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## Women with Administrative Licensure: Their Journey Outside the Principalship

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Women with Administrative Licensure: Their Journey Outside the Principalship

by

Katie Judith Britton

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of an  
Educational Doctorate.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

May, 2024

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### Abstract

Women have been a major part of education throughout history. While women have long been the majority in the classroom the same cannot be said for the principalship. Some may think that women do not get their principal license; however, this is untrue. Women obtain their licenses and then do not become principals. This phenomenological research study worked to understand what women do with their principal license. Through surveys and interviews of women in the state of Minnesota who are licensed as principals but not working as principals conclusions were able to be drawn about why women obtain their licenses, why they choose not to work as principals as well as what they are currently doing with their licenses. The research built upon the work around women in the principalship and attempted to fill the gap between when women move from the classroom to the principalship. There were four major findings for this research. Women obtain their license, women obtain their license for personal reasons, women face barriers and support. The final finding was that women often make the choice not to become a principal.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

#### **Chapter Overview**

The summer of 2023 may have been called the summer of women. From Taylor Swift's Era's Tour to the Women's World Cup, it was a time for women to be front and center in both the news as well as in athletics and entertainment. Even with all the gains that women have made there is still growth needed, particularly in the area of leadership. Women are largely underrepresented in leadership even with all the growth that has happened in the past few years. For years women have been able to have leadership in education. Some would argue that education is a place where women are leaders already and are well represented. I believe that education has always been a strong place for women to be leaders and have women in leadership positions; however, there is still work to be done.

Throughout educational history, women have dominated the profession (Blount, 1998; Rousmaniere, 2007). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2021) as of the 2017-2018 school year, 76% of educators are women nationally. In contrast to this Taie and Goldberg (2019) found that 54% of all public school principals are female. According to the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) (2022), the percentage of teachers in Minnesota who are female matches closely with national standards with 78% of all educators in Minnesota being women. According to Kemper, Zhao, and Pikel (2023), there are 2,323 principal and assistant principal positions in Minnesota whereby 47% identify as female. This means that Minnesota is behind the national percentage of school principals in female presentation.

According to the Minnesota Elementary School Principal Association (MESPA), about 56% of their members identify as female (B. A. Waldie, personal communication, June 6, 2023). MESPA has a diverse sampling of elementary principals in Minnesota with just over 900 active members (B. A. Waldie, personal communication, June 6, 2023). The Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) shared their membership is approximately 40% female out of roughly 1260 members (P. Anderson, personal communication, June 14, 2023). As demonstrated by these statistics, Minnesota has work to do around having more female administrators leading schools.

Women have dominated the classroom while being underrepresented in administration. Nationally, these numbers decline as educators climb the ladder to the superintendency with 27% being women (Robinson et al., 2017). While not within the scope of this research, it is important to note that, while women have dominated the education field for years, they have not been in leadership positions at the same rate as they have been in the classroom (Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing Standards Board, 2022; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021; Taie & Goldberg, 2019).

The simple thought would be that women do not obtain their principal licensure at the same rate as men; however, in their study Kruse and Krumm (2016) found this to be untrue. They concluded that women obtain their licenses at double the rate of men (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). Davis, Gooden, and Bowers (2017) found similar statistics in their research where men are 1.2 times more likely to go into the principalship (Davis, Gooden & Bowers, 2017). In my own experience of obtaining my administrative license, I also found this to be true. A majority of the women in my principal classes were female. I

believe that in Minnesota women are obtaining their licenses which supports the explained statistics

As we dig deeper into this topic, it is important to understand why this topic matters to me, my professional interest, as well as the implications for this research. This chapter explores the importance of this topic, my professional interest in this topic, and the implications this could have on the field of education. Finally, this chapter will share my research questions along with why this is a problem within education that needs to be addressed.

### **Statement of Problem**

Within the United States, we are currently facing staffing shortages in all areas of education (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). One of those areas according to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is principals (NASSP, 2017). In a 2017 position statement, NASSP stated, “Many school districts across the country report principal vacancies and a serious lack of qualified applicants to replace them” (p. 1). Meaning there is a shortage of qualified principals to fill positions.

Post-pandemic NASSP (2022) conducted a second survey and found that half of the members surveyed were considering leaving the profession or retiring. This demonstrates the complexity of the issue and a need for more administrators to go into principal positions. Diliberti and Schwartz (2023) found principal turnover had increased going into the 2022-2023 school year as well. Again, this means that there is a need to create a better pipeline to the principalship.

As previously shared, according to Kruse and Krumm (2016), women obtain their principal license at twice the rate of men. Lovie (2018) also found that there are more

women licensed than open positions. In their study, Fuller et al. (2016) found that there has been an increase in the number of women who graduate with a license, and despite this, they are still half as likely to become school leaders. Despite obtaining their credentials at twice the rate of men (Kruse & Krumm, 2016) and representing 76% of all educators (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021), women comprise only 54% of principals (Taie & Goldberg, 2019). Using these national statistics, I believe that we have more women available to be principals than are currently in the roles. Based on my own experience and research, I believe that women are taking classes and then not going into a principalship which leads to my research questions.

### **Research Questions**

My research questions are:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

Through researching these questions, my goal is to learn what women are doing with their administrative licenses other than being principals. I hope to learn who is licensed in the state of Minnesota and what they are doing with their license. The next section explores the purpose of this study while the rest of the chapter will help to explain the importance of understanding these questions as well as my personal connection to these questions.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand where the women who have their principal licenses are currently working if they are not working as a principal. While working on my administrative license, I did not plan to be a principal. I planned to use the credits towards my EdD degree and then worry about what to do with the license when I finished. I was amazed to find out that many of my classmates were also planning to go into positions where it was preferred to have a principal license but was technically not required or would put them in a position where they were not planning to be a building administrator such as an English Language Learner coordinator or a dean of students. The more I worked through my courses, the more I found this to be true from those around me.

Additionally, I found that other research supported my thinking. Lovie (2018) stated, “Continuing the inquiry into why teachers pursue administrative certification and then do not pursue the principalship would help to more fully understand the problem of practice” (p. 139). Understanding why women obtain their administrative licensure and then do not go into the principalship is important because there is a disconnect between the number of administrators licensed and those available for positions. Echoing this sentiment, Davis et al. (2017) said that there is little known about the transition from credentialing to the principalship. This means that overall it is unknown what happens to most who obtain their principal licensure and then do not go into the principalship. Perrone, Young, and Fuller (2022) argued that there is a need for a national system with access to data on the principal pipeline. Finally, Bailes and Guthery (2020) echoed this idea and concluded that often the first position that principals go into is the assistant

principal and there is not enough known about this transition. Based on my experience and the supporting research, it led me to wonder where women go and what they do with their licenses. The next section explores my professional and personal interest in this topic.

### **Professional and Personal Interest in Topic**

The topic of women in the principalship is of both personal and professional interest to me. On a professional level, I worry about there not being enough principals to fill open positions. Through my preliminary research, I also worry that some of the very qualified leaders are choosing not to go into this profession because they feel they are not prepared for the available positions. I also worry that without enough candidates we will not have the greatest impact on student achievement.

On a personal level, I am concerned about many of the same things as listed above. I also know that my journey to the principalship would not have happened without the support of many others around me. I have found that is not unique to me. I also wonder on a personal level if I had more female principals either as a student or in my early teaching, if being a principal is something I would have considered sooner. Finally, I am invested in this topic because I know that support from other female colleagues is extremely helpful in beginning a career as an administrator. As can be seen, many of my personal and professional reasons overlap. This section explores each of these areas in depth.

### ***Professional Interest in Topic***

This topic is of interest to me professionally because I am fearful that we are going to be short on leaders in the future. As previously mentioned, NASSP (2017)

shared their concern that we could face a principal shortage in the future. I am concerned about this as well about those leaders who are choosing not to go into positions because they feel they are not qualified for the positions. Finally, without a good pool of candidates to choose from, students will suffer and have the potential not to make enough gains.

On a professional level, being short of principals affects me in two ways. First, I may become overworked due to a lack of leaders available. Or it may end up that there are lots of leaders who need training because they are new. In a survey, completed by Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), many principals expressed their concern about having many qualified candidates (2000). I worry about being spread thin in a position where often I feel as though we are being put through constraints to complete our work. Lovie (2018) supported this in their study as well with principals feeling overwhelmed and overworked.

In my long-term career, I am considering the possibility of becoming a superintendent. This is my second reason for being concerned about a possible principals' shortage. Being surrounded by great leaders as a superintendent is important to ensuring that one can do their job well. Without this, it makes things extremely challenging. Again, in this position that is spread thin from a professional perspective, it can be challenging to ensure that positions are filled by the most qualified candidates. In 2000, the IEL shared their concern about qualified candidates due to the lack of consistent recruitment. Without a quality group of candidates to choose from there will be a lack of quality instructional leaders. According to Hattie (2009), effective instructional leadership is the greatest effect a principal can have on a school. When there are effective



school leaders the school building will grow and students will do better. Quality education is vital for the success of students in the future. These reasons both fall into my professional reasons for wanting to ensure that we have enough principals and into my personal reasons because each of these has an effect and a potential future effect on my life.

### ***Personal Interest in Topic***

Personally, my journey has led me to this topic as well as the support I received from those around me. Many of the reasons I am so interested in studying women specifically come from my personal experiences while studying and obtaining my administrative license from the studies I read to the people who helped me along the way.

The first experience that helped open my eyes to this topic was beginning to go through my principal licensure classes. Initially, I was not planning on becoming a licensed principal when I started the licensure process. I was open to the idea after an ask from my previous principal but it was not my top priority. My top priority was to complete my dissertation elective credits. To my surprise, many of my classmates were also not there to obtain their licenses to become a principal. This was something I filed away and kept for future reference. As I thought about it more and more it made me wonder why they were getting their licenses. Some shared that they wanted to work in curriculum while others wanted to be in leadership positions but lead a building. This made me realize that many people were getting licenses and then not using them. Many were getting their license and then planning to do something completely different than what was intended from the coursework.

A second experience that helped me personally to get to this topic was reading a study that shared that women who are in the principalship spend more time than men completing their work even with the same experience and similar jobs (Ridlehoover, 2010). I was baffled by this idea and could not get it out of my head. It was truly what I originally thought I may be studying, why did women in similar positions spend so much more time than men on the same job? Was it their choice? Was it because they felt they needed to represent other women? Or something else? While these are still questions I wonder about, this original study helped me to become interested in women's experience in administration. This led me to research more about women in administration.

As I began to read further, I found a study from Oklahoma that stated women obtain their administrative licenses at double the rate of men (Kruse & Krumm, 2017). In addition, I attempted to figure out if this was well known throughout the US, according to Perrone, Young, and Fuller (2022) the principal pipeline is an area where more research is needed including who obtains their license. This combined with the previous study and my own experience led me to reflect and wonder why had I gone into a principal position even though I had originally not wanted to do so. What were other women doing instead of obtaining their licenses? Why were they choosing not to go into their position?

Reflecting on my own experience, I realized that there were a few specific experiences that led me to make my own leadership choice to become a principal. The first experiences of leadership, the encouragement from my colleagues and administrators, as well as from my family, all helped me to go into administration and continue to support me.

My family and my early leadership experiences kick-started my leadership in education. As a child, I was in leadership positions in elementary school and was able to continue these into high school. In elementary, I started my leadership through being a part of student council. As I moved into middle school, I continued on student council and added class president to my resume. These were positions I had until the end of high school. As I finished high school, I was able to be a captain for all three sports I competed in. Each of these experiences taught me a lot about leadership, such as why collaboration is important, and helped me grow into the leader I have become.

Encouragement from my family and colleagues helped me continue in this position. The first ask I did not even realize was an ask at the time. It came from a retiring teacher who whispered in my ear and hugged me on her last day saying I would do great things. I thought she was talking about being a team leader. Little did I know this was my first nudge towards the principal position. The second ask was from my current male administrator who got me to consider administration. The simple question, “Have you ever considered being a principal?” started me on my journey, even if the original answer was “Ha! That’s a terrible idea!” Once this was in my head, I was able to move in this direction but would not have been able to do this without the support of my family and friends. Something that is not unique to just me, studies show support is one of the most critical items for moving into the principalship for women (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service, Dalgic, & Thornton 2018; Simons, 2020). I know that without this prompting and the support I received, I would not be in the position I am in right now.

Because of these influences, as well as the research that women were going into administrative licensure programs, I began to wonder where women leaders were. Looking around as a teacher, I saw many women and, as I am at the start of my career, I see that there are women in administrative positions but not at the same rates as I saw in my administrative licensure programs and not at the same rate as for teachers. As a woman in administration, my researcher positionality is important to ensure I brought a clear fair perspective to those who obtained principal licensure and have shared their ideas with me.

### **Researcher World View**

My worldview has been affected by many different aspects of my life. The area that is most important related to my topic is my gender. Because I am planning to study women in leadership, as a woman who is in leadership, it is important to acknowledge that while this influences my positionality, it also opens me to the potential for bias due to how close I am to this topic.

As a woman in administration, I have had my own experiences and recognize that this might not be the experience of all other women. By choosing to study women considering administration, as a woman in administration, I believe that I have insider knowledge of my topic. As a researcher who is female researching women, I also need to ensure that I have included my experience where relevant and not put this subjectivity onto my research participants. Recognizing that as a woman in administration, I bring my perspective which is something I will need to keep in mind especially when completing data analysis as I believe my own experience may cause bias.

Similarly being a straight woman is something I have known my whole life about myself but I have not considered how this would change if I were not straight. This is something I do not have to worry about in my daily life when introducing my husband. People around me also assume that when I am talking about my partner he is a man. It is not something I worry about when it comes to hiring. I do not have to worry about being discriminated against. Additionally, I do not have to worry about being judged by those around me.

An area I did not explore much was my whiteness and is something I have not had to address often in my life because of where I live. Related to my topic I recognize that as a white woman, my experience has been different than women of color. Keeping this in mind as I am working with research participants will be important to understanding my topic and sharing the experiences of those whom I work with. Related to my topic I am planning to include those who are willing to participate in my study so I am unsure if this will impact my research or not.

Finally, as someone who has always grown up middle class, I have not had to worry about finances. When thinking about making the jump into administration I did not consider losing my job or going without a paycheck despite being the only breadwinner in my family. I think in my subconscious I knew that my family and my husband's family would support us if we needed it. Additionally, we have savings which creates a safety net for us. Others who have to financially support other family members do not have this same luxury.

When thinking about my personal bias related to this topic, I feel that I need to remember that I have a bias about women not being represented in my mind equally in

administration. I assume that there should be a higher number of women and believe that we need to eliminate barriers for women. Keeping this in mind will be critical to ensure that I am fairly representing the data after I have gathered it.

### **Summary**

This chapter has explored my professional interest and the importance of the topic to me personally as well as professionally. This leads to my research questions which are:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

Chapter Two of this dissertation will share the current literature available on the topic. Chapter Two begins with a more in-depth look at the statistics of education and education administration, then dives into the historical aspects of the principalship. Then, it explores women in leadership and ends with both barriers to women going into the principalship and positive factors increasing the principalship.

The remaining chapters include my methodology, results, and conclusions of my study. Chapter Three includes the methodology for my study. Chapter Four shares the results of my findings. Finally, in Chapter Five, the conclusions and implications of my study conclude my dissertation.

Overall, this study explored women who have their administrative license and their current positions as well as the reasons for obtaining their administrative licensure in an attempt to understand how to get more women into the principalship.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Overview of the Literature

Despite education being primarily occupied by women (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021), the principalship has traditionally been occupied by men (Blount, 1998; Taie & Goldberg, 2019). While positive changes have occurred across the board over the past several years, the number of female principals is still disproportionate to the number of female teachers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021; Taie & Goldberg, 2019). Additionally, women obtain their principal licensure at a rate twice that of men (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Kruse & Krumm, 2016) which begs the question, What are women doing with their license? This leads directly to my research questions:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

This literature review supports the need for further research on this question. As readers will find there is a significant amount of research about women who have become principals and the support or barriers they have faced on their road to the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Oplatka &



Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service, et. al, 2018; Simons, 2020). In addition, there is information supporting the historical context of where women have been in education throughout history as well as today (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Lagemann, 2000).

Through exploring current statistics in education and the history of education we can see the patterns of women going into education and their leadership within education.

As Cochran (2021) shared in her study, “There are many implications for the shortage of female secondary administrators, specifically for school districts that need strong female leaders” (p. 3). In other words, Cochran believed that school districts need strong secondary administrators at every level to ensure not only representation but also great leadership. By doing this women will be able to have female mentors and girls will have principals to look up to. Fixing the shortage means understanding why there is a shortage. If we can understand why there are fewer women within administration, we can add women to the principalship. This gives us more opportunities for women to participate in the principalship and show up in these positions.

Many things can be done to create a smoother path for women to reach for administration in education. Women may have extra needs when it comes to going into the principalship, in particular the head principal position. Ways to encourage women to become principals include being asked, having a mentor, and having feelings of being ready (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service, et. al, 2018; Simons, 2020). These can be particularly helpful for women looking into the principalship.

This paper explores previous and current statistics around principalship, the history of principalship, the principals pipeline, women in leadership, as well as barriers women face when getting into the principalship, and ways to help women overcome these barriers. Exploring the history of the principalship will help us to see where women in education have come from.

### **History of the Principalship in the US**

Historically women have dominated education; however, their place in educational leadership has been limited, particularly if there were men available to lead (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Lagemann, 2000). Teaching has been dominated by women since common schools were created in the United States (Blount, 1998; Bohan & Null, 2007; Lagemann, 2000). Early in school leadership, there was a greater number of female leaders, especially at the elementary level (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). As the position became a “prestigious position distinct from that of teaching” the position “became increasingly defined as White and male” (Kafka, 2009, p. 326). Additionally, following World War II there was a push to have more men in education. Because of the GI Bill, men could attend graduate school to obtain the credentials needed to go into principal roles leading to more men in administrative positions (Kafka, 2009). As time has gone on, teacher positions have continued to be dominated by women and there has been an increase in the number of women in principal positions (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Lagemann, 2000). Despite this increase, there is still an imbalance between the number of women in teaching and principal positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). This section explores how the history of men being in principal roles has led to the current statistics of men in leadership positions in education.

The earliest schools were run by and only for men. Matching the tradition of what had always happened. According to Blount (1998), in the 1800s, having women working in education was remarkable in and of itself because women had been taught they needed men to go anywhere and were not educated. This was the beginning of the shift in who worked in education. As time continued into the mid-1800s women became the majority in education. Blount (1998) stated following the Civil War women became the majority in teaching while men continued to leave the profession. Kruse (2012) also argued that women were in many of the top leadership positions from the late 1800s to the 1940s. Throughout this time, women were education leaders and worked throughout the system.

While women were leading, there were differences in those in elementary and secondary positions. Kafka (2009) stated that even though the principalship had been dominated by men by 1905, 62% of elementary schools had female principals. In contrast in 1905, less than 6% of secondary schools had female principals (Kafka, 2009). As time went on gender roles changed and men began to take on more leadership positions, particularly after World War II and the introduction of the G.I. Bill (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007).

Following World War II, men were recruited to education often with the promise of becoming principals. (Kafka, 2009). Within this recruitment, men were offered schooling for free from the G.I. Bill (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007). According to Rousmaniere (2007), not only were tuition waivers given for men returning from World War I and World War II but men were also given preference over women. Kafka (2009) found that men were recruited to education often with the promise of becoming principals. This led to a significant downturn in the number of women who

were in administrative positions. Before World War II the number of female principals was over half, by the 1970s women were in less than a quarter of positions (Rousmaniere, 2007). Following World War II states began requiring credentials for administrative work which women did not have and men were excited to get (Blount, 1998).

The G.I. Bill highly benefited men in obtaining administrative credentials. In fact according to Blount (1998) “in 1971 around 70 percent of school superintendents surveyed by the AASA had received higher education and administrative credentials with G.I. Bill benefits” (p. 145). Meaning that in that year of all the superintendents, a vast majority were able to receive their education due to serving. This is a struggle for women because at this time they were not able to advance in the same way. Without the financial means to obtain these credentials, women were moved out of administration. Throughout the 60’s and 70’s, this continued and stayed about the same with the principalship being aligned with masculine traits (Rousmaniere, 2007).

According to Lagemann (2000), as school administration became more professional there was a change in men coming into education and especially into administration. Lagemann (2000) stated, “the gender-related hierarchy between female teachers and male supervisors that emerged in the nineteenth century, social relations within education would become increasingly complex as more and more grades and levels became important to the field” (p. 61). Blount (1998) echoed this sentiment stating while teaching was dominated by women, it was controlled by men. Not only were women discouraged from administration from outside sources but at times from family as well.

Additional changes that contributed to the change from women leading to men leading predominantly was the change in education being seen as women's work. With this society viewed education as feminine. For more men to be in education there was a need to create a more "masculine" way to be in education. Educational administration was viewed by society as masculine because leadership traits were viewed as done by men. According to Blount (1998), during the 50s and 60s women were pushed out of administrative positions because they were married and their careers were the second most important in their families. This matched with society's expectations for women at the time and continues to be an issue for women today (Cochran, 2021). Sherman and Beaty (2010) wrote that as education became more female-dominated and thus viewed as a feminine occupation it became necessary to have a way for men to be in education at which point administration was considered the masculine way to be in education. This has created implications for who people see as the leaders in the building and the district office to this day. This creation of the principal's office was a way to get men into education according to Blount (1998).

School administration grew to a professional and academic criteria during a time when women were discouraged from pursuing higher education (Lagemann, 2000). Some were more explicit in their discouragement of women into administration and any professionalism of education such as educational researcher and psychologist, Edward Thorndike (Lagemann, 2000). While others may argue this is all in the past, I believe that this historical context has helped to create where we are now and is still something we are digging out. Bohan and Null (2007) agreed stating, "More than any other field, the

profession of teaching has been shaped by gender for centuries” (p. 4). The shaping of the field goes beyond the classroom and into all areas of administration.

Educational leadership has gone through many changes throughout the years including who can be in leadership. The history of education has contributed to the current state of educational administration. Because of who has been in the principalship this has led to a barrier when it comes to professional support for women in educational administration. While this history has shown education specifically understanding how women are represented in other leadership positions will help to ground us before we explore statistics specific to education.

### **Women and Leadership**

Throughout the United States, women are underrepresented in leadership positions in many different fields (Catalyst, 2022a; Gipson et al., 2017; Wyland, 2016). Education tends to be where women are well represented (Gipson et al., 2017); however, they are underrepresented when looking at the number of women in education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Overall when women are in leadership positions they are often placed in challenging leadership positions where the risk of failure is high (Gipson et al., 2017). This is true in education where women are often found in some of the most challenging schools (Gipson et al., 2017). This section explores the statistics around women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2022b; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Leppert & DeSilver, 2023; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; UN Women, 2023; United States Senate, 2023; Wyland, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018), as well as the challenges they face when attempting to obtain leadership positions (Branson, 2007; Caldwell, 2022; Catalyst, 2022a; Cochran,

2021; Curry, 2000; Dean et al., 2009; DeWitt, 2023; Dzuback, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gipson et al., 2017; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Kruse, 2012; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; Yadav & Lata, 2018), and finally, the supports that encourage and help women become leaders in a variety of fields (Branson, 2007; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013; Tarr-Whelan, 2009).

### ***Women and Leadership Statistics***

In all areas of leadership, there is growth for women to be in more leadership positions. Some may believe that there are fewer women in leadership positions because they do not have enough education (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gipson et al., 2017). While Eagly and Carli (2007) argued that education is a great representation of how many women should be in leadership positions there is still growth to be done because they have over 60% of leaders as women; however, when looking at this compared to the field there is room for growth. As can be seen from the statistics around leadership positions in politics, business, college academics, and law with women there is a great need for growth (Catalyst, 2022b; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Leppert & DeSilver, 2023; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; UN Women, 2023; United States Senate, 2023; Wyland, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018).

Women are well-educated and possess the required degrees for leadership positions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Eagly and Carli (2007) stated women are currently obtaining more advanced degrees than men meaning that at the current rate, we should see more women in leadership positions. According to the

National Center for Education Statistics (2021), in 2020 women obtained 55% of doctorate degrees and 61% of all master's degrees. This shows that women are educated enough to be in positions of leadership. Women obtain a majority of master's and doctoral degrees currently. Gipson et al. (2017) found that there is not equal representation in programs. While women are obtaining degrees at a higher rate they are still not represented in programs at the same rate. Women are not getting MBAs at the same level as men with a third of those in MBA programs being women (Gipson et al., 2017). Catalyst (2022a) also found women are more educated than in recent decades; however, they are not working as much, finding that just under half of the workforce is female.

Women have a variety of reasons for not working as much despite having the education to be in higher-level positions. According to Eagly and Carli (2007), women will leave their careers for family reasons among others. When looking at the statistics, it is clear that fewer women are working than they could do based upon their education. Catalyst (2022a) stated that "In 2021, there were 75,699,000 women aged 16 and above in the labor force, representing 56.1% of all women in the US population and making up close to half (47.0%) of the total labor force" (para. 2). Over half of the population of the US is women and of those they do not quite make up 50% of the total workforce. Within the workforce there is wide variation within career fields. Politics, in particular, has a large discrepancy.

Politics both worldwide and in the US require growth for equal representation of genders. While growth has been made, for women to be represented similar to the population growth will be needed both in world leaders as well as US leaders. Arriaga et



al. (2020) stated that in 2018 more women ran for office than ever before showing that there is growth in political leadership. Gipson et al. (2017) shared that this is an area where women are underrepresented not only in the US but globally as well. Specifically, Tar-Whelan (2009) stated women are 24% of legislators at the state level, and Congress is currently only 17% female. Currently, according to the United States Senate (2023), the U.S. Senate is currently 25 percent women. Congress is currently at an all-time high of women making up its membership with 28 percent of all seats being held (Leppert & DeSilver, 2023). Finally, globally the UN Women (2023) shared throughout the world there just 31 countries are led by women. Similarly, other leadership positions globally are similar with 26.5 percent of those serving in government parliamentarians and lower houses being women (UN Women, 2023). With the background of politics let's look into management and CEO statistics.

While half of management positions are held by women, very few make it to the top and become CEOs (Catalyst, 2022a). While one may think that women are simply not working and that is why they are not CEOs or on boards, they are 47 percent of the workforce thus making them still wildly underrepresented (Branson, 2007). Not only are women not in CEO positions they are not on boards of directors in the numbers that would be expected (Branson, 2007). Only about 2 percent of *Fortune 500* CEOs are women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). We have seen lots of growth since 2007. In 2009 only 2.4% of all CEOs of Fortune 500 companies were women. This is a number that has not changed in about a decade according to Tarr-Whelen (2009). As of 2023, this number has grown significantly to become 10% at the start of the year in the US (Elting, 2023). The number of CEOs on a world level has risen by 11% from 2019 to 2021 (Catalyst, 2022a).

There has been a lot of growth at the CEO level. While growth is great there is still a lot of room to go considering the percentage of women in the workforce.

While the industry percentages vary greatly many leadership areas need to be changed and put in place. Gipson et al. (2017) argued that women are overrepresented in education; however, when looking at the percentage of people who are women they are still underrepresented when it comes to leadership. Especially when considering how many women are teachers. While Gipson et al. may think that the statistics around education will change slightly. These statistics show the need for more women to be in leadership positions. One of the reasons there are fewer women in leadership positions is the barriers faced including care-taking and feeling less qualified.

### ***Barriers***

The barriers that women face when working towards becoming leaders in their respective fields include choosing between caring for their family and their career, gender norms and bias, feeling underqualified, and struggling to find a mentor. All of these combine to create what Eagly and Carli (2007) described as the labyrinth that women face when obtaining leadership positions. While for many years the experience of women and leadership has been offered as the glass ceiling, Eagly and Carli (2007) offered a new way of looking at women in leadership positions and the path they take to get there. They offer the labyrinth because women take a variety of paths and run into walls and have to go back before being able to move forward (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Women in many career paths worry about balancing work and home life responsibilities. It is often why women choose not to take high-level positions. This is an often given reason by women for not wanting to take on a leadership position (Cochran,

2021; Lovie, 2018). Kellerman and Rhode (2007) wrote that women struggle with needing to feel as though they are accomplished both at home and in their professions. Eagly and Carli (2007) and Tarr-Whelan (2009) both wrote that family is the biggest reason that there are changes to career paths with much of the childcare still falling to women in families. To balance their work and home responsibilities 38 percent of women studied by Kellerman and Rhode (2007) chose positions that had fewer responsibilities and less pay than they were qualified for. This means that women were choosing to care for family members instead of pursuing their careers. Finally, Branson (2007) wrote that women take time off to raise their children at the cost of their career and financial earnings until their children reach high school or college level. All of these home and family changes that women face lead to fewer women being able to take on leadership roles. At times women can be the reason they do not go into leadership positions as well because they feel they need more experience before they begin.

According to Cochran (2021) and DeWitt (2023), women feel the need to prove themselves before they can go into a position. This comes out in the types of leadership positions women apply for and the types of tasks they complete. Women do not feel as though they are qualified for a position and therefore do not apply (Cochran, 2021). In contrast, men are more likely to have confidence in their skills whether they possess them or not when compared to women (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). In addition, when women choose their leadership positions they tend to choose not to be in formal leadership and instead choose informal leadership roles (Gipson et al., 2017). DeWitt (2023) summarized these ideas stating women often also feel the need to prove themselves not

only in their leadership positions but also in their other roles. Some of these ideas may be tied to who women view as leaders.

Leadership has been male-dominated for years, meaning that women can struggle to meet the gender norms that have typically been assigned to leadership and that they can be overlooked for positions. According to Yadav and Lata (2018), this has limited women's ability to aspire to leadership roles which limited access. Curry (2000) and Lockhart and Mollick (2013) both shared that leadership in society has often been considered a masculine trait and has often left women at a disadvantage when being considered for leadership positions. Tarr-Whelan (2009) echoed this idea but said that women often face an uphill battle because of the subconscious influence that the brain has on hiring when choosing leaders. Branson (2007) wrote that women need to cope with stereotypes that come their way as they go up the career ladder (Branson, 2007). While these are some of the professional struggles others include the support within organizations such as networks and finding mentors.

Dean (2009) and Branson (2007) both stated that women struggle when receiving support in a professional sense. Dean (2009) shared that women had a different experience than men when it came to receiving mentoring (Dean, 2009). This difference can create a challenge for women when they are attempting to get professional support to grow in their careers. Branson (2007) shared that women in business are often given advice to have a good network and this path unfortunately is often not enough for many women. Meaning that even when they are in a network they do not have the connections needed to get the support they need. DeWitt (2023) stated women need sponsorship.

Mentoring and networking often pair together to help all people move forward in their careers (Branson, 2007; DeWitt, 2023; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

While women face many barriers there are supports that women receive that assist them in becoming leaders. This includes supporting their families, their perception, and needing professional help that they do not receive (Branson, 2007; DeWitt, 2023; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). Conversely, these are often the same things that when people are supported with their family support and are encouraged by those around them can lead to more women in leadership roles (Branson, 2007; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

### ***Supports***

Supports that help women in their leadership include access to family support and encouragement from those around them in their lives both professionally and personally (Branson, 2007; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Seeing women in positions is also helpful to women being in leadership roles in the future as well as being asked to be in positions (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013).

Encouragement is often helpful to being in leadership positions. Kellerman and Rhode (2007) found that when it was suggested to women that they should run for office there is significantly less of a gender gap in those who are interested in running for office. Additionally, while women may not consider running for office as often as men on their own, once they have been asked they are just as likely to be open to running for office in the future (Kellerman & Rhode, 2007). According to Lockhart and Mollick (2013), women became a part of politics as a part of the women's movement where they

supported their husbands in their campaigns. This was a way for women to get more involved in politics and be a part of leadership.

According to both Eagly and Carli (2007) and Branson (2007), women who are in positions need both balance and support from their significant others. Eagly and Carli (2007) found that women who are in leadership positions and are doing well typically have help from their spouses in advancing in their careers. When in any leadership position it is important to have support especially from family. Additionally finding a life balance is critical (Branson, 2007). When women receive support at home it is very helpful to them. Receiving professional support is also impactful.

Women need to build networks, alliances, and mentors as support in their professional journey. Eagly and Carli (2007) and Branson (2007) both found that women who have mentors have better upward mobility. Mentors are not only beneficial in providing advice about work, but they are also helpful in building connections that can be beneficial in the future (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These connections can lead to excellent networking and future alliances. Branson (2007) stated while networking is powerful for women to move up in leadership it is suggested that women should work to build alliances in work. Because getting into networks can be a challenge for women, it is extremely valuable for mentors to support this networking as it helps to create paths for them to move up in leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

According to Branson (2007), it is not only important for women to have networks but also for them to choose the best path to move up as leaders. While the exact path is not stated for individual careers, success can be found most often for women when

they choose the right careers (Branson, 2007). When women get on the right path it can be valuable and help them to create a better path in the future.

The final support for women that can be supported by networks and other women is to help in the growth of their self-efficacy. Dean et al. (2009) shared that working with other women can help to grow this self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is important because it gives women the confidence to go into leadership roles.

Although women have achieved success in leadership roles, there is still a gap (Catalyst, 2022a; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Leppert & DeSilver, 2023; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; UN Women, 2023; United States Senate, 2023; Wyland, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018). They face many challenges when obtaining leadership positions (Branson, 2007; Caldwell, 2022; Catalyst, 2022a; Cochran, 2021; Curry, 2000; Dean et al., 2009; DeWitt, 2023; Dzuback, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gipson et al., 2017; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Kruse, 2012; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; Yadav & Lata, 2018). Despite this, there are many ways for women to get into leadership positions and things that support them (Branson, 2007; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013; Tarr-Whelan, 2009).

Reviewing the current state of leadership has helped specifically to understand where and how women are leaders in other fields. Education as previously stated has a better representation when looking at the statistics but does not compare when thinking about the number of women in education. Understanding education demographics will

help to show how women are represented in education from teachers to principals and beyond.

### **Education Demographics**

Education has been a predominantly female field (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Despite this, the principalship has been traditionally male (Aud et al., 2011; Taie & Goldring, 2019). This is a trend in education and other fields (Catalyst, 2022b). While there have been increases in women in leadership positions there is still room for growth (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). One may simply state that this is because not as many women enter into administrative coursework; however, Kruse and Krumm (2016) found this to be untrue in their study. Women enter into administrative coursework at a higher rate than men (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). Davis, Gooden, and Bowers (2017) echoed this in their study “Administratively certified male teachers are 1.20 times more likely than females to become principals, holding all other variables constant” (p. 229). This demonstrates that even when all things are equal, women are still less likely to pursue a principalship even if they are certified. The current and historical statistics of education show how we have arrived at the current situation of women as leaders in school.

Historically, the principalship has been male-dominated while teaching has been female-dominated. Over the past twenty years, this statistic has changed; however, the principalship still does not match the percentage of women in education. Aud et al. (2011) found that “The percentage of principals who were female increased from 52 to 59 percent at public elementary schools and from 22 to 29 percent at secondary schools” (p. 4). This means that in 2011 there was growth in women entering the principalship. A



similar study was done in 2019. In the most recent study completed by Taie and Goldring in 2019, “There were a higher percentage of public school principals who were female in primary schools (67 percent), than in middle schools, high schools, and combined schools (40 percent, 33 percent, and 43 percent, respectively)” (p. 3). Similar to the first study referenced which was completed in 2011 there has been a growth in the percentage of women who are in the principalship (Aud et al., 2011). There was more growth during this past period than in the previous five years indicating that women are coming into the principalship.

While this growth is great it still does not match the percentage of women who are in education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), currently, 64% of secondary teachers are female and 89% of elementary school teachers are female. In contrast, these statistics at the secondary level mean that 64% of the people who have experience in secondary education are women and they only represent 40% of middle school principals and 33% of high school principals (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021; Taie & Goldring, 2019). Meaning there is significant work to be done to have proportional numbers of women in principal positions to those who are working as teachers within schools.

Restine (1993) found that despite women having a strong presence throughout history of supporting and creating change in education, they are disproportionately underrepresented in school administration. Unfortunately, almost twenty years later Peters (2010) summed the statistics up nicely by stating, “Overwhelmingly, women have had limited access to positions of school leadership, particularly at the middle school, secondary, and district levels” (p. 112). This means women have not been able or have

not chosen to participate in school leadership at the secondary and district level in the same way as men have. While growth has been made within the principalship, the number of secondary female principals lags significantly behind women in elementary schools. This remained true in 2020 according to Bailes and Guthery, who stated while more women are going into the principalship it still does not match the teaching corp in terms of gender. What each of these studies throughout the years tells us is that while there have been gains made in administration there is still work to be done.

While gains have been made at the principal level across the nation the superintendents chair is largely occupied by men. According to Wyland (2016), women have always been well-represented in the classroom, this has never translated into the superintendent's office. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) echoed this by stating that while women still represent the majority of teachers about 22% of superintendents are female. Most of them serve in small or rural districts in the US. Robinson et al. (2017) and Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) also shared that the number of superintendents has statistically lagged behind that of all other areas of education. In fact, according to Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) while there has been an increase it has been by less than a percentage point each year meaning that it would take around another 77 years for women to be properly represented in the superintendent role. This means that if something does not change at some level it will be over three-quarters of a century before women are accurately represented at the highest level of leadership in education.

One may believe women lack access to coursework in administration; however, this is not accurate. Kruse and Krumm (2016) found that there are twice as many women in administrative programs as there are men. Meaning that women are taking

administrative courses and then not becoming administrators. While they may be taking the courses and then in theory certified or close to certification to become administrators, they are not. Controlling for all other factors Fuller et al. (2016) found that women were “50% less likely in their odds to become a school leader, 43% less likely to become an assistant principal, and about 43% less likely in their odds to become a principal” (p. 661). Meaning that even when women are licensed and have the same opportunities they are still not obtaining the principalship or assistant principalship at the same rate as men. Fuller et al. (2016) found that even time did not help and that even 10 years from certification fewer women are in principal positions. Echoing this idea Davis et al. (2017) when keeping everything the same men are 1.2 times as likely to become principals as women teachers. Even if women follow the same path as men when going into a program they are still less likely to become a principal.

The national statistics and the Minnesota statistics are relatively similar with a few differences. The next section will explore statistics specifically in Minnesota including those who have their licenses based on recent studies and those who are in administrative positions.

### **Minnesota Statistics**

The demographics of educators in Minnesota match very well with the rest of the nation (Kemper et al., 2023). Many women work as teachers while the numbers go down when reaching the principalship and are lowest for women working as superintendents. Similar to other states there is no research around who has a license and why they have obtained their license. While Minnesota does keep track of who is licensed as a principal and who is working as a principal this does not give a full picture of women who have

their licenses and are not working as principals. Because my study explores specifically women who are licensed as administrators in Minnesota it is important to understand the current statistics surrounding principals in Minnesota.

Similar to other states a vast majority of educators in Minnesota are women. In fact, according to the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) (2022), 78% of all Minnesota educators are women. Typically the first step to becoming a principal is to be a teacher. There are certainly enough women with teaching licenses to have more of a balance with administrators.

Despite there being such a large number of women working as teachers in Minnesota they lag behind national statistics in women working as principals. While nationally 54% of principals are female (Taie & Goldring, 2019) in Minnesota only 47% of principals are women (Kemper et al., 2023). This means that Minnesota has a greater discrepancy than the national statistics.

According to Kemper et. al. (2023), there are similarities to the national statistics where female principals are more likely to work in elementary schools than males. While males are more likely than women to work in secondary schools. The number of women who are members of the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association matches this as well. With 56% of their members identifying as female (B. A. Waldie, personal communication, June 6, 2023) there are slightly fewer at the elementary level than nationally where 67% of principals are female (Taie & Goldring, 2019).

While at the secondary level has typically had a smaller percentage of female administrators nationally with about 40% serving at the middle level and 33% serving at the high school level (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Minnesota combines middle and high

school with the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) stating that approximately 40% of their members identify as female (P. Anderson, personal communication, June 14, 2023). Meaning that Minnesota matches the middle school level and beats the high school percentage with its current members. There may be discrepancies in what statistics are collected because MASSP also has members who are assistant principals while the national statistics looks at only head principals. Despite this, there are still more women represented at the secondary level than nationally in Minnesota.

The geography of Minnesota plays a part in whether women are in administrative positions as well. Another area that changes who the principals are in Minnesota is what part of the state they are from. Kemper et al. (2023) found that women are more likely to work in the metro area than in Greater Minnesota (schools that are found outside of the twin cities and their suburbs) schools. Fifty-nine percent of the principals in the metro area are female while in Greater Minnesota just 41% of the administrators are women (Kemper et al, 2023). Meaning that in Minnesota geography is important to understanding the differences in Minnesota and who is a principal and who is not.

According to a survey conducted by IEL (2000), despite there being credentialed principal candidates available in Minnesota, many superintendents, 86% to be exact, still find it difficult to fill the positions. Additionally, the IEL (2000) survey found that there are “three additional licensed administrators who do not hold school leadership positions” to each one who is leading a school (p. 5). Meaning there are plenty of licensed administrators, especially in Minnesota, who are not working as administrators. I believe

that many of these licensed administrators are women and similar to what Kruse and Krumm (2016) found there are enough licensed women to be in any open positions.

With a clear picture of what the demographics of education look like and who is currently in education, the next section explores how one becomes a principal. The next section looks at how principals transition from the classroom into the principalship and areas where there are gaps in the transition between men and women.

### **The Principal Pipeline**

An argument can be made that changes to the principal pipeline would increase the number of women in administrative positions. Several initiatives have been tried and have been but there is still more work to be done. In education, there is a need to look to the many female teachers as a beneficial way to fill administrative positions (Davis, Gooden, & Bower, 2017; Fuller, Hollingworth & An, 2016; Lovie, 2018). Women obtain their licenses at a higher rate than men and are qualified to be administrators (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Kruse & Krumm, 2016). When women do obtain their principal licenses their pathways to leadership look very different than those of men (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). Men's career advancement is accelerated by five or six years compared to women's (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). This means women will stay in lower-level positions or positions where they are not administrators longer than men. Once they obtain their license they do not immediately go into administrative positions. Understanding the paths of administrators and some of the differences in the paths of men and women in the principalship is important to know where changes may need to be made. Exploring these pathways will give a greater understanding of how one becomes a principal.

This is important to understand because we know that the principal is an important key to the success of schools. According to Muhammad and Cruz (2019), because the principalship is so important, leaders must be carefully selected and retained. Effective school leaders are more than just good teachers. Without figuring out where women are going in the pipeline it will be difficult to understand where the leadership potential is going. Adams and Hambright (2004) stated even though women are the majority in leadership, they do not go into administration at the same rate meaning that there are many women qualified or talented enough who are not in positions. Something the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) (2000) echoed in their research. Both of these studies share the problem that in education we are missing out on some of the best leaders.

As a part of understanding where women are going it is important to understand the pathways that different people take after receiving their principal licenses. Gordon (2020) argued that there are multiple phases of the principal pipeline for the sake of this paper I will focus on teaching, entering a program, and after a program. Walker and Walker (2006) shared that the principal pipeline integrates “three core concepts- individual career trajectories, personal socialization processes, and professional identities” (p. 414). This combination helps us to understand that each one of these plays a part in why principals choose to move into the principalship after they complete their programs. When looking at these ideas it shows how people obtain their positions. There is a need to see each of these areas for individuals.

As previously stated women are the majority in education with approximately three-quarters of educators being female (National Education Statistics, 2021). According

to several studies (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Kruse & Krumm, 2016), women enter education programs more than men do. Finally, after they have completed their programs they go into a variety of positions; however, it is unclear what these positions exactly are because of tracking from programs to placement as a principal (Fuller et al., 2016).

As previously mentioned according to National Education Statistics (2019), women are the majority in teaching. Even with the majority in teaching according to IEL (2000), there is a shortage of teachers willing to take on the role due to a lack of interest based on the pressures that come with the principalship. This is just one factor; other factors will be explained in the barriers. While there is a lot of pressure in the principal position, Gordon (2020) argued there is a need to get teachers experience as leaders that will help support and understand the role of the principal. These leadership positions are helpful to teachers growing into leaders. Particularly for women this can be beneficial as it can grow needed confidence in themselves. Gordon (2020) also shared that as a part of this part of the pipeline, informal positions can also be important. As teachers are considered the principal position it is important for them to feel encouragement (Myung et al., 2011). This encouragement helps them to go into programs and positions.

While women are in graduate leadership programs they do not choose to go into the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004). Arriaga et al. (2020) argued that men and women take different paths when working towards the principalship leading to women in alternative positions to the principalship. Fuller et al. (2016) found women are getting their principal licensure for other reasons such as being a supervisor or a position that requires advanced certifications. Meaning that women are getting their licenses to be supervisors with no intention of leading a school. Bailes and Guthery (2020) shared that



the problem is women do not get hired at the same rate as men. Davis et. al (2017) found that even when adjusting for possible differences the pathway to the principalship still disfavors women. Their study pointed out that there are more challenges for women when moving into the principalship showing a need to understand what happens or the rate at which men and women move into administration.

A traditional step in moving from teacher to principal is obtaining a job as a principal or an assistant principal. This is another area where there is a discrepancy in how women and men get to these positions. According to Bailes and Guthery (2020), while women do want to go into the principal position they are not promoted at the same rate as their male colleagues. When they are not promoted at the same rate, they are also not promoted in the same timeframe. In addition to having more experience when they are in the assistant principal position, women come to the assistant principal position with at least one more year of experience than men when they go into the position (Bailes & Guthery, 2020). Not only does this occur when going into the assistant principal role, but it happens when moving from assistant principal to principal as well. When looking at the promotion of women from the assistant principalship, Bailes and Guthery (2020) found that a majority of these women were “promoted to principalships in lower schools (elementary and middle)” (p. 13). Women spend more time in the earlier part of the pipeline leaving less time to move into upper positions in school districts. In some cases, this is a choice on women's part while in other cases it is due to a lack of promotion (Cochran, 2021; Bailes & Guthery, 2020).

A way to help these transitions and support schools is to create connections between universities and school districts. Gates et al. (2019) wrote that creating a pipeline

for administrators to come to the principalship districts was able to retain principals. This pipeline and creation helped to keep leaders in positions. Exstrom (2018) argued that this not only could be for universities but for states as well. Exstrom (2018) stated policies have the potential to create a program to fill the principal pipeline including “creating statewide leadership academies based on best practices, mentoring beginners, creating data systems that allow districts and states to identify where leaders are most needed and offering more pay for serving in struggling schools or areas of shortages” (para. 4) With both of these, there would be formal systems to create more leaders in systems and a wider variety of leaders to choose from.

Even without creating these connections between schools and universities, understanding the pipeline will help to understand how one moves from teaching to the principalship. The pathways to the principalship helped us to understand where there are gaps in the principal pipeline and where women might not go into the pipeline. With the valuable understanding of the principal pipeline it is important to understand the specific barriers women face when attempting to move into the principalship.

### **Barriers to Women in Principalship**

Women in administration face barriers to going into the principalship including a lack of professional support, needing to support their family, and lacking self-confidence in their ability to go into a position. Some women choose not to enter or delay their careers as administrators due to the needs of their families (Cochran, 2021; Caldwell, 2022; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016). Women at times lack confidence in their abilities and spend more time in the classroom before becoming principals (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Bronars, 2015;

Kemper, Zhao, & Pekel, 2023; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Rousmaniere, 2007; Yadav & Lata, 2018). Additionally, when women are entering the principalship can struggle to find the needed professional supports such as a mentor or network which leads to a lack of access to positions within education (Blount, 1998; Cochran, 2021; Ehrich, 1994; Lovie, 2018; Kemper, Zhao, & Pekel, 2023; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Peters, 2010; Sperandio, 2015; Yadav & Lata, 2018). This section explores some of the barriers women face as they consider becoming a principal. The first section will explore the lack of professional support that women can face.

### ***Lack of Professional Support***

Because men have dominated the principalship for decades, there is often an unconscious lack of support for women in the principal role (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011; Restine, 1993). Women struggle to find other women to mentor them (Arriaga et al., 2020; Kruse, 2012; Peters, 2010; Restine, 1993) and can be thought of later than men in the practice of hiring principals. When entering networks as women this can pose a challenge because there is not the welcome that is often taken on by the mentor (Blount, 1998; Bronars, 2015; Peters, 2010; Restine, 1993).

Women have been under-represented in the principalship because of gender roles, stereotypes, and discrimination (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011; Restine, 1993). This can come in the form of hiring practices or the types of tasks women are given during their internships (Restine, 1993). Ehrich (1994) found that women were not given as difficult or as useful tasks when working through their internships. When given

lower-level tasks it can cause access issues for women in the future. Not only in answering interview questions but also in the ability to have the right material on her resume. This is problematic because this can limit the ability to answer interview questions as well as cause issues when women do obtain a job. Bronars (2015) discussed hiring stating that women believe that they can obtain leadership roles in education; however, the positions open to them look different than those available to men.

Arriaga et al. (2020) found that women face a variety of barriers from school including finding mentors, being encouraged into positions or even knowing that there are barriers in the system that they are trying to gain access to. Accessing the position can be another limiting factor to the principalship. Because the position has traditionally been male-centered, women are not always the first person thought of for projects or positions (Yadav & Lata, 2018).

Bronars (2015) completed a study with participants in a variety of educational positions and no matter the position they were in, Bronars found that many barriers hurt women from getting into positions including, “gender bias and institutional practices which included networking, traditionalism, and coaching” (p. 91). Meaning these women all felt that they were not getting the same opportunities to even begin to apply for positions. Networking could mean that they are unaware of the positions that are available to them. The set of the system and those in it prevent women from accessing administrative positions (Arriaga et al., 2020).

Caldwell (2022), Ehrich (1994), and Sperandio (2015) shared that because the principalship has traditionally been male, men think of other men when looking for new

administrators. Whether intentionally or not, in the past men have tended to think of other men according to Peters (2010),

[I]n educational administration, as with many other male-dominated fields, mentoring relationships have been a part of the ‘old boy network.’ Essentially, seasoned professionals (typically White males) have sought to assist protégés who are ‘younger versions of themselves’. (p. 112)

This bias can be a limiting factor for women because they can lack the chance of being mentored. Without a mentor entering administration is difficult. This is important solely for principals to be aware of and think about who and how they include and bring particularly women into the principalship (Bronars, 2015). This may be a critical component in including women within the principalship. Curry (2000) stated educational leadership has been constructed in a way that influences who is considered a leader and who is not. This in turn affects who applies and goes into educational leadership. Sherman and Beaty (2010) also found that unfortunately women’s style of leadership may not be valued as much. Those who are already in leadership positions have a responsibility to encourage and support those who are not and think about both gender and race (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Myung et. al., 2011).

Women may struggle to find a mentor (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Restine, 1993). As Peters (2010) indicated, often men will reach out to those whom they are familiar with and those who are similar to them. This can make finding a mentor difficult for women. Ehrich (1994) also indicated that men being mentors for women would be critical for more women coming into the principalship. While it is not necessary to have a mentor of the same gender, it can be helpful because experiences may be more similar (Oplatka &

Lapidot, 2018). Because there are fewer female mentors available to women, men may need to serve as mentors for women.

Lacking a mentor can be a barrier for women for several reasons such as access to experiences, and lack of access to a network (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Restine, 1993). This can cause issues when attempting to get hired. Having a mentor allows access to a network and possibly having doors opened within a district and to different job opportunities (Arriaga et al., 2020; Blount, 1998; Bronars, 2015; Peters, 2010; Restine, 1993). Mentors also serve the critical role of advising on resumes, cover letters, and interview questions (Arriaga et al., 2020).

In their research on mentorship, Ehrich (1994) found that informal mentorship can be another place where women struggle to get access such as in socialization groups where topics can take place in an informal environment. Ehrich found that women are not invited to informal gatherings making it difficult to secure informal mentors or receive informal mentorship that can be so useful in many different cases. Restine (1993) found this informal mentorship to be a place where women are underrepresented or not invited. Again formal mentors give critical advice and access to other principals (Arriaga et al., 2020; Blount, 1998; Bronars, 2015; Peters, 2010; Restine, 1993). This for some can make the difference between getting an interview and not.

Professionally a network and mentors are important for women hoping to obtain administrative positions (Arriaga et al., 2020; Blount, 1998; Bronars, 2015; Peters, 2010; Restine, 1993). Without them, it is a challenge for women to obtain the principalship. Additionally, supporting one's family creates a challenge for women hoping to obtain the

principalship (Bronars, 2015; Caldwell, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016).

### ***Supporting Family***

When women are considering the principalship their family either serves as a support or a barrier and in many cases both. Women often consider supporting their family and the needs of their family when considering the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Bronars, 2015; Caldwell, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016).

The number of hours worked can be a barrier for women going into the principalship according to Cochran (2021), Kruse and Krumm (2016), and Lovie (2018). In all of their studies, they found that women tend to have a multitude of responsibilities outside of their job making them less likely to want to work the 60-hour workweeks that are often required within the principalship (Cochran, 2021; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018). These 60-hour workweeks often mean that women are not done with their jobs when the weekend comes. This can be particularly challenging for women who have families (Cochran, 2021).

Because of the requirements both at home and at work, this can cause women to pursue other career choices. Cochran (2021) and Kruse and Krumm (2016) also found becoming a mother is something that causes women to pause in their pursuit of the principalship. This is not unique to the principalship. Women in many career paths worry about balancing work and home life responsibilities. It is often why they choose not to take high-level positions (Cochran, 2021).

Duncan (2013) stated, “Moreover, to accommodate family needs, women tend to spend more years than men as teachers before moving into administrative positions” (p. 298). This means women tend to stay in the classroom instead of moving into the principalship because of their families. Cochran (2021) and Kruse and Krumm (2016) both echoed this sentiment in their studies. Women find they can accommodate their family needs better from the classroom causing them to spend more time in the classroom and less time as an administrator. Bronars (2015) and Lovie (2018) found this to be true in their studies as well with women wanting to stay in the classroom because it is more conducive to raising a family. Teaching is considered to be compatible with family life while many women in Bronars’ (2015) study felt that the principalship was not and did not lead to a good work-life balance.

When this happens, women go into the principalship later and then end up spending less time in the position (Lovie, 2018). While there is nothing wrong with spending more time in the principalship or in other positions, it limits the time women can spend within the principalship leading to fewer years and less experience for women.

Some women choose to delay the principalship because of family constraints. Others choose to use the classroom to gain more time in the classroom to get additional experience (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Bronars, 2015; Caldwell, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016). Either way, this means they serve for fewer years than their male counterparts (Bronars, 2015). While it may give them extra experience it also means that they spend fewer years as administrators, limiting their time or ability to go into higher positions (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Wyland, 2016). A final factor, with the same result of delayed



time as a principal, that prevents women from going into the principalship is their self-confidence and their training (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Fuller et. al., 2016; IEL, 2000; Kruse & Krum, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Sperandio, 2015).

### ***Lack of Self-Confidence and Training***

Women can often be their own worst enemy when it comes to obtaining the principalship because of their lack of confidence in their skills and a lack of training when it comes to principalship (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Fuller et. al., 2016; IEL, 2000; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Peters, 2010; Sperandio, 2015). Women feel as though they need to be in other positions before being head principals (Bronars, 2015; Fuller et al., 2016; Kruse & Krumm, 2016). This leads to fewer opportunities and years as a head administrator.

According to Kruse and Krumm (2016) and Bailes and Guthery (2020), women tend to spend more time in the classroom before going into the principalship. While spending more time in the classroom does not allow for women to be principals as long, Yadav and Lata (2018) stated that this experience gives women the time and opportunity to build confidence in themselves. Fuller et al. (2016) also found that women are less likely than men to apply for positions at the same timeframe as men. Women do not believe that they keep themselves from being promoted to principalships; however, Fuller et al. (2016) would disagree with Bronars' (2015) findings. This means that while women do not think they keep themselves out of these positions, the reality is that at times they do simply by not applying for positions or thinking they are not ready for them.

In a recent survey of Minnesota principals, Kemper, Zhao, and Pekel (2023) found that women spent an average of 12.5 years in the classroom before becoming a principal compared to men who had spent an average of 10 years. This shows that principals in Minnesota, similar to other studies (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018) spend more time in the classroom before going into administration. With the extra time spent in the classroom, it leaves less time for women to be administrators and climb the educational ladder.

In some cases, women themselves can be a barrier to getting a position as a principal. They may feel they are underprepared or not ready for the position. As indicated earlier they may spend more time in the classroom or more time in other positions before becoming a principal (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018). While this is not necessarily a bad thing it does mean women, once they reach the principal position, may have less time to serve in the role. On the other hand, it may be good because they have the experience to jump right into the role and are ready to begin the position with more confidence. The literature does not clearly indicate whether or not this is the case.

Women lacking confidence in their abilities is not unique to applying to the principalship. Several studies indicate that women feel they need to have more experience before going into the principalship (Bronars, 2015; Sperandio, 2015). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) added that women do not plan in their careers to go into the principalship making it more challenging for them to obtain these positions and the experiences needed.

In addition, Cochran (2021) found that women may not feel qualified for a position. When women do not feel as though they are qualified for a position they will not apply. Fuller et al. (2016) found it may not be women not feeling qualified but men applying sooner when they finish their programs; however, this leaves the question of why women do not apply as quickly as men. It may be a lack of confidence. This lack of confidence can lead to women not pursuing the principalship. If they do not apply they cannot get a job for which they are qualified. They miss out on an opportunity simply because they feel as though they are not qualified.

Krumm and Kruse (2016) found in their study of principals that the women they interviewed felt that they needed more experience before moving into the principalship, “They all expressed doubt about their job skills when they first moved into administration; however, compared to males in similar studies, they were more prepared in terms of years of classroom experience, advanced degrees, and lower-level administrative work” (p. 35). Despite having high levels of classroom experience, prior work as administrators, and many years of experience, the women expressed doubt that they were prepared when moving into these positions. This lack of confidence creates another barrier for women even if it is their own created barrier.

While this section has shared the barriers that women face when attempting to move into the principalship including self-confidence (Arriaga et. al, 2020; Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Fuller et. al., 2016; IEL, 2000; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Peters, 2010; Sperandio, 2015), family needs (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Bronars, 2015; Caldwell, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016), and a lack of access to

professional networks and mentors (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011; Restine, 1993). The next section explores the support and positives for women when moving into the principalship.

### **Positive Supports Increasing Women in the Principalship**

While there are many barriers to women reaching the principalship there are many ways to increase the number of women who enter the principalship. Some effective ways to increase the number of women in principal positions include mentoring, networking, training, and encouragement from mentors, family, and friends (Adams & Hambricht, 2004; Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service, Dalgic, & Thornton 2018; Simons, 2020). Mentors provide support as women are pursuing a principal license and when they are beginning their careers. Cochran (2021), Duncan (2013), and Ehrich (1994) all discussed the important roles mentors play in ensuring that new principals receive the support they need from figuring out how to balance family needs to the nuances of the job and other psychological needs new principals have. Additionally, mentors can provide access to networks which is crucial in obtaining jobs (Arriaga et al., 2020; Ehrich, 1994 & Sperandio 2015). Kruse and Krumm (2016) found that training and working in lower-level positions supported women pursuing administrative positions. Encouragement from mentors, family, and friends is the final important way that positively influences women to pursue the principalship (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Simons, 2020). Each is valuable and works together to create the right set of factors to encourage women to obtain the principalship. This section explores the professional

support women receive, the encouragement women receive, and how self-confidence helps women move into the principalship.

### ***Professional Supports***

Professional support is imperative for women moving into the principalship (Arriaga et al., 2020; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994). While there are many ways that women can be supported professionally, the two that are most important professionally are the opportunity to work with a mentor (Arriaga et al., 2020; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994) and access to a network (Ehrich, 1994 & Sperandio 2015).

One of the strongest factors for any principal to be successful is the opportunity to work with a mentor (Arriaga et al., 2020; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994). It is extremely valuable for women to have a mentor. Mentors provide confidence boosts as well as access to networks and a thought partner to make the loneliness of being a first-time principal more bearable (Duncan, 2013). Just any mentor will not do though. The mentor-mentee relationship does best when there are commonalities between the two (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). This creates a better relationship for both the mentor and mentee; however, Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) also shared that any mentor is useful for new principals.

The effects of having a mentor are powerful for all and cannot be denied. In particular, Duncan (2013) explained that because of the complexities of leadership, no program can ensure that principals are fully ready for the job. This creates a need for support in new leadership positions. As Oplatka and Lapidot (2018) shared, mentors need to provide not only assistance with the day-to-day but also psychological support. This is

why while those with similar personalities are better, every mentoring relationship can be great for solving work and personal challenges or processing difficult moments (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Mentoring in all forms is a way to increase the leadership abilities of the mentee. Because of the nature of the job, there is always more that needs to be done, understood, and learned while on the job (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018). This is something the mentor can help with.

Another problem mentorship can support is the isolation that is often felt by new principals (Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Service, Dalgic & Thornton, 2018). In their new positions, often at the top by themselves, it can be lonely and feel as though there is no place to get new ideas. Service, Dalgic, and Thornton (2018) shared that mentoring along with shadowing can be a great way to keep this at bay. New ideas are important and having support such as a mentor is critical to ensuring new principals function within their jobs. In their study of new principals Oplatka and Lapidot (2018) concluded that their interviewees had mentors they had no mention in their interviews of feelings of loneliness or isolation which is extremely common in the early career stage. Once again it shows that a mentor provides beyond just job support.

Ehrich (1994) found that “a balance between career and psychosocial functions is an important consideration in any mentorship scheme” (p. 17). This means that while extremely important to ensure mentees can do their jobs; however, mentors also provide mental support that may include creating environments where mentees feel supported and have an opportunity to discuss the difficulties they may be facing concerning balancing all of the parts of their position. Duncan (2013) echoed this idea sharing that mentors often help with the social and emotional needs of their mentees. This creates an

environment where mentees can gather more than just the functionality of how to do the job of a principal such as balancing life with their work. For women, this could be important to balance the needs of their families such as those mentioned by Cochran (2021). While these studies happened when principals were new these same ideas apply as women are coming into the role as Lovie (2018) and Blount (1998) found in their studies.

The psychological feelings may be the reason why who the mentor is matters so much to the mentee. Oplatka and Lapidot (2018) found that who the mentor is matters. Being a good pairing for mentorship is important because it helps with beliefs about school as well as work. Peters (2010) claimed that “In other words, traditional understandings of mentoring relationships would support the growth of the protégé professionally, as opposed to both personally and professionally” (p. 126). Meaning that the mentorship needs to take on both the mentee's personal and professional life. It should seek to enhance both of these parts of the mentee's life. When mentorship is a good match not only they enhance the relationship but also the professional development of the mentee. Because of the new job responsibilities and extra time at work a good mentor matching will ensure that the mentor can support the mentee in their unique needs.

Mentorship may also be more successful when the mentor and mentee share other important similarities (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2017). The best mentor/mentee relationships are those where people have several similarities from thoughts about education to life experiences. This makes conversations between the two partners much easier. It also makes the partnership more effective. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) found that this was the number one request from those in their program. They also found that

mentoring needs to begin as early as possible in the school year. Preferably the mentorship would start before the year begins as there are many items that principals must deal with before the year starts. Arriaga et al. (2020) agreed stating when women can find female mentors they provide women with meaningful connections and help them to be more confident and competent in their future. Arriaga et al. (2020) also recognized that while women as mentors can be beneficial because of the number of men currently in leadership positions to meet the needs of mentees, men will need to serve as mentors for women.

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) claimed that as we learn more about what women need in their mentorship experiences better mentors can be created. This will create more productive mentoring experiences for female leaders. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) additionally found that similar values, gender, and the same ethnicity are three factors literature suggests help to ensure that mentoring relationships are more successful.

Sperandio (2015) stated, “The endorsement of mentors not only enhanced the motivation to pursue and achieve a career goal for these women but gave entry into existing networks and hiring boards” (p. 420). While one may think mentors only serve to help with jobs, mentors serve multiple purposes for women such as networking and access to hiring boards. This networking is another critical way to ensure and encourage women to pursue principalship. Arriaga et al. (2020) agreed that mentors support women in finding networks.

Finding a network to be a part of is yet another way for women to become and work as administrators. This is something mentors can assist with, as Ehrich (1994) stated, “Mentors will need to assist women mentees by helping them broaden their access



to power through mentorship experiences and networking” (p. 19). Because women have not been as prevalent in administration mentors must help their mentees secure networks. Networks can be a critical component of finding and supporting a new principal (Caldwell, 2022; Domenech, 2012).

Sperandio (2015) found that “Networking provided a venue to make professional contacts and extend one’s reputation in circles outside the school district” (p. 420). This is critical when attempting to find jobs or reach out to other principals. In addition, a network can give new ideas or people to reach out to. This can also assist in stemming the aloneness that can be felt by principals when they first begin. Creating a network gives access to and extends a professional network giving future professional opportunities to administrators. This can be vitally important when attempting to move upward as a professional (Arriaga et al., 2020; Caldwell, 2022; Domenech, 2012).

### ***Encouragement***

Several studies found that women were more likely to pursue the principalship with encouragement from either family, friends, or a mentor (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011, Simons, 2020). In some cases, women were supported by all three. Simons (2020) studied a principal who had multiple teachers go on to become principals and found that several “recalled that [the principal] encouraged them to think about becoming principals” (p. 6). This simple act was enough for them to consider the principalship and go forward with it. Having an administrator who knows the woman can be very encouraging to her upward movement into the principalship.

Kruse and Krumm (2016) found that “Study participants were supported by their family and friends; all had mothers who worked in education and encouraged their daughters to advance into administration” (p. 36). Support was a major factor for all the women in this study taking on the principalship including support from mothers who worked in education and were encouraging. This encouragement from those who were close to them supported their decision to go into the principalship. Arriaga et al. (2020) echoed this idea stating many leaders had had a "tap on the shoulder" from those around them such as principals, human resources directors, and professors (p. 65). No matter who is asking women it seems as though being asked to go into the principalship is an important factor for women to consider the position. Myung et al. (2011) found that most current principals were encouraged by at least three different people to become principals.

According to studies done by Myung et al. (2011) and Simons (2020), the current principal is a critical person to encourage women to become principals. Being encouraged and motivated by one's principal is an effective way to encourage teachers to pursue the principalship or even consider it (Myung et al., 2011). In addition to being encouraged by principals, principals can take the next step as Simons (2020) did and not only encourage but help teachers go into leadership roles within the building to encourage them to take leadership roles and practice these roles.

Finally, encouragement from family is vitally important. Arriaga et al. (2020) shared that partners are critical to ensuring a woman's career flourishes. Similarly, Bronars (2015) found that encouragement was critical to women obtaining the principalship at all levels. Those already in principal positions were more likely to have a

family member encourage them to become a principal. Additionally, these women were also more likely to have been mentored. She found that over 70% of her participants were encouraged by family members (Bronars, 2015). Showing that these are critical to women gaining their positions. Kruse (2012) found similarly that all the women she studied had been encouraged to go into a principal position by someone in their family such as a parent or partner.

When women are encouraged by family, their principal, and others in their organization they are much more likely to pursue the principalship (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011, Simons, 2020). A final piece of the puzzle for women is to receive training and feel confident in themselves and their purpose as they pursue and obtain the principalship.

### ***Self-Confidence and Training***

Training and working in lower-level positions may be another helpful way for women to gain access to the principalship. When women are confident in themselves and their abilities they believe they are capable of leadership. Through training, women can build this confidence as well as through experiences.

Kruse and Krumm (2016) stated that for some women, “Accepting lower-level administrative positions may be an essential starting point” (p. 37). Starting as an assistant principal was a starting point and in other administrative positions was helpful. This may help build confidence and give them the built-in mentor that can be so important to ensure women feel confident and ready to move into a principal role. Women can also learn from others and receive training to help build their confidence in their abilities.

Another way to create learning opportunities for women was suggested by Adams and Hambright (2004) when they said that creating partnerships between schools and universities may help with tuition costs which could encourage more to pursue the principalship. While tuition may be a barrier if women can go through these leadership programs they can gain experience and confidence. Something that Lovie (2018) agreed with.

To create an environment for increasing the number of female teachers choosing to go into the principalship Lovie (2018) suggested, “increased and improved training, establishing mentorships, and building awareness of the available work structures” (p. 141). Much of this matches with the other research and concepts that can be barriers for women choosing the principalship. Creating an environment where women want to obtain the principalship would mean ensuring that principals have training, mentors, and flexibility in their work. Simons (2020) agreed stating four pillars of practice support adult learning schools including mentoring and coaching teachers to develop leadership skills, establishing teams, and providing opportunities for leaders and inquiry.

Arriaga et al. (2020) stated that women in educational leadership benefit when they are thinking forward and getting into positions that prepare them for the job they want. In addition, Curry (2000) found that female leaders often attribute their readiness for leadership to experiences throughout their lives. Kruse and Krumm (2016) similarly found women feel prepared and ready to begin their roles as secondary principals through the work they do and the experiences they have had leading up to their position.

Finally, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) shared that women become administrators because they can do great things for others. Often they see it as a way to serve others.

Arriaga et al. (2020) agreed saying that knowing why you want to be in educational leadership is important. While these two ideas may not seem directly related to confidence I believe that knowing the why will help on the hard days and create confidence that this is the right position or that one is moving into the correct position by pursuing the principalship.

Encouragement, training, mentors, networking, and building confidence are critical for women to obtain and move into the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service, Dalgic, & Thornton 2018; Simons, 2020). Women need several if not all of these things in place to move into the principalship. The next section will conclude this literature review.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the literature around women in the principalship including barriers and positives for getting into the principalship, as well as a history of the principalship and the process principals go through to get to the principalship. Finally, this chapter included a review of women and leaders as well as the statistics of women in leadership positions and the principalship.

The statistics both nationally and in Minnesota showed us that women have long dominated the field of education but have not been in the principalship at the same rate as they are in teaching positions (Kemper et al., 2023; Taie & Goldring, 2019). The history of the principalship shows how we have made growth through the years but how the

historical aspects have created the current state of the principalship (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Lagemann, 2000).

When reviewing the principal pipeline it became clear that there were areas that women leave the pipeline (Davis, Gooden, & Bower, 2017; Fuller, Hollingworth & An, 2016; Lovie, 2018). While women are the majority in the principal programs, it is clear this does not translate into more women in the principalship when they have completed programs (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). It is still unclear why this happens but it does not only happen when women are in education.

Through reviewing women in other fields we saw that the statistics in other fields are also lacking women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2022b; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Leppert & DeSilver, 2023; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; United States Senate, 2023; UN Women, 2023; Wyland, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018). There are of course things that lead to more women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2022b; Dean et al., 2009; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Elting, 2023; Gipson et al., 2017; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Leppert & DeSilver, 2023; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; UN Women, 2023; United States Senate, 2023; Wyland, 2016; Yadav & Lata, 2018) and several barriers that mirror those in education (Branson, 2007; Caldwell, 2022; Catalyst, 2022a; Cochran, 2021; Curry, 2000; Dean et al., 2009; DeWitt, 2023; Dzuback, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Gipson et al., 2017; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007; Kruse, 2012; Lockhart & Mollick, 2013; Lovie, 2018; Tarr-Whelan, 2009; Yadav & Lata, 2018). In particular, women in other fields struggle with family balance and often choose not to go into

leadership positions because they are caring for family members. Something that is also evident in educational leadership.

While there is still much work to be done in helping women obtain a principalship there are many things that can be done to help women achieve the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cochran, 2021; Domenech, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994; Kruse, 2012; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Oplatka & Lapidot, 2018; Peters, 2010; Service et al., 2018; Simons, 2020). While a lack of a mentor and network can get in the way, having a mentor and a network can be one strong step in the right direction to beginning a principalship (Arriaga et al., 2020; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Ehrich, 1994). In addition, women can be a barrier due to a lack of confidence in their abilities (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Fuller et. al., 2016; IEL, 2000; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Kruse, 2012; Lovie, 2018; Peters, 2010; Sperandio, 2015), and encouragement from family, friends, and a mentor can be extremely important. Finally, the workload may be a barrier for women due to their home life as well as the amount of work needed to be done (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Bronars, 2015; Caldwell, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Duncan, 2013; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lovie, 2018; Sherman & Beaty, 2010; Wyland, 2016). Barriers such as few mentors, no network, and lack of knowledge can be corrected to ensure these are not barriers to women entering into the principalship (Arriaga et al., 2020; Bronars, 2015; Cochran, 2021; Lovie, 2018; Myung et al., 2011; Restine, 1993).

This review of the literature helps to understand the importance of the study which will be in the next chapter. The next chapter explores the methodology for my

research including my research questions, the research framework, methods, design, analysis, and rationale for each.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

Women have been in education for centuries. While women have been the majority in teaching for over 200 years, the same cannot be said for the principalship (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Lagemann, 2000). Despite this domination of the teaching profession, the majority of women do not go into the principalship (Kemper et al., 2023; Taie & Goldring, 2019). While one may believe that women are not qualified to be principals this is simply not true. Women obtain their principal licenses at double the rate of men (Kruse & Krumm, 2016).

Specifically in Minnesota, women are over 70% of the teaching staff and less than 50% of the principals in the state (Kemper et al., 2023). There are differences in the principal statistics for women living in different parts of the state. There is a higher percentage of women in the principalship who live in the metro area than those who live in Greater Minnesota (Kemper et al., 2023). Because there is a gap between women who have their licenses as principals and those who are working as principals, I am interested in finding out what these women are doing as well as why they chose to obtain a principal license.

Understanding women and their reasons for getting principal licenses is important because the principal is critical to the school environment (DeWitt, 2017). Additionally, we need to ensure that students have access to the best possible leaders. Without women in administrative positions, we are missing out on many possible leaders because of how many women are teachers (Kemper et. al., 2023; Taie & Goldring, 2019). Finally,

without a focus on getting women into administration, we face the possibility of not having enough qualified candidates to choose from.

Through this chapter, I explain how I completed this research by laying out my research questions, research framework, methods, design, analysis, and the rationale behind each choice. To begin, I identify and explain my research questions.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions I am exploring are the following:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

As previously stated, women acquire their principal licenses more than men but this does not translate to women in administrative roles. This led to my curiosity about what women are doing with their licenses and why they want to obtain these licenses. Through my first question, I hope to learn the why of women getting their licenses and in my second question I hope to learn what has led to their why. Finally, I hope that the two of these together will shed light on their third question and help me to understand the differences in women and the rest of education. To understand and make sense of the data I gathered to answer the questions above I will be sharing my conceptual framework next.

## Research Framework and Rationale

My conceptual framework is based upon the barriers and positives that women face when working on becoming a principal as identified by the literature review. Throughout the literature review, it came up over and over that there are barriers women face when going into leadership positions as well as positives that can help them grow into leaders. From these two categories, there were three parallel ideas that emerged including professional, family and women's confidence in themselves. I categorized them the following ways with women either facing barriers including: lack of professional support, supporting their families, and a lack of confidence and training or positives of: having professional support, encouragement, and confidence. These are represented below in the following table to show how they are in contrast with one another.

**Table 1**

*Barriers versus Positives Pursuing the Principalship*

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Positives</b>
Lack of Professional Support	Professional Support
Supporting Families	Encouragement
Lack of Confidence and Training	Confidence and Training

I used this as my conceptual framework. Through my own research I believed I would find something similar for women who have not gone into principal roles. I believed that women would be facing the struggles above and therefore not going into principal positions. I believed it was important to include the positive to see if these are ideas that women have on their side as they are looking to the future. My research builds

upon the existing knowledge by adding to the research on women in schools and leadership.

### **Research Method and Rationale**

A phenomenological research was selected for this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), phenomenological research is “research that describes the meanings or essence of a lived experience” (p. 5). This fits the type of research I did because I tried to understand the experiences of women around obtaining their principal license. Bhattacharya (2017) stated, “The purpose of this kind of study is to explore what a particular experience means for people who have experienced a shared phenomenon so that the structure of the experience can be understood” (p. 27). Through phenomenology, I used the phenomenon of obtaining a license as a principal, the process women go through once they have their license and finally the choices they make related to their experience. Using phenomenology I was able to specifically look at the commonalities and differences in the shared experiences of women.

### **Research Design**

This section shares all of the details of my research design and the process I followed to complete my research and answer my research questions. There were four distinct phases of my research design: collecting information from the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB), surveys, interviews, and data analysis. Each of these phrases was critical to answering my research questions.

The first phase of my research was to obtain all the email addresses from PELSB for all principals licensed in Minnesota. PELSB sent me a spreadsheet with all email addresses and all positions that principals can be in in Minnesota. I used this to complete

the data collection phases of my research. After collecting all the data I completed my data analysis.

### **Data Collection**

My data collection methods were surveys and interviews. The survey helped me to answer what current position women are in as well as why they have chosen this. The interview dug deeper into their current position as well as what would help move them into the principalship or why they have chosen and will not be choosing to go into each position. To obtain emails of those currently licensed I worked with PELSB to find out who is not only licensed but also approximately how many principals there are in the state.

### ***Design***

First, in September of 2023, I asked PELSB for a data set including all those who are licensed as principals and where they were working in the 2022-2023 school year. Using this information I sent out a survey in January of 2024 to find out who is currently not working as an administrator and what position they are in. After collecting the survey information I requested eight women to be interviewed. This was completed in February of 2024. I then transcribed my data from the interviews in March of 2024 using Otter Ai, an artificial intelligence transcription tool, to transcribe the interviews. After gathering all of my data I coded it and finally shared it. The specifics of how I designed my survey and interview questions can be found next.

### ***Survey***

I created a survey that was sent to all licensed principals in Minnesota. Using the spreadsheet from PELSB I sent an email (see Appendix C) to all principal license-holders

in January of 2024. With the information from PELSB, I determined that there were just over 7,000 administrators. I sent it to all 7,029 individual license-holders because PELSB does not collect data on gender so I was not able to discern from their data who was male and female. I wanted to receive at least 100 surveys back with 30 being from those in the Twin Cities, 30 being from the Suburbs and 40 being from Greater Minnesota. I chose these numbers because I felt it was a good sample size of all the administrators. The reason I selected a survey is because of the size of this group and how far apart each of these people lives. Additionally, when reviewing the information from Kemper et al., (2023) in their survey of principals working throughout the state I found that there were distinct differences between those who lived in the two areas. When discussing with my committee we decided to add the Suburbs as a category as well because of the district differences between all three.

This survey included a variety of open and closed questions to elicit a variety of responses from participants. Both were helpful in understanding and obtaining answers to my research questions. I chose to create my survey so it could be sent to all license-holders because PELSB does not collect gender information. Because of this, I began my survey with several closed questions to ensure that the participants who took the survey were who I wanted to collect data on.

Each section of the survey served a distinct purpose to either eliminate participants as needed or to gather information. The first section and page contain the informed consent which can be read about more in the section on IRB. Following this, there are three sections to ensure that those taking the survey are currently licensed, are female, and not currently working as a principal or assistant principal. If they do not meet

those criteria they are automatically sent to submit the survey. The next three sections ask about their current position, applying to the principalship, and demographic positions. Each of these helps to answer my research questions and obtain interviewees. To see the full list of questions see Appendix A.

Fink (2017) shared the importance of piloting a survey to ensure that it gets the correct information from participants and there are no errors. I piloted my survey with three different participants who live in Wisconsin and are currently not licensed in Minnesota but are in Wisconsin. I asked them to complete the survey as if they were licensed in Minnesota. I then asked if there were any questions or confusing areas. Based on their responses I added an introduction to the section where people are eliminated from completing the survey and added two questions.

This statement was added to my email request: “The first few questions of this survey are designed to ensure that you are an appropriate participant for this study. Depending on how you answer each question you will be directed to complete the survey or to continue to the next section. If you are asked to complete the survey and believe this is an error please choose the back button and change your answer. Otherwise please submit the survey.” I added the statements because I believed it would help ensure that those taking the survey understood why they might be sent to finish the survey so quickly.

In the survey, I added a section about if they were previously a principal. In the section I asked a simple yes or no question of if they had been a principal and then asked if yes why they were no longer a principal. I felt this added a good dynamic of who had been a principal and why they may have left the principalship. During my pilot interview,

I had found that this may be another reason women were not in the principalship and it would be valuable to learn about to answer my research questions.

With my surveys completed I moved on to the next and final stage of my research which was to conduct interviews with those who were willing to participate based upon my survey.

### ***Interview***

The final step of my research process was to interview eight women. I chose to interview eight women because I felt it was important to have both representation from Greater Minnesota, the Suburbs and the Twin Cities based on the survey completed by Kemper et al. (2023). I chose to interview because I felt it was important to get an in-depth understanding of why each person I interviewed felt the way they did.

Breaking these groups down further I felt that it was important to have two or three people from each of the groups who were in positions where it was either required or suggested to find out why and what their long-term goals were. The other category is those who are hoping to be in principal positions in the future but have not yet obtained them. While these groups may seem small, Brinkman and Kvale (2015) stated, “A general impression from current interview studies is that many would have profited from having had fewer interviews in the study and instead having taken more time to prepare the interviews and to analyze them” (p. 140). With this in mind, I decided to do semistructured life-world interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Using this style I interviewed each participant with the semi-structured format found in Appendix B. Additionally, for each interview, I prepared one question based on their survey responses.



To ensure that I had well-worded interview questions I completed a pilot interview of a retired administrator who left administration. Based upon this interview I added one question and changed the wording on one question. I added the following question: Why are you currently not working as a principal? I added this question because I discovered that I did not explicitly ask in either the survey or interview why they were not working as a principal. In addition, under the other category I changed the word administrator to principal. I felt this was more clear than the word administrator which can be thought of more than just a principal.

I started the interview with questions easiest for interviewees to answer and then began to get more specific and in-depth as I went. The full interview protocol can be seen in Appendix B. Because I had two different groups of participants to interview, two questions are different for each group. These questions are directly related to either being a position suggesting that they needed a principal license or attempting to interview for positions.

The interviews were conducted via Google Meet through the interviewee being invited and selecting a time that works best for them. I recorded all Google Meets and stored the recordings in my Google Drive. While interviewing I took notes. I then used Otter Ai to transcribe the interviews from the Google Meet recording.

While I described pieces of the setting through the interview and the survey, the exact details will be included in the next section.

### **Setting**

I completed my research via Google Survey and Google Meet which made the setting for my research virtual within the state of Minnesota. Surveys went out via email

to be completed virtually. Interviews were also conducted virtually via Google Meet. This helped to ensure that I was able to work with a variety of participants from all over the state of Minnesota.

### **Participants**

The participants in my study were women throughout the state of Minnesota who are principal license-holders but currently not working as principals. I gathered all the email addresses of all license-holders in Minnesota from PELSB. This was helpful to ensure I had a broad variety of participants.

I sent surveys to all those listed as having a principal license. The list from PELSB informed me that there are currently 7,029 licensed administrators who are either currently licensed or their licenses expired on June 30th, 2023. I decided to include these administrators as well because their licenses may have been processed later in the year. Of these just over 7,000 I planned to receive 100 surveys back. I needed participants who were both from around the state because prior research indicated that their experiences are different. I wanted to obtain 50 surveys from each of these groups. This gave a good sample size of those within the state because there are currently about 2,500 full or part-time positions available. I also assumed that of the 7,000 there are some license-holders like me who are licensed in Minnesota but work in another state. This is not indicated in the research. So of those available, I assumed that between working in Wisconsin, North and South Dakota as well as Iowa there may be another 500 working in another state as administrators. Meaning there are approximately 4,000 administrators who are not working as administrators within the state. Of those, I assumed that half of

those licensed are men based on Kemper et al.'s (2023) research and review of the percentage of principals within the state.

I interviewed eight women from the state of Minnesota. These were women who volunteered to be interviewed as indicated on their survey. I chose these eight by selecting randomly selecting three from Greater Minnesota two from the Suburbs, two from the Twin Cities and one from the Other category because according to Kemper et al. (2023), there are more women who work in administration in the Twin Cities I felt they would have a different experience than those who work in Greater Minnesota. Upon reflection with my committee we also decided that the other categories would be important to interview. Of the two from each area, I selected one who was actively pursuing principal positions and one who was not. These categories were critical to my interview because they informed the reasons women choose either to work in administration or choose not to based upon why they received their license. Each of these was valuable to understanding why women either get a license and then pursue a principal position or do not based on why they got their license. Selecting women randomly while still ensuring to have each location and type of job aspiration ensured I had a wide variety of participants available.

The participants were a critical component of my research. Ensuring their anonymity was a crucial part of my IRB process. Through the IRB process, I ensured their anonymity during each stage of my research.

## **IRB**

Through the IRB process, it was critical to ensure that participants were protected and aware of the needs of their research. I completed the IRB Training through Hamline

in the Spring of 2023. I also submitted my research to the IRB in December of 2023 to have it reviewed. For both my survey and my interview I had participants complete an informed consent. The informed consent for the survey can be found on the first page of the survey. The informed consent for the interview was sent to participants and given verbally to me prior to beginning the interview.

### ***Survey***

Prior to completing the survey participants needed to agree to the informed consent by selecting yes on the first question of the survey. The survey informed consent can be found in Appendix A as a part of the survey. Identities of those involved in the survey were protected on two levels. First email addresses were not collected unless those who completed surveys chose to include their emails. In addition, those who did choose to share their email to receive the information shared only their email and their positions. To protect those who submit their email I have not shared the survey results with anyone and kept the completed surveys in my Google drive where only I have access to the information.

### ***Interview***

When emailing to request an interview from participants I shared the informed consent form. In the email I sent (found in Appendix D) I asked them to read the informed consent before signing up for an interview. By signing up for the interview each participant agreed to the informed consent. The interview informed consent can be found in Appendix B as a part of the beginning interview questions.

Participants are protected by using the pseudonyms which were created following the interview. I created pseudonyms for each participant based upon where they live. I stored this information within my Google Drive in a folder only I will have access to.

### **Analysis**

To complete my data analysis I analyzed my survey and interview data. I used my conceptual framework to analyze my survey as well as my interview results. My survey will be used to help me understand who is eligible to be a participant in my research as well as help to answer my questions. To analyze the survey I plan to look through the data and code for the following types: barriers and positives. Specifically, I will look for a lack of professional support, supporting families, lack of confidence, and training. The positives I looked for included professional support, encouragement, and confidence. The rest of the data I used is based on the questions and the answers written in percentages. I also sorted my data based on where the administrator lived in Greater Minnesota, Suburbs, Other or in the Twin Cities. The second way I analyzed the data was by looking at those who were actively pursuing the principalship versus those who were in leadership positions they already wanted to be in.

To begin my data analysis of my interview I transcribed the interviews, reviewed Otter and what themes emerged. I also looked specifically for the following themes and code based upon this: barriers, and positive influences. I used claude.ai, an artificial intelligence chatbot, to look for the following specifics: lack of professional support, supporting families, lack of confidence, and training and the positives I will look for include professional support, encouragement, and confidence. I found barriers and

positive influences that add to women going into the principalship. Additionally, I used claude.ai to compare and look for similarities between interviewees.

My data analysis tools were claude.ai, statistical analysis, and as previously stated Otter Ai. I also used Google Forms and the data analysis that is built into that for my survey. In addition, once I had my information collected and transcribed I used claude.ai to run themes of my interview questions. This helped me to get a fuller understanding of the information and data I had collected. Each of these analyses helped me to understand the differences between women in Greater Minnesota, the Suburbs and the Twin Cities and women who were already in leadership positions or applying for principal positions.

### **Conclusion**

This section of my dissertation explained how I collected my data to answer my research questions. It also discussed the methods I used and how I ensured that I protected my participants during the data collection and analysis process. Finally, I shared information on how I will keep everyone informed and safe with the IRB process.

Chapter four will share results from this study. Beginning with a broad overview of all the data collected, chapter four then moves into looking at data collected based upon demographics and patterns between those within the study. Chapter four also shares the number of participants who responded to the survey and where they were located as well as their professional aspirations. Several patterns emerged.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

#### Introduction

Women have long out-numbered men in education; however while this once extended to the principalship this has changed over the years (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lagemann, 2000). While there has been growth in the number of women in the principalship there is still room for improvement. Specifically in Minnesota women are in 70% of teaching roles and only in 48% of principalships according to Kemper et al. (2023). In addition, Kemper et al. found that there are differences depending on the part of the state women live in for their participation in the principalship.

I used this information to create my research questions which are specifically about finding out why there is a difference in the number of women who are in teaching versus the principalship. I explored the following questions:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

To explore these questions I created a phenomenological study where I completed interviews and a survey. This phenomenological study sought to understand whether or not my conceptual framework held true for those in Minnesota. Using a variety of

sources both about women in the principalship as well as women in other leadership positions, I found that women typically faced either barriers or supports. Table 2 shows how some of these factors can continue to women either choosing to be in the principalship or choosing to take a different path.

**Table 2**

*Barriers versus Positives Pursuing the Principalship*

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Positives</b>
Lack of Professional Support	Professional Support
Supporting Families	Encouragement
Lack of Confidence and Training	Confidence and Training

Using these ideas I created my survey and interview. The survey was completed first and was used to find the interview participants. Through the survey, I was able to get a large sampling of information and a wide variety of responses. The interview helped me to dive deeply into individual participants' experiences. Both of these helped me to understand women's experiences in Minnesota. The first portion of the chapter explores the data collected through the surveys. The final section will share the interviewee's experiences.

### **Survey**

To begin my research, I sent a survey out to over 7,000 licensed K-12 principals in the state of Minnesota. These surveys were sent out in batches of 100 over the space of seven days. I sent the survey to all those who were listed as licensed principals because PELSB does not collect information on the gender of those with a license. While several emails did bounce back, particularly those that were to school districts, I was able to get a



large sampling size from those licensed as principals in Minnesota. Within the first two days, I had almost the required 100 surveys I was hoping to obtain.

Over the month I had my survey open I received 521 responses. Of those, 499 were still licensed as principals in Minnesota. Of that group, 464 identified as female. Finally, of this group I asked if the participants were currently principals or assistant principals and these responses were omitted to create the list of those who completed the full survey. Three hundred and ninety-nine participants completed my full survey.

I analyzed my data in four different ways which led to the categories below. First I looked at the data and patterns created overall by all those who had completed the survey. Next, I reviewed all those and looked for patterns within the region. I compared those who had been a principal and those who had not been a principal. Finally, I examined the ages of women and when they obtained their licenses to see if there are any patterns amongst these women and their career paths.

### ***Overall Survey Data***

Overall, the survey data collected gave a broad picture of the state because of the large sampling size that I was able to receive. As previously shared I had almost 400 fully completed surveys. Within those surveys, I saw a variety of patterns that emerged from the information and rating scales to the types of positions the women are in. Something that surprised me was how many women were in positions that they enjoyed already and were in positions that they planned to stay in for the time being.

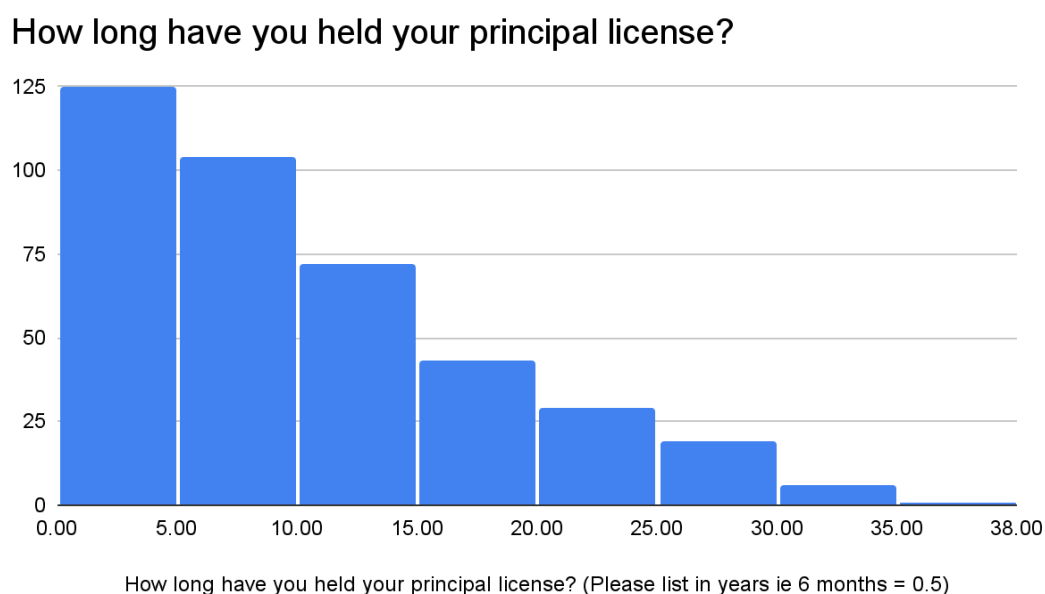
While demographic information was the final section of the survey, I felt this would give a good picture of who was included in this survey. I give a brief overview of who took the survey. Once all of the data has been reviewed the last sections will be

using this information to separate out the information and look for patterns amongst the different demographics.

Within the context of this survey women on average had held their license for 9.8 years with a range of 0.5 year or 6 months all the way up to 33 years. Within this survey there were many different numbers listed. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, while there are many bigger years, most of the women were in the first ten years of having their license. With the largest group being in their first five years.

**Figure 1**

*How long have you held your principal license?*

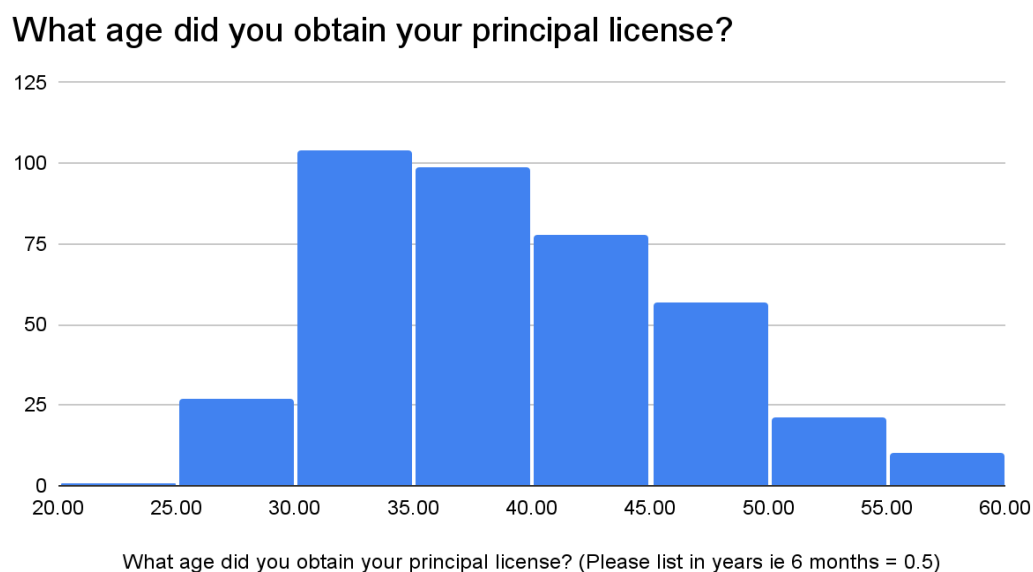


The average age of women to obtain their license was 38 years old. Again there was a wide variety. Most women obtained their licenses in their 30's with just slightly more women receiving their license between the age of 30 and 35. The second highest age to obtain a license was between 35 and 40. There was a slight decrease the following

years. With the smallest number of women receiving their licenses when they were in their 20's. Figure 2 illustrates the drop off below.

**Figure 2**

*What age did you obtain your principal license?*



The ages of women and the number of years they had worked in education were directly related. The older the woman, the longer she had typically worked in education. The average number of years working in education was 25 years again with a wide variety of years when it came to the number of years worked. The average age of women who took the survey was 48 years old. Again with a wide range of ages from 20's to 70's and everywhere in between depending on what stage of career women were in.

As stated earlier when reviewing the data overall there was a decrease in the number of women who obtained an administrative license after the age of forty. For this reason, I divided the data into two different categories: those who were over forty when they obtained their license and those who were under forty. I found the following when

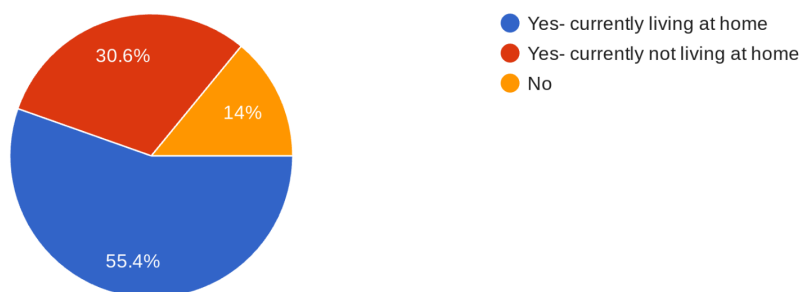
looking at the data there were slight differences; however, there was not a significant difference in the women and their experiences based upon when they obtained their licenses.

Most women in the survey still had children living at home. Those women with children at home represented 55.4% of those who took the survey. Another 30.6% have children who are no longer living at home. This means that 86% of all those who took the survey have children. Fourteen percent of women who took the survey do not have children. Figure 3 below shows that a majority of women have children.

**Figure 3**

*Do you have children?*

Do you have children?  
399 responses

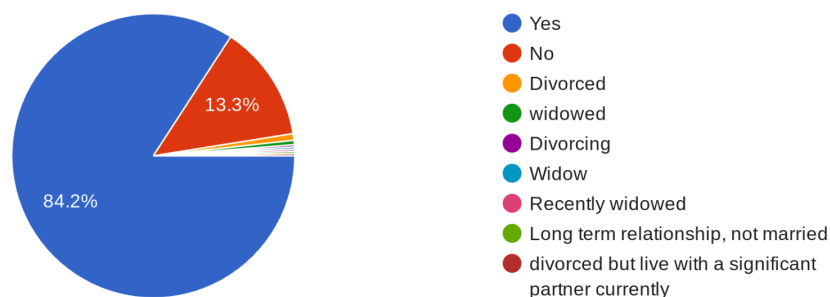


A majority of women in the survey were married with 84.2% of all women being married. The next largest group was 13.3% who are not married. The other 2% were divorced, widowed or moving on to another partner (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4***Are you currently married?*

Are you currently married?

399 responses

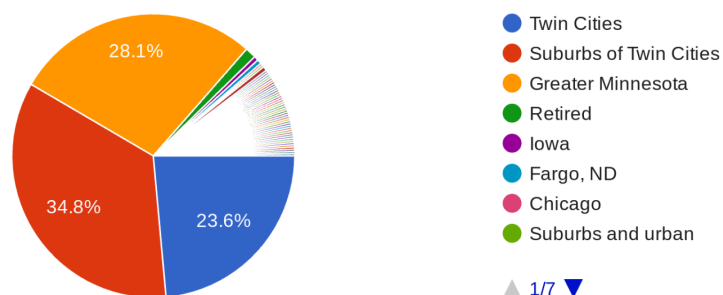


Women lived in a variety of places throughout the state of Minnesota and as well as out of the state. About 29% of women live in Greater Minnesota. Thirty-five percent of women live in the suburbs of the Twin Cities. Another 24% of women live in the Twin Cities. About 12% of women live in other places. Each person listed their own place, some were in other countries while others were in other states. A few lived in Minnesota but worked in other places. This presentation can be seen below in Figure 5.

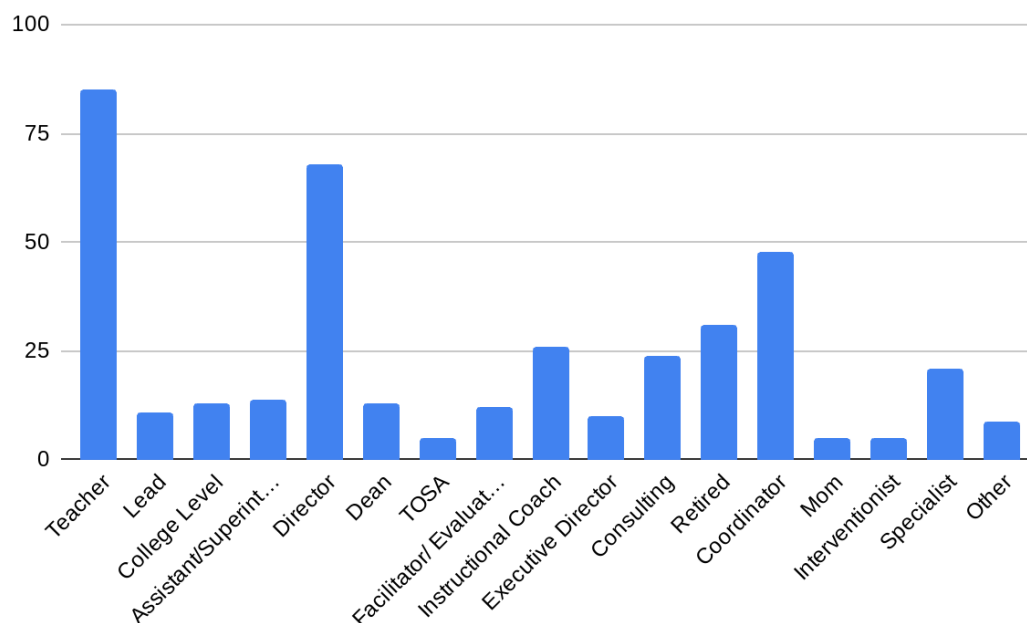
**Figure 5***Where do you work?*

Where do you work?

399 responses



The positions the women currently were in were a wide variety. The list covers a range of positions across K-12 education, from classroom teaching to district and state-level administration, coordination, coaching, higher education, and consulting roles. Many are currently working while others are retired from prior careers in the education field. While a vast majority of women are currently working in some sort of capacity in education, there were about 25 women who were retired. Eighty-five of the women who took my survey were in some sort of teaching role, while an additional 68 were in director positions and 14 were superintendents or assistant superintendents. The third largest group of women identified their position as some type of coordinator with 48 being these positions. Based upon their comments many of them do this at a district level. About twenty more were in instructional or literacy coaching positions. Around twenty women either worked outside of K-12 education or in consulting. Based upon their titles the vast majority of women who have a principal license are working in some sort of leadership role but not necessarily leading a school. Figure 6 below nicely summarizes this data.

**Figure 6***What is your current title?*

While there is a wide range of years that women have been in these positions the average is about 5.9 years for their current position. The mode for these positions was 0.5, while the median was 3. While the max was 60 years and the minimum 0.5 years there was a range of 55.5 years. As can be seen, a good chunk of the women have been in their positions for a shorter period but there is a wide range and variety of timeframes that women have spent in their current positions.

Despite the vast majority of the women with a license having a position that would likely be considered a leadership role, many were not required to have a principal license. As can be seen in the graph below 66% of those with a license were not required to have it for their current positions. Within current positions, 9.5% were required to have a principal license. Of those who completed the survey, 20.8% said it was preferred for their positions and not required. The final 3.7% wrote that they needed other types of

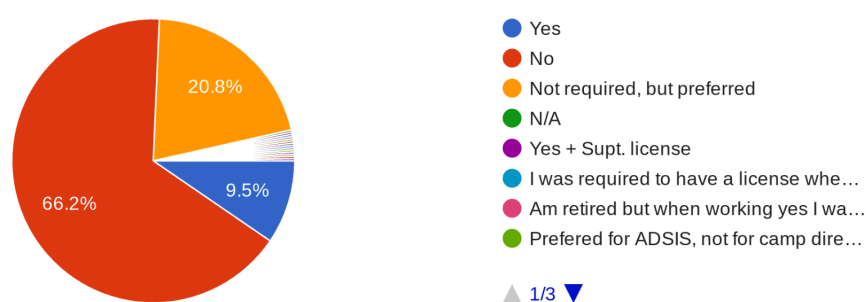
licensure such as a special education directors license, that they were retired or that positions were new and something that was not required at this time. For a visual see Figure 7.

**Figure 7**

*Were you required to have a K-12 principal license for this position?*

Were you required to have a K-12 principal license for this position?

399 responses



For the women that it was preferred for their position but not required I put forth a question to find out why. Almost half of the women selected that the reason it was required was because they lead teacher development as a part of their job. Almost a third of those women said the reason it was preferred was that they oversee a budget of some kind. The next highest reason women gave for it being preferred for their position was that they oversee a portion of staff.

While most women are not currently using their principal license according to the survey the majority are very satisfied with obtaining their license. As can be seen in the graph below most women rated this as a four with 72.2% saying they were satisfied they received the license. By comparison only 3 (0.8%) responded with one stating that they were not satisfied with obtaining their license. Overall, 94.3% of the respondents stated

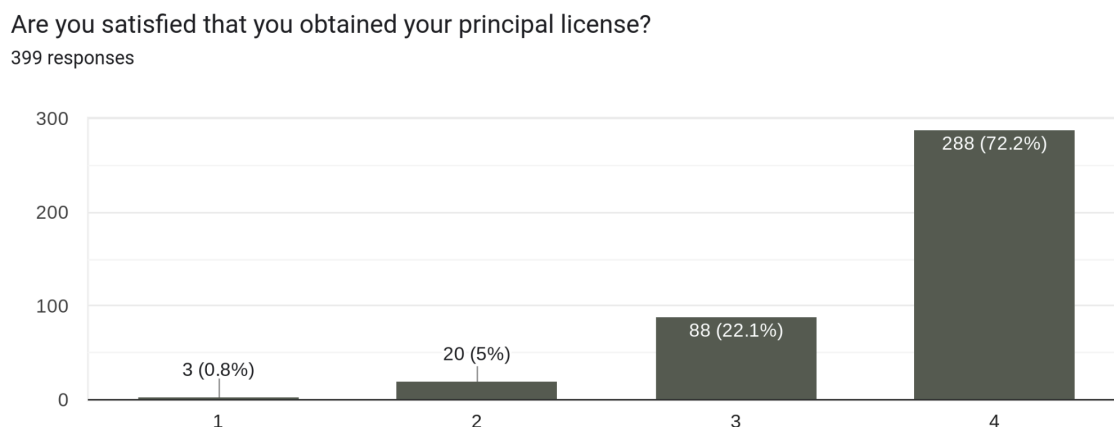


that they were satisfied with obtaining a principal license. Showing that the majority of women who obtained their license were happy that they had done so which can be seen in Figure 8.

**Figure 8**

*Are you satisfied that you obtained your principal license?*

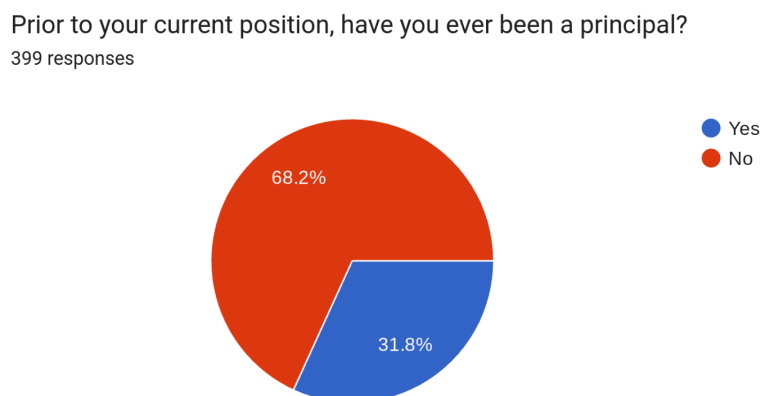
4- Completely satisfied (I am very happy I got my license), 1- Completely dissatisfied (I wish I had not)



Interestingly enough, even with the number of women who are satisfied with their choice to get a license, most have not ever been a principal of any kind. Of the 399 of the women who completed this portion of the survey 68.2% had never been a principal. Meaning that 31.8% had been a principal at some point in their career. Figure 9 seen below shows that a vast majority of women had not been a principal prior to their current position. There were differences between these two groups which will be explored in a later section such as current positions, likeliness to apply, and others.

**Figure 9**

*Prior to your current position, have you ever been a principal?*



The next question of my survey asked those who had left the principalship why they had done so. Their reasons varied from exciting to devastating. Just over 125 women had been principals prior to their current position. Of those about 15 retired, another 20 plus advanced in their career. Those who were promoted became directors or superintendents. While the others had a wide range of reasons they can be summed up as family and work-life balance as well as personal health reasons. One person discussed being attacked by a student. This story was not unique in the reasons for leaving. These women felt as though they were not able to continue and be safe in their roles. Each reason listed for leaving was certainly personal but definitely fell into either a really positive like getting a promotion or negative such as not being able to manage home and work life any longer.

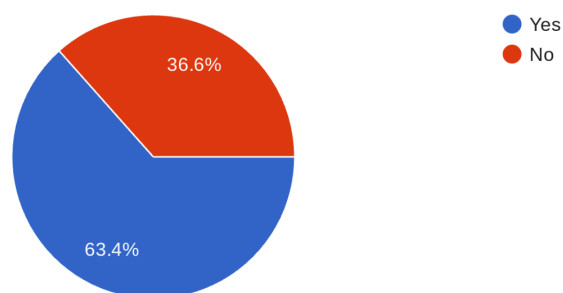
The next section of the survey was all about applying for the principalship. Most women have applied for the principalship at some point. As can be seen in Figure 10

below 63.4% of women have applied to a principal position. In contrast, 36.6% of women have not applied to a principal position.

**Figure 10**

*Have you applied for a principal position?*

Have you applied for a principal position?  
399 responses



These women gave a variety of reasons for not applying to principal positions. In total about 146 women have not applied for a position. Seventeen women wanted to have a work-life balance and have family commitments. Twelve women cited having young children or family responsibilities as the primary reason for not pursuing principal roles, which are known for long hours and high demands. They wanted more flexibility and time with their families. Another fifteen women expressed satisfaction with their current roles, such as teaching, instructional coaching, or district-level positions, and did not want to leave those positions for a principalship. Eleven women discussed an interest in other leadership roles such as district leadership roles in areas like curriculum, instruction, or special education rather than building-level principal positions. Five women indicated that they wanted to gain more relevant experience before applying for principal roles. As has shown up in other areas, four women were concerned about the

stress and workload of becoming a principal. In summary, work-life balance, career satisfaction in current roles, and interests in alternative leadership paths were among the top reasons provided for women not actively seeking principal positions.

While many women have applied and have a variety of reasons for not applying, almost 70% of women indicated that they would likely not apply for a position in the future. Just over 30% of women indicated they were likely to apply for a position. The average of how likely they were to apply for the principal position averaged out to 2.04.

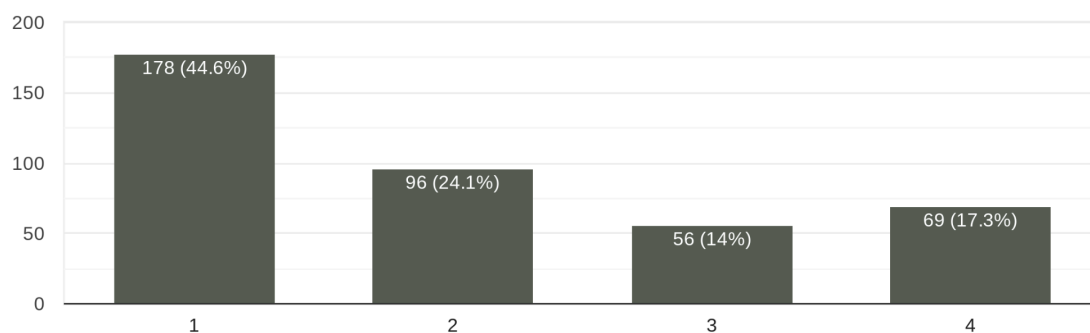
Figure 11 shows how one sided this is below.

**Figure 11**

*How likely are you to apply for a position?*

4- Very likely, 1- Very unlike

How likely are you to apply for a principal position?  
399 responses



Similar to why women do not apply for positions on their own. They had similar thoughts about why other women do not apply for positions. Unsurprisingly work-life balance and family commitments came up over and over as a reason women do not choose to work as principals.

A few women mentioned applying to positions and not getting hired because of gender bias. Some of the comments were specifically about not being able to get hired while others believe that bias is the major reason women do not get hired. Women believe that other women are not applying or working as principals due to not getting hired based upon the bias against women. Specifically a few women commented on the “old boys’ club” mentality as a problem. Another simply wrote, “Respect. Gender bias” as the reason for not applying. Another person wrote, “A lot of the time, I feel like those hiring feel like women won’t be able to perform the duties like a man can. Also, older men have a hard time having a woman in a leader.”

While reviewing the comments women wrote related to applying to the positions, there are also women’s independent choices based upon their level of confidence in their ability to do the job. Some of the women commented that other women are not applying due to a lack of confidence, imposter syndrome (believing that one does not deserve the success achieved) and beliefs that they do not fully meet the qualifications yet. In this same vein women often decide that they want other roles that they enjoy already or find a preference for such as curriculum/instruction or staying in the classroom.

Finally, women noted in their comments that they believe other women do not apply for principal jobs because of the stress and demands of the role. They discuss the time and the demanding nature of the principal job as a deterrent especially when combined with other responsibilities. Specifically women wrote comments like the following:

- “The job is all consuming. If you have a family, it is difficult to balance it all and not feel guilt.”

- “The time commitment and time away from families, including summer work. The pay often doesn't reflect the amount of work that is demanded.”
- “It's a demanding job (may have young children at home, etc.), they don't think they'll get one (it can be a boys' club in some districts).”
- “Principal positions aren't flexible enough for women who also have children at home”
- “The added responsibility and stresses it can cause on family relationships.”

The main themes revolved around navigating work-life balance, persisting biases, doubts about readiness, the principal's high demands, and preferences for other roles over building leadership. The women applying for the principalship include a mix of desires to create change, advance their careers, increase their impact, earn more financially, and realize personal/professional goals motivates many women to pursue the principalship.

Women choose to become principals for a wide variety of reasons with making an impact on education and career advancement being two of the top reasons for women. Other reasons include leading initiatives and supporting teacher development as an instructional leader. The higher salary compared to teaching positions is another reason. Serving their community and wanting to make a difference in influencing the school culture and climate as well as feeling it is important to have women in leadership roles in education. Largely though many of the comments mentioned making an impact on education as a reason for moving into the principalship.

The comments as to why women move into the principalship included things like:

- “To make a bigger difference in students lives,”
- “Belief that they can make a positive impact in schools,”

- “They want to positively impact staff and students,”
- “Women apply for principal positions because they have a desire to influence positive change in our systems and for children.”
- “I believe women choose to apply for these positions because it is important to have equal representation in positions of power.”

As these different comments show, women want to make a change for the better in their schools and ultimately make a difference in the lives of the children and teachers within the school. This is why women believe that other women choose to go into the principalship.

The final section of the survey took my conceptual framework (see Table 3) and tested whether or not women received professional support (support from those in their profession), family support or encouragement from those around them.

**Table 3**

*Barriers versus Positives Pursuing the Principalship*

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Positives</b>
Lack of Professional Support	Professional Support
Supporting Families	Encouragement
Lack of Confidence and Training	Confidence and Training

Most women rated highly that they had received support in each area.

Professional support had the least amount of support when compared to the other areas.

As can be seen in the graph below. Twenty-four percent of women felt they had always received support. Another 36.8% of women rated a three with most of the time receiving support. While 12.5% of women who obtained a principal license felt they

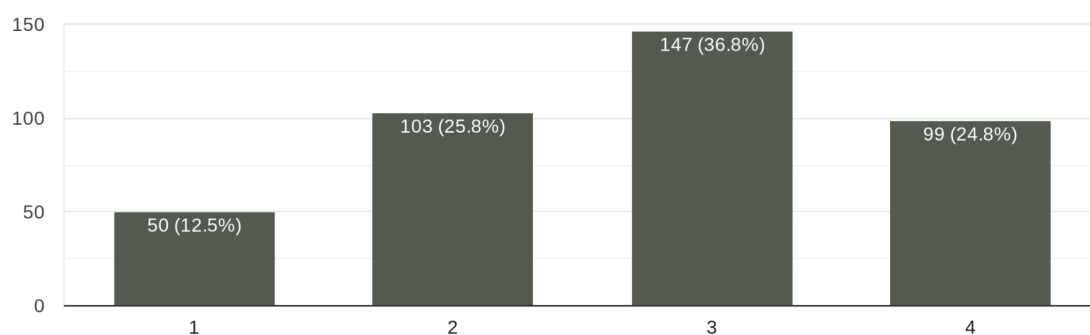
never received support while working on their administrative license. While this is a small percentage when looking at family support and encouragement, it is important to note that this is a much higher percentage of those who did not receive support in their professional setting (See Figure 12).

**Figure 12**

*I received professional support.*

4- Always, 1- Never

I received professional support.  
399 responses



When looking at the next graph of family support it becomes clear that almost all women who took this survey received support from their families. In fact, 85.7% of women in this survey stated that they always received support from their families. This is far and above the group of people who women received support and encouragement from when pursuing their principal license. Only 5 women of the 399 disagreed when rating how much support they received from their family. As can be seen in Figure 13 it is completely one sided.

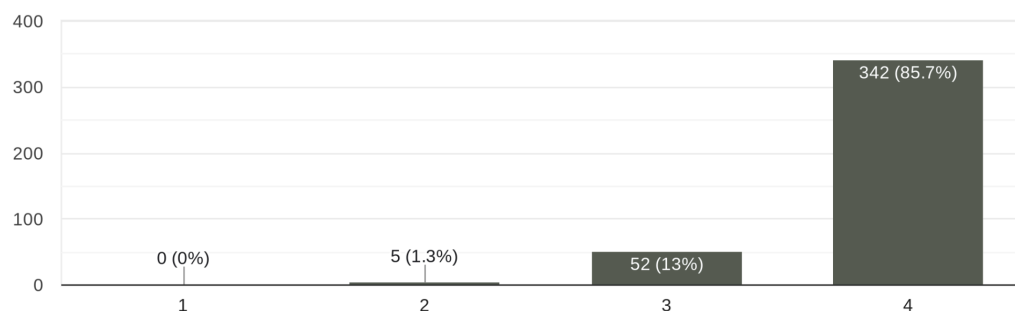


**Figure 13***My family supports me.*

4- Always, 1- Never

My family supports me.

399 responses



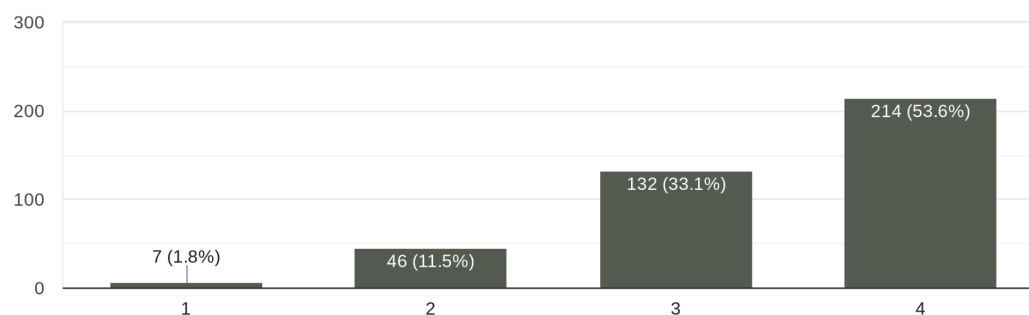
The final area was about encouragement from those around them. Over half of the women in the survey stated that they received encouragement from those around them (see Figure 14). Just 13% of women never received encouragement from those around them. The other third of women received encouragement some of the time rating this area as a three.

**Figure 14***I received encouragement from those around me.*

4- Always, 1- Never

I received encouragement from those around me.

399 responses



Overall when looking at these three as a whole it is apparent that encouragement was received in almost all three categories by most women. Very few did not receive encouragement. However, when looking at the difference between professional support and family support it becomes clear to me that as a profession, we need to do more to encourage women and encourage them consistently.

To end this section, I asked women if they had anything to add from the survey. The comments were varied but included some good additional information with thoughts that women had that did not fit into the previous questions. Forty-four women obtained their principal license but did not end up pursuing principal roles for various reasons like lack of support (15), discrimination (10), family/life balance issues (12), politics in the field (7), or finding other leadership paths that were a better fit (10). Some of these final comments overlapped into multiple categories. Lack of support was a major item mentioned in this final area even with the opportunity to discuss this earlier in the survey. This matched with other areas that we have already discussed.

When specifically discussing support as indicated in the support section of the survey. Support from family and friends was common, but professional support from colleagues and districts was very mixed. While some had great mentors but many did not receive meaningful guidance or opportunities. The lack of professional support makes things challenging to become a principal.

Some women commented on the bias and lack of mentors and the struggles to get experience and a leadership job. Those who did become principals often felt scrutinized more harshly than male peers, lacked mentors, dealt with implicit biases against female leaders, and struggled to balance the extreme demands of the role with family life.

Getting experience and initial admin jobs seems very difficult, with implicit bias and an “old boys club” mentality favoring males or internal hires over new female candidates in the hiring process. This comment summed up the feeling of women for me, “Lack of support/mentorship within buildings and districts, difficulty in balancing family obligations with demands of position” which was mentioned in a comment.

While many of the reasons above can push women out, other things like those already mentioned can cause women to choose not to even pursue the principalship. Some of those reasons included high stress, long hours, lack of work-life balance, excessive parent/community criticism, and misalignment with personal values at times.

Though they are faced with these barriers, women have had an opportunity to find the change and impacts that they are willing to make. However, some women found great fulfillment as principals and opportunities for impact, especially at the elementary level. Strong mentors made a big difference when available. Overall, implicit biases, work-life balance challenges, and lack of representation/mentorship seem to hinder many capable women from educational leadership roles they are qualified for.

This has been a wide variety of information covering all the data throughout the entire survey. With this broad view let's look at some of the data by region, age, time in education, license, intention and the family status. The region will be the first section we look at through patterns.

### ***Region***

I reviewed my data based upon what region of the state individual lived in. To complete this sort I grouped the data into four categories. I reviewed the data based upon Greater Minnesota, the Twin Cities, Suburbs and Other as their current work location.

While there were some similarities in the data that I gathered, there were slight differences in each area.

When comparing the length of the current position, the averages were all within a few years. Those in Greater Minnesota and the suburbs were the closest with Greater Minnesota averaging 6.7 years and those in the Suburbs averaging 6.4 years. Those who worked in Other averaged 5.4 years and those in the Twin Cities had been in their positions the least with 4.3 years.

When asked about applying for future positions those in Greater Minnesota, the Suburbs and Twin Cities were very similar while those in Other were lower. Greater Minnesota was a 2 rating as was the Twin Cities. While the Suburbs were a 2.1 with the highest rating. Those in Other averaged a 1.6 meaning they were the least likely to apply for a principal position.

The final areas that had some differences were the ages at which licenses were obtained as well as how long the licenses had been held. Those in Greater Minnesota on average held their license for 10 years and obtained them on average at age 39. In the Suburbs they averaged holding their license for 9.5 years and obtained them at age 51. While in the Twin Cities they had held them for 9.2 years and obtained them at age 39. While those who listed Other had held their licenses for an average of 13.6 years and obtained them at 37.5 years old. I found the comparison in ages obtained to be interesting based upon the area of the state and the length of time held for each of these groups.

The area gave us a unique look at how the different areas of the states compared. There were more similarities than I expected. While there is a large difference in the

number of women for the next category, there were a few differences that helped to give another view of the data in this study.

### ***Ever a Principal***

Within the survey I asked whether someone had been a principal ever in their career. There were 129 women who had been a principal at some point in their career. I compared this data with those who have not been a principal in their career. I found that in several areas there were differences in their percentages including time in current positions, likeliness to apply, time with license, age obtained and amount of time license held.

The amount of time that those who had been a principal versus those who had not varied by almost three years. Those who had been a principal previously had only been in their current position for 3.8 years. Those who had not been a principal had been in their position for 6.6 years on average. This makes me believe that those who had been some sort of principal are more willing to change positions.

Those who had not been in a principal position were four-tenths more likely to apply for a position in the future. With those who had been a principal averaging a rating of 1.7 while those who had not been in a position rated this as a 2.1. While this is a difference I would have expected this to be much larger of a difference because I expected those who had already had a position previously to not want to go back and those who had not to be much more interested.

The final areas that were different between these two groups was in the age of a license obtained and how long the license had been held. Those who had previously been a principal had held their license twice as long. The average time they held their license

was 14 years compared to those who had not previously been a principal at 7 years. Those who had been a principal earned their license younger at the average age of 37 while those who had not been in a principal position previously were older at 46 years of age on average.

Similar to the differences based upon having ever been a principal there are differences based upon someone's marital status. The differences between these two groups will be shared in the next section.

### ***Marital Status***

The data was sorted by whether women were married or not. If women indicated that they were divorced or widowed they were also put in the unmarried category. There was a much larger group of women who were currently married than were unmarried. Over three hundred of the women were currently married as opposed to just over sixty who were not married. There were large differences in the two groups especially in their averages.

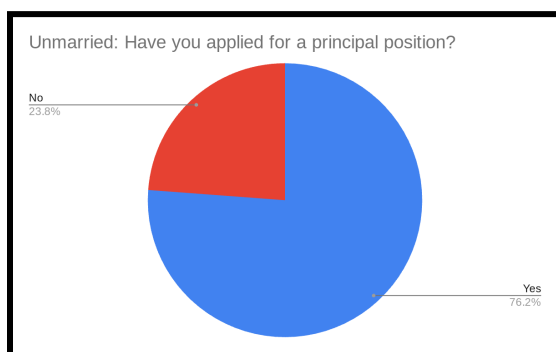
Those that had significant differences included their averages on receiving professional support, encouragement, the time their license was held and the age at which they obtained their licenses. Married women rated receiving professional support as a 2.74 while unmarried women rated this as a 3.21 meaning the married women rated getting professional support as a half a point higher in their professional support. Similarly married women were almost half a point lower on encouragement from those around them with married women rating with an average of 3.39 while unmarried women rated this as 3.71. The average length of time unmarried women had held their license

was six years and the age they obtained their license was 36 while married women obtained their license at age 44 and had held their license for an average of nine years.

The other area that was significantly different was the number of women that had applied for a principal position. By comparing figure 15 and figure 16 a large difference can be seen in the percentage of women who have applied for positions. Of those who are unmarried 76% have applied for principal positions while only 61% of those who are married have applied for a principal position. Meaning that as can be seen in figure 15 and 16 there are more women who are unmarried with their licenses who have applied for principal positions.

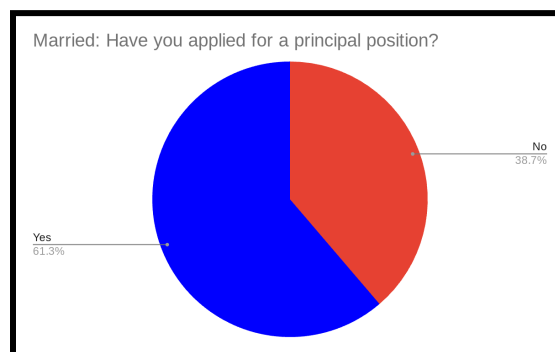
**Figure 15**

*Unmarried: Have you applied for a principal position?*



**Figure 16**

*Married: Have you applied for a principal position?*



The next category that held differences was in those who had children. The next area explored is related to women who have children or do not and then where their children are currently living.

### ***Children***

For women who had children, I had three different categories which women could choose from. They were able to select whether they had children either living at home or

not or had not children. I then compared this data and found the following that those who had children whether they were at home or out of the house were more likely to be in their forties when they obtained their license while those without children obtained their licenses earlier in life. Interestingly enough two of those who had children out of the house had held their licenses the longest with an average of 14 years; however, this may be more related to their age with their average age being 57. In contrast those with children at home had held their license for an average of seven years and were 43 years old on average. The final major difference between each of these groups was the likeliness of applying for jobs. Those with children at home had an average of 2.3, while those without children averaged a 2 and those with children out of the home averaged a 1.55 showing that they are the least likely group to apply for a principal position. These were the significant differences of those who had children at home or out of the house or no children.

The other data I collected was interviews. These interviewees also completed my survey and were from a variety of places and different intentions. The interview takes the survey and dives deeper into individual experiences of women.

### **Interviews**

I completed eight interviews with women. One of the final questions of the survey was to leave an email address if women were interested in being interviewed. In total I had 195 women volunteer to be surveyed. I randomly selected women based on where they lived as well as their job aspirations. To obtain my eight interviewees I first reached out to eight women who met my criteria and volunteered. I gave them a week to respond and sign up. Two did not respond and two told me they did not have time right now. I



then reached out to an additional four before I had all my participants. In total I reached out to twelve women.

I chose to interview four women who intended to be a principal, as well as four who did not have intentions of being a principal. In addition, I selected two to three women in each category who lived in either Greater Minnesota, the suburbs or the Twin Cities to see if patterns emerged in any of these areas. Finally, I selected one woman who had selected that she worked for in Other for their location. The following Table 4 organizes women and captures their pseudonyms.

**Table 4**

*Pseudonyms for Interviewees and Their Fast Facts*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Job</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Intention</b>
Greta Greater	Greater MN	Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator	34	Principal
Grace Greater	Greater MN	Community School Site Facilitator	41	Other
Gabby Greater	Greater MN	Director of Professional Learning	38	Other
Sophia Suburb	Suburb	Student Services Specialist	36	Principal
Shana Suburb	Suburb	Academic Support Teacher	41	Other
Tia Twin	Twin Cities	Science teacher	35	Principal
Talia Twin	Twin Cities	Interim Director Federal Programs	54	Other
Olivia Other	Other	Vice President, Education Program Management, Government Affairs	67	Other

Through my interviews, I was able to meet a variety of women with different experiences. Each of their stories was unique and will be shared next along with their

aspirations and reasons for obtaining their licenses. These interviews took place from mid-January to mid-February.

***Greta Greater***

Greta Greater is a Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator for a district in Greater Minnesota. She is currently 34 years old. Greta is single and acknowledged during her interview that this makes it easier in her future to choose to be a principal in a different place. Greta shared several barriers, benefits and her reasoning for obtaining her principal license. She shared she obtained her principal license primarily for career flexibility, though she is open to becoming a principal in the future. In spite of obtaining her license to use it in the future, Greta was very happy in her current position and did not have a desire to go into the principalship immediately. At some point in the future, Greta would like to go into an assistant elementary principal position which does not exist where she currently lives. Even with this as her current career aspiration, she did interview for a position.

While interviewing for this position, Greta shared that she felt the need to be more masculine. She also shared that it was a unique interview experience where she was the only woman and was interviewed on a panel with two other men causing her to feel as though she needed to be more domineering in her personality.

This falls directly into the barriers that Greta feels she wants to move into the principalship. Other barriers Greta mentioned include male-dominated leadership circles, a perceived need to adopt a more assertive demeanor, and toxic cultures of sexism in some districts.

Particularly around the barrier of the principalship feeling very masculine Greta talked about being the only woman in the room and feeling “othered” or out of place. She also discussed how some districts she has been a part of have had a toxic culture of sexism that has prevented her from feeling as though she could move up.

The final barrier that Greta discussed was a geographic limitation. She would like to be an assistant principal in the future but in her current location, these types of positions do not exist. To obtain a position like this Greta would need more meaning that her current location is a barrier to her career aspirations. Greta stated,

To be able to get my foot into that kind of a position. I need to probably be networking up there more than I am right now. Right where I am geographically, school districts are more spread out too. And so I either have to be willing or able to move to a location where I could get a position or I'm probably going to be looking for a lot longer because there will be fewer openings, fewer opportunities for openings to happen in my area.

Without moving she would not be able to obtain this type of position making her location a challenge.

A barrier that does not affect Greta but she believes affects other women is motherhood. While this does not apply to her current situation, she shared that it applied to many of the women she knew either when it came to taking on more responsibilities at work or when thinking about needing to move to be a part of a different district. Greta shared that she knew several women who had not gone into leadership positions until after their children were older.

On the other hand, Greta shared that mentorship was a positive that would support women being in the principalship. She additionally shared that in her experience having close mentors who are principals, whether male or female, has been one of the biggest factors encouraging her to pursue leadership roles. Greta said,

And so getting to know people and having more of a mentorship relationship with leaders, I think is one of the biggest things that has pushed me into more of a leadership type role. Having just that close mentor who encourages your own leadership.

These mentors provided guidance and helped build her confidence. These mentors pushed her and encouraged her to go into leadership positions. This included even pursuing the principal license.

Thinking about how to increase the number of women in leadership, Greta discussed mentoring as a way to grow the number of women in leadership. She specifically discussed how we create teacher mentorship programs formally and discussed that if we did something formally with our leaders we might be able to get more women to move into leadership positions and in particular the principalship.

I really think that mentorship piece is probably one of the biggest factors when I think of student teachers and having that cooperating teacher who's really like by your side along that path and to have kind of that similar type of thing in leadership positions, even before you're at the licensure points, like having some sort of mentorship for leaders would be a really good asset that I don't think we usually have, said Greta.

From what Greta shared she believes that we need to make these mentor roles formal and a part of getting women into leadership.

Greta discussed several barriers and in particular, suggested that formal mentorship would increase the number of women willing to go into the principalship. While Greta is satisfied with her current position she does hope to become an assistant elementary principal in the future. She shared that geography is a limiting factor for this career aspiration. Something that will echo through those who live in Greater Minnesota.

### ***Grace Greater***

Grace Greater is currently a Community School Site Facilitator in Greater Minnesota. She chose to obtain her license because it was free to her and has been working as a Community School Site Facilitator to gain more experience as a leader without having to have all the responsibilities of having the final say. Grace shared several barriers she faced as well as some of the things that were helpful in supporting her obtaining her license.

Grace has had several experiences in the education field including as a teacher, curriculum instructor, instructional coach, and currently as a community school site facilitator. Each of these has given her a unique opportunity to practice and participate in leadership. Even with all of the leadership experience that Grace has had she still faces a variety of barriers.

Grace shared the main barriers she has are centered around finding an appropriate work-life balance given her family situations, the timing of getting licensed compared to male colleagues, and ensuring she felt truly ready for the principal duties. Grace cited family demands, childcare needs, and work-life balance as major barriers for women

pursuing principalships, as the role often requires long hours and evening commitments. Competition is another factor, as men tend to obtain administrative licenses earlier when their children are younger. While passionate about education and supporting families, Geta is hesitant to become a full principal due to the intense time demands and potential strain on her family life with young children. She values her current role's flexibility.

This leads right into the biggest barriers that Grace faces including family demands and wanting to have a work-life balance. Grace specifically discussed having young children at home as a major barrier and needing to balance childcare drop-off/pick-up with daycare hours. She also shared that much of this has fallen on her as a mom. Grace also noted that she does have a very supportive husband but when children are young women need to feel the babies. Specifically, Grace stated,

I, for me, and a lot of people I know a lot of it has to do with the timing of the coursework. And then the competition that happens like family demands, it was a big one for me. So my position as an instructional as an implementation associate with curriculum and instruction was really flexible. And so I did my admin license during that time, because the timing was flexible. I didn't have to write sub plans to do my internship hours. And I do have like, I have young children at home. So that was a big part of it is trying to arrange childcare and trying to have that healthy work life balance while doing school and working at the same time.

This leads into the timing of when women and men are trying to go into the principalship. Grace noted that many men are able to obtain administrative licenses earlier when their children are younger, before family demands become as high. Grace said,

My assumption is they're quite demanding for keeping track like the men don't have to feed the children. The babies, right. Like my husband does all the cooking here and so it's but like when my children were babies he couldn't do that.

When women are breastfeeding this tends to be a time they need to take a step back and happens earlier in their career. Men on the other hand can move forward. This gives them more experience going into principal roles. This goes directly into the work-life balance that is often a challenge for women.

Grace talks about struggling with work-life balance. Specifically, she mentioned that she worries about being able to balance working at her job. She is concerned about the long hours and significant evening/weekend commitments required of principals, which would greatly impact her ability to spend time with her family. Her husband also works, so they cannot both take on such an intensive job. This would make it challenging to be in a role where there are late nights. While she sometimes has late nights now, being there every time would be challenging.

Finally Grace discussed that a barrier for herself is her confidence. She wants to really understand the ins-and-outs of the principal role before taking it on, rather than learning on the job. She worries about being fully prepared for the high-stakes responsibilities. Grace said referencing her current role compared to the principal role,

And so it's a lot better for trying to experiment with my skill sets and getting better at my skill sets than it would be if I were like a lead principal with my name on the decision. So it's not like we're trying to fill a gap that's already there and we're not creating new gaps. And so it's a lot better for trying to experiment with

my skill sets and getting better at my skill sets than it would be if I were like a lead principal with my name on the decision.

So the main barriers centered around finding an appropriate work-life balance given her family situation, the timing of getting licensed compared to male colleagues, and ensuring she felt truly ready for the principal duties.

Grace's school district played a very supportive role in enabling her to obtain an administrative license for free through a partnership program. The district also provides mentorship opportunities to try out administrative roles through subbing. Increasing support structures, sharing responsibilities, and redefining time expectations are suggested as potential avenues to remove barriers.

As mentioned Grace obtained her administrative license because it was free to her. Her district has a partnership with a university that allowed her to get her license for free to get her administrative license for free while working in a curriculum and instruction role in the district. In addition, her district has created a program where those with administrative licenses sub for principals while they attend the Minnesota Principal Academy. This gives an opportunity to participate in the position without having to be the final say all the time. There is also a way for them to call and get information from if they are struggling with what to do in a situation.

For Grace, she was also in a flexible position which accommodated the licensure work. Her role as an implementation associate allowed flexibility to complete the coursework and internship hours required for the admin license, without needing to take time off from a teaching position. Grace discussed that being in a larger district with a variety of pathways she was allowed to explore different roles like curriculum instruction,



instructional coaching, and her current community school facilitator position as growth opportunities. Finally, Grace had the safety net of going back to her teaching position.

Grace believes that many women face similar challenges that she does with going into the principalship. These include greater family responsibilities, delays in obtaining licensure, confidence issues, and concerns about work demands create barriers that lead to fewer women than men pursuing and attaining principal and other administrative leadership positions. Family demands make it a struggle for women to go into the principalship. Timing is a challenge for women with this and the work-life balance. Confidence is a challenge for women with their belief to do the job as an administrator.

Grace obtained her license because it was free. Currently, she does not have a specific path that she would like to follow. In fact, she stated, “I don't know what I want to be when I grow up.” When asked differently she stated, “Things I love. I love working with people and helping people kind of figure out our system and navigate it.” Grace expressed enjoying roles where she can act as a liaison to help families, especially those new to the area, understand and navigate the school system effectively. While she values these liaison/facilitator types of positions, Grace recognizes there may not always be funding for such roles in schools.

While Grace does not know what she wants to be in the future she believes that it was good to obtain her license. Her school district really gave her the opportunity to do this and to be in a place to try out positions. While she does not want to be a principal in the near future she does appreciate working in the systems to create better schools. This takes us to our final person from Greater Minnesota, Gabby.

***Gabby Greater***

Gabby Greater is currently a Director of Professional Learning at a service co-op in central Minnesota, overseeing professional development programs for school staff. She has worked in this position for about a year and prior to that worked for a different service cooperative in a similar capacity. Gabby has worked in education for around fifteen years, starting as a teacher and later obtaining her principal and community education director licenses. She had a different path through education where she worked in several different roles in education such as an EL teacher, Spanish and English teacher but has now landed in a service cooperative.

Gabby pursued her administrative licenses to have a deeper impact and influence, especially for marginalized students that she felt were overlooked as a teacher. She worked with ELL students in Greater Minnesota and really felt that this was an area that was often overlooked especially in smaller school settings. This was a major reason she obtained her principal license. While she did have a desire to be a principal she would choose to go into a principalship only in a certain situation. Gabby feels that she found an alternate path at the service co-op where she can still create influence regionally without being a principal in a single district. Gabby said,

I found a different path. That I feel like I can still have the influence or create influence without being in a school district directly. Especially so as an ESL teacher. My hope now is to do more actual policy work and to support regionally. Some el programming that may not exist in a lot of our districts, that if you're localized in one district, it's hard to reach that. So. Yeah, yep. So I think I'm going to stay on this path.

While Gabby is currently on her path her information helps to see what other women are doing with their licenses.

While Gabby originally obtained her license to be able to make an impact she feels that she can do that in her current position. This has made her career aspirations uncertain. She enjoys her current role but misses being connected to students. The only thing that may make her return to a district leadership role is a very specific opportunity in her home district where she would be able to work in the district her children are in; however, she recognizes that this could create problems on its own for her with the dynamics of small districts.

Gabby sees a variety of barriers for women pursuing principalships, including gender dynamics with superintendents and boards of education, family considerations like mobility, and sometimes implicit biases in smaller rural communities. These are also similar issues to those that Gabby has faced individually while pursuing the principalship.

Gabby discussed gender dynamics as a part of the portion that she feels are at play particularly with school boards, superintendents, principals and teachers. She felt that especially in smaller districts this can lead to women not being able to pursue the principalship because of these groups' feelings. In her experience, messages or leadership styles from women may be interpreted differently than from men which can be a gender dynamic that makes it challenging for women to go into the principalship. When thinking specifically about school boards Gabby said that some rural school boards may hold more traditional beliefs about gender roles in leadership that create challenges for women pursuing principalships. Specifically Gabby stated,

I definitely feel like gender dynamics still exist. Between boards, superintendents, principals, teachers. I think that sometimes if you know a principal you have to sometimes deliver hard messages, difficult messages. And I think sometimes that that message is interpreted differently coming from a man than it is coming from a woman which can lead to it you know, it's it can be tricky.

She also discussed the lack of encouragement and support that women receive and feel. Gabby mentioned that men are sometimes more actively encouraged to pursue principal roles when they are “rockstar” teachers, whereas women often have to choose that path themselves without as much external support/encouragement. Gabby stated,

I think sometimes when we see these ‘Rockstar teachers,’ it's a rockstar, female teacher. They're a rockstar, female teacher. We see a rockstar, male teacher, hey, you should become a principal. And I think often they're more encouraged. And so sometimes I think women often have to choose more than they're encouraged and supported to enter the field.

Specifically, she discussed that women are thought of as great teachers as opposed to men who when they are great teachers are then encouraged to be great leaders. This difference can be the big difference why women choose not to apply for principal positions and move into this position.

Gabby also discussed that as a mother, it would be extremely difficult to uproot her family. As someone who understands what happens when children often move schools, she discussed the challenges and feelings that this could be challenging for her children. She shared that this was a challenge for other women as well in their ability to

move into these types of positions. Gabby also discussed that this can cause a limitation on where women are able to apply.

Gabby also discussed the implicit bias that is often a factor in smaller districts discussing that this can be a challenge for women. While this might not be outright prejudice there is implicit bias about where men and women “belong” in terms of leadership roles in smaller communities; in her experience sometimes women are not thought to be in the places and spaces where they can get into leadership positions. Therefore, the main barriers she highlights are gender dynamics, lack of active support for women leaders, family constraints, and ingrained traditional mindsets/biases in some communities she has experienced.

When thinking specifically about her own journey, many of these same factors come into play including family constraints, traditional mindsets as well her enjoyment of her current role and finding a way to make a meaningful impact. When thinking of her own family Gabby was hesitant to uproot them and make her children move. Gabby also perceived some traditional mindsets and potential biases on school boards in her smaller, rural community that could make it challenging for a woman to be selected as a principal

The biggest reason for Gabby not currently being a principal is finding an alternate path to make an impact and enjoying her current role. Gabby felt she could still have significant influence and create change through her role at the regional service co-op, without being tied to a single district as a principal. She saw this as another avenue to have an impact, especially on marginalized students and programming, especially those who meet the ELL criteria. Gabby expressed fulfillment in her current director

position overseeing professional learning initiatives, which allows her to lead and impact educators regionally.

The final reason for Gabby was not finding the right fit. She applied to a few principal positions but ultimately went a different direction upon working in a co-op. This had changed her direction. Additionally, Gabby would have liked to be a lead for EL teachers but in the area she lives in this is simply not an option because the schools in her area do not have this kind of position. For now, she really feels that her current position is the best fit and ability to work with and support ELL students which is part of her passion.

A combination of finding an alternate leadership path, perceived local barriers, family factors, not getting her ideal fit, and contentment in her present co-op role all contributed to Gabby's choice not to actively pursue the principalship after licensure. Gabby did not discuss the support that she received; however, she felt that there would need to be better leadership development around effectively leading and empowering women in education roles. The other support Gabby hinted at was supporting as she framed it out "rockstar" female teachers to encourage them to go into these positions.

Each of these three women offered us a unique perspective on living in Greater Minnesota and what it means to be a leader in these areas. Next, we will learn about the women who are currently working in the suburbs. One of these women is actively pursuing the principalship while the other is not. Each has a unique story to be shared.

### ***Sophia Suburb***

Sophia Suburb is currently a Student Services Coordinator in her fourth year in a suburb of the Twin Cities. Prior to her current role, she worked as a behavior specialist.

This is her eleventh year in education. While an administrative license was not required for her current role, Sophia was encouraged to have her administrative license in this position. Sophia hopes one day to become a principal; however, wants to gain more experience first.

As stated, Sophia's current job aspiration is to become a principal someday. She got her license because she wanted to do more beyond her previous role and was interested after working closely with her principal in her current position. Sophia plans to apply for principal positions in the next 2-3 years. Sophia is holding off on applying because she still wants to build more confidence and gain more instructional/curricular experience, as her background is in social work rather than teaching. Sophia noted that because the administrative program is close and aligned with one's current career she did not have as much curriculum experience as she feels she needs because she comes from a social work background. In addition to wanting to gain more experience, Sophia is currently feeling very fulfilled in her current position.

Sophia mentioned several supports that she has received on her principalship journey including having a supportive principal, a fulfilling career to build confidence and women in professional capacities in her district. Sophia discussed working with her principal and having a support system in her role. She specifically stated, "I'm not ready to let go of that support system quite yet." When discussing moving into the principal positions, she shared that she is able to get experience in her current role and goal herself professionally while still learning and gaining confidence in her abilities. Sophia also specifically discussed a "good balance" of men and women administrators in her district, leading me to believe that she can see other women in those roles within her district.

This leads into what she believed would be supportive for other women to become principals. Sophia said, “as more women take that jump and step into roles like that and show that it is possible, it's doable, we can be positive role models.” Sophia feels that as more and more women are in principal positions there will be additional women who go into the principalship or other leadership positions within education.

When I interviewed Sophia and asked if she saw any barriers for women she said, “No, I don't think so.” However, when reflecting on her questions a little more she discussed a lack of confidence and that some women may struggle with seeing themselves as authority figures when comparing themselves to men. Specifically when discussing seeing males as authority figures Sophia said,

I think authority and power and what that appears as in males looks different than in females, I think coming as a female. And my guess is just a lot of principals are male. They have more authority over staff and with parents and maybe come across better as an authority figure with students. I think it's just a lack of confidence in females and their ability to have those types of roles.

However, in her experience in her district, she does not believe that this affects women.

Within herself and others, Sophia mentioned confidence several times throughout the interview. Having more experience for herself would give her more confidence. This is something that she shared over and over throughout the interview as something that either helped women to go into principal positions or having a lack of confidence prevented them from being able to go into the position. This was her suggestion for getting more women into the principalship as well. Overall, Sophia highlighted how issues like confidence, role models, prior experience backgrounds, and satisfaction with



current roles can influence when and if women licensed for principalships actually pursue those positions.

Sophia stated that she obtained her license to become a principal and is hoping to support schools positively. Sophia has not applied to any positions and does not believe that her geographic location in the Twin Cities suburbs would be a barrier to her either.

Sophia did not see any direct barriers; however, she believes that women lack the confidence to become principals. She additionally shares that the idea of who is a principal may be something else that creates a barrier for women. Sophia's personal plans are to gain more confidence and then go into the principal positions. She is looking forward to continuing to be supported and learn and grow in her current position before going into her new position.

The next interviewee is also from the suburbs. Her current position is also a teaching position; however, she did not obtain her license with the intention of becoming a principal.

### ***Shana Suburb***

Shana is an academic support teacher with a split role as a testing coordinator (60%) and facilitator for new teacher support and professional development (40%) at a high school in the suburban metro area of Minnesota. She has 18 years of experience in education. Shana has been very intentional with her time and choices not to become a principal at this time. As a widow, Shana has chosen to maintain her current position and be very protective of her time. Shana is also working on her doctorate and wants to ensure she obtains that before she does anything else. The three biggest reasons Shana is

not working as a principal include being a single mother, completing her doctoral degree and preferring a job with more flexibility.

Shana has had the opportunity to live in two areas of the state which gives her a unique perspective of living and working in rural Minnesota as well as living in the suburbs. Shana's career aspirations are to create school environments where students choose to attend over other paths, inspired by her own childhood experience of sometimes skipping school. This is something that she supports in her current role; however, she does have aspirations to move into other leadership roles but that is not her priority at this time. Shana would like to go back to Greater Minnesota at some point because she felt that often the principals she worked with did not necessarily have the experience and knowledge of some of the principals that she has had the opportunity to work with. Overall, Shana's reasons for not currently being a principal seem heavily influenced by her personal circumstances as a single mother, her doctoral studies, and waiting for the right timing and opportunity that aligns with her vision for impacting education.

When thinking about the future, Shana would either like to move back to rural Minnesota or potentially work as an adjunct professor to make an impact on education. Either way, Shana would like to create school environments where students want to attend school and "choose school" over other paths. Shana shared that as a child she would choose to "wash the pipeline" on her family farm as a child to skip school, which made her realize she wants kids to choose being in school. She says her aspiration is: "I want kids to choose school, not the pipeline." She believes that either of these methods would be a good way to make an impact on education and create a change. Part of this

impact would be to one day impact rural Minnesota schools, feeling the leaders she encountered there previously were not as strong. As a profession, Shana mentions potentially doing “adjunct work at colleges to really ignite the passion to want to be in education, the love for just educating.” This passion for education may come from the professional support Shana has received.

Shana discussed that she received a lot of professional support from the principals she has worked with and did her internships with. Shana actually obtained her current position while working with her now principal during her internship. This gave Shana the opportunity to be in a position where she can work in a position similar to being a principal without having the extra responsibilities and time commitment that principals have. Something that is extremely important to her while her children are in school. Shana has a customized job that her principal created for her to do data analysis. This gives her the opportunity to gain experience and meet her familial needs while still adding to education.

In addition to the professional support Shana’s late husband is always in the back of her mind pushing her to move forward. Her husband’s motto was “They can take your car and kids but never your education.” This is something that pushes her to complete her doctorate and be motivated to pursue education. This has created an opportunity for Shana to push herself and want to move up in education to support others.

Shana and her family moved from rural Minnesota to the metro area provided Shana's children with more opportunities in terms of diversity, academics, and extracurriculars. In addition to the move creating more opportunities for her children.

Shana shared that this created more opportunities for her to pursue leadership positions in a variety of ways and to have more opportunities.

Shana believes increasing women in leadership roles requires providing courage, confidence and acknowledging their often overlooked strengths. Something that she has received and has been helpful for her in moving into her current position. Shana believes that these same things will support moving into leadership positions. While some women are overlooked, if we look for them we can find more women to go into positions. Specifically, Shana said, “I think it's continuing to give courage and giving them confidence that anyone can hold leadership positions. So it's building people up and acknowledging some things that people often overlook in ourselves.” With this building up Shana believes we can get more women into principal positions.

The biggest barriers that Shana faces are currently personal to her situation. The biggest barrier is being a single mother. Shana states her children always come first before work, and as the sole parent/guardian, this was a large barrier in taking on the longer hours and time commitment required of a principal position. Additionally, Shana is completing her doctoral degree. This is her personal goal right now and this is a priority over pursuing a principalship.

The final reason Shana has not pursued the principalship is the politics involved in leadership roles. Shana mentioned not doing well with the politics involved in leadership roles, which deterred her from principalship opportunities that felt like the right fit. She shared that this is not one area that is a strength for her. She prefers not to be involved in the politics of a school and shares that she often does not like to have to say the right things and be politically correct.

Shana's barriers were the demands of single parenthood, prioritizing her doctorate, aversion to politics in leadership, lack of support from one administrator, and concerns about leadership quality in her prior rural work locations. She has a great desire to support future educators and to work in rural areas to support education there. Shana believes that we need to give women more confidence to ensure they want to go into principal positions.

With the suburb overviews concluded, the next two interviews will review two educators who work within the twin cities. One has moved into administration and one works as a teacher.

### ***Tia Twin***

Tia Twin is a middle school science teacher in the Twin Cities. She has been teaching for eleven years. Tia has applied to many teaching positions and would like to be a principal to enact positive change in education.

Tia would like to become a principal or assistant principal but has not had any luck in obtaining a position. She believes that she has applied to over two hundred positions with a few interviews. Tia stated that she has interviewed for about three different positions of the two hundred positions she has applied to. When discussing her aspirations Tia stated, "I'd like to start off in a dean role or assistant principal role and see how that goes." She would like to be in a position like this to make a difference in education stating, "to see change in our educational system." Tia recognizes that this is a way to make a difference in education and change the system.

Tia has faced more barriers than she has had support; however, she has received a few supports within her pursuing a principal position. Tia expressed that she received

good advice while completing her field experience from her mentors. The only additional support Tia expressed was keeping in contact with those in her cohort obtaining their license.

One of the biggest challenges Tia faced was the lack of structure in her field experience. Tia stated, “There was never really any kind of like, defined goals about what we're to get out of that field experience.” This made her feel like she did not get what she needed out of this experience, expressing that does not feel like she has the knowledge she needs when it comes to interviews. Tia did share that part of this may have been due to doing a majority of her hours during COVID.

Related to this area Tia expressed a concern with a lack of leadership opportunities and roles at lower levels to gain experience such as being an instructional coach or PLC leader. She shared that not only for herself but for others as well having more “stepping stone” leadership roles available within schools would help increase the number of women pursuing principalships. Tia said, “I think the school systems need to be set up in a way that allows women to gain more leadership roles and like small incremental level levels, encouraging them more to be instructional coaches offering more of those positions internally.” She cited a lack of roles like instructional coaches, PLC leaders, department leads that used to exist. Without these she shared that it is challenging to gain the needed experience to become a principal.

Specifically, when applying for jobs Tia shared her frustration with the system and not getting feedback from applications. “I feel like the Applitrack system is very soul-sucking. I never hear back from a lot of those...” In addition, Tia recognizes that where she is applying for jobs is extremely competitive making it more challenging to get

into a position. Tia shared applying for a position in her building and being beat out by someone who already had experience as a principal and applied to be an assistant principal. Specifically, she stated, “I’m up against people that are, you know, have 20 plus years of experience and it’s hard to go, you know, say that 10-11 years is worth that so much so.” She shared that this makes it very difficult to gain an edge and be competitive with those around her.

Finally, Tia saw current male administrators not seeing women as leaders as a barrier to herself and other women. Tia said, “I think a lot of current administrators in our systems don’t really see women as leaders. And I think that’s been a big barrier for a lot of us.” With this Tia does not believe that men in administrative positions who are doing the hiring process do not see women as natural leaders in these districts.

The key barriers for Tia include perceptions of women not being seen as leaders, a lack of pathways to gain leadership experience, an inadequate licensure program, tough competition against more experienced candidates, and an impersonal application process. Tia also noted the imbalance of men and women in teaching positions stating,

I’m just kind of curious. I think it needs to be more explored. Why it is that we’ve got 80% of the workforce is women, but only 20% of us are in leadership roles that might need to be like examined at the administrative level currently, like why is it that we see men as more of a leadership type than other women because that just doesn’t make sense to me.

She seems to suggest there may be an inherent bias or perception at the administrative level that sees men as more suited for leadership roles than women, despite women making up the vast majority of the teaching workforce.

Tia believes that the underrepresentation of women in administrative positions stems from current (male) administrators not valuing women's leadership potential, as well as deeper systemic biases that view men as more natural leaders despite the demographics of the teaching profession. Changing these perceptions is presented as key to increasing women in leadership roles. Tia shared that her internship hours could have been more structured and that would help her. Tia is more at the beginning of her career whereas Talia is towards the end of her career. Despite this, there are still similarities between these two and their experiences working in the Twin Cities.

### ***Talia Twin***

Talia is a 54-year-old woman who has worked in education in the Twin Cities for 27 years. She started as a school social worker, then moved into leadership roles overseeing special education programs, eventually obtaining her principal's license and special education director's license in 2013. Currently, she is the interim director of federal programs. Specifically, most recently she has overseen McKinney-Vento homeless services. With her current role being an interim position, Talia is hoping that she will become the director of her program and then hopefully retire from there in eight to ten years stating, “And you know, I mean, like, and honestly, I like I could see myself doing this until I retire I'm 54 so I still have you know, a good eight 9, 10 years left. I could see myself doing that.”

Talia had a different route than others and being towards the end of her career has been in several other positions prior to her current leadership role. She began her career as a social worker and then worked in a special education setting where she was a lead teacher. Eventually this became a principal position and Talia obtained her license but



was not chosen to go into this position. At this point she went into the federal programs office and worked in the McKinney-Vento office.

Talia's support for obtaining her license was more personal than outside of her. The first support for Talia is having a social work background. This has given her a unique view of interactions with families and schools. Another support that Talia personally had was having a husband who is a teacher and could manage the family responsibilities when her job took her to late hours or summer work. Being able to attend a licensure program close to home was also helpful to Talia as she worked on her license. Finally, receiving encouragement and advice from women who had gone through the program was helpful. Talia stated, "I know when I was applying, it helped me to talk to other women that had already gone through the program." Talking to these women helped Talia know that the program was doable for her to complete. This left her with the confidence to do this work.

The barriers that Talia faced were the same reasons that Talia feels that other women do not pursue the principalship includes self-doubt about having enough experience/knowledge, balancing career with family responsibilities, and the time commitment required to obtain licensure.

The first barrier that Talia feels and knows others have is self-doubt or imposter syndrome. Talia discussed that women, including herself, often doubt whether they have enough experience or knowledge to take on leadership roles like principalship. She gave the example of a gym teacher friend who said "I'm just a gym teacher" as a reason for not pursuing administration. Talia noted that women often doubt whether they have enough experience or knowledge to pursue administrative roles like principalships. She said

“We're our biggest barrier” in this sense. Talia shared an example of this feeling even once in a leadership position stating,

And after the meeting, like why am I doing that? Like I stop you know, I mean, I'm in this position, you know, because of someone over my knowledge and you know, that kind of thing. But, yes, I thought I don't need to say that anymore. Like I should just be like, This is why I think.

She also shared that with her social work background, she was not sure she had the academic experience that others have shared with her as well when they have a similar background.

While Talia's life situation helped pursue educational leadership she shared that for other women balancing a career with family responsibilities can be challenging. Talia shared that women tend to take on more responsibilities at home with children and household duties. The time commitments of being a principal with after-school meetings, summer work, and other responsibilities can be difficult to balance with that. The significant time commitments required of principals can make it difficult to balance those family responsibilities.

As Talia discussed, being close to the university where she pursued her license helped obtain her license but the coursework can be difficult for other women when attempting to complete their licenses and balance their lives. Talia stated, “I think the online aspect would help or help a lot. I think, you know, if you don't have to kind of leave the house and leave for kids or leave the other stuff that's going on.” Creating a balance of where to get a license can be very supportive of women who are juggling responsibilities in their lives.

In summary, the main barriers that Talia faced and agreed that other women faced were internal doubts, work-life balance challenges, the time requirements of licensure programs, and perceptions about non-teaching backgrounds.

Talia recommends increasing online program options and mentorship to encourage more women to pursue principalship. In her own experience and that with friends she believes having online classes creates the option to learn in alternate spaces. Additionally, she shared that mentorship is helpful to women when they are looking to the future. Talia has about nine or so years left of her career. Olivia is the next woman and is also close to retirement with her own unique experience.

### ***Olivia Other***

Olivia Other is currently a vice president for private consulting companies working with state departments on assessments. Prior to this, Olivia worked as a classroom teacher, curriculum specialist, professional development leader, and a deputy superintendent. In Olivia's words, "Basically everything except a principal." Olivia also works as an adjunct professor and has had a wide variety of experiences with women in many different settings and their reasons for choosing not to be in leadership and administration.

Olivia is not sure of her next steps in education. She is of retirement age and states that she will continue to work as a consultant and as an adjunct professor until the company she works for does not want her to do this any longer. Then she may retire but right now she is very happy with what she is doing in her work and with the work she does with graduate students. Olivia stated, "My career aspiration right now is to do that really well. Until such time as I choose not to do it or they choose not to have me do it."

Olivia had a unique set of circumstances that led to her stepping over the principalship into an assistant superintendent role including the support she had at home as well as a great deal of encouragement she received. As previously stated, Olivia was a deputy superintendent and part of her belief of why she was able to skip to this step was having a husband who was a principal. She shared that having a principal as a husband was a support in her career as well as having family support. Olivia and her husband had lots of family around which allowed both of them to have someone to pick kids up when needed if things came up or both of them needed to stay late for meetings.

Olivia discussed having lots of professional encouragement and mentorship throughout her entire career. She shared having encouragement from her beginning college years stating,

I even think about in college just, you know, my undergrad, I had a professor who and I forget what the paper was that I done, but who wrote you know, in addition to the grade at the top, this will be the basis for a master's degree, you know, thesis, and I'm not sure I thought about a master's degree thesis until such time as someone said, Hey, this would be a pretty good basis for that.

This encouragement early helped to propel Olivia on the path she got on. After college, Olivia mentioned many people who encouraged her to think about pursuing advancement opportunities like principalship. Each of these encouragements helped Olivia to move forward into different leadership opportunities.

Olivia discussed that having these leadership opportunities was important for her to move forward as a leader. She also shared that other women need these types of opportunities to try on leadership and be a part of groups that encourage leadership

opportunities. In Olivia's career, when she was leading professional development, she was a part of a group that would share ideas and connect. This network and peer support not only helped them all to stay on track but also held them accountable for the growth needed in this area.

The final support that Olivia had throughout her career was living in an area with good education, work, and leadership pathways. While Olivia currently works all over the country, she spent the majority of her career in the Twin Cities and the Suburbs allowing her to work with many people and have a wide variety of opportunities for career development and advancement.

While Olivia did not discuss barriers that she faced in her career she did discuss several barriers that she sees in her graduate students as well as from others she has known. A lack of confidence, family constraints, and societal expectations are the biggest barriers that she hears and sees.

Olivia mentions that sometimes she finds that a lack of confidence can hold people back from pursuing principal roles even after getting the license. Olivia stated,

Sometimes it's just a lack of confidence. You know, there's what I find that I think is interesting is when people begin principal licensure programs, it's not uncommon, and you may be related to this for them to say, you know, I don't really want to be a principal. I just I, I topped out on the salary schedule and this kind of the next thing I can do to get some credit, so I'm just gonna, I'm just gonna take these classes.

While Olivia observes this for both men and women she believes that this occurs more for women than it does for men.

A second factor that Olivia sees is family constraints. She discussed that this is more than just for children and can be for aging relatives as well. She acknowledged that family situations can impact women's career decisions more than men's in terms of factors like being the primary caregiver. Olivia pointed to research showing the average age for a woman's first superintendency is 10 years later than for men, likely due to things like raising children earlier in careers. This shows that women are in caregiving roles which can make an impact on going into administrative roles. Related to this is the societal expectations for women where they need to be the caregivers in their families.

Olivia briefly mentioned the region in the context of the whole country. While she noticed differences in women's experiences around the country I focused on the regional differences within the state. Each section below shares the differences that women faced.

### ***Regional Themes in Interview Data***

The region that each woman was in made a difference in the experience that she had. I compared each of the interviews based on their location looking for similarities, and differences, and then looking for information that shared whether or not their location made a difference on whether or not their ability to obtain a leadership role. Each woman had their own experiences; however, within each region, I found some similarities and differences. Each region including the Twin Cities, Greater Minnesota, and the Suburbs will be reviewed. The other category is not included in this section because there is no other interview to compare it to.

**Twin Cities.** The two women I interviewed in the Twin Cities were in very different places when looking at their careers as one towards the end and one in the

middle. There are a few similarities and differences between the two of them in their experiences as well as their opportunities for positions.

The similarities for both women included where they obtained their licenses, some similar barriers, and the value of a professional support system. While both women obtained their licenses at the same place they had different experiences and saw each of them with different values. One woman felt her licensure was challenging because of the structure of the field experience while the other enjoyed the convenience of choosing this. She also shared that living in the cities made it easier for her to obtain her license without having to travel.

The barriers that were similar for both women despite being in different areas of their careers included self-doubt, work-life balance issues, and a perceived lack of experience or qualifications compared to men. These created challenges for these women in their professional lives and made it challenging to obtain the positions they wanted. In contrast, both discussed the importance of professional support systems. Sharing that these are invaluable when attempting to get a principal position.

The biggest difference between Talia and Tia was the positions and career pathways that they had taken. While Talia has been in leadership positions Tia has not yet. While neither has been a principal, Talia has been able to use her license in some capacities. Tia has applied for several principal positions and has not obtained one yet while Talia was in positions that could have been similar to principal positions but did not go into those positions for a variety of reasons.

When specifically discussing if the place they lived in made a difference, both women agreed that living in a large area gave them more potential positions to choose

from. Both interviewees indicate that living in a larger urban/metropolitan area like the Twin Cities region of Minnesota has benefited them in terms of having more potential leadership position openings available. Both Talia and Tia discussed the types of positions that are available within their districts just due to the size. These are positions that smaller districts simply would not have. This indicates that in larger districts there are more opportunities to be in leadership positions that are outside of the principalship. While there are more opportunities, Tia also discussed that this can create more competition as well making it more challenging to obtain a position.

While Tia and Talia are in different positions and different places in their career both agreed that the area they live in has given them more opportunities to pursue a variety of leadership positions. Both women have faced challenges when attempting to go into leadership positions and experienced professional support. Moving out to the suburbs will help us to see the experiences of the two women who live in this area.

**Suburbs.** The two women who worked in the suburbs have a few similarities and differences in their experiences including working in leadership positions that are not the principalship as well as possible agreement on wanting to move into principalship but not yet.

Both Sophia and Shana have plans to move into the principalship; however, Sophia has a more specific timeline. Sophia plans to move into the principalship within three years while Shana is more based upon her future related to her children. While not related to where they live with Sophia and Shana it becomes very apparent that the two of them have a big difference in their lives and that makes the biggest difference in their current future.



Sophia and Shana both work in the suburbs. The two of them did not say specifically that this makes a difference in their jobs and opportunities. Sophia stated, “No, I don’t think so” when specifically asking if the area of the state she lives in has any impact on getting a principal position. Shana moved from rural Minnesota to the suburbs so she discussed greater opportunities in general but did not specifically mention the greater opportunities for jobs.

While Shana and Sophia did not specifically feel that their location made as big of an impact, those living in Greater Minnesota certainly felt that where they lived had an impact on their ability to get a job just based on what is available to them within their districts as well as what is located near them.

**Greater Minnesota.** I compared the three transcripts of the women who lived in Greater Minnesota and looked for patterns in what the women said and compared for themselves. I found that Greta, Grace, and Gabby felt that there were some limits in their ability to apply for jobs as well as some struggles with a lack of encouragement or mentorship in some cases.

One of the biggest similarities between these three was the struggles with finding mentors or being consistently asked to be in leadership positions. Each woman recognized this as something that needed to be improved from their experience or from the experiences of others in their lives.

While Greta, Grace, and Gabby were all from Greater Minnesota their districts were of much different sizes. Based on the resources available within these districts it became apparent that likely the size of a district, at least in Greater Minnesota, made a bigger difference than being located rurally. Gabby specifically discussed how living in

rural Minnesota leads to traditional views stating, “I think a lot of our local school boards operate with the best of intentions but are often operating on a very traditional, perhaps traditional mindset that may perceive women leaders a little differently.” Greta discussed that the job availability was less, simply because of the variety of jobs available. Greta also shared that because of the geographical distance between districts, she would need to move, simply because of the number of positions available.

Gabby, Greta, and Grace each had their own experience while two of the three shared that there were simply fewer positions available and having to move to get to these positions. Each woman had mentoring support. While this is their experience, it may or may not be related to their location. The next section will explore women by their reason for wanting to obtain their license.

### ***Positional Themes from the Interview Data***

I sorted my interview data by intention of position. While all eight women had obtained their principal license, three of the women had intentions of becoming principals and five did not. Within each of these areas there were similarities and differences of their challenges and positives as well as intentions for the future.

**Principal.** Tia, Sophia and Greta each had intentions of becoming principals at some point. Each is currently not a principal for a variety of reasons from wanting to gain more experience to not having the right positions open yet. While they each want to become a principal their exact path differs and their timelines are different.

Tia, Sophia, and Greta agree that mentorship is important. Two of the three discussed that they would like to continue to have mentorship before moving into the principalship. All three would like to go into the next step, likely an assistant principal

role to gain more confidence before continuing in their career path. All three while wanting to become principals hint at wanting to gain more confidence and experience before going into their next role.

While these three want to obtain principal positions, the other five I interviewed are not planning to pursue principal positions right now. One difference between these groups was a huge satisfaction with their current roles. While Tia, Sophia, and Greta are happy in their roles, they are looking forward to more than the other five women.

**Not a Principal.** While likely impactful for the other women Talia, Shana, Grace, Gabby, and Olivia all specifically discussed their own family needs as well as a satisfaction and ability to make an impact in education. Again, while these are things that are underlying for Tia, Sophia, and Greta these are items that specifically came up for the other five women.

Talia, Shana, Grace, Gabby and Olivia all selected in their survey that they would not be applying for principal positions. Upon discussion with each of them, the needs of their family came up as one of the reasons for this with each woman discussing wanting to meet family needs and be with family as the working hours of a principal are not conducive to their current lives.

Combined with this was a level of satisfaction in their current roles. All of these women discussed having satisfaction with their current positions and the ability to make a difference. The current roles these women have allow them to make an impact in education which is important to them while still balancing their other needs. While they may have obtained their license to make an impact, they have been able to make an impact in their current role.

Intentions of jobs in the future are important to each of them. These women know what their intentions are and the way they would like to move forward in their careers. A couple of women discussed in their interviews the impacts that non-teaching roles have on women wanting to go into the principal role.

**Non-Teaching Roles.** One area that came up several times while completing my interviewees was women in non-teaching roles and their confidence around being in positions overseeing teachers without the experience needed related to overseeing curriculum. Two of the women I interviewed specifically discussed needing more confidence in this area because of their different experiences. They saw the value in their experiences but found that they did not have the skills needed to discuss the curriculum. These women had been social workers prior to getting their licenses and felt that particularly in the curriculum area they had needed more experience. Talia mentioned specifically that she felt that she knew several women who had chosen not to go into the principal role because they did not feel they had the curriculum experience that was needed for the position. Similarly, Sophia discussed wanting to get more experience and knowledge about the curriculum before going into a principal position.

## **Conclusion**

Women choose to obtain their principalship for a variety of reasons that change based upon age, location, and having children. As can be seen from the wide array of data in this chapter, women choose whether or not to go into the position for individual and complicated reasons. The survey and interviews shared many women's stories and their experiences. Some of this data overlapped with each other and created patterns to be

observed. Several places showed where growth can be made as well as areas we are doing well supporting women on their administrative journey.

Using the data gathered in Chapter Four, Chapter Five creates conclusions about the data within this chapter. Additionally, major learnings will be shared along with connections to the literature, implications as well as research for the future. Finally, chapter five concludes this entire dissertation and connects back to the other areas of the dissertation.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusions

#### Introduction

Education has been a field thought of as a woman's career field for years; however, the principalship has lagged behind the number of teachers (Blount, 1998; Kafka, 2009; Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Lagemann, 2000). Growth has happened in the principalship and gotten closer but there is still room for improvement. Minnesota actually has a greater number of women in the teaching roles at 70% and a slightly smaller number who are in the principalship when compared to national averages (Kemper et al, 2023, National Education Statistics, 2019). Kemper et al. (2023) also showed that the part of the state women lived in made a difference in participation in the principalship with fewer women being principals in Greater Minnesota than in the rest of the state.

These differences led me to my research questions which specifically look at why there is a difference in the number of women who are teaching compared to the principalship. I explored the following questions:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*
3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

To understand these questions I completed a survey and interviews of women who

are currently licensed in the state of Minnesota as principals who are not working as principals. My study was a phenomenological study to understand if my conceptual framework, based upon my research, was representative of Minnesota. Based upon the literature, women typically face either barriers or positives when transitioning to the principalship. Table 5 below organizes the barriers and positives that are typically faced by women choosing to pursue the principalship. I wanted to learn more about who the women were who were licensed and not working as principals. I wanted to know what they were doing with their licenses.

**Table 5**

*Barriers versus Positives Pursuing the Principalship*

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Positives</b>
Lack of Professional Support	Professional Support
Supporting Families	Encouragement
Lack of Confidence and Training	Confidence and Training

As previously stated I completed a survey and interview. I sent the survey to the 7,000 licensed administrators in Minnesota to get information from a broad sampling of individuals. Upon completing the survey I chose eight women to interview. I selected three from Greater Minnesota, two from the Suburbs, two from the Twin Cities and one from Other. This helped me to understand individual people's experience at a deeper level. Each of these helped me to understand and answer my research questions.

The first portion of this chapter explores the major learnings of the chapter. I also share the implication, limitations, future results and finally the way I am communicating the final results. Throughout the chapter there will be connections between the

conclusions and those in chapter one.

### **Major Learnings**

There are four major learnings for my study: personal reasons for obtaining a license, choosing not to work, barriers and positives. Women seek licensure for individual reasons based upon their life and work experiences. When they choose not to work as principals there are many factors that lead to their decision, one of which is family dynamics. Family needs and personal reasons lead to more men in the principalship than women. Even though many reasons are highly personal, there are many things that can be done to support women wanting to go into the principalship such as having strong communities, mentors and working to share the workload. Each of these reasons fit into either barriers or positives women face when attempting to move into the principalship. While each of these is important to begin with, I will review the reasons that women obtain their license in the first place as my first learning.

#### ***Obtaining a License- Personal Reasons***

Women obtain their administrative license for reasons that are very personal to them but ultimately typically related to their work. Women want to make a difference in education and make an impact. Women obtain their licenses for credits either to advance on the pay scale or to gain credits for higher degrees. Finally, women obtain their licenses to become principals.

While the final reason may seem obvious, women do obtain their licenses to become principals. Three of the women I interviewed obtained their licenses for this reason and have applied to positions but have not obtained a position at this point. At some point in the future they plan to continue to apply but are not there yet. Some want to



gain more experience prior to becoming a principal. Others obtained their license to become an educational leader but not a principal.

Several women from my study are in leadership positions but are not working as principals but there are not licenses for these types of positions. For example several women indicated that they are coaches of teachers or work as directors of different departments. These women are using their licenses just not as principals. These women are working as leaders in a different capacity. Some were even required to have a principal license or it was preferred for them to have their license.

Something that came up over and over through both my survey and my interviews was that women obtained their license to make a difference or impact in education. This was one of the number one reasons given by those thinking about why women get their license. Over and over it came up that women want to make an impact in education. For some this means impacting policy change for others this means making an impact for the adults and making schools a better place to work. For a vast majority it meant making schools a better place for children. While the how of the impact or change was different it was very clear that women had a passion for education and making it the best place for all to be. These were not always directly stated but always implied through responses.

The final reason that came through was women wanting more education. In fact, three of the women I interviewed were also working on doctoral degrees currently. With a fourth already having hers. The first three discussed specifically getting their credits as a part of their degree. They were using these credits as a part of their programs. Another woman I interviewed discussed that she obtained her license because it was free to her while working in a curriculum position. The women I interviewed largely discussed

having the credits to think about their future and be open to opportunities. The two women who were closer to the end of their careers discussed that they had gotten their licenses for reasons similar to this and often talked to people who minimally were getting their licenses to go up on the pay scale. One interviewee works with students in an administrative licensure program and discussed that she often sees students who are getting their license for credits without intention of getting their full license. She also shared that later they often discuss going into administration. All of these reasons truly speak to my personal reasons for obtaining a license which I discussed in chapter one. From not wanting to be a principal to just getting the credits.

While women seek licensure for their own personal reasons. Wanting to make an impact on education was a theme that came out in both the survey and interview. Women obtain their licenses to make a difference in education. They want to make it a better place for students to be. Some women sought their license to gain more experience or to get a raise on the pay scale. Each woman had a unique reason for wanting to obtain their license. A few in my study obtained their license as a part of gaining credits for a doctorate. The three major reasons women personally choose to obtain a license are credits for advancement or obtaining a degree, making an impact in education and becoming a principal. Each of these reasons must remain strong if there is to be growth in the number of women in principal positions.

The next section again relates to the personal reasons women choose not to work as a principal but share the two biggest reasons women choose not to work as principals.

### ***Choosing Not To Work as a Principal***

Women often choose not to work in the principalship for personal reasons. The two big reasons that came up in my study were the dynamics of their own family and truthfully being happy in their current positions. Each of these reasons came through in both the surveys and the interviews.

Many of the women I interviewed and the surveys I reviewed discussed that their current family situation did not allow for them to be in principal positions. Either they had young children who needed them at home or they were single and needed to be available for their children. The women I interviewed who were in leadership positions but not in the principalship also discussed the fact that they had lots of family support that enabled them to be in the position they were in. Through the surveys the comments strongly suggested that women need to feel like they have family settled before advancing in their career.

While not explicitly stated many of the women found happiness and success in their current career outside of the principalship. They found alternative leadership positions where they could make the impact that they wanted to. Whether they were directors or Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) they found a way to make changes and impacts on education without leading a building. They were content and felt they had the impact that they wanted in their current position. They could do all of the things they wanted to from where they were at without the added stressors that come with being a principal.

Women choose to stay in their current positions due to family dynamics as well as being happy in their current position. Women can make the impact from where they are at

which leads to them staying in their current position. This showed me that women are in leadership positions but not necessarily in the positions that are tracked specifically when looking at national statistics of leadership positions within education. The next section specifically discusses barriers that women face when thinking about making the move from obtaining their license to going into the principalship.

### ***Barriers to Pursuing the Principalship***

Barriers that women face when going into the principalship was a major portion of my study. Some women explicitly stated barriers they faced while others were more subtle. The three areas that I identified through the literature of lack of professional support, supporting families and a lack of training and confidence certainly came through in my study.

When discussing professional support it came out more subtly and was discussed in hiring processes and in who is selected for different types of opportunities. Some discussed the gender dynamics that still exist that see men as leaders before women. This creates an impact on who is seen as a leader and given opportunities. Some suggested ensuring that women are asked into leadership positions. Two women in my interviews specifically discussed hiring committees having preference for men or seeing men as leaders. This was also a theme that emerged through the surveys as well. When women were asked specifically why there were more women than men in leadership positions they often pointed to family dynamics as well as who is thought as a leader.

While others specifically discussed that at times there are not as many expectations of men when it comes to raising children making it easier for them to go into leadership roles. One of my interviewees discussed the simple fact that when babies are

newborns women need to “feed the babies.” She specifically pointed out that at a time in women's careers when they are attempting to move into these positions they can not because of family dynamics. Another interviewee discussed this as well in her experience with others. Finally, two other interviewees discussed having family support as the reason they were able to be in positions of leadership. This will be discussed further in the positives.

Women's own confidence in their leadership abilities came up as a reason that they were not in leadership roles. This came through in women stating that they needed to gain more experience before they obtained a principal role. It also came up when women discussed their practicums and how they would move forward in their roles with a need to gain experience first. Those in leadership positions discussed that other women did not apply because they felt they did not have the experience. One of my interviewees even shared that she thought women were their own biggest barriers when thinking about their own experiences.

The three barriers that came out through my literature review held true in my study. At times family can be a barrier for women. Similarly, women's own confidence in their ability and training can be a barrier for going into the principalship. Finally, there is still a need to invite women and some women have experiences with hiring practices where they are not selected because of their gender. Each of these need to be considered in depth in order to make a change in who becomes a leader within education.

### ***Positives to Pursuing the Principalship***

Through both the interview and the survey the same positive supports that came up including professional support, family support and having confidence and training.

One additional potential support that came up was sharing the workload both personally and professionally once women become principals.

Many women discussed having supportive mentors, strong communities and working to share the load as supports to get more women into leadership positions. These professional impacts had an impact on women even obtaining their licenses. Women talked about being asked to be in leadership positions and having positive mentors to ensure they were able to go into the next leadership role. When women have these experiences they feel more confident.

Family was listed as a major support. In the survey almost all women stated that they have received support from their family. For each woman this looked different but is critical for women in their confidence in being a leader. Two women I interviewed were in leadership positions but not working as principals both shared that having supportive partners and families were critical to their ability to be leaders within school districts. Figuring out childcare made it possible for these women to be in leadership roles.

Gaining individual confidence was a big support for women as well. Having experiences made women feel confident. One of my interviewees discussed wishing she had experience not during COVID because this made it challenging to have the right experience in interviews. Others discussed gaining confidence in lower level positions before taking on running a building. This would give them the confidence to feel as though they could lead the building.

The final item that came up to support women was sharing the workload amongst people as late hours of a principal can often get in the way. As family is a major reason women choose not to go into the principalship this was often related to the workload of a

principal as well as the hours worked. If there was a way to ensure that principals are not working tons of hours and could share the load this would be a positive to getting women into the principalship.

These four major learnings of women not being in administration for personal reasons, there being many supports that can help women, why women choose not be in the principalship as well as why more men are in the principalship connect closely with the Table 1 sharing the barriers and supports that women have. Meaning that many of the conclusions I was able to draw connect to the literature. The next section will share the connections to the literature along with areas that do not match.

### **Revisiting the Literature**

A large portion of the literature that served as a foundation for this study focused upon the barriers and supports for women in leadership roles both in and out of education. Much of the literature matched the information that I found in my research, especially the barriers women face and the positives that support women. The principal pipeline is the other area that I found connections to but not something that women specifically discussed. I was able to see where they were in the pipeline but many were happy where they were at without intentions to move to the next area, something that was not discussed in the literature I reviewed. Kemper et al. (2023) noticed a difference in the number of women working in the metro area versus Greater Minnesota, my interviewees shared the reasons for this potential difference.

Specifically my research supported the barriers in the literature. I found that women's families have a big impact on when they decide to begin their careers. This supported the research done by Cochran (2021), Caldwell (2022), Duncan (2013), Kruse

and Krumm (2016), Lovie (2018), Sherman and Beaty (2010) and Wyland (2016). Additionally matching the research of Bailes and Guthery, (2020), Bronars (2015), Kemper et al, (2023) Kruse and Krumm (2016), Rousmaniere (2007), Yadav and Lata (2018) I found that women need to gain confidence in their abilities. Finally, when looking at the finding professional supports matching the research of Blount (1998), Cochran (2021), Ehrich (1994), Lovie (2018) Kemper et al., (2023), Kruse and Krumm (2016), Peters (2010), Sperandio (2015) and Yadav and Lata (2018) I also found the not having a mentor or a network is extremely important and can be challenging for women to find on the professional end. In fact, the professional support received the lowest ranking of any area in my survey.

Similarly, my research supported the information previously found that are positive supports for women. As Cochran (2021), Duncan (2013) and Ehrich stated, mentors play a critical role in ensuring new principals receive the support they need to get into the position and feel confident in their roles. Similarly supporting Arriaga et al., (2020), Ehrich (1994), and Sperandio (2015) I found that mentors can help support women finding networks. Finally, my research found that encouragement from family was something women had received in their family supporting the literature of Kruse and Krumm (2016) and Simons (2020). Finally, Kruse and Kumm (2016) found that training in lower-level positions was important which matches the feelings of the women in my research.

Something that was quite different from the literature was something Blount (1998) found when researching the history of women in the principalship. Blount (1998)



found that women were discouraged from both their family and outside sources. My research found that almost all women were supported by family members in my research.

The final area that my research extended was the thinking around needing to continue the research into women who obtain their license and then do not pursue the principalship. In their study Lovie (2018) stated, “Continuing the inquiry into why teachers pursue administrative certification and then do not pursue the principalship would help to more fully understand the problem of practice” (p. 139). My research extended this and found that women are working in leadership positions but not necessarily in the principalship. Others including Davis et al. (2017), Perrone et al. (2022) and Bailes and Guthery (2022) each also discussed the need for greater understanding of the principal pipeline. While my research helps support this gap there is still room for growth. This and additional future research will be discussed later in the chapter. The next section will review the implications for research.

### **Implications**

This study’s results have implications for current principals, those who mentor women, and finally women who are considering going into the principalship. These things came up for me as implications for the future. An awareness of how leaders are identified in education needs to be put in place as well as how licenses are obtained. Finally, there needs to be support put into place and barriers removed for women to go into leadership roles.

For those who are currently in principal roles, it is important to recognize leadership potential and encourage women into principal roles. While understanding that women may need support to finish their hours as well as challenges that accurately match

the needs of the principalship. This ties directly into those who mentor women obtaining their principal roles. Helping them to gain the confidence to go into administration is important to ensuring that they know they are ready and have the experiences needed to be in principal roles. By simply asking women and then supporting them in the process can be a valuable way for more women to become leaders. Thinking about who can be a leader and who should be a leader needs to be well thought out.

When creating licensure programs there needs to be support put in place for women to obtain their licenses as well as a commitment to getting women into the right practicums. Women shared that being able to do things virtually was a support that helped to get licensure. This is something that should be kept. When potential candidates are doing their practicums they need to have access to work that matches the needs they will see when going into school. Many women feel they need more experience before becoming a principal. While there are many specifics needed in the practicum building it ensures women get out of their comfort zone and are challenged may give them the confidence and belief in themselves to move into the principalship.

Finally, for all those who work in education women need to be supported on this journey. No matter what stage of the journey to the principalship women are on they need to be supported and a change needs to be made for mothers. Whether this is helping those go into the principalship that a work life balance is possible or through figuring out a way to create childcare that works for principals. Figuring out how to support women with childcare is imperative to ensuring that women are able to go into the principalship earlier.

Women who obtain their license need to recognize that they have the skills to do the job. Many of the leadership positions that women are already in connect amazingly to the principalship. Meaning that many women who think they need to build their confidence have the skills and need to take the leap and be encouraged to take the leap into the principalship.

While there are several implications for this study there are also limitations to this study. The next section reviews the limitations of this study.

### **Limitations**

There were three limitations to my study. The first limitation was the number of responses to the survey I received. The second was a change to my protocol because of the responses I received. The final limitation was during the interview there were several women whose positions did not fit in with my questions exactly and a couple more who had intentions for the future that did not match my questions.

I received a staggering high number of responses to my survey. While over five hundred took the survey I had also four hundred who completed the entire survey. With my hope of one hundred this made data analysis challenging. While I used all of the data it made it challenging with the comments from all the questions.

Additionally, I had intended to send out my survey a second time; however, this was not needed. I thought I would need to resend my survey to get to the number of responses I wanted but this was not necessary. Before I had sent out all of the emails I was at the number of survey responses I needed.

Finally, within my interview questions I had a section where women were to answer the questions based upon whether they wanted to be a principal or not a principal.

The answers women gave throughout the interview made me realize that most of their intentions were simply not this binary. They could not give a simple answer based upon this because their intentions for the future were more complex than this. In this same category a few women worked in consulting currently which also made these same questions slightly challenging because they were not working in a school which is how I worded my questions.

The number of responses and not needing a second request created two of the limitations within my study. The third limitation of women not being able to give a binary response as well as those working outside of education lead right into my future research.

### **Future Research**

There were four areas that came up as a need for future research. The first is a deeper exploration of women who have chosen to work in fields related to education but outside of the traditional school system. Another is to explore those who have not worked as teachers. Mentoring relationships and how these impact the choice to move into the principalship. Finally, there are several ways to be a leader within education without being a principal. While these are not counted on national statistics there are many women working in these positions who have leadership credentials.

While interviewing two of my interviewees they expressed their experience of not coming from a classroom background and how this affected their confidence. One interviewee also shared that she had several friends and colleagues to share this same concern. Both interviewees felt they did not initially have the academic experience needed to supervise teachers. This may be something that should be explored about the requirements for field experience. The other way this should be explored is through those

who have come from social work, counselor or other behavioral backgrounds and how this impacts their transition to the principalship.

Again I had two interviewees who were currently working in related fields to education. With one working in a service cooperative and another working for a company that creates testing materials for state departments. Women who have their principal license and are in leadership positions related to education is another area that should be explored. These two women were not required but it was certainly a credential that helped in their position. One of the two leads a team as well so women who are leading but not in K-12 education is another area that should be explored in depth.

The mentoring relationship between would be another area that can be explored further. While there are many articles that reference the importance of mentoring there are few who explore the relationship while women are attempting to obtain principal positions. This is an area that could use exploration.

Finally, those who are in education and working as leaders but not counted in the traditional statistics should be considered. Many of the women in my study who have principal licenses are in fact working in leadership positions. They are just not positions that are typically counted in national statistics. How these positions are classified when looking at how many women are in leadership positions should be considered. For example, several women indicated that they work at the director level, this is not an area that is counted as leadership when looking at statistics; however, it is a leadership position. Without understanding who leaders at the district level are it will be difficult to understand how many women truly are in leadership positions within education.

There are four areas that need to be explored further in the future including exploring those who have not worked as a teacher and those who are working outside of education but related to education and those in leadership positions within schools but who are principals. Their unique leadership paths may help to understand how women select their career paths and the impact this has on the number of women in the principalship. Understanding deeper of how women can impact one another as they mentor each other could benefit the understanding of who comes into principal positions. Finally understanding who is working in leadership at all levels of the school district will help to understand how many women are working in leadership within education.

The next section shares how I will communicate my results with a variety of people.

### **Communicating the Results**

My results will be communicated in three different ways. I plan to share with those who asked and those at Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP). At the end of my survey, I asked who would like a copy of my results. There were about one hundred people who said they would like this. When I asked MASSP for data about their members they also asked that I share my results when my research is completed. To share with those at MASSP and those who have asked for my research I shared my dissertation and a one-pager that holds the conclusions as the highlights of the dissertation. A copy of the one-pager can be found in Appendix E. Finally, my dissertation is available through the Digital Commons online at Hamline.

## Conclusion

Throughout 2023 and into 2024 women have dominated the headlines and have made big moves into leadership in many different fields. While education is often thought of as the leader for women and the place women can be in charge, there is room for growth in the number of women in leadership particularly when compared to the number of women who are teachers. This study attempted to shed light where growth could be made for more women to become principals.

My phenomenological study of women who have their principal license but are not working as principals was based on my own interest in seeing what women are doing with their licenses. Particularly when I found out that women obtain their license at a greater pace than men (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). Similarly, my interest grew when I found out that Minnesota has more educators that are teachers and fewer who are working as principals when compared to national averages (Kemper et al., 2023; National Education Statistics, 2019).

To complete my research I completed surveys and interviews of women who are licensed as principals in Minnesota. Based upon the large number of survey responses I received it is clear that this is an area of interest not only for me but for many women throughout the state. Through both the surveys and interviews these license-holders share their experiences with me to help me answer my research questions:

1. *What are the professional aspirations of women who choose to seek principal licensure?*
2. *When women with administrative licensure choose not to work as principals, what factors contribute to their decision?*

3. *What accounts for the disproportionality of women in administrative positions as compared to principal license-holders?*

I found that I had four major learnings that connected to my literature as well as my own personal interests in this topic. These major learnings are women have personal reasons for obtaining a license, women are choosing not to work as principals for a variety of reasons, women face many barriers and there are several positives or supports that get women into the principalship.

When thinking directly about not only my conclusions but also my research questions each question came with its own answers. My first question asked what are the professional aspirations of women who seek licensure. When reviewing and looking at my questions I found that each woman I either surveyed or interviewed had their own unique reason for getting their license. Many wanted to make an impact while others wanted to be open to the experiences that could be an option for them.

My second research question was looking to understand what factors continue to women not working as principals. Again women had a variety of personal reasons for not working as principals. The most common answer was caring for family. A second reason that I did not find in the literature was that women are already excited about their positions and enjoy the positions they are working in. They had found the right fit for them and wanted to continue. They were able to match the reasons they had gotten their license in the position they already had.

Finally my last question sought to answer why we have a disproportionality in the number of women in administrative positions when compared to the number who are license holders. Many women are in fact in leadership positions within education. They



are just not in the positions that are counted for leadership such as superintendents and principals. Many of them are in director positions, coordinator positions and many other leadership positions within education. This makes me believe there is a slight disconnect between the numbers that show how many women are leaders in education and how many women are leading in education.

Each woman's journey outside the principalship is unique and is a journey that many women I surveyed and interviewed will still be on for years to come. With the passion they shared I hope there will be continued growth in the number of women in the principalship in future years.

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## Appendix A

### Participant Survey



Section 1 of 9

### Principal License Survey

Please complete the following form. Thank you for taking time to complete my survey. The first page is your informed consent. You must complete this in order to move forward in the survey.

⋮

This research is being conducted in collaboration with a EdD Doctorate at Hamline University. This constitutes the informed Consent Form, a copy of which can also be obtained by any participant by emailing [kbritton01@hamline.edu](mailto:kbritton01@hamline.edu). Participants may also choose to print this page for their records.

This form provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research participant.

If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the student researcher for more information.

You should feel free to discuss your potential participation with anyone you choose, such as family or friends, before you decide to participate.

Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research team has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

**Title of Research Study:** Women with Administrative Licensure: Their Journey Outside the Principalship

**Student Researcher and email address:** Katie Britton, [kbritton01@hamline.edu](mailto:kbritton01@hamline.edu)

**Principal Investigator or Faculty Advisor, Hamline affiliation/title, phone number(s), and email address:** Trish Harvey, Assistant Professor, 651-523-2532, [tharvey03@hamline.edu](mailto:tharvey03@hamline.edu)

**What is the research topic, the purpose of the research, and the rationale for why this study is being conducted?** The research topic is women with administrative licenses. The purpose of this study is to understand where the women who have their principal licenses are currently working if they are not working as a principal. The rationale for this study is that women have their principal license but may choose not to pursue being a principal.

**What will you be asked to do if you decide to participate in this research study?** Participants will be asked to complete a single electronic survey.

**What will be your time commitment to the study if you participate?** The participant should expect to spend no more than 15 minutes to complete the entire survey.

**Who is funding this study?** This research is being conducted without funding.

**What are the possible discomforts and risks of participating in this research study?** By participating in this study, there is a small chance of feeling uncomfortable with the questions asked. There is also a potential of the risk of loss of confidentiality. Steps will be taken to mitigate the risk of confidentiality including the choice to include one's name. Names included will be stored in a secure location. In addition, there may be risks that are currently unknown or unforeseeable. Please contact me at [kbritton01@hamline.edu](mailto:kbritton01@hamline.edu) or my faculty advisor Trish Harvey at [tharvey03@hamline.edu](mailto:tharvey03@hamline.edu) to discuss this if you wish.

**How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your data and research records be protected?**

I will be the only one with access to this survey. Names will only be included if you choose to later participate in an interview or wish to obtain a copy of the results.

**How many people will most likely be participating in this study, and how long is the entire study expected to last?** There will be 100 participants in this study. The entire study is expected to last between three and six months.

**What are the possible benefits to you and/or to others from your participation in this research study?** The possible benefits to those participating are a greater understanding of women who choose to obtain their administrative licenses and a better understanding of why they not go into principal positions.

**If you choose to participate in this study, will it cost you anything?** Beyond a brief amount of time, participation does not cost anything.

**Will you receive any compensation for participating in this study?** There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

**What if you decide that you do not want to take part in this study? What other options are available to you if you decide not to participate or to withdraw?** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study, and your refusal will not influence your current or future relationships with Hamline University. In addition, if significant new findings develop during the course of the research that may affect your willingness to continue participation, we will provide that information to you.

**How can you withdraw from this research study, and who should you contact if you have any questions or concerns?** You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled. If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should tell me, or contact me at [kbritton01@hamline.edu](mailto:kbritton01@hamline.edu) or my faculty advisor Trish Harvey at [tharvey03@hamline.edu](mailto:tharvey03@hamline.edu). You should also call or email the Faculty Advisor for any questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints about the research and your experience as a participant

in the study. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at Hamline University at [IRB@hamline.edu](mailto:IRB@hamline.edu).

**Are there any anticipated circumstances under which your participation may be terminated by the researcher(s) without your consent?** None expected or anticipated for this brief survey of educators in Minnesota.

**Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?** The researchers will gain no benefit from your participation in this study beyond the publication and/or presentation of the results obtained from the study.

**Where will this research be made available once the study is completed?** The research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository and that it may be published or used in other ways, such as in conference presentations or published in research journals. Participants may request a copy to be sent to them at the end of the survey as well.

**Has this research study received approval from the organization/school/district where the research will be conducted?** Participants of this survey will be educators throughout Minnesota. This is not approved or endorsed by any organization, school, or district.

**Will your information be used in any other research studies or projects?** No - your information collected as part of this research, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used in or distributed for future research studies.

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits, and the risks that are involved in this research study:

/s/ Katie Britton

By checking YES below and clicking NEXT, you consent to participate in this survey. You may stop taking the survey at any time if you decide you no longer want to continue. If you would like to discuss concerns or questions about this survey, you may contact the student researcher at [kbritton01@hamline.edu](mailto:kbritton01@hamline.edu) or the Faculty Advisor for this research project at [tharvey03@hamline.edu](mailto:tharvey03@hamline.edu). (If you do not want to participate, simply close the form and disregard the message. If you begin the survey and decide you no longer want to participate, simply close the form; your answers will not be recorded.)

☐ Yes

☐ No



## Section 2 of 9

## Principal Status



The first few questions of this survey are designed to ensure that you are an appropriate participant for this study. Depending on how you answer each question you will be directed to complete the survey or to continue to the next section. If you are asked to complete the survey and believe this is an error please choose the back button and change your answer. Otherwise please submit the survey.

Are you currently licensed as a principal in Minnesota? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

After section 2 Continue to next section



## Section 3 of 9

## Gender Identity



Please answer the following question about your gender identity.

What is your gender? \*

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other...

After section 3 Continue to next section



## Section 4 of 9

## Current Position



This section will have you explain your current position. Before beginning you will be asked if you are in a principal position.

Are you currently a principal or assistant principal? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

After section 4 Continue to next section



## Section 5 of 9

## Current Position- Continued



In this section, please tell me more about your current position.

What is your current title? \*

Short answer text

.....

Were you required to have a K-12 principal license for this position? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not required, but preferred
- ☐ Other...

How long have you been in your current position? (Please list in years ie 6 months = 0.5) \*

Short answer text

If it was preferred or required for you to have an administrative license, why was it preferred?  
(Choose all that apply)

- ☐ Lead teacher development
- ☐ Oversee budgets
- ☐ Other...

Are you satisfied that you obtained your principal license?

- |                                            | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     |                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Completely dissatisfied (I wish I had not) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Completely satisfied (I am very happy I got my license) |

## Section 6 of 9

## Previously a Principal



Description (optional)

Prior to your current position, have you ever been a principal? \*

☐ Yes☐ No

If yes, why did you leave the principalship?

Long answer text

## Section 7 of 9

## Applying to the principalship



Description (optional)



Have you applied for a principal position? \*

☐ Yes☐ No

If no, why not?

Long answer text

How likely are you to apply for a principal position? \*

	1	2	3	4	
Very unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very likely

⋮

Why do you believe women choose NOT to apply for principal positions? \*

Long answer text

Why do you believe women choose to apply for principal positions? \*

Long answer text

## Section 8 of 9

## Barriers and Positives



Please rate the following statements based on your professional aspirations after receiving your principal license.

I received professional support. \*



	1	2	3	4	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

My family supports me. \*

	1	2	3	4	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

I received encouragement from those around me. \*

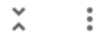
	1	2	3	4	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

Please write any comments here that you would like to add.

Short answer text

## Section 9 of 9

## Demographic Information



Please answer the following questions to give me a little better idea of who you are.

How long have you held your principal license? (Please list in years ie 6 months = 0.5) \*

Short answer text

What age did you obtain your principal license? (Please list in years ie 6 months = 0.5) \*

Short answer text

How long have you worked in education? (Please list in years ie 6 months = 0.5) \*

Short answer text



Do you have children? \*

- ☐ Yes- currently living at home
- ☐ Yes- currently not living at home
- ☐ No

Are you currently married? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other...

Where do you work? \*

- ☐ Twin Cities
- ☐ Suburbs of Twin Cities
- ☐ Greater Minnesota
- ☐ Other...

What is your age? \*

Short answer text

If you would be willing to speak to me more about your position and job aspirations please leave your email below.

Short answer text

Would you like a copy of my research results? If yes, please add your email address.

Short answer text



## **Appendix B**

### **Participant Interview Questions**

#### Interview Questions

##### Obtaining Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. Before we begin I would like to remind you of the purpose of the study and I will also obtain consent to being interviewed. This study seeks to understand why women have obtained a K-12 Principal license but are currently not working as a principal. The following questions will seek to understand not only your story but why other women may not be working as principals.

1. Do you have a copy of the consent?
2. Have you read the consent form?
3. Do you have any questions about the consent form?
4. Do you consent to being interviewed?

##### Demographic information

5. What positions have you worked in education?
6. What is your current position? Were you required to have an administrative license for this position?
7. How long have you worked in education?
8. What area of the state do you live in?

##### Pursuing the principalship

9. Why do you think some women pursue the principalship and others do not?

10. Do you have or see any barriers for women pursuing the principalship? If so, what are they? How might these be removed?
11. How can the number of women pursuing the principalship be increased?
12. What are your career aspirations?
13. Why did you obtain your principal license?
14. Why are you currently not working as a principal?

Following this question I will ask two different sets of questions based upon why they obtained their license. One based upon wanting to be in a principal position and not being in one and one based upon obtaining a license for other reasons.

	<b>To become a principal</b>	<b>Other</b>
15.	Have you applied to become a principal? Why or Why not?	If in a leadership position, does this position work on a teacher contract?
16.	What has that process been like? Please explain.	Do others with this position have a principal license?

17. Based upon the survey, I will likely ask participants to expand on their answers to why they have chosen to apply or not apply for positions.

Final questions for all participants:

18. Do you believe the area you live in has any impact on your ability to pursue

leadership positions? Why or why not?

19. Is there anything else I should know about this topic? Or anything else that I missed in my questions?

If anything else comes up for you please feel free to email me additional information.

## **Appendix C**

### **Invitation to Participate in Survey**

#### **First Request**

Hello,

I am an EdD student at Hamline studying principals. You are receiving this email because according to PELSB you are currently licensed as a principal in the state of Minnesota. I am hoping that you will take about 15 minutes to complete the following survey for me. The first page of this survey involves an informed consent. If you would like a copy for your records you can find it [here](#). The following pages include questions to help determine if you meet the criteria for my study. Please complete all questions until you are asked to submit and then submit the survey.

You can find a link to the survey [here](#).

Thank you for your time!

Katie Britton

#### **Second Request**

Hello,

I am an EdD student at Hamline studying principals. You are receiving this email because according to PELSB you are currently licensed as a principal in the state of Minnesota. I

am hoping that you will take about 15 minutes to complete the following survey for me. The first page of this survey involves an informed consent. If you would like a copy for your records you can find it [here](#). The following pages include questions to help determine if you meet the criteria for my study. Please complete all questions until you are asked to submit and then submit the survey.

You can find a link to the survey [here](#). If you find that the survey is already closed for you that means you have already completed the survey. Thank you very much for helping me!

Thank you for your time!

Katie Britton

## **Appendix D**

### **Invitation to Participate in Interview**

Hello,

My name is Katie Britton and I am an EdD student at Hamline who is researching women in administration. You recently completed a survey for me on this topic where you indicated that you would be willing to be interviewed further on this topic. First of all, I want to thank you for taking the time to participate in my survey. I greatly appreciate it!

Second, if you are still willing to participate in an interview please follow this link to review the [informed consent](#). This includes all the information you need to know about my research.

If you agree with the information in the informed consent please use this link to sign up for a 30-minute interview with me. By signing up for an interview you are indicating that you have read and agree to the informed consent included above. Once you are signed up I will email you the informed consent to be signed and returned before our interview. In addition, I will email you the interview questions.

Thank you for considering!

Katie Britton

## Appendix E

### One-Pager

# WOMEN WITH THEIR ADMINISTRATIVE LICENSURE: THEIR JOURNEY OUTSIDE THE PRINCIPALSHIP

## Major Findings

### OBTAINING A LICENSE

Women choose to obtain their license for personal reasons including but not limited to making a difference or impact, to gain credit or to be a principal.



### CHOOSING NOT TO WORK

When women decide not to work as principals it is typically for two major reasons. First women are supporting their families. Second, they are satisfied with their current position.

### BARRIERS

Women face barriers when working on obtaining their licenses. These include supporting their families, not having confidence and a lack of professional support.



### SUPPORTS

There are a variety of supports that can help women go into the principalship including family support, professional support and having confidence in their own abilities.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT HAMLINE DIGITAL COMMONS  
AT: [HTTPS://DIGITALCOMMONS.HAMLIN.EDU/HSE\\_EDD/](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/HSE_EDD/)  
BY DR. KATIE BRITTON