 23)

When I moved into administration the first time...my mom was living with us, and my child had gotten to upper elementary, and we were just at a point where Mom could help me take care of my son with the extra hours that I was spending in administration as opposed to being at home and doing homework and putting the child to bed. I was at school doing more, and so she was there to help me with him. Then when I moved to the principalship, he was driving, so it just happened to work out. If those things had not happened, trying to raise a child, take care of my mom and deal with my family's needs at that particular moment, things would have been difficult. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 3)

Men, it seems to me, have a natural support system that women never had. Almost all the men I know who are principals have wives with a job that is less demanding than theirs, and wives that take up the slack with the children--wives who pick up the children, wives who do this and that--so that they are free to pursue whatever it is that they want to pursue. I am not sure that is just indigenous to leadership or educational leadership; I think it is probably true in all professions...That is a real barrier because if you go into leadership, for the most part, unless you have an understanding mate, you have more demands than a man has all the time...If you have a traditional home as a mother--wife--that sort of thing, then something goes slack. Those are the barriers. For a female to go into leadership, she has to give up something, or she has to have a support system that is not traditionally in place. In my case, my support system was my husband who took care of our child...and this allowed me to go to school--allowed me the hours. But if I did not have that, it would have been a barrier. You have to mentally make a choice, mentally and emotionally, what is important. Is what I am doing for a career more important, or is the motherhood/wife more important? You think sometimes you can balance it, but in educational administration, there is no balance because it is very demanding. It does not allow you to make a good balance. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 2-3)

You have to be willing to juggle a lot of responsibilities and give up a lot of things if you have a family, and I am speaking of children...Yes, I think a female has a lot of obstacles if you have children. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 2)

Your family is going to have to sacrifice. There's no "ifs, ands, or buts" about it, and I somewhat carry that guilt. I feel a lot better about it now that my (children) are...on their own, and they talk about the years growing up in school-- my school. My responsibilities were part of our life...So I felt guilty for a long time about the sacrifices that they had to make with my time. Now as a high school principal,

there is no way I could do this the way I do it if I had small children. I'm fortunate that mine are older. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 2)

I was able to make it exciting because you have to think about what the priorities are and when you are raising children, the priorities are to nurture them and create opportunities to bond. Therefore...I always drove a very raggedy car; sometimes it would just be coming apart, but I always had a nanny. So when I came home from work, all I did was play with my children. I'd go to their activities because there was a nanny there that had taken care of them during the day...who had prepared the meal, and we were by no means rich--I just gave up [sacrificed]. I did not drive nice cars and I just did it with that.... I didn't even entertain applying for the head principalship until my son graduated from high school. I knew that couldn't happen because I knew what it takes...I have seen examples where principals failed or reached mediocrity because of their parenting responsibilities, and I just wasn't going to sacrifice anything. You know, that's the reason that education is in the shape it is--because of parenting responsibilities. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 3)

The most difficult thing was trying to balance everything. We had (#) children. My husband had a very busy career. He was gone a lot of the time. He traveled...I was a high school principal...He was just extremely busy in his own career, so it made it difficult trying to raise (#) kids. Keeping up with the demands of his career--my career...that was the most difficult thing...trying to do whatever he needed to do for his career and yet do what I needed for my career and make sure the kids got time. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 1)

They [the children] are grown. That is one reason I didn't go back to school. I didn't go back and get my Master's because, by the time you haul "younguns" all over creation--dance lessons, baseball practice, put supper on the table, and all this--you just kinda think, "What's the point." I was ready when I got older. I was ready to do something else. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 3)

Intrinsic Barriers. Some of the intrinsic barriers that make becoming a high school principal a less probability for women than for men, according to the interviewees, include women having natural instincts to help and to nurture others and fearing that trying to help everyone in a high school might be overwhelming, a female being a peacemaker by personality and, therefore, having difficulty confronting people who are not doing what is right, or a woman not seeing herself as worthy to take on the role. One respondent

discussed women not wanting to appear to be indecisive and, as a result, making decisions too quickly before they were well-thought-out. In addition, it was suggested some women in leadership wear their feelings on their sleeves and turn everything into a gender issue. The respondent also seemed to believe that more women are now willing to take on the challenge, but in the past, they were not willing to make the sacrifices that are necessary to do the job effectively.

As a teacher...I am trying to change these groups of children. I'm trying to change the hands that life dealt them and make them better people and better able to be successful with their lives than what they came into my room with, and so as a consequence, that desire to help means that many women don't want to take on the burden of a high school--especially if they teach in a high school-- "I'm carrying enough burden taking care of my family--I'm carrying enough burden taking care of my 3, 5, 6 classes that I'm teaching. Why would I want to take on a family of a hundred adults and a student population...and care for them, too." Men don't come to the job with the same set of priorities. To them, it is managing and leading in a different way than women manage and lead...A man will lead a high school by directive--"I direct my secretary; I direct women to do the jobs that need to be done; I don't involve myself in nurturing and caring--it's just not part of my nature...it's not my leadership style." So I think it [having few female high school principals] is going to continue to be a problem. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 30)

I am very non-confrontational naturally...In an altercation, I almost always take the role of peacemaker so that to be a mediator is very easy for me, but to be confrontational is very difficult. That has been the most difficult for me in being a principal because I have had to force myself to be confrontational, whereas I would rather work it out or just let it work itself out.... I want people to just do right and do what they are supposed to do. I don't like having to reprimand people, but I do it because I know I have to. So that has been my greatest challenge, working with people who just won't do right and bringing them in and making them do--helping them do what they need to. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 16)

A lot of women weren't interested [in a high school principalship]. A lot of women didn't see themselves as worthy, capable--I mean that "learned helplessness" like not wanting to take on challenges. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 23)

We don't have to make decisions too quick, and I knew that every decision I had ever made...I was making it too quick...and I lived to regret it...I think as women, we particularly don't want to look indecisive because of the stereotype and the fickleness and everything...Okay, I can make a decision, right or wrong one, but you don't have to do that...You don't have to wear your feelings on your sleeve. You don't have to put on your armor every day and go out and fight everybody you run into. You really can listen to other people even though you disagree. They may have some points, and everything is not about being a woman. Just being an administrator you have enough of your battles and your wars. So don't turn everything into, "Because I'm female..." More women now are willing to take the challenge, but in the past, they haven't--didn't want to give up what it takes. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 10)

Women Overseeing High School Athletic Programs. Several of the principals recalled incidents during which they faced extreme difficulties with athletic personnel or booster clubs. Two of the principals also commented upon the "good ol' boys" network in the Georgia High School Association (GHSA). One principal discussed the preliminary angst of the community regarding having a female principal in charge of the athletic program that was quickly dispelled as she proved to be very supportive of the program.

I think that people were a little uneasy about what was going to happen to the athletic program...There was some concern about that on the part of the coaches and the community, but it didn't take them any time to get over it. They pretty soon saw that they were going to get a lot of support...and the athletic director, he would tell you as he does everyone else that he has never had a more supportive principal. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 6)

Girls aren't supposed to know about athletics.... [Choosing an athletic director] It was a bloody battle and I lost--and it was probably one of the most unpleasant experiences I have ever been through. I wasn't directly threatened, but there were enough threats thrown around and threats on the Internet that...I was worried about my family's safety.... The search committee was the five board members--the five male board members--they sat in on the interviews.... I should have listened to the advice of my all time mentor who said, "You are not going to win. You need to go there, ask them what they want, and make the recommendation that you hire this guy and live with the consequences because that is who you are going to end up getting over the long haul..." It wasn't my job to direct the board in that process 'cause the athletic director is a county-wide position...but just if I had been

a guy, I think that he would have more easily said to them, "This is not how to do this." (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 17-18)

My athletic director was also my head football coach, and he was not sure he still wanted to be head football coach. He wanted to go into administration...I said, "If you want to go into administration, you can't straddle the fence. You either have to go into administration or you have to be head football coach." He said "Okay." I said, "I need your resignation." He gave me his resignation verbally. I started looking around...and I called one coach in--not to interview him... to see what kind of things he was doing so that I could share them with my head football coach when I hired one. Well, within a matter of days, he [the head football coach] was saying that I was interviewing to hire a football coach to replace my AD/football coach. Those football coaches, he and his whole team, called a meeting, and they essentially "put me on the carpet" for bringing somebody in. I was so angry with them. I knew that if I had been a male principal, they would not dare. It felt like a coup or an insurrection. Even though they couldn't do anything, that is the way it felt and I was furious. I had to let them know, "You don't run the show here, I make the decisions about the football coach. I make the decisions about whom I am going to hire in this building..." I lambasted them, and they all apologized, but it was the AD/football coach who had instigated it. Since that time, he did resign; I hired another coach. He is wonderful. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 9)

There are times when as a female that we feel that maybe people expect a male or something--like when you play a region football game and it ends in a tie, and the principal has to go down to the field and move the pylons, and I'm down there and I don't know "squat." Everybody's down there, the athletic directors, the male principals and the referees, and they are trying to explain to me--this is based upon penetration. "Have you got that?" and I go, "No." You should see their eyes roll back in their heads. "All right, I'm going to tell you one more time." But, overall, I can't say there--there just have not been many [barriers]. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 7)

Years ago...he [the superintendent] talked me into applying for a high school, and (the principal) had already announced his retirement--they had given him a retirement party. But that booster club went ballistic...and that got kind of ugly and political and nasty...The booster club got into it--they didn't know me, but then I was replacing a man that had been there for 17 years who was a "good ol' boy." That got very political to the point that I was not going to get a vote from the board even though (the superintendent) was going to make the recommendation. About 30 minutes before that [the meeting], I said take it [the recommendation] off...and then (the principal) decided he wouldn't retire. That is one time I think that "female" was an issue. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 21)

Male coaches have been somewhat of a dilemma, and I have mixed reviews with many of them now. A lot of them I love and have really come to respect, but a lot of them are the biggest bunch of jerks that I have ever seen...I had a coach last year...he got on the bus to take the B-team football team to an away game...and saw the cheerleaders and the sponsor sitting there--they were at the back of the bus and had a division between the football boys and cheerleaders. He just started ranting and raving, "This just can't be. Cheerleaders can't be on the bus." Some of them [the witnesses] came to tell me what he said, "This is some of that (respondent's name) shit." So he's no longer with us. But there are so many of that group of people, and there's enough of them to really say that it exists; they really discount you. You don't exist. "Me, coaching this football or this basketball or whatever is more important than school, community, God, mother, and country. And you really don't understand because you are a woman." (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 12)

The barriers I really have faced are coaches trying to blackball me and tell people not to go to work for me because I'm a woman, and they [women] don't understand things. I truly did have--I have a coach right now that put the word out that you did not want to work for me and made it very difficult for me for a while to hire people because he said, "You don't want to work for her," and he is a fairly well respected coach...It was very difficult to counteract...He and I had gone around about some issues, which I didn't feel he was working appropriately to solve. So you do have a struggle with coaches sometimes...But as a woman, you do face a lot of issues with coaching in high school because it's such a major part of the curriculum. You are not a part of the network. You are not a part of the "good ol' boys," and it is very difficult being a female...A major part of everything that goes on in a high school. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 9)

[The Georgia High School Association] They say they would like you to be a part of it, and I think the leaders at the top would like you to be a part of it, but the general members--the people who really run it--the guts of the association--they don't want you [a female] to be a part of it. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 9)

You talk about the "good ol' boy" system being alive and well--that's the Georgia High School Association. It's unbelievable. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 12)

Gender Discrimination. Gender discrimination toward the principals came from a variety of sources, including board of education members, central office personnel, former supervising principals, male teachers, parents and even some male students. Some recollections the respondents called trivial; other incidents were serious and harmful. In



addition, certain groups with whom they interacted on the job behaved differently when a woman rather than a man is in the role of principal. Some of the interviewees perceived that the expectations of their job performance, the amount of effort they must commit to doing the job, their decision making, or the ways in which they communicate were scrutinized much more intensely than they would have been if a man were in their position. One principal explained that the board of education was supportive of a female high school principal as long as she had strong male assistant principals. One principal detailed an experience with gender discrimination early in her teaching career when she was not hired as a social studies teacher because the principal was really looking for a male coach, not a teacher.

I think there are adjustments that they have to make because I am a female...All five board members are male and the superintendent is male, and I spend time occasionally with just that group, and I find them, for example, watching their speech in front of me and apologizing for whatever they said that they would ordinarily have said in private. I don't care what they said; it doesn't matter to me, but they make a little bit of a deal about that. And they probably don't have as good a time with me along as they would if I weren't along...that's undoubtedly true. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 10)

Another thing that I think anybody ought to be able to see is that women, maybe trying to prove themselves, but you are going to get more--you are going to get a better job done from a woman. You know, if I were ever in a position to be hiring a principal, I would hire a female...Honestly, you have to work harder for what you do. You know, that's life. I hope the time will come when my daughter won't have to feel she has to do that, but she probably will. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 9)

If they had a guy to put here, they would in a heartbeat. I was visited by three different board members as part of this football extravaganza we just had. Each of the three of them said, "We think you need to go to the county office." If that is what the superintendent wants me to do--I don't want to go...I'm not coming for less money. I'm coming for more money...so I didn't go. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 21)

When I went back to a public school system, I asked my principal at that time about a leadership program because I was still interested in the leadership program and wanted to pursue it...He said, "You would not make a good administrator." He would not recommend me. There were men in the building who were recommended who were on the fast track and, in little or no time, were able to become assistant principals or principals. That was a barrier, and it took me [many] years after that before I actually decided to pursue an administrative career in public education. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 3)

The other barrier, and I don't know that it is a barrier, but I think it is something that you come across--one of my female colleagues alluded to it, but I didn't really know what she meant until I had the job because I was still assistant principal--she said, "You are going to find that men react differently to female principals than they do with men." And I have found that time and time again this year...When they [male teachers] have been displeased with something that I have done, they have wanted to raise their voices as if I am going to cower. I have had to say very softly, "Excuse me, apparently you do not know who you are talking to. Would you meet me in my office." And we go from there, and I have had to establish that I may be soft spoken, but I am the boss and "don't cross me" and have found that a big challenge. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 8)

Men have the impression that if you just call things will get done. And because there is a "good ol' boy" network, it does sort of work like that. So, if you are female coming in, it takes you a little while to negotiate the network and to establish yourself so that they know, "This is (respondent's name) calling, and I really need to respond to what she needs." You need to be able to do it in such a way that you are nonthreatening and non-hostile, but they know that when I call I need them to respond. That is a barrier because you have to negotiate how to get in so that they respect you enough to do what you want them to do. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 9)

My experience is that they [board of education members] are very supportive because there are an awful lot of female principals and assistant principals. Up until recently, the majority of the people going through parent interviews who have done extremely well have been females. I don't think they have a stigma. But they do believe you have got to have some strong males, but I think they are seeing now that males don't have to be principals; they can be assistants, as long as you have someone level-headed as the principal. Respondent 3:

A man can be an idiot. I'm serious, he can be an idiot, and as long as he has a really good assistant principal for instruction, she makes him look good and can teach him the ropes...A woman coming in better have a firm grip on instruction because that is what is going to keep her afloat. I never did discipline except as I



did it “here and there” as an assistant principal, but I really didn’t have to know discipline to run the school, but I had to know instruction so that when things started going in a way that was crazy, I could say, “No, that is not going to work...” It stands to reason--men--they don’t need that [strength in instruction] as long as they can do the “coach thing” and motivate and talk and make people feel good, then they are wonderful people. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 13-14)

I feel like sometimes, and I’m not specifically talking about this Board, but I’m talking in general to the hierarchy--I think you are only as good as your last decision. In other words...let’s say you have something that’s may be on the negative side that’s high profile--I don’t know if maybe they feel that a male would have handled it better than a female...that’s not been expressed to me--but I think typically you expect high school principals to be males. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 8)

I feel like they [the board of education members] listen to me in substance and I appreciate that...I don’t know how much it’s got to do with my being a woman, but I think in the past they just accepted men by position, and they accepted me by substance. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 15)

I have that [the belief that a high school principal should be male] with my Iranian boys. I have to get real strong with them. “I am the principal. You have to do what I say.” The boys say, “Not in my culture, (principal’s name).” I said, “I know, you go back to your culture. You go back there and fight another war or stay over here and work with me. Now what do you want to do?” Most of the Iranian kids over here are rich. Their parents sent them over here so they wouldn’t have to fight. But oh, my god, they are such chauvinists. They report me all the time. They go downtown and report me. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 16)

You have parents and kids who try to physically intimidate you, which is kind of an interesting thing because they think bigger and louder is better; therefore, if they scream loud enough and puff up and stand up and can be taller than you, then they can win. It is kind of like watching kids play games. A lot of times that has been one thing that you have to overcome...You just have to laugh at them and say, “Oh please, when you decide to be civilized, I’ll talk to you. Until then, I’ll have the public safety officer escort you out,” which tends to get their attention real fast. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 9)

There are males who will try to cause you to stumble..(Another female principal) said, “All I can tell you is you have to work twice as hard because there is a double standard.” What is accepted for men is not accepted for women...Men can cuss and carry on, but women cannot. If you do, then you are looked down upon, and I think in the South, that’s especially true. I think there are a lot of social and

ideological barriers; you know, a woman is not supposed to have this job. They [the board of education members] are accepting [of female high school principals] for some schools but not for others. (The oldest school in the county) would not have a female principal. (Respondent's school) had never had one...High schools are not really set up for women, and a lot of times you have to fight that little prejudice. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 11)

When I came into education, I was patted on the head and was told, "Well sweetheart, well honey," by principals, "I'm looking for a man for the job. I really need a coach; I just said I needed a teacher but I really need a coach." Okay, give me the darn play book. How hard can it be to do junior high football? They literally patted me on the head--patted me on the shoulder, and it was very difficult to find a job because most social studies teachers were coaches. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 16)

Stereotypes. One stereotype discussed by the respondents concerned the belief of others that the position of high school principal is generally reserved for men and better suited for men. The women related encountering people who unwittingly assume that females do not occupy the high school principal's office, and therefore, the women were often mistaken for secretaries, curriculum directors, or assistant principals. In addition, two of the interviewees described the stereotypical ways in which a woman in a position of authority is expected to communicate in contrast to the accepted communication styles of men. One female principal recalled an incident in which another female principal fueled the stereotype that women given power are unreasonable and dictatorial. Another principal said if women fight to be involved in the information gathering and decision making sessions with men, the women are typified as "bitches."

It certainly was an unheard of thing--there had never been a woman principal before--that's for sure...I never aspired to that even when I was working on those degrees or even when I was an elementary principal. I hadn't thought of being a high school principal, somehow. I guess that was because it probably was not something that was going to be a woman's position--not that I thought I couldn't do it, but that I just didn't think that would be a possibility, but you know it came

to me.... I think that the high school principal is perceived as being a position of authority much greater than any other principal in the system. Also, the whole athletics question comes in to the factor...Many principals come from the coaching ranks. I think that there is a perception sometimes among people who really don't necessarily know that you somehow have to be physically strong to manage these teenage children, which is crazy. You know you are not going to wrestle children to the floor, but there's some kind of a perception there that you have got to be physically courageous to do that job. I'm not sure that I'm expressing that well, but it's like "It's a man's job--it's a tough job and here are all these wild high school students. It's got to take somebody strong to be able to handle that." That's just not true--that's ridiculous. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 7)

I don't know what I'm doing--and that comes from a lot of different sources. If I'm an English teacher, how can I understand a curriculum in math and science, and I had to prove to the math and science teachers that I understand what I observed in their classrooms...I had to prove to my fellow teachers who I was supervising that I understood what they were doing. I had content knowledge...Girls typically don't know anything about facilities management--what do I know about air conditioning--what do I know about roofing--what do I know about paint--those kind of things are things I've had to learn. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 15-16)

The first barrier is that because I tend to be soft spoken, people tend to think that I am very soft. In a way, I am, but once I determine that I want to go in a direction, then I guess the hard, determined side of me that people don't see comes out. And they think because I am soft spoken I could not be a good leader, which is why, I think, they made me interim principal instead of naming me principal...Some people said, "Do you think (respondent's name) is too soft for the job?" But obviously, I'm not...With the ladies I don't usually have a problem--just tell them what you want...and they say "yes," and they go on with their life and either they like it or they don't like it. With men, they tend to want to challenge what you say. And unless you come across--I don't want to say "masculine," because I don't want to start any of the male/female role thing--but unless you come across [respondent speaking in a harsh voice]--I don't have a word to describe it--they are going to challenge you. You almost have to be in their face to keep them... (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 7-8)

If we [respondent and her male assistant principals] are in a group together, because the men do their little rituals "Bam, Bam (slapping hands)--you know, that kind of thing, they [outsiders] will automatically defer to one of the male assistant principals as the principal. They will start talking to the male as if he is the principal...I usually get tickled by it and don't say anything because they always have to defer to me, and say, "I'm sorry, she is the principal. You need to ask

her.” I will go along and say [in a bold, deep voice], “Hi, how are you doing!” I will do a heavy “man” handshake and they say, “oh, okay,” and then they will ask questions to me. That is a small thing, but I have found that they tend to defer to men. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 8)

People said, “A woman can’t do it.” That was the talk at the little restaurant in town. A friend of mine told my husband that the friend was in the restaurant and Mr.-- was saying, “What in the world are they thinking, hiring a woman for high school principal.” (The friend) listened to it as long as he could. Finally, he said, “That’s not just any woman high school principal, that’s (respondent’s name). You know she can do that.” Mr.-- said, “Nah, a woman can’t handle that out there.” The friend told my husband he finally just looked at Mr.-- and said, “I know one thing, she can beat your ass.” So certainly people felt that way [a woman can’t handle it]. There were other people who were willing to give it the chance. But I can tell you that certainly was a question in people’s minds--thank goodness--not a big enough question to the ones that made a difference in hiring me, but certainly, that was, I’m sure, a barrier. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 10)

No matter what man I’m standing beside, even at GAEL conferences, I go up to the vendors, and I’m standing there with any man, then they ask me what elementary school I’m principal of--every time--not just necessarily GAEL, at other places, I can be standing there and they will call me a secretary...and it’s very inappropriate for me to correct that, so I’m politically correct and nice and smile and don’t correct them and can’t say what I really want to say...Those are just petty things. Those aren’t really barriers, but you just know that is still alive and that people don’t recognize women as being high school principals...Several [other women], though, came in and did it poorly, and lived right through the stereotype people thought--oh man--this is bad for all of us. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 10)

[Discussing other female principals] “I’m going to be the boss.” They call men assertive and women “a bitch.” But they really were bitches--they really were--several of them and they didn’t make it. They chose their battles poorly and made everything a battle--everything a war...[One female principal] decided everybody was going to sit down at the football game. Nobody could stand up and walk and that you couldn’t smoke there. She went down and harassed a little group of men because of the rules. And I mean, she killed community support...One of the men said to her, I’m told, “If I just go ahead and admit that ‘yours’ is bigger than ‘mine’ will you leave me alone?” That’s the way of some women that have not been successful. It does seem that they go around trying to prove “theirs” is bigger, and you’re not going to be successful like that. That’s just not good people skills--not good leadership skills--just destroys a sense of community. You are not going to get a lot of support like that. You got to have expectations and let people

know where you stand but not that you are just an unreasonable dictator.  
(Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 10-11)

[Discussing facilities management decisions] When you fight to be involved in the loop, you are a bitchy woman, and you have to fight to be involved in the loop. I also find really interesting that as a male, they would just naturally put you in the loop, but when you fight to be in the loop...you are a hard-driving woman, and you better be careful; "She's a real bitch," and that's really interesting...Those things [facilities management decisions] are things that you would think you would be involved in, but all of the sudden, you find that someone has turned you back, and you think, "That's how they think of me." (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 10)

A lot of people don't think women are smart enough to handle a high school. They don't think we are smart enough really to teach in a high school, and if you do, you are supposed to be shoved over to the side and let the men handle it.  
(Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 10)

My evaluations are done by an assistant superintendent...The first year she did my evaluation, she marked me down on my tone of voice because a parent had called and said that I spoke abruptly to them. This was never brought to me. You know, "(A parent) called and said that you did such and such"...When I asked about it, I was told that this situation had occurred, and after having worked with me for a year she realized that I was not a sweet, fluffy voiced person and that she knew I had to be firm sometimes, but whereas a man could do that, a woman couldn't. People didn't take it [a firm tone of voice from a woman] the right way...I was at fault because I didn't use the appropriate tone of voice. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 11)

Resistance to Female Leadership. Resistance to female leadership was an issue for three of the principals. Asking applicants whether or not they could work for a woman was one principal's mechanism for safeguarding against having employees who did not want to be led by a woman.

When I first came here, I had 3 assistant principals. One of my assistant principals was a man who had been here for years and years and years and had never done an adequate job, and he was "by God" not going to have some woman tell him what to do. I mean that was just the way it was. Well, he is not here anymore.  
(Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 9)

I think there are people who don't like working for women, and I think that's their problem, not mine. I figured if it got that bad then they would remove themselves 'cause I wasn't going anywhere. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 8)

A male [assistant principal]--I asked he be relieved of his duties here because he couldn't--he's young and he's proving it--he couldn't take it, and he didn't believe that I knew what I was doing. They asked me what I thought, and I said he didn't need to lose his job, but he needed to be under a man's tutelage. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 14)

I have had one assistant principal who just could not work for a woman... He just couldn't do it. If I said, "This needs to be done and this needs to be done; these are your responsibilities," he'd say, "Okay," and that was the end of it; it never got done. And if I said anything to him about it, if I said, "Mr --, this..." he said, "Are you checking up on me? Who do you think you are? No woman is going to tell me what I can and can't do." It's real strange--he's now working at an elementary school as an assistant principal. They should have fired him but because he is male, they just transferred him out. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 10)

You are trying to...maintain the office staff, which is a whole other ball game. "Can you work for a woman?" Some can; some can't. I hadn't ever dreamed of having to ask somebody that question, but any time I interview now that is one of the first questions I ask. "Give it some thought, because if you can't, I need to know now." (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 14)

Drawbacks That Transcend Gender. The demands of the job, including excessively long hours at school, oppressive workloads and job-related stress, are barriers that transcend gender. Male and female high school principals, according to some of the interviewees, sacrifice their personal lives, quality time with their families, and sometimes even their health as they try to manage a safe high school environment. Two of the respondents also mentioned that the pay compensation was not adequate for the responsibilities of the job.

I give 60 to 70 hours a week to my job, and certainly my personal life suffers for it. You can't help that.... I would say as far as sacrifices that I've made I think time with my family and friends is very high on that list. My life is coming to work, staying at work--sometimes going home and getting a bite to eat and coming back



to work and going home at 10:00 at night--getting up the next morning and doing it again and doing it all weekend and doing it all summer--and it takes a great toll with your personal life.... I would say that you cannot do the job if you are not willing to give it your whole life--and that may not be a fair statement but it is my feeling.... You have to pick the time in your life when you can give that much and when you are not going to resent giving and I don't resent it. I do it because I want to do it, because I really have a vision of what I want this school and this system to be and I want it to be that way before I retire. But I couldn't have done this for 20 or 30 years, not at the rate I'm going now. I can do this for a few more years, but I couldn't do it "on and on." The cost would be too great. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 23)

There are days when I feel like I am ambassador to a third world country. It's tough; it's stressful... I really and truly would like to go back to being assistant principal for instruction. I know it's not as much money as I'm making now, but the time off in the summer and the other benefits in terms of not having to be here when the sun rises and be here when the lights go out would allow me to do some staff development, some training, some consulting that I'm not able to do now. I can't go to school now. I can't consult unless I beg a day off. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 4-5)

That's [school safety] the thing I focus on from the minute I get up in the morning till I finally put my head down at night--it has to be...it's what our clientele have asked; it's what our children need; it's what our teachers need. They believe when they come to work in the morning, when they come to school in the morning, when they drop their children off in the morning or when the bus picks them up in the morning that they are going to come home alive in the afternoon--that they are not going to be watching themselves on CNN--wondering how come they were lucky enough to survive. That's my job and it's stressful; it's nerve racking. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 10-11)

A lot of principals and I have gotten together, and in our conversations, we say five years is about as much as you can be a high school principal and be effective before you burn out. It used to be you could be a high school principal for thirteen, fifteen, thirty years, but now it is just too complex.... It is too great a sacrifice. You literally have no life, especially on the high school level. I think a lot of females weigh the cost and say it is not worth it...It is not about getting the education because we go back; we go to school; we get the education...It is not about ability because obviously we have the ability. We run schools anyway. It is about sacrifice. I believe if you did a study of female principals, you would find that most of them are either divorced or single...My average day is from 8:00 a.m. until 8:30 p.m...and that doesn't even count when I have a basketball game or a football game. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 17)

A high school is so much different, and you know that it is, but if you are coming from a middle school you think, "Well, I'm ready for a few nighttime activities and extracurricular and athletics." You just don't have the foggiest idea until you have been in a high school--I thought I knew, but I didn't...I've worked harder in these years than I did the first 20 of my whole career.... Do you have that many females really willing to give what it takes? I'm not exaggerating when I say 24/7, I mean 24/7--that's what it takes. When the sheriff calls you at 2:00 in the morning, telling you have an open door and (the superintendent) has said that you will go out, you come out here and you secure that building and you check it with the deputies. I've always had the philosophy, not just since high school, when the doors are open, I'm going to be there. Administration is going to be there. I think parents expect it. I think the kids should expect it...I may go a little overboard, I don't know.... I think it takes a very, very strong person to be at high school regardless; it takes someone that really has that commitment to it. I do think I've missed a lot with my own kids that maybe I shouldn't have. Maybe I should have taken more time off for things. I don't think they hold it against me, but a lot of those things don't come back around. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 19-20)

This job is four nights a week--every week. Last night, I was here till 8:30. This is summertime. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 23)

The only thing I hate about it [being a high school principal] is it doesn't pay--doesn't pay what it should, and if it paid more, I think more people would be interested in it. We are losing such good teachers because of the pay and aspiring administrators and teacher leaders. Now-a-days we are getting people who weren't successful in other things and have decided they would go into teaching, and we don't need that. We need the best in teaching because we are the creators of knowledge. We are the creators of the doctors and the lawyers and the chemists and the technicians. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 20)

I think it's probably managing your personal lives with the time it takes to run a school...I don't even think the superintendent has a clue; he's never been a high school principal...I do think that it probably needs some more evaluation, or we are going to lose a lot of people. It's the most exhausting job I've ever had. My husband, he's the one who thinks I shouldn't do it because I don't have a personal life. I think they won't get people to want to be a high school principal until they find a way to balance it out, and I don't know how to do that. Also, I don't think the compensation is adequate for the responsibility, for the number of hours that is expected or for the amount of the responsibilities that are given to people in this position...One of the things I've got to go to the doctor for is because physically it has taken its toll on my health, which is crazy--never had health problems in my life, but it's probably job-related...That's what's facing other principals right now



too...That's a male problem as well as a female problem. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 19-20)

### Mentoring

Research Subquestion 4. Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?

Willingness to Mentor. Whether they were involved in formal mentoring programs through their local school systems or through college administrative training programs or involved in informal mentoring situations, all of the respondents viewed themselves as mentors. A number of the principals emphasized the importance of actively seeking talented potential administrative aspirants to mentor to ensure the welfare of the educational system in the future, whether the aspirants were male or female. Additionally, they felt it was their obligation to train their assistant principals so that they would be prepared if the opportunity for them to become a high school principal presented itself.

I would say one of my assistant principals--my female assistant principal certainly, also one of my male assistant principals...he'll be a principal one day, and you know that it is not an official mentoring program--that is just the way it goes. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p.15)

I see myself as a mentor to a lot of different people. I mentor administrative candidates, people who would like to be an administrator someday. This is a wayward stopping point for ( a college). They send people to shadow out of their leadership class and that's great--love having them, and it's a good opportunity for those who haven't decided whether they want to be elementary, middle or high--one day here and they can very quickly tell--this is something I want to do or something I don't want to do, and the sooner you make a decision, the better off you are going to be--cause you will find your niche and get there and stay there. The people in our building and in our district who have administrative ambitions have been good "mentees." It's good for me because it allows me to teach, and it is good for them because it gives them the opportunity to actually experience some administrative jobs. I think it's [having a mentor] is good in a number of ways. One, just the confirmation of your own worth and value...Having a mentor whose

thought processes are different from yours but at the same time who gives you advice, even if you don't take that advice, helps shape your thought processes and actions. Sometimes, I will call my mentors, not so much to take their advice, but just to have a sounding board--just to have somebody who's not involved in the politics of the decision. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 24-25)

I have a formal "mentee" who is in (a leadership program)...and when I have critical issues in the school...I say, "Now this is a mentoring moment. This is the situation." I try to get her to see from a different perspective. I am also mentoring several young teachers in the building, and I do that rather informally, but I encourage them to go to, like the governor's program. Then when I see something that they can benefit from, I say, "What would you do in this case?" I try to mentor each one of my administrators to groom them for a principalship if that is what they want...I have them do things like write their vision..." What do you see in a good school and compare what we do in our school to where your vision is." I tell all of them, "You can't act like an assistant principal today and be a principal tomorrow; you have to begin thinking like a principal while you are an assistant." (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 12)

Everybody working on an advanced degree has got to have an administrator working with them, so some of the faculty members--I've been the one that they have come in and shadowed and spent time with and that sort of thing. I feel like one of my responsibilities is to expose [assistant principals] to as much as possible so that if an opportunity comes up...they can move into it without a whole lot of trouble because when I went into it, I didn't know "squat" about any of it--it just happened and I was there...so I try to expose them to as much as I possibly can, and I view us as an administrative team. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 14)

Nobody came in and said, "Let me take you by the hand and let me mentor you." You can't sit back and wait for somebody to offer that service to you, and I don't think you can go looking for them. You have to be open to everything everybody says--you listen. Then that thing that says, "The dull and ignorant, they still have their story--" you learn from what people say. If you listen, you truly listen, all of the sudden, you hear some particular person saying things that are of value to you, and then you need to find a way to associate with that person and develop that relationship so you are in a position for that person to be a mentor so you can have that relationship with them...You put yourself in a position to recognize those people who can mentor you, and you can't get it all from one person.... I'm kind of the ...old lady principal. We just had two of our principals retire and two new ones come on...We had a leadership retreat at (location) a couple of weeks ago and all the central office staff and all the principals go...I realized then this was a whole different role because they deferred to me and asked me questions. Now that's going to kill the superintendent because he already thought I led the

principals in the revolt and astray...They'd come to me and they would ask me a lot of questions on their own individually about change and how you become a change agent or some things you need to do--what you need to do to get your faculty to invest in the philosophy that you have with the vision that you have for the school...I think we have that professional responsibility...to keep your eyes open for who you need to mentor and be available for that person, and it's not like you need something else on your plate, but there has got to be somebody who can carry on when I retire and I'm on the creek bank fishing. Then you hope that some of the things you believe and some of the visions that you have will continue to go--that they're not going to change with every administrator that comes. That may be the best way for you to leave your mark and your legacy is through the leadership growth in the county. Hopefully, she [the next principal] will pick it up for whoever comes on after when she's the old lady.... (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 17-18)

I have three people, three women, and they are administrative [aspirants]. One is a teacher here...and she has started the administrative program and I need to mentor her. I don't think she wants me to mentor her all the time, but she doesn't have a choice because without me don't think she will be a success...She needs the extra guidance because she is having a difficult time being transparent and looking at things objectively. I have two more I try to mentor... have a teacher whose sister lives in another town, and she is getting her administrative degree, and she called me up--could she interview me, and we were just talking on the Internet...She's coming here next week...and she is going to do an internship with me...I love to mentor.... I consider myself a mentor to my assistant principals. My assistant principals-- they need me as a mentor, but they don't know it, and I am a mentor, but they don't know it. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 11)

[I am mentoring] one of my assistants--actually two of them right now. One of them recently made principal, and she calls informally. I think it is real important my assistant principals be groomed...All the different things are so hard, and I think it is real important to try to pass on as much as you can. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 13)

I try not to isolate my assistant principals in any respect. One will be a high school principal at some point. He is being trained; that is the point, and that is the way I look at all the assistants--is that they are being trained because...You are looking at a huge turnover in high school principals [due to retirements]...You kind of have to get in there and really get your feet dirty as to what goes on, and that's what my assistants do.... I took a great deal of pride in the fact that the superintendent has told me twice now that people have been put here primarily to be trained for high school positions. I don't have the turnover that a lot of high schools have because

these people are being trained for high school positions. It's an in-depth thing. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 18)

Mentoring Women. Specifically mentoring female aspirants added other dimensions to the responses of the principals, although a great deal of emphasis was placed on the idea that mentoring is good for any administrative candidate, male or female. Men having an automatic acceptance in the role of administrator that women are not afforded was suggested by two of the interviewees; therefore, being introduced to those who are the "gatekeepers" by a mentor becomes important for a woman's career advancement. Moreover, women benefit from being mentored by other women because they bring different leadership characteristics to the role that can only be polished by observing female administrators. However, men are more likely than women to ask for guidance or to aggressively seek someone to help them move up the career ladder, according to three of the principals.

[Mentoring] is tremendously important. It would be wonderful if there were more women to be mentors for some of these women. I certainly think that's the way it works for me and my assistant principal, but there aren't enough [female mentors] out there...[Women] are more likely to mentor other women probably, I would think so.... I have gone out and pretty well actively sought out some people to go into administration from this school--I mean a couple of teachers that I thought really had what it would take and talked to them, and in both cases of the people, both were female. I guess it is not accidental there--both of them have enrolled in administrative programs. I have one of my people [a woman] who is going to school now, and this is somebody I identified early on.... She is the first person I hired here as a teacher. She has only taught for 4 years, but she was so clearly the best first year teacher I ever saw, and she just had it--just the right sort of person...that just will do well at whatever she does. So at the end of the first year, she was saying to me, "I'm going back to get my Master's. What do you think, should I go ahead and do it?" "Yes, you certainly need to go ahead, but when you are getting your Master's, go ahead and get every elective you can in administration and get that administrative add on." So she has done that. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 15)

I've been just as supportive of the guys that have come through as I have been of the women. Women are at the point now that if any administrator cared, it is good. This system is bound to have a huge leader sucking leadership vacuum within the two years. There are people who are working on year 28 or 29 and they are going home...Our job is to mentor, regardless of sex, these people who have got the people skill to be successful and to do it. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 26)

Having a mentor is invaluable. I don't think you can put enough merits on it. A woman has to have someone who is sensitive to different modes of leadership. It doesn't help for a woman to have a mentor who says, "Tell them to do it this way and do it!" because quite often it is not going to work that way for a woman...A woman needs someone to see her individual traits, her individual strengths and to coach her to use those effectively to run a school...A woman needs that more than a man because when he steps into leadership...he is given automatically the authority and respect. Whereas, when a woman steps into a principalship, she has to earn--she has to prove that she is, in fact, capable of being a leader, and it is not until she has proven it that they give her [authority and respect]. And that makes the job twice as hard because while a man is learning and stumbling through, they say, "Okay, he knows what he is doing." While a woman is learning and stumbling through, they say, "Oh, she doesn't know what she is doing," whereas, they automatically assume a man does.... Women are just as likely to mentor women as they are men, I think, initially. What happens is that they end up mentoring men more because men are more aggressive about wanting to be mentored, and they go after it. Women tend to sort of sit back and say, "Well, I'm thinking about administration," and they don't say, "Would you help me? Would you mentor me?" Most women don't. Whereas, men say, "Look, this is the road I need to take. I need for you to help me get there. How can you help me?" ...In the building, there are one, two, three, four, maybe five women that I have encouraged to move up, and I've only encouraged two men, but they are the ones who ask me aggressively for help...They just don't push, but the men do, and yet I regard them [the women] as highly or more highly than I do the men in terms of what they have to offer the building.... My bias is that they [women] can do a better job because most of them have spent some time learning what it takes to be an instructor, and here again is my bias--I believe you have to be successful in the classroom before you can be anybody's administrator. (Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 13-14)

Everybody needs someone to talk to--whether male or female--I just think you do--because I'm very much a people person, but I also realize that I am not faculty. I'm not one of them, no matter what. I've been in some schools where I had some very good personal friends that were on the faculty, but as far as work, I can't be one of them. Sometimes, you need somebody to talk to and bounce stuff off of. It gets lonesome sometimes, and I think it's very important for you, whether you

formally do it or whether you informally do it, that you have somebody that you can call and talk to, regardless of how many years of experience you have...I think it's important to have somebody in administration at your level, so you can pick up the phone and say, "Hey, let me run this by you--let me tell you what happened," because you know it is going to be confidential and you are getting some valued input from someone you respect. There are some times you just need a little listening to or a little walking through before you take it up to the next level. (Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 15)

I would like to think that people who are really serious about doing a good job and you can see some aptitude [for leadership] there, then women would want to nurture the field of education. I don't think it's just trying to [mentor] for women. We would certainly see needs that women may have that the man doesn't, like introducing her to the powers that be, but I would like to think that our commitment is to the entire education field, and we would mentor and recognize that need for whoever.... A woman has to really stand out and make a name for herself or somebody has to introduce her to the system to say, "Look at this person; this person is of value or worth; let's escort them into the system to be recognized..." Whereas, ...they are always looking for a man to be able to promote, and if he were just standing there warm blooded or whatever--the women wouldn't have gotten [the administrative jobs].... (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 20-21)

Mentors are good for everyone, and you hate to just think for women alone. I think everyone could use a mentor. From instruction to facilities to working with custodians, there are lots of things you might not think about and might not have dealt with.... They [women] are more likely to mentor other women, and women are more likely to think they don't need it, and they won't take it from another woman or ask another woman. A man may ask a woman he has worked closely with and trusted in that relationship. (Respondent 7, June 26, p. 13)

[Concerning making a conscious effort to mentor women] Yeah, I do and part of it is that men know the rules of the game, but most women don't. However, they also tend not to ask for help. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 20)

### Leadership Characteristics

Research Subquestion 5. What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?



The dominant leadership characteristic of the female principals was the employment of shared decision making, also termed site-based decision making, collaboration, or participatory decision making. Building relationships among the staff and with the students was another leadership characteristic that manifested itself in the responses of several of the interviewees. Also evident from the discussions of two of the principals was that they were not afraid of making the difficult decisions that were in the best interest of the organization.

We had a number of teachers who were either incompetent or who just plain didn't care. It was a hard job, coming in here and working on that.... The first year I was here I fired 15 teachers, and it didn't take long after that for people to either know that they had better go on and look somewhere else or they needed to shape up and they did--but it was not an adversarial situation, strangely enough. Others would say, "Well, how did you do that and still stay?" But, you know, the teachers, the good teachers, take a lot of pride in that and they are glad. I keep a pretty close pulse and I would check with some of the people I knew to check with and would say, "Am I scaring everybody?" They'd say, "We see who's going and we are glad. It's the right thing." I think I am a real motivator. I have had a number of people come here and observe...and that is the thing they all comment on--is that the morale is high and that everybody knows that their job is important and that their job is noticed, good or bad, it's noticed. I try to be very "hands-on" in one respect in that I want every teacher to know that I know exactly what's going on with them. I care about what's happening--if they have a sick child, I know it. I know what goes on in that classroom. I observe every week.... Last year when we had the department of education team down, they talked to different groups of teachers--they talked to every teacher but one of the things that they came back chuckling to me about--they were talking about shared decision making. The teachers volunteered "We think we make about 90% of the decisions around here...." The truth is that they have a huge amount of decision making power. (Respondent 1, June 25, 2001, p. 17)

These people as department heads continue that [site-based decision making] because it is good for them to take responsibility for decisions that they make. If they can't reach a decision, I will make it for them and I'll tell them I will make it for them. Decide what you want--you've got three months to make that decision. If at the three months, you can't make a decision, this is what I am going to decide--so if you want something different, this is what you need to do. And

sometimes they'll abdicate responsibility--sometimes they will be in a difficult political situation like in the department and they want me to be the bad guy--good cop, bad cop and I play the bad cop.... I believe that what we do every day is the most important thing anybody could be doing. And my job as a leader is to make sure that happens--my leadership is resource manager--my leadership is facilitator of learning--my leadership is protector of safety. Those are my jobs, and I need to do them all and do them as well as I possibly can. I need to demonstrate for kids through my modeling that I am a leader but also need to demonstrate for them that I am a team player and that I value their input--kids have a lot to say about what we do here--teachers have a lot to say about what we do here.... We do a lot of shared stuff. There are some people who feel that's not the right leadership style for this building but eventually they are retiring...they don't want to be part of the decision-making process because it takes time and effort.... "I wonder why they don't like me?" is a question I could agonize over--two years or three years ago--I can't agonize over that anymore. I don't have that luxury. I can't please all of the people all of the time. One of my coaches told me, "If you haven't made somebody mad, you're not doing your job" because it's hard for people to accept a decision different from the one they wanted...I do play favorites--I favor those people who go the extra mile--who are interested in the welfare and the well being of everybody in this school--those people who are here from dusk to dawn to work with kids, not just in the classroom but outside the classroom. If that person is sponsoring FCA and coaching a minor sport and teaching above and beyond the call of duty and is a master teacher and asks for a new printer, I'm going to find that person a new printer. (Respondent 2, June 25, 2001, p. 23)

The mark of a truly effective leader is--if I were called out of the building tomorrow--that the school would run efficiently--not quite because I still want to keep my job--but would run almost as efficiently as it does when I'm here.... I'm analytical, first and foremost...I build, or what I have tried to do is build my leadership on the basis of trust and on the basis of relationships. And I try to build leadership on the basis of expertise and honesty...I'm very thoughtful about what I do; I'm very determined and direct. They tease me because I don't see myself being very authoritative, but the people are me--the guys call me "madam queen," and my head counselor...says, "You may be soft-spoken, but make no mistake about it, there is not a person in this building that doesn't know you're the boss..." I believe in getting people involved, who need to be involved, as much as possible...When I first came to [the high school]...I would call a meeting and I would say, "Okay, we need to make a decision." And they [the leadership team] would say, " (Respondent's name), we don't want to make a decision. You just make the decision." That flabbergasted me because in my previous school the leadership team wanted to have some input...It has taken me (#) years to get a leadership team that actually works together, that makes decisions, and that has a



vested interest in the school...Now they like the idea of making decisions.  
(Respondent 3, June 29, 2001, p. 16-17)

Very much participatory--shared [leadership]. I like to give people an opportunity to have input. I don't like to get bogged down in committees...but I want to hear what you feel and what you think, and I think that is real important because I think you need to make a commitment and buy in. I think most of the faculty think I am a fair person. Most of them feel that I do just what I said--that I value their input and suggestions. Then you've got some that are going to tell you they've never been so unhappy in their whole life...Don't ever think you will have one hundred percent 'cause you won't and you'll always have that percent that's against you. That'll change--it won't be the same group--it depends on what issue it is.  
(Respondent 4, June 15, 2001, p. 18-19)

I charge straight ahead. I really hope that I am a leader. I want to be a pioneer...I want to take people where they didn't know worlds and places existed and just come on and let's see what wonderful opportunities and challenges are out there...and that is the hardest thing for me and my style--how far do you go ahead into the universe? You can go so far in light years that you leave your people behind, but you can't let them sit on planet "whatever" and get comfortable because they are going to settle in and they are going to say this is where we want to stay. We don't want to go any farther. But they've got to go farther because this is a process and you're never going to get to the end of the journey. I believe in collaboration; I believe we have to work together, but I believe the principal is the single most important player to the culture of the school--to the vision--to the risk-taking that teachers are willing to do--how hard they are willing to work and I don't mean to just put in 8 hours a day--but I mean work, like outside that comfort zone... You really do have to be grounded in what your true beliefs are...The basic philosophy that I have, I try to make sure that it guides every decision that I make, and so those who are astute--those who are more visionary themselves--those faculty members all feel liberated. (Respondent 5, June 27, 2001, p. 21-22)

I try to empower my department heads to the fullest. They really are a decision making body here because I believe in participatory decision making.... I think they (the faculty) finally realized that I am a participatory manager because I said I was going to do it. We do not come to any decision unless it is consensus, and they get frustrated with me sometimes, and they say, "Just go ahead and make the decision." I say, "No, I don't have all that. I can't do that. That's not what's best for the kids. So they know I am going to go through the whole process. Sometimes it can get frustrating because a lot of people say that they are participatory, but they really don't go through it. If there is decision that I have to make and it cannot be participatory, I tell them. See, I came in under good circumstances. My predecessor was hated by the faculty. Her demise was the

degree or lack of relationship with her colleagues--and the community didn't care for her, and the kids didn't care for her, and the teachers didn't care for her--brilliant woman--I look at her record and I wouldn't do anything different. It was just "the way" she did it. (Respondent 6, June 26, 2001, p. 15)

Hands on--I'm always involved. I'm trying to put the big picture together... extremely organized. We are always trying to focus on success for each student.... I would say they (the faculty) see it as very organized. They would see it [the leadership] as very child focused...I am always pushing them to do more, do more , do more, but then I always push myself, so they can't fault that.... I insist that they [the assistant principals] keep me informed on everything. I tell them that's the one thing--keep me informed. I don't mind people telling me too much; I mind not knowing enough.... What makes an effective building--it's all about relationships and I really do believe that's the key to a successful school--relationships. If I had to say what the key word to any school is it's "respect." If you have that key word as your center, whether it is teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator, administrator to teacher, or teacher to student, then I think any school runs effectively. (Respondent 7, June 26, 2001, p. 18)

I like [to lead] by walking around. I like to see. I like to go in. I like to walk into the classroom and stand for a little while. I like to ask the kids what's going on. I feel like if you've got your door closed and locked with paper over the window, you are doing something you shouldn't be doing. I want people to teach the way I taught. I want them to have a love for the kids and a love of the subject, and I don't want them behind a desk. (Respondent 8, June 13, 2001, p. 20)

### Summary of the Qualitative Data

The data gathered from the qualitative portion of this study were analyzed to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of eight female public high school principals in Georgia. To do this, the researcher conducted 90-minute interviews with each of the participants. The researcher traveled to each principal's high school or, in one case, to the principal's home to conduct the interviews. An interview guide was designed and employed for conducting the interviews. The interviews were recorded with audio equipment and then transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The data in the form of the transcription texts were studied by the researcher to discover prominent elements of

the principals' personal backgrounds, career paths, career barriers, mentoring experiences, and leadership characteristics.

### Overall Summary

The methods of discovery used in this research project to explore the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia were both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data were collected through the use of a demographic questionnaire, which was mailed to all of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. From the analysis of the quantitative data, it was found that the typical Georgia female high school principal is 50 years old or older, Caucasian, married for the first time, and has at least one child. In addition, she has earned an Ed.S. and is not enrolled in a doctoral program. Her career path to the principalship was from the classroom to an assistant principalship in a high school to the high school principalship. She had been serving in the position of principal for 4.6 years.

The qualitative data for this research project were collected through the employment of the in-depth interview. Eight Georgia female high school principals of 22 who agreed to be interviewed were chosen through stratified, purposeful sampling. The long, in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher; the interviews were then transcribed. By using the qualitative data analysis program, *QSR NUD.IST*, the transcripts of the interviews were analyzed. Recurring themes, patterns, and noteworthy responses to the interview guide questions were categorized and/or coded. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, each interviewee was assigned a number, i.e., Respondent 1. The significant findings regarding the personal backgrounds, career paths,

career barriers, mentoring experiences, and the leadership styles of the respondents are presented in the form of text selections preceded by the term “Respondent” and the participant’s assigned number. A discussion of the significance and implications of the findings of this study are included in Chapter V.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study was designed to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of Georgia's female public high school principals for the 2000-2001 school year. Quantitative and qualitative research techniques were utilized to conduct the study. All of the public female high school principals in Georgia were mailed a demographic questionnaire. The questionnaire included a question asking the respondents to participate in an in-depth interview session with the researcher. Twenty-two of the respondents were willing to be interviewed; eight women were chosen through stratified, purposeful sampling to participate in the qualitative portion of the study. The data from responses to the demographic questionnaire and from the in-depth interviews were analyzed, yielding important findings concerning the personal and professional backgrounds of women in key leadership positions in school systems in Georgia. A discussion of the significance and implications of the findings of this study are presented in Chapter V.

#### **Summary**

The underrepresentation of women in key leadership roles in corporate America and in America's public schools has drawn the interest of a number of researchers for more than two decades (Asbury, 1993; Beason, 1992; Edson, 1988; Fisher, 1992; Gupta, 1983; Hite & McDonald, 1995; Leonard & Papalewis, 1987; Lovelady-Dawson, 1980; Owen & Todor, 1995; Townsend, 1996). As a result of the research, recommendations to

remedy the disproportionately low number of female executives, public high school principalships, or superintendencies are prolific. The recommendations include such strategies as implementing mentoring programs, redesigning preparation programs in colleges and universities, public awareness, and restructuring administrative recruitment programs. The federal government, too, has recognized the disparity and moved to enact legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title I and Title IX amendments, and the Glass Ceiling Act of 1991, to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment of women.

Yet the problem of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles persists. For example, women's representation in the senior management positions of corporate America was estimated at 5% or less (Townsend, 1996), and female representation as superintendents in state public school districts was estimated to be 12% (Keller, 1999). In her study of female high schools principals, Eckman (2000) found that women occupied only 22.7% of the high school principalships in Illinois, 17.1% of the positions in Minnesota, and a paltry 10% of the leadership roles in high schools in Wisconsin. In Georgia, only 19.8% of the public high school principals were women (Georgia Department of Education, 2000).

Female aspirants need to be able to develop successful strategies for assuming the high school principalship. An examination of women who have become high school principals in Georgia may provide guidelines for mapping out career plans and for discovering the inroads to the principalship. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of the current female high school

principals in Georgia and to explore factors that may be associated with their obtaining a position that is historically and traditionally occupied by males. The overarching question for the research was the following: What are the personal and professional backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year? In addition, the study explored the following research subquestions:

1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?
2. Are there any commonalities in the career paths of these women?
3. What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive that they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their careers?
4. Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?
5. What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?

This project employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. To collect the quantitative data, a demographic questionnaire was sent to all 56 public female high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. Seventy-five percent responded to the questionnaire, and 22 were willing to participate in the interview portion of the study. Eight principals were interviewed utilizing the long, in-depth interview technique. The analysis of the quantitative data was done by using SPSS Base 10.0 statistical software, and the qualitative data analysis was completed with use of the

*QSR NUD.IST 5* software package that aided the researcher in categorizing responses to the interview questions, identifying common themes, and exploring significant information.

### Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the results of the study include the following:

1. The public high school principalship in Georgia continues to be dominated by men. Only one-fifth of the public high school principalships in Georgia were filled by women. From the responses to the demographic questionnaire, it could be concluded that the average age of the female high school principal was 50 years old or older; she was Caucasian, married, had at least 1 child, and held a Specialist Degree in the field of educational leadership. The interview portion of this study suggested that her parents were very supportive of her and encouraged her to attend college, even though they did not attend college themselves. However, she probably did not enter college with the intention of becoming a teacher, deciding to enter the field of education later in her college career, after abandoning other career interests. The importance of a supportive husband was also documented through the responses to the in-depth interview questions.
2. The most common career path for Georgia's public female high school principal was from the classroom to the assistant principalship in a high school to the principalship. The average length of time in the field of education before obtaining the high school principalship was 19 years. From the interview portion of this study, it could be concluded that the majority of the women participating in the interviews did not have early aspirations of becoming an administrator. Their



aspirations surfaced over a long period of time as they realized that by moving from the classroom to administration they could have a positive impact on a larger number of students if they were in administration. Half of the interview respondents were very reluctant to assume the position of high school principal and had to be coaxed into accepting the assignment. A further conclusion from the qualitative data analysis and findings is that the women in the study did not establish definite career plans early in their careers, and that half had no desire to move to central office administration. The females who rejected the idea of moving to the central office expressed strong feelings about remaining in close proximity to the students.

3. Developing long-term proficiency as a classroom teacher before moving into administration is a prerequisite to effective school leadership, according to the interview participants in this study. Abbreviated tenure in instruction, specifically noted in the careers of their male counterparts, leads to a lack of insight and a lack of understanding of the needs of the teachers, the needs of students, and the demands of organization overall.

4. Responses to the interview questions indicated that the female principals believed that a number of barriers existed for women advancing in school administration. The barriers included competing family responsibilities, psychological barriers stemming from low self-esteem or self-confidence, the perception that women cannot supervise athletic programs effectively, gender discrimination, and sex-role stereotyping. Hindering future female aspirants are

women who reinforce the negative stereotypes through adverse or inappropriate administrative behaviors and bolster the public perception that women are too emotional, too moody, too unyielding or too autocratic, etc., to be effective leaders.

5. The responsibilities and demands of the high school principalship seemed overwhelming at times to the interview participants. The long-term tenure of the high school principal may no longer be viable, and burn out could occur in a relatively short period of time because the job requires long hours and personal sacrifice. In addition, the compensation for the job may not be adequate considering the conditions and stressfulness of the work. School systems may have difficulty attracting qualified, competent candidates, male or female, as high school principals because of the ever-increasing workloads and lack of adequate support personnel.

6. From the interview portion of this research project, the participants' willingness to mentor administrative aspirants, both male and female, could be concluded. The shortage of female administrative role models was underscored by some of the participants, who also suggested that women need other females to guide them as they develop their leadership potential because females have different modes of leadership from men that can be used effectively to run a school. Also, the interview respondents expressed a professional obligation to seek out actively individuals who can carry on their legacy and ensure the leadership growth in their school systems.

7. The outstanding leadership trait ascribed to themselves by the interview participants was the effective facilitation of shared decision making in their organizations. In addition, the women worked to build positive relationships in their buildings among the faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.

### Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this quantitative and qualitative study was to discover the personal and professional backgrounds of female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year. The quantitative data analysis yielded aggregate information concerning the principals' personal backgrounds, educational backgrounds, career paths, and mentoring experiences. The qualitative data analysis gave more in-depth and insightful descriptions of the women's personal background, career paths, and mentoring experiences. In addition, the data provided significant information regarding barriers the women had faced in their personal and professional lives and detailed descriptions of their self-perceived leadership characteristics.

Subquestion 1. What, if any, are the commonalities in the personal backgrounds of the female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year?

### Discussion

The percentage of public high school principals in Georgia that were female during the 2000-2001 school year was approximately 20%. In his study of the principalship in Georgia, Boyer (1997) also found that approximately 20% of Georgia's high school principals were females; Hilliard (2000) reported that 19% of those in the principalship were females, a slightly lower number than was discovered through this study. In other

states, the percentage of female high school principals varies significantly. Eckman (2000) for example, found that 23% of the high school principals in Illinois were women, 17% in Minnesota, and 10% in Wisconsin. The percentage of female high school principals in Georgia seems to fall in line with the percentages found in other states.

An aggregate description of the female high school principal in Georgia resulting from the analysis of the principals' responses to the demographic questionnaire includes data such as age, marital status, and number of children. The typical female high school principal in Georgia was 50 years old or older (69%), Caucasian (74%), and married (69%). She may have had a husband who was retired (23%), or she may have had a husband who was also in the field of education (19%). In all likelihood, her husband graduated from a four-year college or university (77%). She had at least one child (83%), and almost half (48%) had 2 children. In Beason's (1992) study of 224 male and 224 female secondary principals in 17 states, she discovered that the female high school principals were predominantly white, in their mid-40s, and married with one to three children. The primary difference in the profile of the women in this study is that the majority were 50 years old or older rather than in their mid-40s.

Often, the mother was a housewife (37%), or she worked in a nonprofessional occupation (46%) and most often had graduated from high school but had not attended college (54%). Only 15% of the mothers were educators. None of the principals' fathers were teachers, according to the findings of quantitative data analysis. Very few of their fathers had graduated from college (18%), and frequently their fathers were either blue collar workers (31%) or associated with the military or civil service (26%).

The most popular undergraduate major for the female high school principal was English (26%), while elementary education (19%) was the second most popular. The typical female in the role of high school principal in Georgia had a Specialist's degree as her highest degree earned (71%) in the field of educational leadership (53%) and was not enrolled in a doctoral program (95%).

From the analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews of the eight female high school principals, the researcher found that the women had very supportive parents and that going to college was an expectation of six of their parents even though the majority of their mothers and fathers had not attended college. From the interviewees' responses to the opening question of the interview, the current public female high school principals appear to have some of the family background characteristics as the 450 top women administrators described in Woo's (1985) composite profile, which was derived from a study conducted by the Center for Women in Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina. According to Woo, one characteristic of the composite female administrator is that she grew up in a two-parent household where the mother did not work outside the home. Another characteristic is that she received encouragement from her parents to go to college and to become successful. All but one of principals in this study expressed that attending college was an "expectation" of their parents. The recurring pattern of their parents' encouragement and positive influence is also evident. For example, Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 1) said, "As long as I can remember, my parents, particularly my mother, said, 'All of my children will go to college.' I guess the caveat with that is she wanted her girls...to get a good education so that if they married

poorly, they would be able to support themselves.” Respondent 6 (June 26, 2001, p. 1) stated the expectation of her parents was analogous to getting a driver’s license: “It was expected that I go to college and I get my PhD, and it was talked about when I was little so it was just like when you are expected to get your driver’s license at sixteen.” More subtle parental influences affecting the female principals’ self-perceptions and self-expectations were communicated. Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 2) said, “My mom and dad said whatever you do, you are going to do well, and I knew living off them was not an option.” Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 2) was told by her father, “If you want to do something, you can do it. Just because you are a girl doesn’t enter into it... You might have to be more discreet, but you can do whatever you want.”

In conjunction with supportive parents, four of the interviewees discussed the importance of supportive husbands. Their responses were typified by Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 2): “Fortunately, I had a husband that was understanding, and he was one, like my children’s first day of school, he was at the corner with the moms waiting for them to catch the bus...because the first day of school, I had to be at school.” In contrast to having a supportive husband, Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 1) described bearing the burden of the rearing of her children alone while her husband pursued his career: “I know from my own husband--what did he do when he had a busy career--he didn’t worry about the part of the family; that was my job.” According to Pigford and Tonnsen (1993), work must be made a priority to be successful, and this is an accepted practice for men, who can depend on their wives to handle the daily responsibilities. However, women are less likely to have such a support structure at home. Two of the principals were divorced.

Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 3) explained that if she had been married at the time she went into administration “to the person I was married to, who had a difficult time dealing with school competing with his time, it would have been horrible.”

The willingness of the husbands to “take up the slack” in their personal lives appeared to be a crucial element in their successful professional endeavors for half of the career women interviewed. Edson (1988) found, “One of the things most married women mention is the support they receive from their husbands. Indeed, they credit their husbands for being among the first to encourage them to pursue administrative careers” (p. 85). The observations of the principals in this study appear to align with the idea that women in administration are as likely as not to have a support structure at home so that they can make their careers a priority. Worth noting is that far fewer female high school principals in Georgia (69.1%) were married according to the results of this study as compared to Boyer’s (1997) study of Georgia’s principals (male and female), which reported that 98.4% were married.

Subquestion 2: Are there commonalities in the career paths of these women?

### Discussion

A career path, also called career patterning, is defined by Yeakey et al (1986) as career patterning that involves a sequence of positions so that each provides the necessary experience to ensure success in other positions. The quantitative data analysis yielded that the female high school principal in Georgia spent an average of 19 years serving in other capacities before obtaining a high school principalship. Over half (52%) had moved from classroom teacher to assistant principal in a high school to high school principal. Twenty-

four percent had served as the principal of an elementary or a middle school before becoming the chief administrator in a high school. Her average length of tenure as the principal was 4.6 years.

Specifically regarding the career paths of the interviewees, half of the women had been high school teachers and assistant principals before becoming high school principals. The other four never taught or served in an administrative capacity in a high school before taking on the high school principalship, although three of them had been the top administrator of a building at the elementary and/or middle school level. The most common first step in the career path for both men and women who become administrators is the classroom (VanHuss, 1996).

Becoming a Teacher. Becoming a teacher was a career decision prior to entering college for only three of the interviewees. This finding was contrary to the findings of VanHuss (1996) and Cwick (1999) who reported the majority of the participants in their qualitative studies of female principals entered college with the intention of becoming educators, influenced by former teachers in over half of the cases. Only two of the principals discussed that the ambition manifested itself in early childhood, i.e., Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 3) said, "I have always wanted to be an educator. I jokingly tell-- when I meet parents at PTA--I tell them I have been teaching since I was four, and they laugh and say, 'Four years old?'" I said, "Yes, but remember that in order to teach all you have to know is a little bit more than the people you are teaching." One principal was given the opportunity to go into a classroom and assume many of the responsibilities of a teacher while she was in high school. The experience gave her the desire to teach. Pavan



and Robinson (1991) found in their study of 18 Pennsylvania school administrators in a variety of positions that the women became teachers because of their love of children and/or because of societal expectations. Evident from the responses of the female principals were the constraints placed upon the women of this study during their time of choosing a career, whether they were social norms or expectations of the era or family restrictions or boundaries.

Five of the respondents did not go to college with the intention of becoming an educator. Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 2), for instance, revealed, "I went to school with a major in art and my senior year I realized that, you know, I am going to starve to death when I get out of here, and my dad was not going to support me because I wanted to be a pure artist...I better come up with something I can make a living at also. So that's how I got into education." Two of the respondents suggested they might have gone on to law school if times had been different. Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 4) put her career path in the historical context of the Vietnam era: "The Vietnam war was going on and, believe me, the colleges were quite full of young men who were maintaining very good grade point averages so they would not be drafted...Why should they [the law schools] let you in when here is a man whose life might be at stake if they don't let him in."

Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 2) also alluded to a limitation for women during the time period in which she was choosing an occupation: "I didn't go to college with the intention of becoming an educator...At that time, there were few careers that were open to women."

Moving Into Administration. Only Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 4) indicated that the idea of going into administration surfaced early in her career. She phrased it this way: “It’s one of those things, seeing a need and knowing that the only way to create change was to be the leader.” The principals in this study stayed in the classroom for many years before entertaining the idea of becoming an administrator. Researcher Van Huss (1996) and later Cwick (1999) described the slow progression of women into administration as an “evolving” career path.

The reason given by the majority of the interviewees for moving from the classroom to administration was to have a positive impact on the students and to improve school for the students. Representative of this desire is the discussion by Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 4): “I had been teaching for [over ten] years and...I knew I was really good at what I was doing...I realized that when you teach you have an impact on 150 or so kids you have, but if you are in administration and any good, you can have an impact on a whole lot more.” Respondent 6 (June 26, 2001, p. 5) was told by a supervisor to go into administration because she had good ideas and could “bring people along.” Hale (1994) also found the majority (66%) of the participants in her study “wanted to make a greater contribution to society” (p. 47).

Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 6) went into administration out of financial necessity, and Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 3) termed her move into administration as being “in the right place at the right time.” Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 5) went into administration because she felt she knew “a lot more about what’s going on” than others that she had seen in administrative positions. The absence of definite career goals and the

evolution of a career over a long period of time has been documented in previous research (Funk, 1986; Pavan & D'Angelo, 1990; Shakeshaft, 1989; VanHuss, 1996).

Acquiring a High School Principalship. Four of the eight female principals participating in the qualitative portion of the study expressed great reluctance to assume the leadership role of high school principal. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 6) said, "Oh no not me!" when first approached by her superintendent. Their dialogue about her taking the reins as principal continued for over a year before she relented. Respondents 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 5) and 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 6) both suggested they went "kicking and screaming" to their positions as regular public high school administrators. Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 7) stated she "wanted to be principal of this high school...It was here, and I wanted to come home and I wanted to help mend fences and build our community." Respondent 6 (June 26, 2001, p. 6) said she knew she would become a high school principal, but it wasn't on her mind because of her family responsibilities, and then when she finally did apply, "it happened so quick." For Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 7), the opportunity arose as a result of a parent group soliciting her help "to try to revitalize and get (the high school) going." She said it was "almost like a calling." Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 8) applied for the job in her high school because she asked herself from the assistant principal's ranks, "Do I let somebody else come in who doesn't know the school, who doesn't know the teachers, who doesn't know the kids come in and start telling me what can be done, and what can't be done, and how it needs to be done?"

Setting Goals. Respondents 4, 7, and 8 discussed their lack of career goals. "I am not a long-term goal oriented person...Things just happened...and it's been good," was

remarked by Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 2). Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 5) related, "I was perfectly content where I was. I hate to say this, because it sounds like you have no control over your own future--had no plans--you had no career goals. Really, I didn't. I was happy doing what I was doing." Cwick (1999) and VanHuss (1996) found the women in her study also lacked definite future career plans.

Envisioning the Future. Shakeshaft (1989) suggested that many women did not consider the superintendency appealing and felt no urgency to move beyond the principalship. Glass (2000) purported that women are not attracted to the position because of its oppressive workload, the focus on fiscal rather than academic concerns, lack of financial incentives, and lack of superintendent certification in some states. However, in this study, three of the female principals who expressed adamantly that they had no desire to go to the central office or to seek a superintendency seemed more concerned about the lack of everyday contact with the students. Their common rationale for not wanting to move on the career path in that direction is summed up by Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 4): "I can't imagine being an administrator beyond this level. I want no part of the central office administration because you don't have contact with the students. You deal with unhappy adults all day long." This is consistent with the findings of Eckman (2000), whose participants did not want to be removed from direct, constant contact with teachers and students.

Three of the other female principals envisioned a future in central office administration. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 16) confessed that she had been approached by her board to consider the superintendency. "My superintendent is going to

retire next year, so they [the board] have asked me if I would do that...I had rather stay where I am, but I can't imagine doing this and having somebody else as superintendent, so I assume I will do it."

Two respondents discussed enrolling in a doctoral program. Yet neither felt she could pursue a doctorate while running a high school. As mentioned previously, only one of the interview participants had earned her doctorate. Another interviewee said she was "ABD," but too much time had lapsed for her to complete the requirements. The prevailing belief of the interviewees was that pursuing a doctoral degree while running a high school would be an impossible task.

Gender Discrepancies in Length of Time From Teaching to Administration. Hale (1994) recommended the length of tenure for women in the classroom or in other positions should become more equal to that of men in order to encourage females to enter administration. The principals in this study, it appears, would rearrange the pattern of the recommendation to prescribe that the tenure for men in the classroom should become more equal to that of women so the men might become more effective, insightful administrators. Four of the interview participants communicated their frustrations because they had seen others, especially men, go into administration whom the females believed were not good candidates because they had very limited experience as classroom teachers. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 1) strongly suggested, "For a person to become a principal after a couple of years in education is foolish, and I think that a person who works for a principal who has done so suffers for it. I think a good career in teaching is the best background you can get." Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 15) described some of

her assistant principals: “Their teaching careers were very short and so as a consequence, they don’t understand that people out there are talking about them and about their short-sightedness and their poor decision making that don’t reflect what is happening in school.”

It was also Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 30) who vividly related the typical scene at a high school principals’ gathering by saying, “When you go to the NASSP, it’s the greatest collection of bald, white guys you’ve ever seen...There are few women; there are few minorities and that’s a reflection of that pattern of leadership development in secondary schools in the last thirty years.” Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 19) expressed a promise of hope for future female high school principal aspirants: “We are on the cutting edge of the beginning--a female can come into this position--that you can have a female administrator.”

Subquestion 3: What personal or professional barriers, if any, do these women perceive that they have faced as they have attempted to advance in their careers?

### Discussion

The review of the literature revealed a number of barriers, intrinsic and extrinsic, that have plagued women who are trying to advance in their careers (Daily, 1995; Funk, 1986; Johnson & Douglas, 1995; Leonard & Papalewis, 1987; Lovelady-Dawson, 1980; Wenting, 1996). The barriers discovered through the interview portion of this study added dimensions and depth to the barriers that were identified in the research of others. The difficulties perceived by the female principals on the job often involved interactions with men serving in subordinate positions, such as athletic directors, coaches, or assistant principals.

Having Children. The most prevalent response to the interview question regarding personal barriers the principals had faced was that their families had to sacrifice because balancing the work schedule and scheduling time for children and their needs was very difficult, also documented in research of female executives by Daily (1995), Funk (1986), and Hilliard (2000). Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 2-3) suggested that women must pose the following question to themselves: "Is what I am doing more important, or is motherhood/wife more important?" Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 2) said, "Your family is going to sacrifice. There's no 'ifs, ands, or buts' about it, and I somewhat carry that guilt." Respondents 1, 6, and 8 clearly communicated that they postponed certain career advancements until their children were older and no longer forced them to make choices between work life and home life. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 2) answered, "I was in the right time of my life to do this. I could not have done this job if my children were small." Respondents 2 and 6 detailed strategies involving in-home care-takers for their children to ease the burden of rearing the children and maintaining a demanding career. Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 3) described having her own mother as a source of support: "When I moved into administration the first time...my mom was living with us, and my child had gotten to upper elementary, and we were just at a point where Mom could help me take care of my son with the extra hours that I was spending in administration as opposed to being at home and doing homework and putting the child to bed."

Intrinsic Barriers. Several intrinsic barriers were identified by the respondents.

Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 30) believed that the nurturing nature of women deterred women from going into administration, explaining that the women's

desire to help means that many women don't want to take on the burden of a high school--especially if they teach in high school--'I'm carrying enough burden taking care of my family. I'm carrying enough burden taking care of my 3, 5, 6 classes that I'm teaching. Why would I want to take on a family of a hundred adults and a student population...and care for them, too.'

Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 16) felt that her non-confrontational nature was a challenge to overcome. "I am very non-confrontational, naturally...In an altercation, I almost always take the role of the peacemaker so that to be a mediator is very easy for me, but to be confrontational is very difficult."

Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 6) delved into the nature of certain women in leadership from several different angles. First, she discussed a woman's inclination not to appear to be fickle when put in a position of authority, and therefore, making decisions too hastily. "We particularly don't want to look indecisive because of the stereotype and the fickleness...'Okay, I can make a decision, right or wrong one,' but you don't have to do that." Second, Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 23) addressed the problem of women being too sensitive: "You don't have to wear your feelings on your sleeve. You don't have to put on your armor every day and go out and fight everybody you run in to...So don't turn everything into, 'because I'm female.'" Third, Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 23) suggested, "A lot of women weren't interested [in the high school principalship]. A lot of women didn't see themselves as worthy, capable--I mean that 'learned helplessness' like not wanting to take on challenges." Leonard and Papalewis (1987) described the



intrinsic psychological barriers to women's career advancement as well, including low self-image, lack of self-confidence, and reluctance to take risks.

Women Overseeing High School Athletic Programs. Seven of the eight female principals commented upon their role as high school principal in relation to at least one element of high school athletics. Coaches, athletic directors, the booster clubs, board members, or the communities were perceived by the women to have reacted differently to a woman rather than a man in the principal's position. Two respondents also shared their perceptions of the members of the state athletic association.

According to Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 6), although the coaches and community were at first concerned about the athletic program under a female principalship, "It didn't take them any time to get over it. They pretty soon saw that they were going to get a lot of support." Respondents 2, 3, 5, and 7 were not as fortunate as Respondent 1 concerning their involvement with athletic directors and coaches. Respondents 2 and 3 faced problems when the issue of hiring a new athletic director/head football coach surfaced. Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 18) called it "a bloody battle" that she lost. Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 9) said she felt like her coaches were involved in a "coup or insurrection" against her instigated by the athletic director who was supposed to be stepping down at the time. She was forced to confront her coaches and remind them that she was the one who made "the decisions about the football coach." Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 9) related a somewhat different twist on difficulties working with coaches: "The barriers I really have faced are coaches trying to blackball me and tell people not to go to work for me because I'm a woman, and they [women] don't

understand things.” Respondent 5 told a story of one coach who made a disparaging remark about her in front others and lost his coaching position as a result.

Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 21) faced insurmountable opposition from a very vocal athletic booster club when she was being considered for a high school principal’s position to replace, what she called, a “good ol’ boy” who had announced his retirement after serving as principal of the school for 17 years. “That booster club went ballistic...That got very political to the point that I was not going to get a vote from the board even though (the superintendent) was going to make the recommendation.” Respondent 4 withdrew her name, and later the “good ol’ boy” principal withdrew his retirement announcement and continued to run the school. Also, Respondent 4 light-heartedly conveyed an anecdote, detailing her challenge to understand the intricacies of football rules while the watchful eyes of the referees, the coaches, the spectators, etc., were upon her.

Respondents 7 and 8 clearly did not perceive that they were accepted into the organization that primarily oversees athletics and other extra-curricular activities throughout Georgia. Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 12) summed up her view of the association by saying, “You talk about the ‘good ole boy’ system being alive and well-- that’s the Georgia High School Association. It’s unbelievable.” In her quantitative study of the barriers faced by female high school principals in Georgia, Hilliard (2000) found the perceived barrier most often listed by the principals and second most often listed by the assistant principals was the perception that women could not handle athletic programs. The perception that women cannot deal with athletics was also documented in the

qualitative study by VanHaus (1996). One of her interviewees suggested that women probably do not have the background and knowledge in athletics; however, that did not mean women could not develop them.

Gender Discrimination. Gender discrimination, both personal and institutional, is a major condition inhibiting the access of women to leadership roles, according to Leonard and Papalewis (1987). In this study, seven female principals who were interviewed believed they had faced gender discrimination from various groups with whom they interacted while on the job. Although each example or observation offered by the women was different, the recurring themes seemed to be that women have to work harder than men, that men are more likely to be accepted in the role of high school principal regardless of the level of ability, men are believed to be more suited for the position, and men are under less scrutiny.

Boards of education, according to Respondents 2, 5, and 8 may not be as readily accepting of female high school principals as they are of males in the position. For example, Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 21) believed, "If they had a guy to put here, they would in a heartbeat." Respondent 5's (June 27, 2001, p. 15) perspective that took on a positive complexion involved how differently the board interacted with her as opposed to her male predecessors. "I feel like they [the board of education members] listen to me in substance...In the past they just accepted men by position, and they accepted me by substance." Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 11) perceived that, although her board of education was receptive to women running certain high schools, they would not hire a woman to run the oldest high school in the system.

Respondents 1 and 8 stated that women have to work harder than men in the same position. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 9) said if she were ever in a position to hire a principal, she would hire a female because, “Honestly, you [a female] have to work harder for what you do. You know, that’s life. I hope the time will come when my daughter won’t have to feel she has to do that, but she probably will.” According to Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 13), “A man can be an idiot...and as long as he has a really good assistant principal for instruction, she makes him look good...Men--they don’t need that [strength in instruction] as long as they can do the ‘coach thing’ and motivate and talk and make people feel good, then they are wonderful people.” Hilliard (2000) also documented that the female high school principals and assistant principals in her study believed that women have to work harder to prove they are competent in their jobs.

Another form of discrimination was reflected by the ways in which central office personnel, teachers, parents, or students reacted to the females in the high school leadership role. Edson (1988) found that women in every region of the country admit that sexism is still rearing its ugly head, even though it may be more subtle than in the past. Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 9) described negotiating the “good ol boys” network in the central office: “If you are a female coming in, it takes you a little while to negotiate the network and to establish yourself so that they know, ‘This is (respondent’s name) calling, and I really need to respond to what she needs.’ This is a barrier because you have to negotiate how to get in so they respect you enough to do what you want them to do.” Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 8) also discussed interacting with male teachers and establishing the parameters for acceptable behavior. “When they [male teachers] have been

displeased with something I have done, they have raised their voices as if I am going to cower...I have had to establish that I may be soft-spoken, but I am the boss and 'don't cross me.'" Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 9) described parents and students who try to physically intimidate female principals: "They think bigger and louder is better; therefore, if they scream loud enough and puff up and stand up and can be taller than you, then they can win...You just have to laugh at them and say, 'Oh please, when you decide to act civilized I'll talk to you.'" Respondent 6 (June 26, 2001, p. 16) faced a challenge when confronted by a certain nationality of boys who believe that women are inherently inferior to men. "I have that [the belief that a high school principal should be male] with my Iranian boys. I have to get real strong with them. 'I am the principal. You do what I say.'"

Stereotypes. Traditionally and stereotypically, the position of high school principal is expected to be filled by a male. According to Edson's (1988) findings, most women believe that persistent stereotypes are the reason for the discrimination they encounter. Men are still seen as the ones who are the disciplinarians and the ones with supportive spouses, allowing them extra hours required to be successful school administrators. Moreover, men are given the benefit of the doubt in terms of limited experience, while women are not. The false perceptions of the public regarding the scope of the job which makes it best suited for men were delineated by Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 21):

The high school principal is perceived as being a position of authority much greater than any other principal in the system. Also, the whole athletics question comes in to the factor...There is a perception sometimes among people who don't necessarily know that you somehow have to be physically strong to manage these teenage children, which is crazy... "It's a man's job; it's a tough job and there are all these wild students. It's got to take somebody strong to be able to handle that." That's just not true. That's ridiculous.

Two other respondents described scenarios in which some of the players did not expect the high school principal to be a female. Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 8) said, “They [outsiders] will automatically defer to one of the male assistant principals as the principal.” Respondent 5 described going to conferences such as the GAEL conference and being tagged as an elementary school principal or as a secretary rather than a high school principal. Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 10) reflected, “Those aren’t really barriers, but you just know that is still alive and that people don’t recognize women as being high school principals.”

Not only do others not expect women in the role of high school principal, according to Respondents 2, 5, and 8, there are those who do not believe a woman can do the job. Women do not know about “facilities management,” “women aren’t smart enough,” or simply, “a woman can’t do it.” Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 10) told about a member of her community who questioned the decision of her local board by saying, “What in the world are they thinking, hiring a woman for high school principal!” The stereotype that a high school principal should be male still exists.

In addition, Respondents 3, 7, and 8 discuss their own demeanors in relation to how they spawned reactions from others. Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 8) called herself “soft-spoken”; thus, she is perceived by some of her staff as “very soft,” and therefore, not a good leader. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the challenges of Respondents 7 and 8, who were seen as too assertive. Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 10) suggested, “When you fight to be in the loop, you are a bitchy woman...As a male, they would automatically put you in the loop, but when you fight to be in the loop...you

are a hard-driving woman and you better be careful; 'She's a real bitch.'” Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 11) was “marked down” on her first evaluation after she became the high school principal because of her tone of voice. Later, her evaluator realized that she was “not a sweet, fluffy voiced person and that she knew (Respondent 8) had to be firm sometimes, but whereas a man could do that, a woman couldn't.” These women, it seems, battled the stereotypes of being too soft or too hard as they conducted themselves in their duties. Hale (1994) also cited not being treated equal to men as one of the major barriers facing secondary female aspirants.

Respondent 5 (June 25, 2001, p. 9) further suggested that some women placed in positions of authority help to reenforce the stereotype that women are unreasonable and ill-suited for leadership positions by choosing “their battles poorly and making everything a battle.” She offered the advice, “You are not going to be successful like that. That's just not good people skills--not good leadership skills--just destroys a sense of community...You got to have expectations and let people know where you stand but not that you are just an unreasonable dictator.” Perhaps because there are so few female high school principals, their being perceived as a phenomenon places them under a more watchful eye and adds the burden of proving themselves as worthy much more so than a man would have to, which means that those obtaining the position must be very careful not to exhibit the stereotypical traits that would make the public resistant to feminine leadership in the future.

Resistance to Female Leadership. Resistance to a female leader was included in the recollections of Respondents 1, 6, and 8. Inheriting male assistant principals who did not

want to work for a woman was the recurring theme. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 9), for example, recalled, “One of my assistant principals was a man who had been here for years...and had never done an adequate job, and he was ‘by god’ not going to have some woman tell him what to do...Well, he’s not here anymore.” Respondent 6 and 8 also faced difficulties with male assistant principals who were eventually removed from their schools. Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 8) suggested that anyone who could not work for a woman would “remove themselves” because she wasn’t going anywhere. Respondent 8 surprisingly found herself asking potential employees if they could work for a woman to avoid any conflicts that might occur after they were hired. A number of female high school principals in VanHuss’ (1996) study also experienced resistance to female leadership from staff members and teachers. VanHuss’ participants described difficulties with staff members who did not like working for a woman.

Drawbacks That Transcend Gender. Six of the female high school principals who were interviewed discussed the demands of the position in terms of the amount of time spent on the job and personal sacrifice. For instance, Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 2) said, “I give 60 to 70 hours a week to my job, and certainly my personal life suffers for it...You cannot do the job if you are not willing to give it your whole life.” Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 5) looked to the future in view of not having the position, stating, “The time off in the summer and the other benefits in terms of not having to be here when the sun rises and be here when the lights go out would allow me to do staff development, some training, some consulting that I’m not able to do now. I can’t go to school now. I can’t consult unless I beg a day off.” Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 20) declared, “You



literally have no life, especially on the high school level.” She further speculated, “I think a lot of women weigh the cost and say it is not worth it...It is not about getting an education because we go back; we go to school; we get the education...It’s not about ability because we have the ability. We run the schools anyway. It is about sacrifice.” Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 6) echoed Respondent 3’s sentiments: “I’ve worked harder in these years than I did the first 20 of my whole career.” She then asked, “Do you have that many females really willing to give what it takes?” Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 20) suggested that even her superintendent would not have “a clue” about what it takes to be a high school principal because he had never been one. She also discussed the strain of the job on physical health that she said was “a male problem as well as a female problem.” The participants’ assessments of their job demands and personal sacrifices are evidence that contradict stereotypes explored in the literature, such as women placing family above work considerations and women lacking the drive necessary to succeed in leadership roles (Owen & Todor, 1995).

Boyer (1997) found that the salary of most principals had doubled since 1983 and that 64% of all high school principals earned over \$66,000 a year. In addition, he reported that the number of hours worked had increased from 53 to 58 hours a week on the average. In this study, Respondents 6 and 7 stated that the compensation for being high school principal was not adequate for the demands of the job. From Respondent 6’s (June 26, 2001, p. 20) viewpoint, “It doesn’t pay what it should, and if it paid more, I think more people would be interested in it.” Respondent 7’s declaration was similar: “I don’t

think the compensation is adequate for the responsibility, for the number of hours that is expected or for the amount of responsibilities that are given to people in this position.”

Subquestion 4: Do they purposefully try to serve as mentors to other women who are administrative aspirants?

### Discussion

From the analysis of the data from the demographic interview, the researcher found that the vast majority (91%) of female principals had served as mentors to female aspirants. Only 52% of the respondents to the survey indicated that they had been mentored by another female during their careers. This would support the findings of Wentling (1996) who documented that the mentors available for female executives are usually male bosses or managers. This difference possibly reflects the low percentage of female administrators, especially at the high school level, who are available to mentor aspiring females.

Willingness to Mentor. Fisher (1992) found that women's careers often stall out for lack of the kind of informal advice and sponsorship that men get from one another. Madsen (1992) as well as other researchers (Beason, 1992; Collins, 1998; Ehrich, 1995; Scanlon, 1999; Turoczy, 1996) documented that having a mentor in a position of power is a prerequisite for career advancement. All of the interview participants expressed a willingness to mentor administrative aspirants, male or female, who would contribute to the general welfare of the organization to which they were tied. Some of the respondents were involved in formal mentoring programs through their local school system or through

college or university leadership programs; others were involved in informal mentoring situations, and a few mentored in both formal and informal capacities.

Six of the female high school principals related that they mentored at least one of their assistant principals. Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 14) stated, "One of my responsibilities is to expose them [assistant principals] to as much as possible so that if an opportunity comes up...they can move into it without a whole lot of trouble." Similarly, Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 12) described trying to mentor each one of her administrators to "groom" them for the principalship. Respondent 8 said she took great pride in the fact that the superintendent had told her on two separate occasions that people were assigned under her to be trained for high school principal positions. Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 13) viewed mentoring assistant principals as a means of trying "to pass along as much as you can." Respondents 2, 3, and 6 served as mentors in a formal mentoring capacity arranged by a college or university. In addition, three of the female principals reached into their teaching ranks to mentor members of their faculty who were administrative aspirants.

Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 18) suggested that she and her fellow principals had a "professional responsibility...to keep your eyes open for who you need to mentor and be available for that person...There has got to be somebody who can carry on...Then you hope that some of the things you believe and some of the vision that you have will continue...." She continued by saying, "That may be the best way for you to leave your mark and your legacy is through the leadership growth in the county," underscoring the importance of a willingness to mentor. Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 18) also spoke

poignantly to those who seek mentors, admonishing them to put themselves in situations where they can truly listen and “hear some particular person saying things of value to [them], and then [they] need to find a way to associate with that person and develop that relationship so [they] are in a position for that person to be a mentor so [they] can have that relationship with them.”

Mentoring Women. Whether or not the interview participants perceived that they were more likely, as likely, or less likely to mentor other women received mixed responses. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 26) commented upon the sparsity of female mentors to role model for aspirants: “It would be wonderful if there were more women to be mentors for some of these women...but there aren’t enough [female mentors] out there.” Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 14) noted that although women are as likely to mentor women as they were men initially, “What happens is that they end up mentoring men because men are more aggressive about wanting to be mentored, and they go after it.” Respondents 7 and 8 also alluded to the reticence of women to ask for assistance. Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 13) related, “They [women] are more likely to mentor other women, and women are more likely to think they don’t need it, and they won’t take it from another woman or ask another woman.” Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 20) said she made a conscious effort to mentor other women because “men know the rules of the game but women don’t.” “However,” she said, “they also tend not to ask for help.”

Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 13) discussed the importance of having a female mentor because, in her words,

A woman has to have someone who is sensitive to different modes of leadership...A woman needs someone to see her individual traits, her individual strengths and to coach her to use those effectively to run a school...A woman needs that more than a man because when he steps into leadership...he is given automatically authority and respect.

Respondents 2 and 5 emphasized that mentoring is valuable to everyone, male and female. Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 26) said, "Our job is to mentor, regardless of sex, these people who have got the people skill to be successful and do it." Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 21) suggested, "...People who are really serious about doing a good job and you can see some aptitude [for leadership] there, then women would want to nurture the field of education. I don't think it's just trying to [mentor] for women." However, she also remarked, "We would certainly see needs that women may have that the man doesn't, like introducing her to the powers that be...A woman has to really stand out and make a name for herself or somebody has to introduce her to the system and say, 'Look at this person; this person is of value or worth.'"

Respondent 4 (June 26, 2001, p. 13) described what an individual can experience through a mentor/mentee relationship:

Everybody needs someone to talk to--whether male or female... You need somebody to talk to and bounce stuff off of. It gets lonesome sometimes, and I think it's very important for you, whether you formally do it or informally do it, that you have somebody that you can call and talk to, regardless of how many years experience you have.

Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 13) summarized a number of female principals' views of mentoring by saying, "Mentors are good for everyone, and you hate to think for just women alone." Yet one reason women lack confidence to aspire to leadership positions is the absence of sufficient role models in key positions of authority (Pigford & Tonnsen,

1993). Without an adequate number of successful female administrators as role models and informal sponsors, women who might aspire to such positions may assume that only females who are extremely skillful can be successful.

Subquestion 5: What, if any, leadership characteristics which they attribute to themselves do they have in common?

### Discussion

Six of the female principals who participated in the interview portion of the study elaborated upon the use of shared decision making as a key ingredient of their leadership. Shared decision making was also one of the ingredients of female leadership reported in studies by Cwick (1999), Morris, Tin and Coleman (1999), and VanHuss (1996). Madsen (1999) cited the use of collaboration as a key leadership characteristic of the Colorado female principals in her study. The use of collaboration was further substantiated by the findings of Eckman (2000), who investigated the experiences of women high school principals in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin through in-depth interviews. Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 19) said that her faculty had “a huge amount of the decision making power.” Respondent 2 (June 25, 2001, p. 23) narrowed the decision making power to her department heads saying, “These people as department heads continue that [site-based decision making] because it is good for them to take responsibility for the decisions they make.” Respondent 3 (June 29, 2001, p. 17) had formed a “leadership team that actually works together, that makes decisions, and that has a vested interest in the school.” Respondent 6 (June 26, 2001, p. 15) also orchestrated her shared decision making through

her department heads: "I try to empower my department heads to the fullest. They really are the decision making body here because I believe in participatory decision making."

Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 18) identified her leadership as "very participatory--shared." She further stated, "I like to give people an opportunity to have input...I think that is real important because I think you need to make a commitment and buy in." Respondent 5 (June 27, 2001, p. 22) termed her shared decision making approach "collaboration," saying, "I believe we have to work together."

The key to an effective school, according to Respondent 7 (June 26, 2001, p. 18), was "relationships." Additionally, she described herself as "hands on," "extremely organized," and "trying to focus on success for every student." This would support the findings of Shakeshaft, Nowell, and Perry (1991), who reported that female principals attend to the emotional and social development of the students and their relationships with one another. Respondent 8 (June 13, 2001, p. 20) said she led by walking around, seeing, and going into classrooms. Other terms used by the principals individually to categorize their leadership characteristics were "analytical," "determined," "motivator," "resource manager," "facilitator of learning," and "pioneer."

Respondents 1, 2, and 4 emphasized that they were willing to make difficult decisions that might be unpopular. For instance, Respondent 1 (June 25, 2001, p. 18) said, "The first year I was here I fired 15 teachers, and it didn't take long after that for people to know that they better go on and look somewhere else or they better shape up and they did." Respondent 4 (June 15, 2001, p. 19) warned, "Don't ever think you will have one hundred percent 'cause you won't, and you'll always have that percent that's against you."

That'll change--it won't be the same group--it depends on what issue it is." The term "stroft," introduced in a study of female high school principals by Robinson (1996) and describes female leadership that has both strong and soft traits, appears to reflect leadership attributes of the respondents.

### Implications

The findings of this study add to the body of research concerning the personal and professional backgrounds of Georgia's female high school principals. Based upon the findings of the study, the following should be considered:

1. The number of female high school principals will not increase unless school district-level leadership and school boards make a concentrated effort to fill high school principals' positions with qualified candidates without regard to their gender.
2. Women should be encouraged to establish career goals earlier in their careers and study the career paths that lead to the final career destination.
3. Female teachers with potential for leadership need to be actively recruited, mentored, and afforded leadership opportunities by other administrators in their buildings so they will consider the high school principalship as a feasible career goal.
4. Female aspirants should be encouraged to voice their interest in an educational leadership position and seek out role models to mentor them and to create opportunities for them to be introduced to the key players who make recruitment and promotion decisions in their organization.



5. Women in positions of leadership should do everything within their power to demonstrate professionalism and competency in their jobs so that any prevailing negative stereotypes concerning female leadership can be dispelled.

#### Dissemination

The results of this study, most importantly, should be reviewed by female high school principal aspirants. The women who have successfully attained the coveted position are a rich resource of guidance, advice, insight, and inspiration to the females waiting in the ranks. The findings of this study will add to their understanding of the personal and professional backgrounds, career paths, career barriers, views on mentoring, and leadership styles of the successful female administrator, thus providing them with valuable information from role models as they establish their career paths and set their goals.

Since women represent over half of the enrollees in graduate education programs, educational supervision program coordinators should review the findings and adapt courses to address gaps in the training of women for administrative positions. Courses could incorporate opportunities for women to strengthen their leadership skills and acquire practical knowledge in all facets of high school administration, including athletics, school finances, and facilities supervision and management. The courses could also help women develop strategies for networking and for being mentored by males or females to advance in their careers. In addition, graduate programs need to place greater value on successful classroom experience and the acquisition of masterful teacher status before enrolling candidates in leadership programs.

An awareness of the findings of this study could alter the current recruitment and hiring practices of local school districts. As detailed in their own words, the women who participated in this study provided a wealth of evidence to indicate that females can handle the job of high school principal very effectively and should be given the opportunity to demonstrate their capability without regard to gender.

### Recommendations

Based on a thorough examination of the quantitative and qualitative data generated by this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Because the study was limited to public female high school principals, further qualitative study which includes female high school assistant principals should be conducted to compare their personal and professional backgrounds with the women who have acquired the key leadership position.
2. Because of the breadth of the topics addressed in this study, more in-depth qualitative research should be conducted to expand upon the findings involving perceived barriers, mentoring experiences, or feminine leadership styles.
3. Further study could be conducted to focus on teachers' perceptions regarding the leadership styles of the female high school principal. In-depth interviews with teachers may provide additional information regarding the qualities and attributes valued by faculty members working with today's secondary female principals.
4. A follow-up study of the qualitative portion of this research could be conducted in three years to explore the participants' career progressions, their evolving

leadership styles, and other important aspects of their professional experiences over the course of time.

5. University leadership programs should develop course work designed to help females develop very positive self-images, understand the strengths of their individual leadership styles, and educate them in areas where they lack experience or exposure, such as high school athletics, budget management, or facilities management.

6. School systems should assess the brutal demands of the job of the high school principal and design and implement strategies for lessening the stressfulness, time commitment, and personal sacrifices faced by the high school administrator so that the position will become attractive to a greater number of qualified, effective candidates, including women with leadership potential.

7. School systems should implement guidelines that emphasize a strong background in instruction as a prerequisite for anyone who is being considered for the high school principalship.

8. The leadership of traditionally all-male organizations, i.e., the Georgia High School Association, should be made aware of the perception that the “good ol’ boy” system is alive and thriving in their ranks and should develop ways to ensure that all of its membership is treated equally and with dignity.

### Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional backgrounds of the public female high school principals in Georgia, thereby, providing

information that might afford insight for other women who aspire to become high school principals. This study contains the findings from a demographic questionnaire concerning the participants' personal, educational, and professional background, as well as their mentoring experiences. The questionnaire was mailed to all of the female high school principals in Georgia. The responses to the questionnaire provided personal and professional background information regarding Georgia's female public high school principals.

The qualitative portion of this study provided rich documentation of the lived experiences and perceptions of eight women who have broken through the invisible barriers and have been given the opportunity to demonstrate their talent, competency, and administrative skills in a high school setting. Their career paths, career barriers, mentoring experiences, and leadership styles were described in their own words to provide a meaningful portrait of these talented, dedicated female educational leaders.

The women who participated in the interviews were amazingly talented, insightful, and resilient women determined to lead each of their organizations to new heights of achievement for the sake of their students. I hope that I have conveyed to the reader through the selected narratives and corresponding discussions the essence of what I experienced first hand as I met with each one of these astounding educators. These women were willing to make difficult decisions to ensure the welfare of their organizations, they were willing to sacrifice much of their personal lives, and they were willing to take on the added responsibility of nourishing the field of education by mentoring and grooming the next generation of school administrators. Words cannot

adequately describe the personal power and professional commitment of the eight female high school principals who participated in this study. Yet it would be a great disservice if I made no attempt to express the overwhelming awe felt by me as I listened to each one of these great women reflect upon the interview questions and masterfully articulate their experiences, values, and visions. The responses, the anecdotes, and the stories of these female public high school principals in Georgia should inspire female administrative aspirants to pursue their goals and should remind the decision making bodies of local systems that they may very well have a wealth of leadership potential for their high schools at their thresholds if only they peel away the blinders of discrimination and cultural expectations and let the women lead from out in front rather than in the shadow of a man.

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## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX A  
IRB APPROVAL CORRESPONDENCE

Georgia Southern University  
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Phone: 912-681-5465

Fax: 912-681-0719


Ovrsight@gasou.edu

P.O. Box 8005

Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

**To:** Marjorie Hamilton  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

**Cc:** Dr. Michael Richardson, Faculty Advisor  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

**From:** Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator   
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** March 16, 2001

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

After an expedited review of your proposed research project titled "Qualitative Study of Georgia Female High-School Principals," it appears that the research subjects are at minimal risk and appropriate safeguards are in place. I am, therefore, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board able to certify that adequate provisions have been planned to protect the rights of the human research subjects. This proposed research is approved through an expedited review procedure as authorized in the *Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects* (45 CFR §46.110(7)), which states:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

**However, this approval is conditional upon the following revisions and/or additions being completed prior the collection of any data:**

1. You will need to revise the informed consent cover letter to include a provision for respondents to receive a copy of the research's results. This is a common, and required, component of all informed consent for research of this type.
2. You will need to revise the interview consent form and remove the use of "anonymous." You cannot guarantee both confidentiality and anonymity, as these terms are mutually exclusive. Furthermore, your research design is such that you can only guarantee the participants confidentiality, not their anonymity.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about these conditions of approval, please do not hesitate to contact the IRB Coordinator. Please send a copy of all revised and/or additional materials to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs (PO Box 8005).

**This IRB approval is in effect for one year from the date of this letter.** If at the end of that time, there have been no changes to the exempted research protocol, you may request an extension of the approval period for an additional year. In the interim, please provide the IRB with any information concerning any significant adverse event, **whether or not it is believed to be related to the study**, within five working days of the event. In addition, if a change or modification of the approved methodology becomes necessary, you must notify the IRB Coordinator **prior to initiating any such changes or modifications.** At that time, an amended application for IRB approval may be submitted. Upon completion of your data collection, please notify the IRB Coordinator so that your file may be closed.



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Georgia Southern University  
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Phone: 912-681-5465

Fax: 912-681-0719

Ovrsight@gasou.edu


P.O. Box 8005

Statesboro, GA 30460-8005

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**To:** Marjorie Hamilton  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

**Cc:** Dr. Michael Richardson, Faculty Advisor  
Leadership, Technology and Human Development

**From:** Mr. Neil Garretson, Coordinator   
Research Oversight Committees (IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** March 26, 2001

**Subject:** Status of Conditional IRB Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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The Institutional Review Board (IRB) Committee has received your revised and/or additional application materials for the approved research titled, "Qualitative Study of Georgia Female High-School Principals." You have satisfactorily met the conditions of your Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as detailed in the March 16, 2001 approval letter.

Please remember that this approval is in effect for one year (3/16/01 – 3/16/02) and if at the end of that time there have been no substantive changes to the approved methodology, you may request a one year extension of the approval period.

Good luck with your research efforts, and if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the status of your approval, please do not hesitate to contact me.

APPENDIX B  
COVER LETTER TO FEMALE  
HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

4828 Long Lane  
Evans, GA 30809

March 26, 2001

Dear Colleague:

I am currently conducting research for my dissertation in a doctoral program in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. My research focuses on the personal and professional backgrounds of female public high school principals in Georgia. I believe the study will contribute valuable information about female administrators who have obtained high school principalships. My study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

The enclosed demographic questionnaire, upon which the quantitative findings of the study will be based, has been mailed to all of the current public female high school principals in Georgia. The questionnaire will take only a few minutes for you to complete and return in the postage-paid reply envelope. The final item on the questionnaire, which asks if you would be willing to be interviewed by me, reflects the qualitative aspect of the study. Your participation by responding to the questionnaire and through your willingness to be one of the eight participants who will be interviewed is important! Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed envelope by February 20, 2001.

Your responses will be confidential. Information from the questionnaires will be reported in summary form and will not be reported individually or by school district. The identities of the interview participants will also remain confidential. The participants will be given pseudonyms when the study's findings are reported.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (706) 860-9860 (home) or (706) 556-5997 (office). In addition, if you would like a copy of the research's results, call me and a copy of the findings will be mailed to you. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Margie Hamilton, Graduate Student  
College of Education, Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX C  
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

### A DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE: THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE CURRENT FEMALE PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN GEORGIA

#### I. Personal Background

*Please circle the correct response to the following items:*

1. Your Age

- |             |            |                |
|-------------|------------|----------------|
| a. Under 30 | d. 40 - 44 | g. 55 and over |
| b. 30 - 34  | e. 45 - 49 |                |
| c. 35 - 39  | f. 50 - 54 |                |

2. Your Race

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| a. African-American | c. Caucasian             |
| b. Hispanic         | d. Other (Specify) _____ |

3. Your Marital Status

- |                          |                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Single, never married | d. Married, first time          |
| b. Separated or Divorced | e. Married, second time or more |
| c. Widowed               |                                 |

4. Number of Children

- |      |              |
|------|--------------|
| a. 0 | d. 3         |
| b. 1 | e. 4         |
| c. 2 | f. 5 or more |

5A. Husband's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

5B. Husband's Highest Degree Earned \_\_\_\_\_

6A. Mother's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

6B. Mother's Highest Degree Earned \_\_\_\_\_

7A. Father's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

7B. Father's Highest Degree Earned \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Educational Background

8. Undergraduate Major \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX D  
INTERVIEW POSTCARD

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_, State \_\_\_\_\_, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Number of students enrolled at your high school \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX E  
FOLLOW-UP POSTCARD

Recently, a questionnaire entitled **The Personal and Professional Backgrounds of the Current Female High School Principals** was mailed to you. Your completing it will be greatly appreciated as the return of the questionnaire is a very important component of the research project that is being conducted. If you have already mailed back the instrument, thank you again for your cooperation.

Your humble colleague, Margie Hamilton.

APPENDIX F  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER

4828 Long Lane  
Evans, GA 30809

April 18, 2001

Dear Colleague:

I am currently conducting research for my dissertation in a doctoral program in the College of Education at Georgia Southern University. My research focuses on the personal and professional backgrounds of female public high school principals in Georgia. I believe the study will contribute valuable information about female administrators who have obtained high school principalships. My study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

Enclosed is a second copy of a demographic questionnaire, upon which the quantitative findings of the study will be based; it has been mailed to all of the current public female high school principals in Georgia. The questionnaire will take only a few minutes for you to complete and return in the postage-paid reply envelope. Your returning the questionnaire will indicate permission to use the data in this study. The final item on the questionnaire, asking if you would be willing to be interviewed by me, reflects the qualitative aspect of the study. Your participation by responding to the questionnaire and your willingness to be one of the eight participants who will be interviewed is important! Please complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed envelope by April 25, 2001.

Your responses will be confidential. Information from the questionnaires will be reported in summary form and will not be reported individually or by school district. The identities of the interview participants will also remain confidential. The participants will be given pseudonyms when the study's findings are reported.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (706) 860-9860 (home) or (706) 556-5997 (office). In addition, if you would like to have a copy of the research's results, call me and a copy of the findings will be mailed to you. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to the IRB Coordinator at the Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at (912) 681-5465. **Your taking the time to complete the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.**

Sincerely,

Margie Hamilton, Graduate Student  
College of Education, Georgia Southern University

APPENDIX G  
LETTER OF APPRECIATION TO  
NON-SELECTED INTERVIEW CANDIDATES

4828 Long Lane  
Evans, GA 30809

June 24, 2001

Dear Colleague:

I sincerely appreciate your response to *A Demographic Questionnaire: The Personal and Professional Backgrounds of the Current Female Public High School Principals in Georgia*. A number of the current female principals agreed to participate in the interview portion of my research, and for that I am very grateful.

Thank you for your willingness to be a part of the interview process. The interviewees have now been selected and contacted, and I plan to complete the interview process and finish my dissertation in the very near future.

If ever I can assist you, please contact me.

Truly,

Marjorie Hamilton, Graduate Student  
Georgia Southern University

Home Phone - (706) 860-9860

APPENDIX H  
INFORMED CONSENT

## INFORMED CONSENT

DISSERTATION: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF GEORGIA'S  
FEMALE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

I understand that the purpose of this study is to describe the personal and professional characteristics of the current female high school principals in Georgia.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any question(s) during the interview or withdraw my consent at any time during the study by contacting the researcher.

If I have any questions or concerns about this study, I may contact the researcher, Margie Hamilton, at work (706-556-5997) or at home (706-860-9860) or the chairman of the researcher's doctoral committee, Dr. Mike Richardson, at Georgia Southern University (912-681-5079). If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a participant in this study, I may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Georgia Southern University, (912-681-5465).

I understand that my interview (approximately 90 minutes) with the researcher will be audiotaped. I also realize that the researcher may follow up with a telephone contact to clarify information given in the interview.

I understand that the results of the study will be mailed to any participant upon her request.

Additionally, I understand that all data (demographic questionnaires, audiotapes, and transcriptions) will be retained for a period of one year or through the completion of the dissertation. These materials will be stored at the home of the researcher. At the end of one year or at the end of the completion of the dissertation, the audiotapes will be erased and the written data destroyed.

Finally, I realize that all my responses, written and verbal, will remain confidential as the researcher will use pseudonyms to report the qualitative findings of the study.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



APPENDIX I  
IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

## IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Personal Background

Let's begin with some family background.

1. The parents of the majority of the women who responded to the questionnaire had the equivalent of a high school education or less and many of the mothers, according to the survey, were housewives. However, these same households produced daughters with advanced degrees, occupying coveted positions in local school districts. Were your parents insistent on your going to college or was college a personal goal for you? If you would attribute your career success to your parents, explain in what ways.
2. Are there any other persons in your life to whom you would attribute your professional success?
3. Describe, if any, the barriers in your personal life, including family responsibilities, that you perceive you have had to overcome as you have advanced in your career.

### Career Paths

4. Did you go to college with the intention of becoming an educator? If so, what influenced you to take that career path?
5. Have you wanted to be a school administrator since you entered the education profession, or is that something that has surfaced over a period of time? Please elaborate.
6. Describe your teaching and administrative experience in chronological order.
7. At what college or colleges did you earn your undergraduate and graduate degrees?
8. What special courses, workshops, seminars, or training sessions have you attended that were designed to prepare you for a high school principalship?
9. Why did you decide to become a high school principal rather than a middle or an elementary school principal?
10. For you, was becoming a high school principal a long-term goal?

### Professional Barriers

11. What barriers, if any, have you faced in the education profession as a woman pursuing and obtaining the position of high school principal?

12. Please recall any incidents during which you perceived that you were being treated differently by your colleagues or your superiors because of your gender.

13. Do you believe that the local school board is as receptive to a female high school principal as it is a male high school principal? If not, why not?

#### Being Mentored

14. Is there a person or are there persons in your professional background who have served as mentors to you and who had an impact on your professional success? If yes, please describe some of the ways in which you were mentored.

15. Detail your relationship, formal or informal, with anyone who is currently serving as a mentor to you.

#### Mentoring

16. Have you in the past or are you now serving as a mentor to anyone? If so, what activities did you engage in then or do you engage in now to assist the person?

17. Based on your experience, how valuable is having a mentor for a woman trying to advance in educational leadership?

18. Do you perceive that women are more likely, less likely, or as likely to mentor other women as they are to mentor men who are administrative aspirants?

19. Do you perceive that you make a conscious effort to mentor female aspirants? Why or why not?

#### Leadership

20. How would you describe your leadership style?

21. How do you believe your faculty members and other staff members perceive your leadership style?

#### Conclusion

22. Why do you think there are so few female high school principals (19.86%) as compared to male high school principals (80.14) in Georgia?

23. Is there anything else that you would like to add that would help to complete this interview concerning your personal and professional backgrounds?

## APPENDIX J

### AUDIT OF TAPES AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

## AUDIT OF TAPES AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

This is to certify that I \_\_\_\_\_ have conducted an audit of \_\_\_\_\_ tapes that were the products of interviews conducted with female public high school principals in Georgia for the 2000-2001 school year.

I do hereby confirm that the transcriptions accurately reflect the responses of the participants unless the responses were inaudible (i.e., as a result of background interference).

I understand the confidential nature of the material I have reviewed and pledge to maintain its confidentiality.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_