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Kelly K. Coash-Johnson

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, kcoashjohnson@gmail.com

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Factors Affecting School Administrators Decision to Join and Maintain Membership in a
Professional Association

by

Kelly K. Coash-Johnson

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Masters of Arts

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Larry L. Dlugosh

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FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS DECISION TO JOIN AND
MAINTAIN MEMBERSHIP IN A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

Kelly K. Coash-Johnson, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2011

Advisor: Larry L. Dlugosh

This paper explored factors that influence school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrator's decision not to join a professional association was also explored. The research showed the relationship between, age, gender, dues payment, attitude and importance of benefits. Results from this study will be significant to recruitment and retention for professional educational associations such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). In addition, information gathered from open-ended questions as well as other survey questions from both members and non-members helped the researcher determine other challenges that have an impact on school administrators and their field that are not being addressed by the association currently.

The data suggests there is a relationship with regard to age and gender. Members were older than nonmembers and members are more male than female. The results of the study indicated payment of dues was a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, the study illustrated attitudes towards association are not a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in professional associations. There was a relationship between "importance of benefits" for members and nonmembers of a professional association. Additional research is needed in

order to further determine the relationship between benefits and involvement in a professional association.

Keywords: professional association, membership, association benefits

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Professional associations are organizations with membership consisting of professionals with similar job responsibilities, who have received comparable educational training, and may possess a professional license or certification” (Thackeray, Neiger & Roe, 2005, p. 337). Associations have a unique opportunity to serve a membership while helping to better enhance the professionalism of the field. Some examples of professional education associations in Nebraska are the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), the Nebraska School Boards Association (NSBA) and the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA). The professional organization for school administrators in Nebraska is the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). NCSA is an umbrella organization that represent the views of their members. Organizations that are represented under the umbrella are; the Nebraska Association of School Administrators (NASA); Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP); Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals (NSASSP); Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors (NASES) and Nebraska Association of School Business Officials (NASBO). As an umbrella organization of more than 2,000 school administrators, NCSA thrives to partner in developing excellence in educational leadership. Although school administrators are more aware of problem areas in schools than anyone else, their voices can be drowned out by special interests in politics. There is a need for concentrating the knowledge, judgment, and influence of all administrators in matters affecting the quality of education in the state. NCSA provides strength in numbers to make their voices heard in educational matters in Nebraska. The

objectives of this organization are: to provide an opportunity for continuous study of the mutual professional challenges facing school administrators; to make its members aware of public educational issues; to provide a forum for the continuous communication and cooperation in matters of mutual concern to all levels of school administrators; and to cooperate with other organizations in the promotion of effective education and to render appropriate professional assistance to the membership upon request. (NCSA Constitution). The expertise and knowledge that school administrators possess obligate them to assume leadership roles in their community and for their schools and students. Professional associations such as NCSA are available to help.

As an association, it is the goal of NCSA to focus on collective benefits of its members and encourage involvement. As a not for profit corporation, it is important to keep a close watch on income and expenses. Membership dues revenue plays a large role in the overall fiscal health of the organization. Understanding why someone joins and remains a member of the association can help in keeping a financially sound organization.

There is evidence that many professional associations are struggling to maintain membership and are initiating innovating ideas and programs to survive financially. According to Lisa Junker who interviewed seven association leaders about what associations are doing to prepare for changes in the economic environment, many are tightening budgets, decreasing staff and enhancing some of the existing services to produce more member benefits and income lost by dues revenue. (Junker, 2011, p. 11-13) After feeling the effects of a declining membership, associations like the National Auctioneers Association (NAA) changed the way they managed their association to

become relevant and began providing benefits to a large group of members' verses individual members. The changes were accomplished through online publications, online education and social networking. (Combest, 2010, p. 29-30) Some believe the issue facing struggling associations is generational diversity. The belief is younger generations do not find value in association, which result in a decline of membership in organizations. "People under the age of 30 are not joining associations at the same rate as people older than 30." (Dalton, 2009, p.26). This also means that the under-30 age group is underrepresented in many associations.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrator's decision not to join a professional association were also explored. Such information could provide important data for strengthening organizational membership and expand representation within the profession. The research was based off a study conducted by the American Society of Association Executives and the Center for Association Leadership in Washington D.C. The results of that study revealed similarities in how professionals, no matter what their occupation, view associations. Results from this study are significant to recruitment and retention for professional educational associations such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). In addition, information gathered from open-ended questions as well as other survey questions from both members and non-members will help the researcher determine other challenges that have an impact on school administrators and their field that are not being addressed by the association currently.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?
2. Is there a relationship between "who pays for dues membership" and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association?
3. Is there a relationship between "attitude towards associations" and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association
4. Is there a relationship between "importance of benefits" for members and non-members of a professional association?

In addition, the researcher explored the following assumption to gain a better understanding of professional associations as a whole and the personal benefits gained by being a member of a professional association.

1. Individuals gain value and generate value for those who share a common profession.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), member and non-members, the following definitions were provided:

School Administrator: Individuals who are practicing school administrators in education in Nebraska.

Active NCSA member: Active members shall be individuals who are practicing administrators in education in Nebraska and who have joined NCSA as a member.

Association: Any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy.

Limitations

The population of this study was limited to Nebraska school administrators in the public school sector. Individuals were selected by their official title in their individual school districts. This study was done in one state with one educational association.

Significance of Study

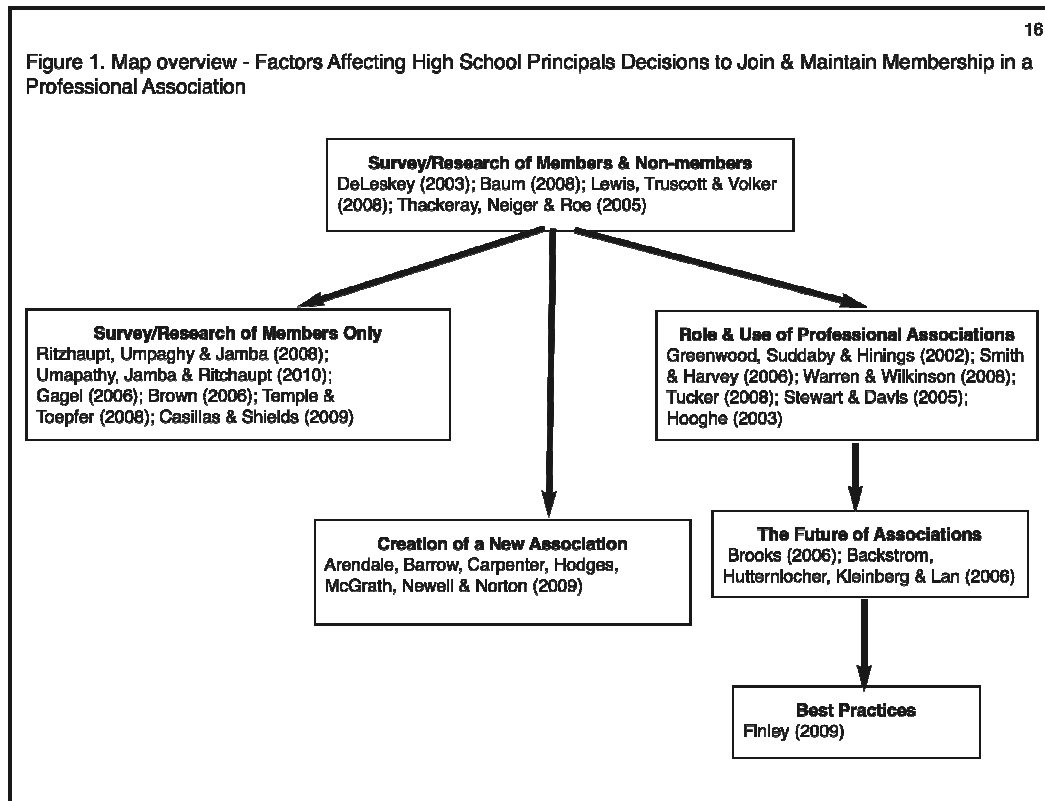
This study examined both members and non-members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. The research uncovered key insights with strategic importance. An association must balance “what’s in it for me” with “what’s in it for us.” This study can help determine if members feel they accrue benefits individually and or collectively. Information from this study will be able to help leaders understand where they are out of sync with current members and potential members and by how much. Are the lists of benefits provided important to the members? Are the benefits for the good of the association more important than the personal benefits offered to the individual? Information collected from this study showed how an individual’s membership dues were being paid for and the impact it had on the decision to join. With a potential shortfall in funding for schools and members, will non-payment of dues by a school result in fewer members for the association? In addition, information from this study can be used to help plan future professional development events and activities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrator's decision not to join a professional association were also explored. As such, this chapter focuses on a review of the literature of other associations that have undergone similar studies as well as literature on the future of associations and their roles. There is evidence that many professional associations are struggling to maintain membership. Through this literature review, I was able to determine that there are many similarities for this phenomenon. In addition, the literature illustrated a shift in the roles and uses of professional associations. As illustrated in Table 1, six factors emerged and included: Surveys of Members & Nonmembers, Surveys of Members Only; Creation of New Association, Role and Use of Professional Associations, The Future of Association and Best Practices. (Table 1)

Table 1

Literature Map**Survey/Research for Members and Nonmembers**

DeLeskey (2003) indicated that professional nursing organizations represent the interests of the members and form supports for political participation at the local and national level. Yet, membership in professional nursing associations continues to decline. DeLeskey developed a research hypothesis that stated, “Perianesthesia nurses join ASPAN because they perceive that the benefits of the organization exceed the cost of membership. Perianesthesia nurses do not renew membership in ASPAN because they perceive that the benefits of the organization do not exceed the cost of membership” (DeLeskey, 2003, p. 11). Through a Professional Association Membership Questionnaire

(PAMQ), mailed to 239 current and former members of the association, DeLeskey was able to demonstrate the high cost of dues was cited most frequently as the reason for nonmembership. Nonmembers believed that the benefits offered by the organization did not exceed the cost of membership in terms of time, effort, commitment, and financial requirements. The professional benefits that nonmembers seek are apparently not being derived from membership in a professional association.

Like DeLeskey, Baum (2008) wanted to explore the decision to join or not to join a professional association due to a problem of declining membership in professional organizations. Baum perceived that membership in a professional association of school counselors provided many opportunities and benefits. The author mailed a survey to 1,342 individuals in the profession of school counseling in one southwestern state. The survey included both a quantitative and a qualitative aspect. A total of 450 surveys were completed and returned. The major results of this study emphasized four main themes that influenced membership. They included; personal or individual characteristics, work environment, professional organization (including professional conferences) and profession or lack of professional status. The perception is that associations need to look at individual members and the needs they have that are intangible as well as tangible. Members look for benefits that would increase value to themselves and their organization such as prestige, opportunities to present and ability to take on leadership roles.

In the above studies, samples for surveying were gathered through membership lists. Lewis, Truscott, and Volker (2008) were concerned that surveys with membership lists from state and/or national professional organizations were not accurate when gathering data on the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) members

and non-members. They conducted a phone survey of 124 practicing school psychologists to determine if the following assumptions were true. 1) Membership lists provide a reasonable approximation of overall population. 2) There are no meaningful differences between members and nonmembers on important variables or themes of interest with respect to membership. In addition, the Lewis study had a secondary purpose of gathering information related to alternative assessments and the IDEA reauthorization. A sample of selected schools were contacted by phone and researchers simply asked to speak to the school psychologists on staff. Participants were selected randomly from across the United States. The questionnaire used to obtain information from the selected school psychologists addressed background information, school demographics, job satisfaction, current versus preferred roles and membership affiliation. The final survey included 49 individual items. The results indicated that using a random sample of NASP members did provide an accurate picture and understanding of school psychology as practiced by individuals claiming that title. These results would indicate that surveying members and non-members of an association provide an accurate picture of understanding the profession as a whole.

Thackeray, Neiger, and Roe (2005) conducted a study to identify marketing strategies to strengthen membership in the certified health education specialist's field. They surveyed a random sample of health educators from a variety of associations or organizations through a list provided by the National Commission for Health Education Credentialing (NCHEC). Researchers used SPSS to select a random sample of 800 health educators from the total membership of 5,718. Of the 800 individuals contacted, 485 completed the survey. Data was collected with an 88-item self-administered

questionnaire and included a variety of questions on membership, involvement, employment, and general demographics. Results indicated there was no relationship between membership, full-time or part-time employment, gender, race, hours worked per week, or percent of the job that was directly related to health education. In contrast, the study found there was a relationship between membership and number of years working in the field, income education and age. Thackeray, Neiger, and Roe (2005) displayed this relationship (Table 2).

Table 2

Summary of Demographics and Other Variables by Association Membership

	Member of SOPHE, APHA, or AAHE				X ²	P values
	YES		NO			
	No.	%	No.	%		
Total	217	55.6	173	44.4		
Gender					1.18	.28
Male	26	12.1	15	8.7		
Female	189	87.9	158	91.3		
Age					20.12	.00*
Less than 25	12	5.5	14	8.1		
25-34	74	34.1	85	49.1		
35-44	38	17.5	31	17.9		
45-54	62	28.6	37	21.4		
55+	31	14.3	6	3.5		
Race					1.46	.23
Caucasian	167	78.4	125	73.1		
All Other Races	46	21.6	46	26.9		
Income					18.51	.01*
<19,999	11	5.2	10	5.8		
20-29,999	13	6.2	27	15.7		
30-39,999	44	21.0	51	29.7		
40-49,999	50	23.8	37	21.5		
50-59,999	37	17.6	19	11.0		
60-69,999	24	11.4	13	7.6		
70-79,999	13	6.2	7	4.1		
80,000+	18	8.6	8	4.7		
Employment					.343	.56
Full-Time	193	88.9	157	90.8		
Part-Time	27	11.1	16	9.2		
Hours Worked Per Week					1.820	.61
< 35	26	21	19	11.1		
36-40	77	35.6	67	39.2		
41-50	81	37.5	67	39.2		
50+	32	14.8	18	10.5		
Years Working in Health Education					15.274	.00*
<1	18	8.4	28	16.3		
1-5	75	35.0	73	42.4		
6-10	39	18.2	29	16.9		
11-15	28	13.1	17	9.9		
16-20	21	9.8	15	8.7		
>20	33	15.4	10	5.8		
Percent of Job Related to Health Education					3.142	.07
<25	17	10.2	13	10.8		
25-49	26	15.2	11	9.2		
50-74	32	19.3	21	17.5		
75-99	33	19.9	28	23.3		
100	58	34.9	47	39.2		
Highest Degree Obtained					36.295	.00*
Bachelors	33	15.3	63	36.4		
Masters	138	63.9	102	59.0		
Doctorate	45	20.8	8	4.6		

Note: * Significant at P = .05.

Although the authors were not able to know the percentage of health educators that belong to a professional association, there were able to find that “among certified health

education specialist, membership in professional associations is very impressive". (p. 339) The authors were able to provide a variety of suggestions and strategies to improve membership and member involvement. These recommendations included; association recommitment to professional involvement, increased involvement with university programs to encourage student membership and involvement; volunteer recruitment; career development and improved marketing.

Survey/Research for Members Only

In addition to membership surveys, given to members and non-members, many associations choose to do overall cultural surveys of members only and publish them in journals. These surveys only include information from current members. Ritzhaupt, Umaphy and Jamba (2008) developed an instrument to better understand what motivates computing professionals to join and maintain membership in a professional association. They found that with a variety of professional associations and professional growth opportunities, there was a problem determining what motivated individuals. The authors created the *Ideal Computing Professional Association Survey* that was given to Association of Information Technology Professionals (AITP) members and available for a 3-month period. This instrument was organized with seven domains: career enhancing opportunities; information access and dissemination services; professional networking opportunities; communication services; leadership and community service opportunities; advocacy services and opportunities; and member discounts. Participants were informed that the survey was anonymous and their personal information would not be shared. There were 220 respondents to the survey. The results indicated three key findings. 1) There was a high degree of internal consistency reliability for the seven domains of

importance. 2) The most important domains to AITP members are the professional networking opportunities; advocacy services and opportunities; and leadership and community service opportunities provided by the association and 3) Across each of the domains of importance the highest mean item scores painted an extremely important picture of AITP members' needs and motivations.

As a follow up to the Ritzhaupt study, Umaphy, Jamba and Ritzhaupt (2010) also completed a qualitative analysis of factors that deter and persuade membership in the professional computing association. An instrument containing 52 items organized into seven domains was distributed to AITP members. These domains included; career enhancing opportunities; information access; professional networking; communication services; leadership and community service opportunities; advocacy services and member discount services. Of the two hundred twenty survey respondents, 87 completed the open-ended questions, which were coded using a constant comparative method. The results of the study included themes that deter membership; time and location constraints, chapter deficiencies, solicitation, total cost of membership, and meeting and membership composition. Themes that persuade membership included; personal growth, reputation, contribution, relationships, and career education.

The Association for College and University Biology Educators (ACUBE) conducted a membership survey in 2007-08. The authors Temple and Toepfer (2008) recognized a need to confirm or change objectives of the association. A link to the survey was provided to all members. Responses were anonymous and thirty-four percent of the ACUBE members completed the 27-question survey. On the survey members indicated that location of the annual meeting was an important factor in attendance, followed by

time of year at which the annual conference was held and cost of the annual conference. In addition, the survey results indicated that 90% of members perceived 45-minute breakout sessions at the annual meeting is an effective amount of time. With regard to membership, the survey showed that over 60% of members learned about ACUBE through networking with colleagues. Overall, results were able to provide a Steering Committee with ideas on membership recruitment, public visibility, the annual meeting and advocacy. The survey also was able to highlight what the association has been doing well and what members find rewarding about being a member.

Like the ACUBE, the National Association of Industrial and Technical Teacher Educators (NAITTE) responded to concerns of declining membership by conducting a membership survey in 2004. Gagel (2006) compared this survey with a past survey to help understand challenges to the association and give data to better meet the needs of its members. The survey given in 2004 was made available to the full NAITTE membership through the website and only resulted in a 22% response rate. In addition to a few demographic questions, the survey consisted mostly of open-ended questions. Results focused on the background and participation of members, name, mission, structure of the organization, publications, products, conferences and programming. In the end the author indicated the challenges today are the same as the past two decades.

Conducting and analyzing surveys are not enough if real change is going to come from the data collected. As a follow up to Gagel's article, Brown (2006) used the same prior survey along with historical perspectives to provide possible solutions to declining membership. Brown indicated evidence of the Gagel survey showed a need to change the organizational mission and name. In addition, it was suggested that the association

expand on an international level. He indicated issues that required immediate action of the leadership are; formation of an aggressive Membership Recruitment Committee, establish procedures for information sharing and establishing rules for discontinuing membership services. Sometimes it is necessary to first collect the data, analyze it and then have someone else interpret it.

Casillas and Shields (2009) wanted to understand the attitudes and opinions regarding programs and services of The Central Texas Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration (Centex ASPA) membership. They developed a survey, which was emailed to 163 members. With only a 23% response rate, the authors noted the results should be interpreted with caution. Along with demographic information, the Centex ASPA received high effectiveness ratings in providing networking opportunities and low effectiveness ratings in providing access to information on opportunities for skills development. More importantly, the survey, when compared to a 1999 survey indicated the attitudes and opinions had risen. Specific recommendations were given to the executive board to consider and future surveys were warranted.

Creating New Associations

In some cases, membership surveys and research have lead to major changes and even the creating of new professional associations. In the case of the College Reading and Learning Association/National Association for Developmental Education (CRLA/NADE), the associations noted a major shift in their membership and membership needs relating to the evolving postsecondary education environment. To solve this problem, Arendale et al. (2009) wrote a position paper on the creation of a new professional association. This position paper, in my opinion, was designed to help current

and future members of the associations understand the complexity of serving its consumers. The authors addressed issues related to who the new potential members might be, what benefits they required, how to deal with members retained by the existing organizations and designing the association structure and the financial implications and needs. In conclusion, the authors determined the next steps were to continue the conversation with more stakeholders and to learn more about the issues surrounding the creation of a new association. This position paper is valuable for understanding what is required to create a professional association.

Role of Professional Associations

To best understand the factors affecting the decisions to join a professional organization, it is important to understand the role of a professional association. According to Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings (2002), “Regulatory agencies, such as professional associations, play an important role in theorizing change, endorsing local innovations and shaping their diffusion”(p. 612). The authors did a case study of the field of accountancy and business advisory services in Alberta, Canada and the major changes that occurred over a 20-year period. Data was gathered from regulatory agencies such as the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta (ICAA). This data included, annual reports, committee meeting notes and minutes as well as transcripts from two promotional videos. The results provided a better understanding of how change occurs in organizations and how associations contribute to defining the role of its members and facilitating change over a long period of time.

Tucker (2008) reviewed how trade associations could further membership interests with stakeholders and how to manage reputation with collective action. The author was able to identify the success factors of Trade Association's role as reputation agents. Through 43 qualitative interviews with Trade Association Executives, the author identified a model of incentives that drove membership. The model addressed economic incentives and non-economic incentives such as trustworthiness, code of practice and promises. In addition, the author outlines five directions for more research.

In addition to furthering industry, professional organizations also play a large role developing practitioners in their fields. Stewart and Davis (2005) understood that it was important to mold dispositions of pre-service teachers and future educators with the traits and attitudes of successful teachers. A survey, which included a broad open-ended questionnaire about experiences with student education organization, was given to 60 undergraduate teacher education students. In addition, interviews were conducted with former student organization members and recent teacher education program graduates. The results indicated that membership of students in professional organizations help enhance the practice and professionalism of the field. In addition, the authors showed that teacher members or active members indicated the success of the program was significant along with enhancing their own dispositions toward professionalism. It was suggested by the authors that Teacher education programs to consider offering opportunities to student members in their organization.

Warren and Wilkinson (2008) also understood the importance of professional body membership for young professionals in the field of property and construction industries within Australia. A questionnaire was distributed to students in three separate

universities in Australia, studying property and construction. A total of six hundred and sixty one surveys were completed and returned. Questions were asked on demographics, the importance of professional organizations and views on professional organizations. The results provided valuable knowledge on student attitudes and knowledge about professional organizations. They were able to show from the research that students do value professional aspects provided by professional associations but do not always understand the role of a professional association in their career. Respondents were asked to give reasons and score them on a Likert Scale between one a five. (Table 3) shows the top ten reasons for joining a professional association given in the study by Warren and Wilkinson (2008).

Table 3

Reasons for Joining a Professional Body

Reason	Number of responses	Mean	Rank
Enhances my career prospects	632	4.26	1
Provides access to professional networks	629	4.11	2
Increases promotion	626	4.05	3
Increases employability in Australia	626	4.00	4
Will keep me up to date	632	3.98	5
Improves my salary	627	3.91	6
Increases employability outside Australia	622	3.86	7
Improves benefits paid by employers	628	3.74	8
Is a benchmark of professional skills and knowledge	628	3.65	9
Provides access to CPD	624	3.63	10

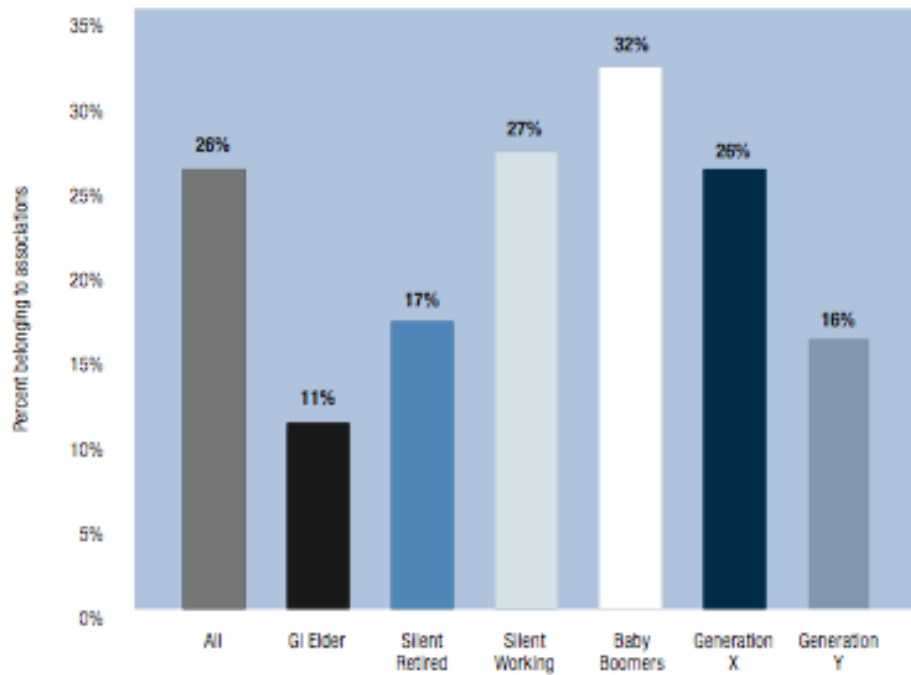
Smith and Harvey (2006) valued research as another important role for professional associations. They recognized that associations focus on professional qualifications and little on the research process for their field. They discussed the importance of research and its place in the librarianship profession, while including the role of a professional association.

Hooghe (2003) investigated the idea that voluntary associations play an important role in the establishment of a democratic political culture. He found that there was little data supporting this idea and could be due to poor measurements of participation. To test this theory, he did research on a survey conducted by the Free University of Brussels. This survey included 1,341 face-to-face interviews with residents of a Flemish region. The analysis of these surveys noted “a significant relationship between participation in voluntary associations and the adherence to democratic attitudes” (Hooghe, 2003, p. 64).

The Future of Associations

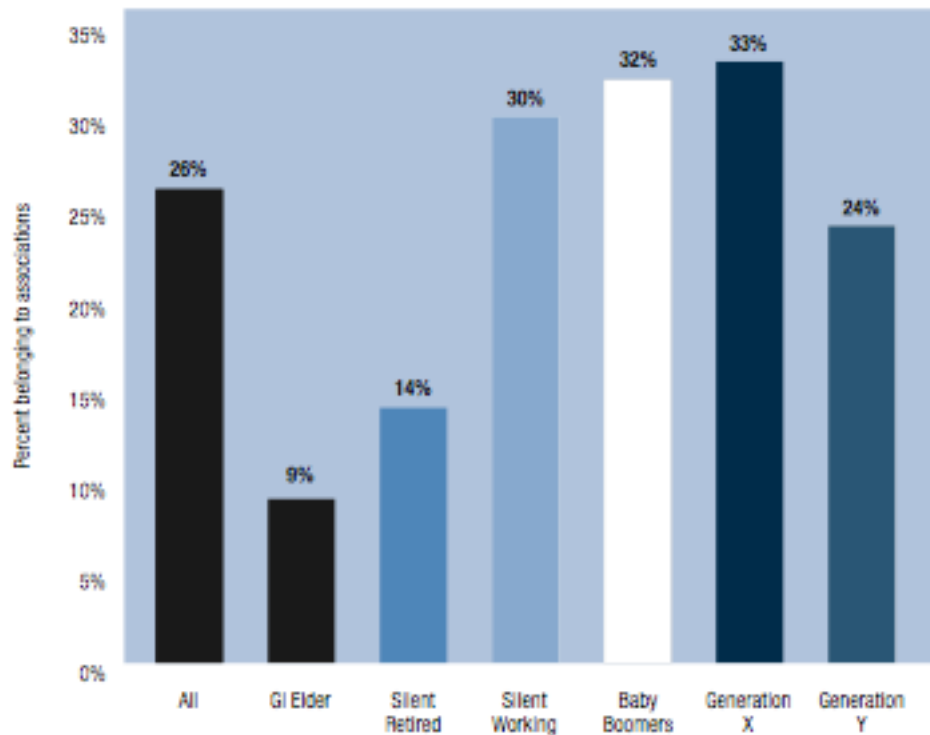
Once the roles of professional associations are defined it is important to understand what the future of professional associations will be. Brooks (2006) sought to answer the question whether Generation X and Y present a danger for future membership ranks in trade associations. Table 4 and Table 5 show data of trade and professional association membership in 2000 and 2004. Membership varied significantly by generation.

Table 4

Trade and Professional Association Membership Levels, 2000

Source: 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey

Table 5

Trade and Professional Association Membership Levels, 2004

A comparison of the data illustrates that the differences among generations are largely a function of age, not generation. With data collected through census analysis and information provided by The William E. Smith Institute For Association Research, the author is able to conclude that the younger workforce generation, show a willingness and eagerness to join associations. Besides age and generation there are other characteristics that affect the likelihood of belonging to an association. Brooks (2006) shows the results of a statistical procedure designed to separate generation and age from characteristics such as income, education, gender, family structure, race, religion, and political views in (Table 6).

Table 6

Personal Characteristics Affecting the Probability of Belonging to a Trade or Professional Association

Characteristic	Effect on probability of belonging to an association (number of percentage points)
Generations (compared to Baby Boomers) and age	
GI Elder	0
Silent Generation	-4
Generation X	0
Generation Y and later	0
Extra ten years of age (e.g., difference between age 30 and age 40)	9
Retired	-4
Other demographics	
White (compared to non-black racial minorities)	6
Man (compared to woman)	5
Extra four years of education (e.g., college degree versus no college degree)	4
Politically liberal (compared to politically moderate)	4
Extra \$10,000 in household income	0
Black (compared to non-black racial minorities)	0
Married	0
Politically conservative (compared to politically moderate)	0
Religious (compared to people who attend their house of worship occasionally)	0
Extra person in family (e.g., an additional child)	-1
Nonreligious (compared to people who attend their house of worship occasionally)	-5

Notes: These effects are calculated as the statistically-significant (.10-level or above) marginal logit effects, evaluated at the population mean values. See Appendix for details.

The author indicated if trends continued the percentage of workers, to join a professional organization will increase over the next ten years. There is no relationship between Generation X and Y and association membership decline.

Backstrom, Hutternlocher, Kleinberg and Lan (2006) understood that knowing the process by which people come together in professional organizations was important. They wanted to understand the reasons about why people join organizations now and in the future with the growing digital domain, social networking and online groups. The authors analyzed data from LiveJournal and Digital Bibliography & Library Project (DBLP). They used a decision-tree technique as well as developing their own novel methodology for measuring movement of people through these two online communities. The results included theories as to why people join social networks, however indicated the challenges of pinpointing specific answers. Overall, it was concluded more research was needed.

Best Practices

Today or in the future, Professional Association will need to constantly evolve their best practices. One example of best practices is choosing leadership. Finley (2009) examined the perceived best practices in executive succession of a membership association. Interviews were done with 20 paid chief staff officers of association that are members of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) whom met the criteria for the study. In addition, seven individuals participated in focus group interviews. Through the research several themes regarding executive succession emerged. Some of these themes included; succession is a major organizational change that has implications, the process of choosing a successor is expensive, there is a gap between perceived best practices and reality and the debate of hiring someone with profession knowledge or association knowledge. The final results of the study indicated that the most common method for choosing succession is not aligned with the themes discovered

about succession. More research is needed and it is hopeful that succession practices will change to fit the changing needs and goals of professional associations.

Deficiency in the literature

More research will need to be conducted on the subject matter of professional associations and their membership. There appears to be a deficiency in the literature about why individuals join and maintain membership in professional associations. Most literature is specific to a particular association. More specifically, I was unable to find any literature on the subject of membership in educational associations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence a school administrators' decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrators' decision not to join a professional association were also explored.

Setting

This study was conducted with school administrators from Nebraska. Individuals were selected from databases provided by the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) and the Nebraska Department of Education.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?
2. Is there a relationship between "who pays for dues membership" and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?
3. Is there a relationship between "attitude towards associations" and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?
4. Is there a relationship between "importance of benefits" for members and non-members of a professional association?

In addition, the researcher explored the following assumption to gain a better understanding of professional associations as a whole and the personal benefits gained by being a member of a professional association.

1. Individuals gain value and generate value for those who share a common profession.

Subjects

Population

The population for this study was comprised of both active members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) and nonmembers of the association; administrator eligible for membership but chose not to join NCSA. NCSA is a council of the following member affiliate associations: Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals, Nebraska Association of School Administrators, Nebraska Association of School Business Officials, Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors and Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals. Active members shall be individuals practicing administration in public schools in Nebraska. To maintain good standing in the Council, members must adhere to the policies adopted by the NCSA Executive Board. The nonmember population was provided by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) through its 2010-11 Nebraska Education Directory. The NDE directory allows the user to create and search data files that include public schools and job titles. For the purpose of the Nebraska Department of Education, a Principal would represent an individual working in a school district with the Administrative Endorsement and title of Principal. Through the researcher's employment with NCSA access to the population and the information necessary to conduct this study was easily accessible.

Sample

The sample of this study included 150 active members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) with the title of Principal. The 150 individual active

members were randomly selected with simple random sampling from a group of 618 total individuals. It should be understood that some members with the title Principal hold additional roles and titles, including Superintendent and Assistant Principal. Active members shall be individuals who are practicing administrators in education in Nebraska. In addition, 132 nonmembers were selected for the study. Non-NCSA members were identified by comparing a list of public school administrators with the title of Principal from the Nebraska Department of Education database with the database provided by NCSA. When the two lists were compared, 132 individuals met the criteria for the sample.

Instrumentation

Two instruments were used in the study: the Member survey and the Nonmember survey. Both the member and nonmember survey were developed with the assistance of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and the authors James Dalton and Monica Dignam. The original survey template files and guide, which were purchased from ASAE, are designed to help organizations conduct a study to members and nonmembers on the decision to join their professional association. The data used to create the surveys were compiled with the help of 18 diverse individual membership organizations that were among the study's initial sponsors (Dalton and Dignam, 2007, p. 97). The original template data has been pooled and benchmarked for use by other associations. The researcher modified the instrument from its original form to better fit the category of professional educational association. In addition, the original likert scale was modified to better analyze the data with the assistance of the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center. The instrument was provided ahead of time to a panel of experts,

principals, members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators who examined the survey to check for understandability, ease of use and time commitment.

Member Survey

The member survey consisted of a two sections (Appendix B). This first section was 11 questions that focused on respondents' attitude toward associations in general. Associations are defined, as any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy. Questions were designed to receive information about: (a) the overall attitude toward associations; (b) the belief associations are capable of addressing needs of members; (c) the most important function of an association; (d) preference to receiving information about their profession or field; (e) common challenges that concern the profession; (f) identifying common challenges; (g) factors in dropping membership of an association; and (h) the need for associations in the future. The second section of the survey referred to the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) and included 16 questions. Participants were reminded while they may belong to other associations, all question in this section were only about NCSA. In this section, questions focused on; (a) the importance of numerous items in the decision to join NCSA; (b) the satisfaction of performance of the association in various listed benefits;(c) the importance of various benefits to the field or profession as it relates to the decision to join; (d) the overall satisfaction with NCSA's performance on various benefits; (e) how the member first learned about NCSA; (f) the involvement of the member in volunteer opportunities through NCSA; (g) how likely the member was to recommend membership; (h) who pays for NCSA membership; and (i) do you expect to

renew your membership in NCSA for the next year. Demographic information was gathered including the year the participant was born, gender and administrative title. In addition some open-ended questions were asked regarding other challenges that have impacted the field and membership to other associations. The Member Survey was ten pages long and required approximately 15 minutes to complete. Not all survey items directly impacted the research questions, however, information gathered helped form an understanding and knowledge of association membership.

Nonmember Survey

The Nonmember Survey also consisted of two sections (Appendix C). The first 11 questions were identical to the Member Survey. The second section of the survey was composed of 18 questions and refers to the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). Participants are reminded while they may belong to other associations, all questions in section two were only about NCSA. In this section, respondents are asked: (a) if they have ever been a member of NCSA; (b) have they ever been invited to join (or rejoin) NCSA; (c) who invited them to join; (d) how they were invited to join or rejoin; (e) how familiar they are with NCSA; (f) how did they first learn about NCSA; (g) in the next two years, do they think they will join (or rejoin) NCSA; (h) how important would various benefits be in their decision to join NCSA; (i) how important would various activities on behalf of their field be in the decision to join NCSA; and (j) if the school district was willing to pay membership dues in NCSA would they join today.

Demographic information was gathered including the year the participant was born, gender and administrative title. In addition some open-ended questions were asked regarding other challenges that have impacted the field and membership to other

associations. The Nonmember Survey was nine pages long and required approximately 15 minutes to complete. Again, not all survey items directly impacted the research questions, however, information gathered helped form an understanding and knowledge of association membership.

Data Collection Procedures

This quantitative survey developed by the American Society of Association Executives was designed for postal mail distribution and Internet distribution. For this study, survey data was collected through internet distribution into an online survey software system. The researcher consulted with the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center to best align the questions for data analysis. Once completed, the researcher obtained approval to conduct the study via e-mail from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB # 20110411692 EX, Appendix A). All e-mail addresses for both the member sample as well as the nonmember sample were checked for accuracy against the schools information. Participants received an e-mail message introducing the researcher and the interest in collecting the data. The purpose of the survey and study along with who the results will benefit were included. Participants were informed of the time commitment and confidentiality of the information. The survey software system was configured to collect no e-mail addresses or IP addresses.

The survey instrument was distributed to both members and nonmembers in the early part of May 2011. Many school districts conclude school for the semester at the end of May or the beginning of June. While many school administrators are still under contract, the researcher wanted to collect the data while the individuals were still actively participating in school activities. An immediate response to the survey was requested. In

addition, a reminder request was sent five days following and an additional ten days following.

The researcher received the data set of participant responses of the Member Survey and Nonmember Survey. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the data did not include any identifying information, such as name, school district, phone number, email address etc. Each survey returned was assigned an identification number.

The data received contained the responses returned for each survey. Unfortunately, not everyone in the sample completed the surveys (Table 7).

Table 7

Sample Responses by Survey

Survey	Sample	Returned
Nonmember Survey	132	23
Member Survey	150	62

Out of 132 nonmembers in the sample, 23 Nonmember Surveys were returned. Out of the 150 members in the sample, 62 Member Surveys were returned.

Data analysis Procedures

This research study analyzed the attitudes of members and nonmembers of a professional association regarding the role and function of associations. The study specifically analyzed the attitudes of both members and nonmembers of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to determine why they joined or did not join their professional association. The purpose of the analysis was to identify factors that influenced a school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a

professional association. Of the 132 nonmembers surveyed, only 23 individuals completed the survey. Of these 23 nonmember respondents, two individuals indicated they were not practicing as a School Administrator and two individuals indicated they had become a member of NCSA. Therefore, four surveys were removed from the dataset. Of the 150 members surveyed, 62 individuals completed the survey and indicated they were a current member of NCSA. The researcher made arrangements to analyze the data collected for the purpose of this study with the Nebraska Evaluation and Research Center (NEAR Center). The researcher paired the research questions for the study with questions asked on the surveys. After the data set was received, the researcher conducted statistical analysis to explore factors that may have influenced the decision to join or not join a professional association.

For research question number one: “Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual’s decision to join or not join a professional association”, a cross tabulation of age and gender was conducted.

For the research question number two: “Is there a relationship between who pays for dues membership and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association”, the researcher compared Q 25 of the nonmember survey, asking, “Does your school district pay for dues in any association?” with Q 21 of the member survey asking “Who pays for your NCSA membership fee?”

For research question number three: “Is there a relationship between attitude towards association and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association”, the researcher with the assistance of the NEAR Center, performed a point-biserial correlation of Q1 and Q2 of both the Nonmember and Member Survey asking, to

rate overall attitude toward associations and the belief that associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members. In addition, a descriptive statistical analysis of Q10, “Would you say that there are too many associations in your professional area of interest, too few or is the number about right?” and Q11, “Do you think there will be a greater or lesser need for associations five years from now?” of both the Nonmember and Member Survey was completed.

For research question number four: “Is there a relationship between importance of benefits for members and nonmembers?” the researcher, with the help of the NEAR Center, performed a point-biserial correlation of Q22 of the Nonmember Survey and Q14 of the Member Survey. This question asked participants, “How important would the following personal benefits be in your decision to join?”

For the assumption, “Individuals do get value and generate value for those who share a common profession”; the researcher did a descriptive statistical analysis of Q3 of the Nonmember and Member Survey. This question asked, “What are the most important functions of an association?” In addition, descriptive statistical analysis was done on Q19 and Q20 of the member survey asking “In the last 12 months, have you volunteered for NCSA in any of the following ways?” and “How likely is it that you would recommend membership in NCSA to a friend or a colleague?”

The results of this research study are described in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that influence a school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrator's decision not to join a professional association were also explored. Such information could provide important data for strengthening organizational membership and expand representation within the profession. The research is based off a study conducted by the American Society of Association Executives and the Center for Association Leadership in Washington D.C. The results of that study revealed similarities in how professionals, no matter what their occupation, view associations. Results from this study will be significant to recruitment and retention for professional educational associations such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). In addition, information gathered from open-ended questions from both members and nonmembers will help NCSA determine other challenges that have an impact on school administrators and their field that are not being addressed by the association currently.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?
2. Is there a relationship between "who pays for dues membership" and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association?
3. Is there a relationship between "attitude towards associations" and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?

4. Is there a relationship between “importance of benefits” for members and non-members of a professional association?

In addition, the researcher explored the following assumption to gain a better understanding of professional associations as a whole and the personal benefits gained by being a member of a professional association.

1. Individuals gain value and generate value for those who share a common profession.

Participant Population

The population for this study was made up of both active members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) and nonmembers of the association. NCSA is a council of the following member affiliate associations: Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals, Nebraska Association of School Administrators, Nebraska Association of School Business Officials, Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors and Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals. Active members shall be individuals practicing administration in public schools in Nebraska. To maintain good standing in the Council, members must adhere to the policies adopted by the Executive Board. The nonmember population was provided by the Nebraska Department of Education through its 2010-11 Nebraska Education Directory. This directory allows the user to create and search data files that include public schools and job titles. For the purpose of the Nebraska Department of Education, a Principal would represent an individual working in a school district with the Administrative Endorsement and title of Principal. Through the researchers employment

with NCSA access to the population and the information necessary to conduct this study was easily accessible.

The sample of this study included 150 active members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) with the title of Principal. The 150 individual active members were randomly selected with simple random sampling from a group of 618 total individuals. Active members were defined as individuals who were practicing administrators in education in Nebraska. In addition, 132 nonmembers were selected. Non-NCSA members were gathered by comparing a list of public school administrators with the title of Principal from the Nebraska Department of Education database with the database provided by NCSA. When the two lists were compared, 132 individuals met the criteria for the sample. Of the 132 nonmembers surveyed, only 23 individuals completed the survey. Of the 23 nonmember respondents, two individuals indicated they were not practicing as a School Administrator and two individuals indicated they had become a member of NCSA. Therefore four surveys were removed from the dataset and 19 were matched for participation. Of the 150 members in the sample, 62 individuals completed the survey and were matched for participation (TABLE 8).

Table 8

Sample Responses by Survey/Used

Survey	Sample	Returned	Used
Nonmember Survey	132	23	19
Member Survey	150	62	62

Research Questions/Findings

Four research questions were tested using statistical analysis to explore factors that may have influenced the decision to join or not join a professional association. The following is a description of each research question and the relevant findings.

1. Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?

This research question required a cross tabulation of age and gender. The data displayed in Table 9 summarizes the percentage of females and males in the sample that completed the member instrument and the nonmember instruments.

Table 9

Survey Instruments by Gender

Survey	Female	Male
Nonmember Survey (N=19)	12	7
Member Survey (N=62)	16	46

Of the returned instruments, the female sample was approximately 63.2% of the total sample of nonmembers and 25.8% of the total sample of members. The male sample was approximately 36.8 % if the total sample of nonmembers and 74.2% of the total sample of members. Members tend to be male. The position of public school administrator is perceived to be a more male dominated profession.

The data displayed in (Table 10) summarizes the distribution of the sample of those who completed the surveys by age.

Table 10

Survey Instruments by Age

Survey	25-35	36-45	46-55	56+
Nonmember Survey (N=19)	3	11	3	2
Member Survey (N=62)	3	17	24	18

Of the returned nonmember sample, participants aged 25 to 35 years old accounted for 15.79%; participants 36 to 45 years old accounted for 57.89%; participants aged 46 to 55 years old accounted for 15.79% and participants 56 years and older accounted for 10.53% of the total sample. Of the returned member sample, participants aged 25 to 35 years old accounted for 4.84%; participants 36 to 45 years old accounted for 27.42%; participants aged 46 to 55 years old accounted for 38.71% and participants 56 years and older accounted for 29.03% of the total sample. There was a significant correlation with regards to age, $r = .364$. Members were older than nonmembers. Age accounts for 13% of the variability of membership. The mean/average age for members was 49.1774 while the mean/average age for nonmembers was 47.5000.

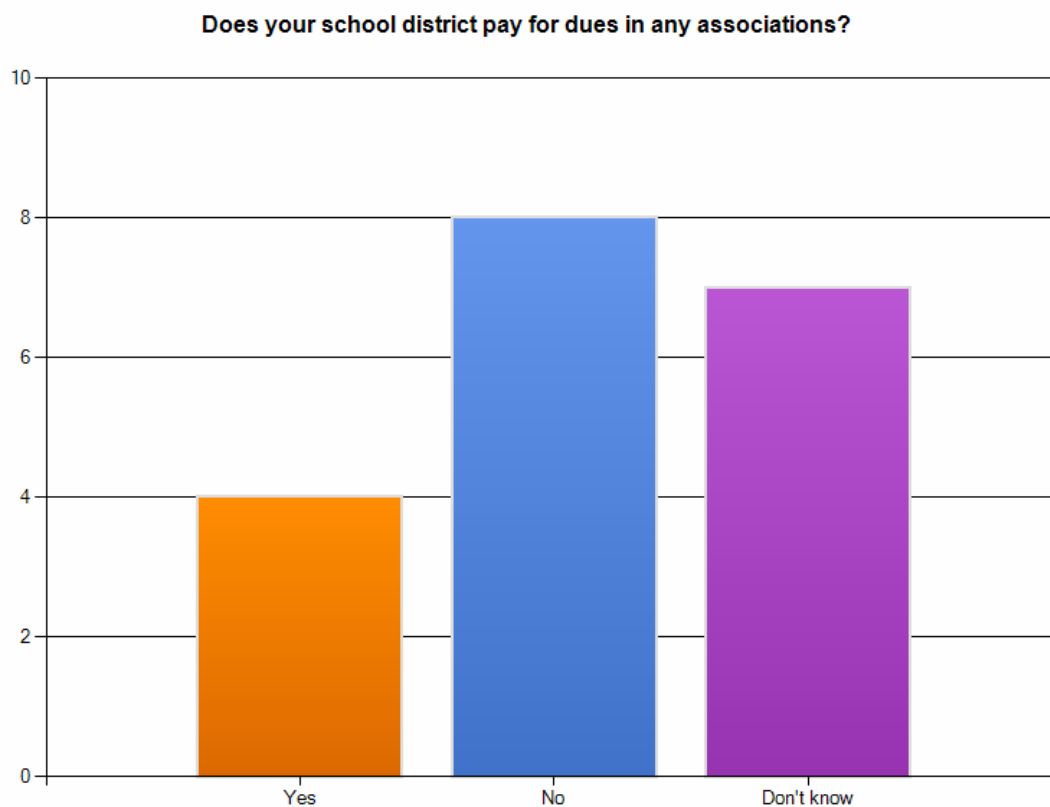
2. Is there a relationship between “who pays for dues membership” and an Individuals decision to join or not join a professional association?

This research question required analysis of Q25 of the Nonmember Survey, asking, “Does your school district pay for dues in any association? With Q21 of the

Member Survey, which asked, “Who pays for your NCSA membership fee?” For Q25, 21.1% of nonmembers surveyed indicated that the school district did pay for association dues, 42.1% of individuals surveyed indicated that the school district did not pay for association dues and 36.8% did not know if their school district paid for dues. (Table 11) summarizes the information.

Table 11

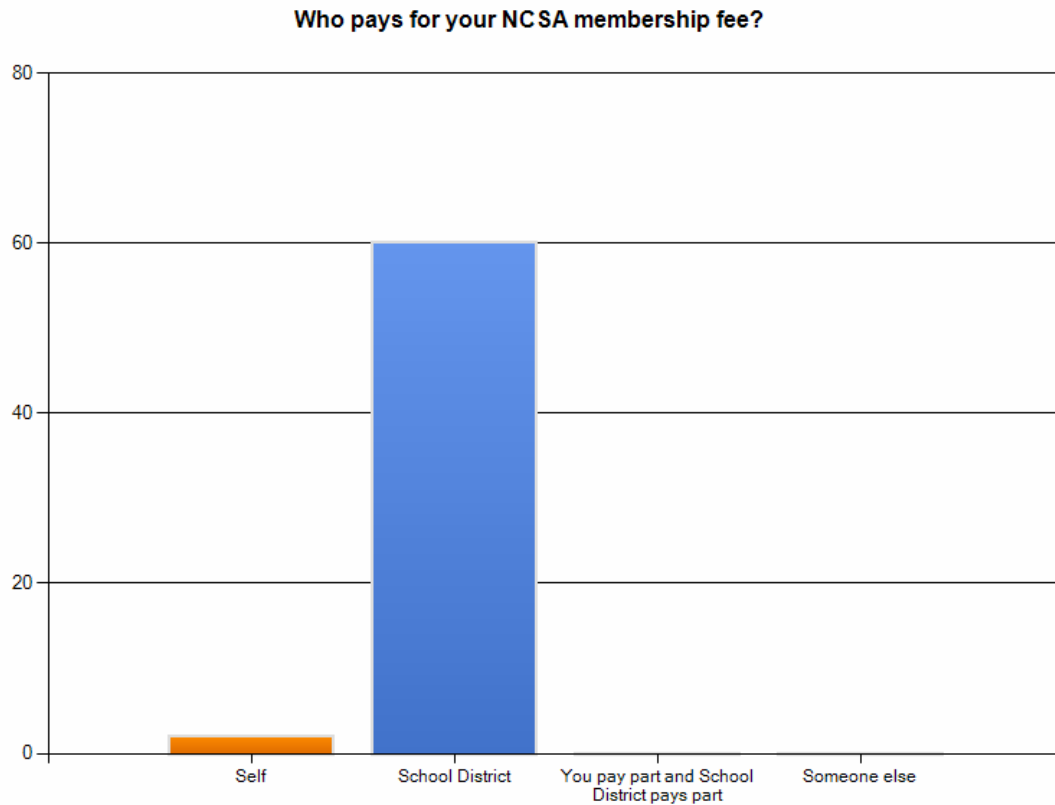
Summary of Payment of Dues for Nonmembers (N=19)



For Q21, 96.8 % of members indicated that the school district paid for association dues while 3.2% of individuals indicated they paid for dues themselves. (Table 12) summarizes the information.

Table 12

Summary of Payment of Dues for Members (N=62)



There is a relationship between who pays for dues membership and an individual's decision to join a professional association. Who pays for dues membership is a factor that influences school administrators' decision not to join a professional association.

3. Is there a relationship between "attitude towards associations" and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?

This research question required a point-biserial correlation of Q1 and Q2 added together of both the Nonmember and Member Survey asking, to rate overall attitude toward associations and the belief that associations are capable of addressing the practical

needs of individual members. Of the 19 Nonmember participants in the study, the average rate for overall attitude was 4.68, with a minimum score being 0 and the maximum score being 5. Of the 62 Member participants in the study, the average rate for overall attitude was 4.53, with a minimum score being 0 and the maximum score being 5. The data displayed in (Table 13) and (Table 14) shows the overall attitude toward associations.

Table 13

Nonmember Summary of Overall Attitude Toward Associations (N=19)

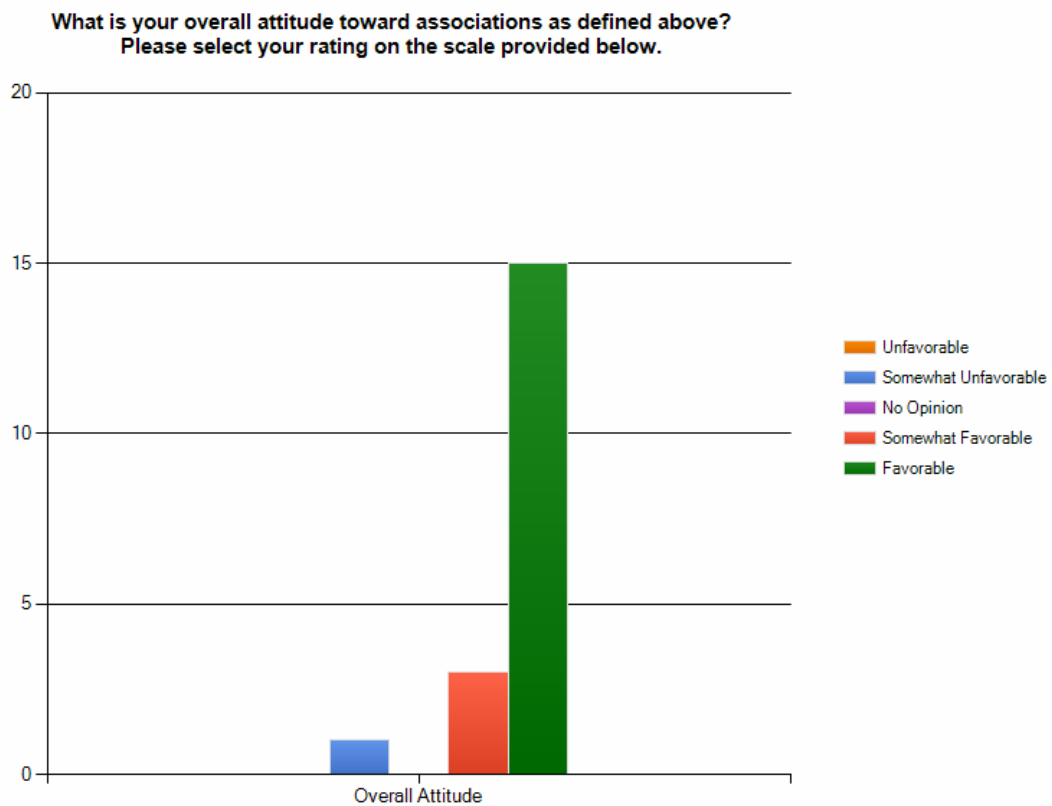
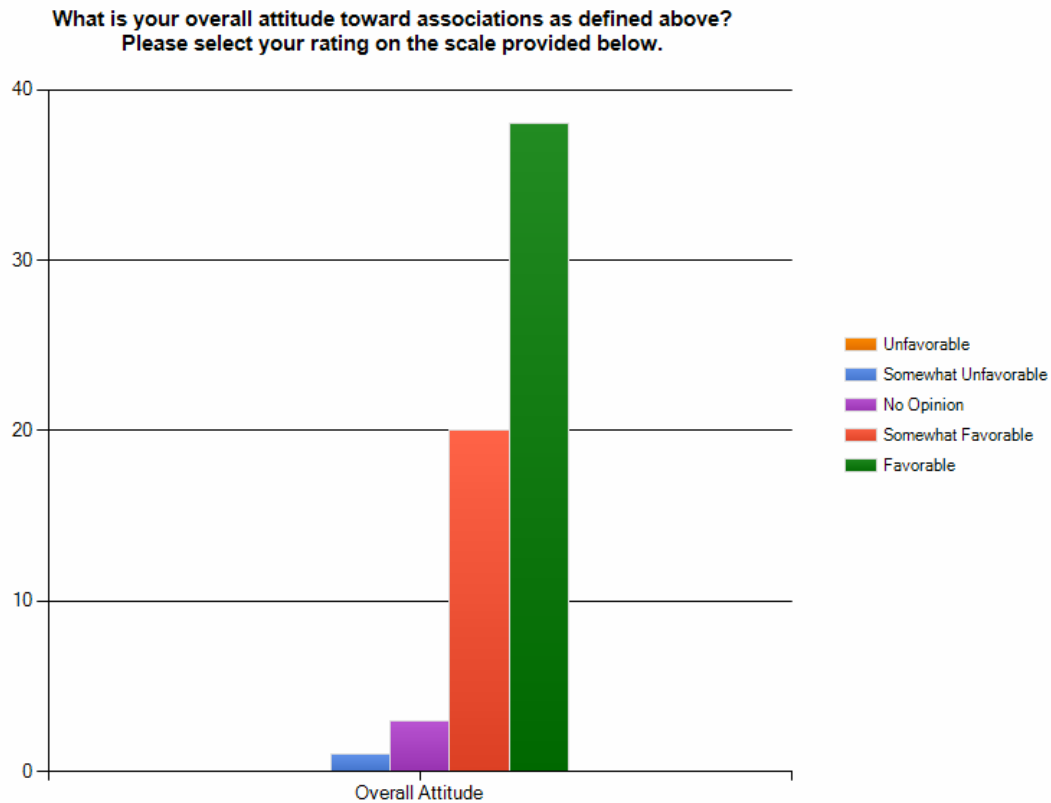


Table 14

Member Summary of Overall Attitude Toward Associations (N=62)

The researcher used the point-biserial correlation to determine the relationship between participants. After removing one outlier, the point-biserial correlation was $-.293$ and showed a significant negative relationship between attitudes of members versus nonmembers and the belief that associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members. Nonmembers have a more favorable attitude towards association as defined as, any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy. Of the 19 Nonmember participants in the study, the average rate for belief associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual

members was 4.58, with a minimum score being 0 and the maximum score being 5. Of the 62 Member participants in the study, the average rate for belief associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members was 4.32, with a minimum score being 0 and the maximum score being 5. The data displayed in (Table 15) and (Table 16) shows the belief of Nonmember and Members that associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members.

Table 15

Nonmember Summary of Beliefs (N=19)

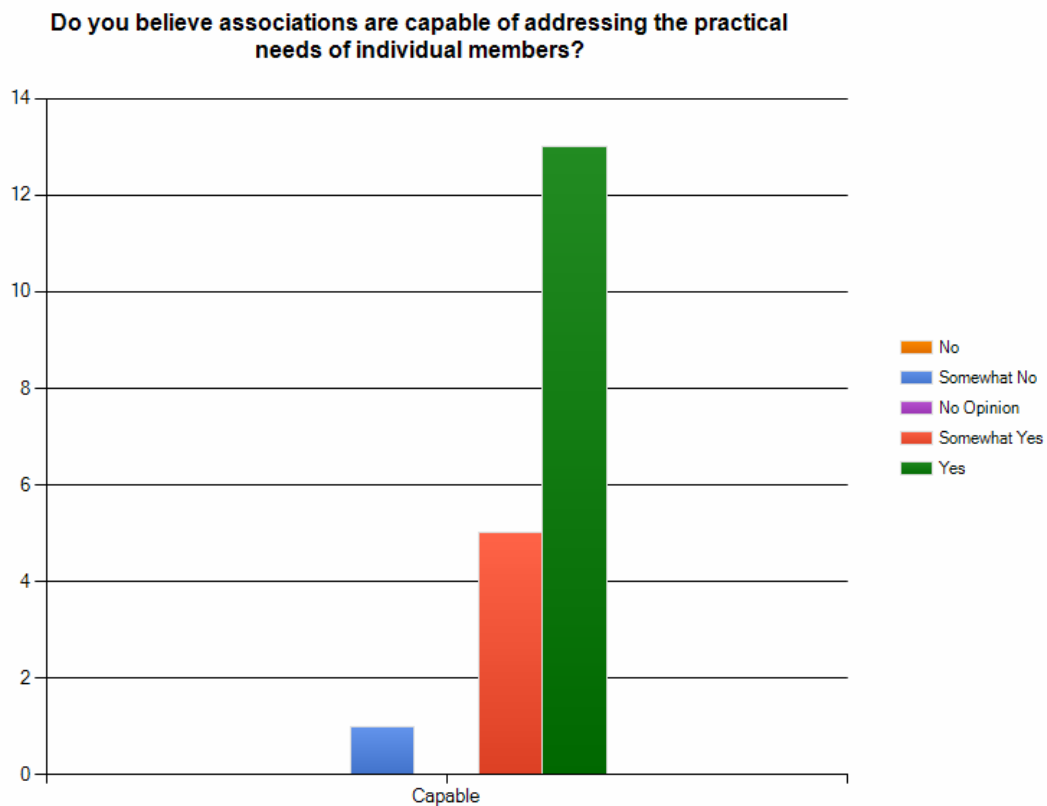
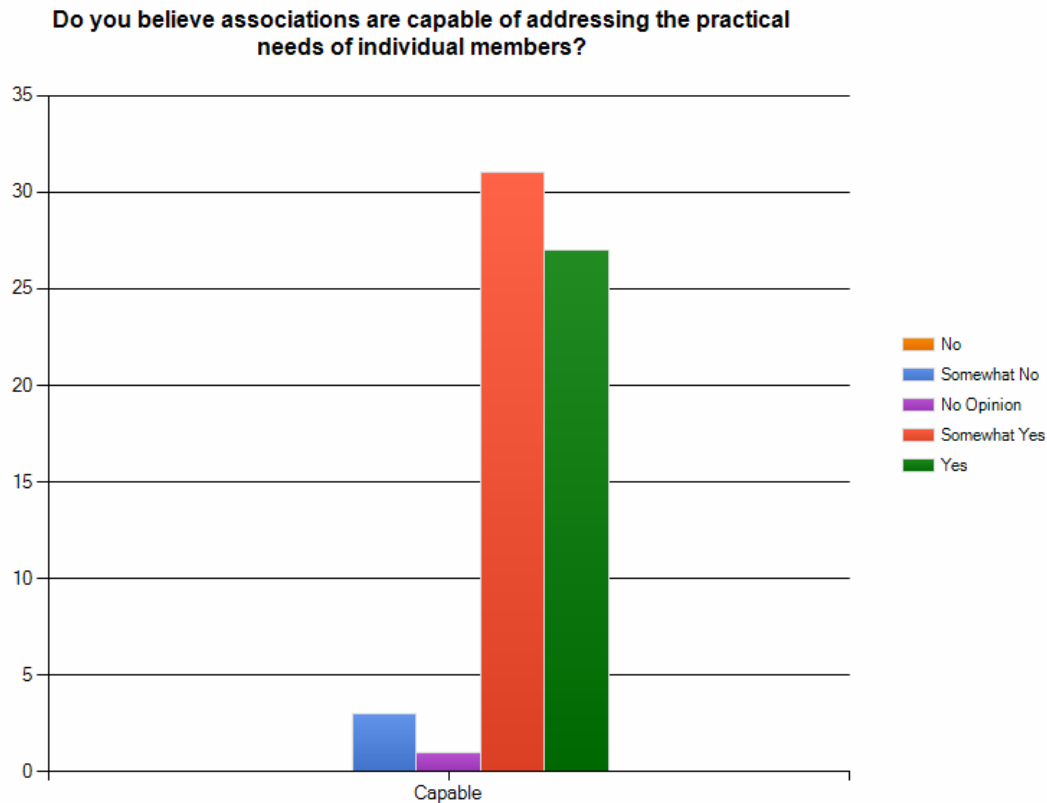


Table 16

Member Summary of Beliefs (N=62)

In addition to the above correlations, a descriptive statistical analysis was done on the attitude of number of association in the participant's area of interest. Of the 19 surveys completed by Nonmembers, 94.7% felt there was about the right number of associations and 5.3% felt there were too many. No nonmember participants felt there were too few associations available. Of the 62 surveys completed by members, 79.0% perceived there were about the right number of associations, while 11.3% could not say, 6.5% perceived there were too many and 3.2 % felt there were too few association.

A descriptive statistical analysis was done on the attitude of need for associations five years from now. Of the 19 surveys completed by nonmembers, 78.9% feel there will be

about the same need, while 10.5% feel there will be a greater need and 10.5% feel they cannot say. Of the 62 surveys completed by members, 41.9% feel there will be about the same need for associations, while 35.5% feel there will be a greater need, 14.5% feel there will be a lesser need and 8.1% can not say.

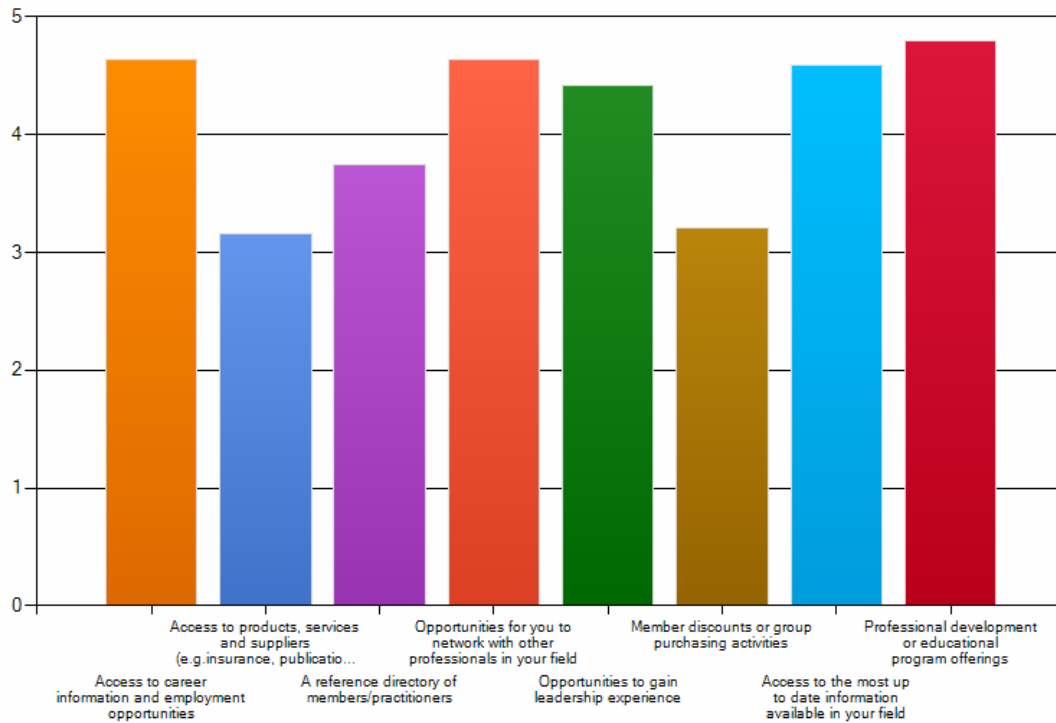
4. Is there a relationship between “importance of benefits” for members and non-members of a professional association?

This research question required an independent T-test of Q22 of the Nonmember Survey and Q14 of the Member Survey asking participants, “How important would the following personal benefits be in your decision to join a professional association?” Table 17 summarizes the rating average of each of options for nonmembers. Items included were (a) Access to career information and employment opportunities (b) Access to products, services and suppliers, (c) A reference directory of members/practitioners, (d) Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field (e) Opportunities to gain leadership experience (f) Member discounts or group purchasing activities (g) Access to the most up to date information available in your field (h) Professional development or educational program offerings.

Table 17

Nonmember Importance of Benefits (N=19)

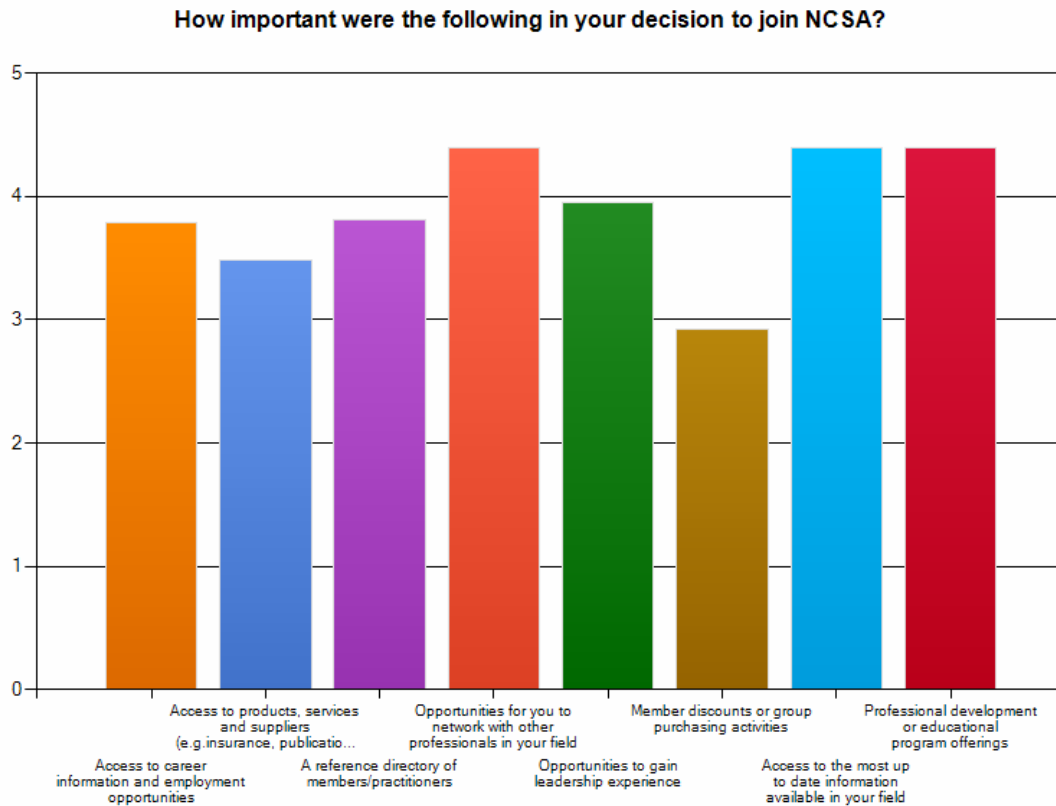
If you were considering joining NCSA, how important would the following personal benefits be in your decision to join?



(Table 18) summarizes the rating average of each of options for members.

Table 18

Member Importance of Benefits (N=62)



With assistance from the NEAR Center, an independent T-test was used to assess the means in the nonmember and member samples. When the Lavene's test of equality of variances resulted in a p-value showing less than 0.05, there was an obtained difference in the variances. Areas of benefits that showed significant differences between members and nonmembers included: Access to career information and employment opportunities, $p=.017$; Access to products, services and suppliers where $p=.031$; Opportunities to gain leadership experiences, $p=.030$; Member discounts or group purchasing activities,

$p=.006$; Professional development or educational program offerings, $p=.002$. The following (Table 19) shows the average mean score for each of the benefits listed.

Table 19

Summary of Importance of Benefits (N=62 member) (N=19 Nonmember)

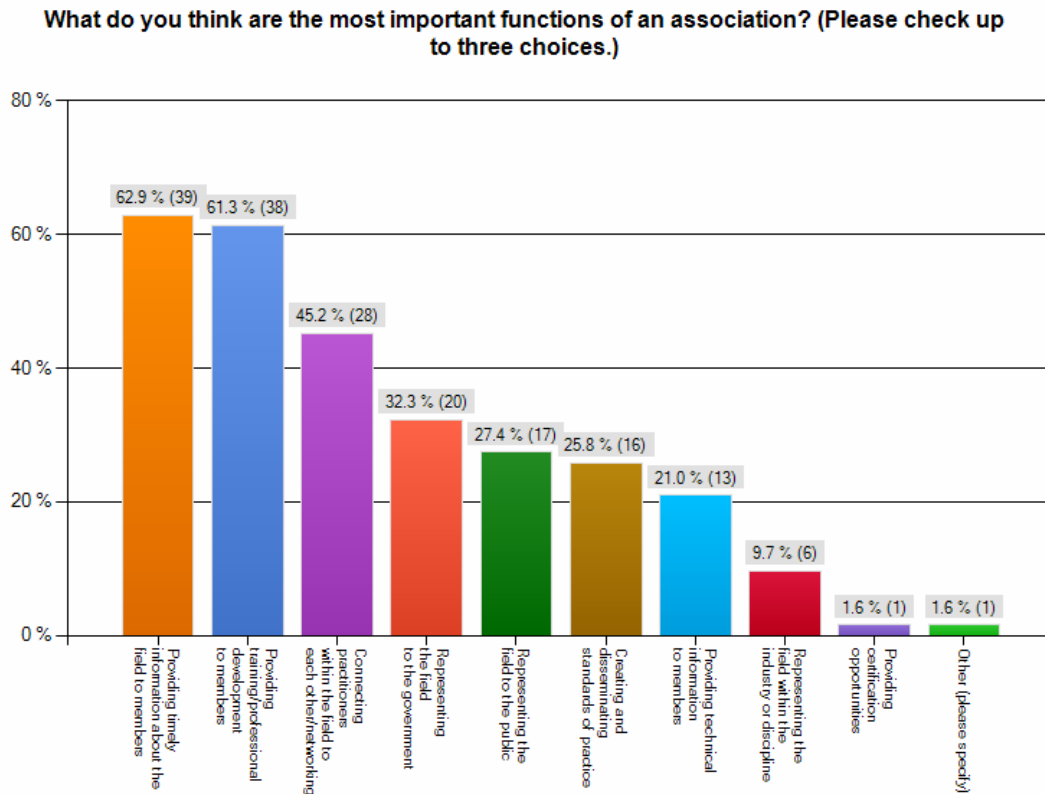
Benefits	Member Mean	Nonmember Mean
Access to career information and employee opportunities	3.7903	4.5000
Access to products, services and suppliers	3.4839	4.0556
A reference directory of members/practitioners	3.8065	3.8333
Opportunities for you to network with other professional in your field	4.3871	4.6111
Opportunities to gain leadership experience	3.9516	4.6111
Member discounts or group purchasing	2.9194	3.8333
Access to the most up to date information available in your field	4.4032	4.6667
Professional development or educational program offerings	4.4032	4.8333

Assumptions

1. Individuals gain value and generate value for those who share a common profession.

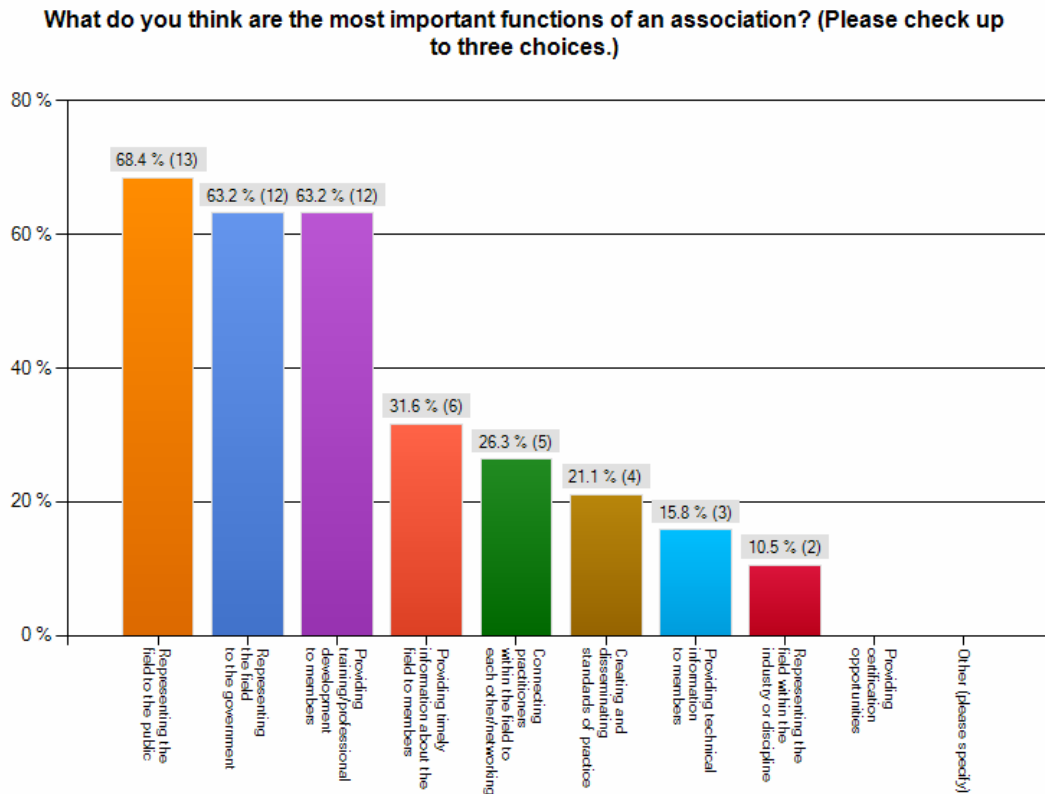
To study this assumption, the researcher did a descriptive statistical analysis of Q3, “What are the most important functions of an association?” of the Nonmember and Member Survey ranking the most important functions of an association in (Table 20) and (Table 21).

Table 20

Member Ranking of the Most Important Function of an Association (N=62)

Members ranked the most important function as “Providing timely information about the field to member” 62.9%; “Providing training/professional development to members” 61.3% and “Connecting practitioners within the field to each other/networking” 45.2%.

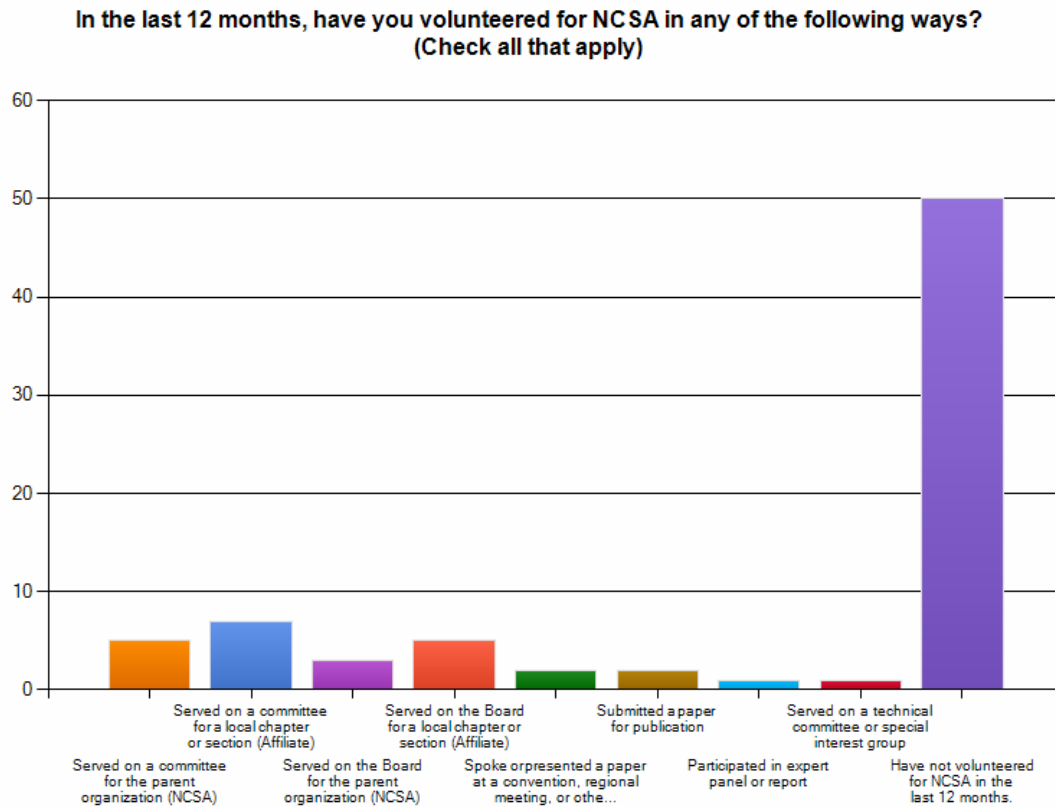
Table 21

Nonmember Ranking of the Most Important Function of an Association (N=19)

Nonmembers ranked the most important functions of an association as “Representing the field to the public” 68.4%, “Representing the field to the government” 63.2% and “Providing training/professional development to members” 63.2%.

In addition, descriptive statistical analysis was done on Q19 and Q20 of the Member Survey asking “In the last 12 months, have you volunteered for NCSA in any of the following ways?” and “How likely is it that you would recommend membership in NCSA to a friend or a colleague?” Of the 62 surveys completed by members, 80.6% indicated they had not volunteered in the last 12 months. (Table 22) shows the breakdown of other involvement of members in the last 12 months.

Table 22

Member Involvement in Past 12 Months

Of the 62 surveys returned by NCSA members, 75.8% indicated they would recommend membership in NCSA to a friend or colleague; 19.4% were somewhat likely and 4.8% has no opinion about recommending membership.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that influence school administrator's decision to join and maintain membership in a professional association. In addition, factors that influence school administrator's decision not to join a professional association were also explored. Such information could provide important data for strengthening organizational membership and expand representation within the profession. The research was based on a study conducted by the American Society of Association Executives and the Center for Association Leadership in Washington D.C. The results of that study revealed similarities in how professionals, no matter what their occupation, viewed associations. Results from this study will be significant to recruitment and retention for professional educational associations such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). In addition, information gathered from open-ended questions from both members and non-members will help NCSA determine other challenges that have an impact on school administrators and their field that are not being addressed by the association currently.

Summary of Findings

1. There is a relationship correlation with regard to age, $r=.364$. Members were older than nonmembers. There was a relationship correlation with gender, members are more male than female. Age and gender are a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in a professional association. I perceive the field of public school administration to be more male than female and I perceive the

- filed of public school administration to be older due to the educational commitment and experience in the classroom expectation.
2. There is a relationship between who pays for dues membership and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association. If your school district pays for your professional association dues, you are more likely to be a member. Payment of dues is a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in a professional association.
 3. There is a relationship between "attitude towards associations" and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association. Nonmembers have a more favorable attitude towards association as defined as, any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy. Attitudes towards associations are not a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in a professional association.
 4. There is a relationship between "importance of benefits" for members and non-members of a professional association? Benefits that showed significant differences between members and nonmembers included; access to products, services and suppliers, opportunities to gain leadership experiences, member discounts or group purchasing activities and professional development or educational program offerings.

In addition, the following assumption was addressed.

1. Individuals gain value and generate value for those who share a common

profession. Being involved is not a factor when deciding to join or maintain membership in a professional association. The top three functions of an association for members are; providing timely information about the field to members; providing training/professional development to members; connecting practitioners within the field to each other/networking. The top three function of an association for a nonmember are; representing the field to the public; representing the field to the government and providing training/professional development to members. Members hold the function of connecting and networking as an important function because they believe they gain value and generate value through this task.

Discussion

Since there was little to no research on Educational Associations, it was difficult to compare this information with other data. However, the data gathered can be easily compared to data available on trade associations as a whole. Research done by the American Society of Associations Executives helped a great deal in connecting the concepts in order to make sense of the results of this study. In addition, thanks to the study done by Lewis, Truscott, and Volker (2008), I am confident that information gathered from both nonmembers and members of an association do provide an accurate picture of understanding the profession as a whole.

The first research question for this study was: *Is there a relationship between age and gender and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association?* Generally it was clear that there is a relationship with regards to age, gender and

membership. Members tend to be older and members tend to be male. The result of the first research question related to age and gender was expected by the researcher and backed up by research done by Thackeray, Neiger, and Roe (2005) when they found there is a relationship between membership and number of years working in the field and age. The belief has been that the younger generations do not find value in associations, which result in a decline of membership organizations. "People under the age of 30 are not joining associations at the same rate as people older than 30." (Dalton, 2009, p.26). Regarding gender, additional research would need to be done on the field of school administration as a whole and if indeed there is more males occupying these jobs verses females.

The second research question for this study was: *Is there a relationship between "who pays for dues membership" and an individuals decision to join or not join a professional association?* There is a relationship between who pays for dues membership and an individual's decision to join or not join a professional association. This study indicated that most members, 96.8% have their dues paid for by the school district. The researcher expected this result. The study also indicated that only 21.1% of the nonmembers have association dues paid for by the school. The researcher also expected this result. What was not expected from the study by the researcher was the amount of nonmembers who did not know if the school district paid for association dues or not, 36.8%. It would be difficult to determine if perceived benefits of the organization did not exceed cost of membership if indeed the subjects were not aware of cost nor district support of these costs. In the future, should school districts choose not to pay for

professional association dues, more research will need to be completed on the theory that perceived benefits of the organization exceed the cost of membership.

The third research question for this study was: *Is there a relationship between “attitude towards associations” and an individual’s decision to join or not join a professional association?* Nonmembers have more of a positive attitude towards associations in general than members do. The researcher did not expect this result. In the survey instrument, the researcher defined “association” as any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy. When analyzing open-ended questions, the researcher was able to determine members had strong feelings towards the association’s involvement in politics and its effects on funding. The strong views on these subjects could cause a difference in the attitudes towards association at this current time. Nonmembers are not as informed about the activities of the associations and therefore side more favorable than unfavorable, ignorance is bliss. Had this survey been administered during a year where legislation was not as threatening to school administration or funding was not cut for schools, the attitudes of members towards professional associations may have been different.

The fourth research question for this study was: *Is there a relationship between “importance of benefits” for members and nonmembers of a professional association.* The top three benefits of an association for a member were: Access to the most up to date information available in your field; Professional development or educational program offerings; Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field. The top three benefits of an association for nonmembers were: Professional development or

educational program offerings; Access to the most up to date inform available to your field and a tie between Opportunities for you to network with others in your field and Opportunities to gain leadership experience. The researcher expected this result. Member and nonmember have similar expectations when it comes to benefits. In other studies such as the one done by Wilkinson (2008) shows the benefits of “Enhances my career prospects” and “Access to professional networks” ranked highest for reasons for joining a professional association.

The assumption given for this study was: *Individuals do get value and generate value for those who share a common profession.* Individuals do get benefit from being members together. The researcher did not expect the information regarding member involvement in the past 12 months. The top three items listed as important functions of an association for members indicated a need for information sharing and networking, while important functions of an association for nonmembers indicated a need for representation of the field. Understanding which benefits are for the individual and which benefits are for the profession and comparing these help to show the above assumption. An association must balance “what’s in it for me” with “what’s in it for us”.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study indicated that additional research is needed in order to clarify reasons why individuals join and maintain membership in a professional association. As the makeup of associations change, it is important to include these changes in research. One suggestion for future research is to expand on the nonmember sample to include more than just those who hold the title of “Principal”. Professional educational associations such as the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA)

have many different levels and categories of membership. By looking into all levels and job titles for school administration, a more accurate result of membership could be gained.

In addition, the researcher recommends further research be conducted using an instrument that focuses on value of benefits to members only. A study such as this could help association focus attention in areas that matter most to members and nonmembers. With potential changes in “who pays for dues” it will be more important than ever to have perceived benefits outweigh costs.

Conclusion

The Nebraska Council of School Administrators is fortunate to have such a high percentage of membership verses potential members. Many associations are struggling to maintain current membership let alone gain new members. It is necessary to keep the pulse on your current members while always looking ahead. Many of the studies used in the literature review were a result of declining membership. The Nebraska Council of School Administrators does not have declining membership currently. Most professional associations are put in a difficult position of weighing what is important for the individual verses the institution. Having an understanding of the issues and an understanding of what is important for the member is crucial. The business of educational administration is always changing. A professional association cannot always make all the people happy all of the time.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



April 19, 2011

Kelly Coash-Johnson
Department of Educational Administration
2621 Jane Lane Lincoln, NE 68512

Larry Dlugosh
Department of Educational Administration
141C TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20110411692 EX
Project ID: 11692
Project Title: Factors Affecting Principals Decisions to Join and Maintain Membership in Professional Associations

Dear Kelly:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 04/19/2011.

1. Please include the IRB approval number (IRB# 20110411692 EX) in the survey letters. Please email a copy of these letters to bfreeman2@unl.edu for our records. If you need to make changes to the letters please submit the revised messages to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- * Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- * Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- * Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- * Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- * Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB



APPENDIX B
MEMBER SURVEY

Member Survey

[Exit this survey](#)**1. Association Member Survey**

Note: The term "association" in all questions in this study refers to any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy.

*** 1. What is your overall attitude toward associations as defined above? Please select your rating on the scale provided below.**

	Unfavorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	No Opinion	Somewhat Favorable	Favorable
Overall Attitude					

*** 2. Do you believe associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members?**

	No	Somewhat No	No Opinion	Somewhat Yes	Yes
Capable					

3. What do you think are the most important functions of an association? (Please check up to three choices.)

- Representing the field to the public
- Representing the field within the industry or discipline
- Representing the field to the government
- Providing timely information about the field to members
- Providing technical information to members
- Connecting practitioners within the field to each other/networking
- Creating and disseminating standards of practice
- Providing certification opportunities
- Providing training/professional development to members
- Other (please specify)

4. How do you prefer to receive information about your profession or field? (Please check up to three choices)

- At conferences or meetings
- Through traditional broadcast media (television or radio)
- Through your network of peers (word of mouth)

In magazines or journals serving your field

In general interest magazines

In newspapers (print)

In print sources other than magazines or newspapers

By searching on the Internet

In E-newsletters

Through blogs or podcasts

Through communities of practice (e.g. Special Interest Groups, user groups, etc.)

Through an association website

Other (please specify)

*** 5. Over the years, associations have identified some common challenges that concern professionals across fields. Some may not apply to your field. These challenges are summarized below.**

Please rate how well you think associations address each of those challenges

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	No Opinion	Somewhat Well	Well
Challenging regulatory environment (needed relief from regulations)					
Liability exposure, risk management					
Undesirable pending legislation					
Inadequate recognition of the value delivered by your profession or discipline to the larger society					
Inadequate supply of capable professionals					
Inadequate supply of personnel (teachers)					
Keeping pace with technology					
An expanding body of knowledge					

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	No Opinion	Somewhat Well	Well
Inadequate sources of funding or revenue					
Keeping up with new information in the field					
Lack of public awareness of your field					
Achieving high quality outcomes					

6. If you think there are other challenges that have an impact on your field today, please use the space below to describe them.

***7. Have you ever dropped membership in an association?**

Yes (continue)

No (please skip to question 10)

8. Which of the following played the biggest role in your decision to drop membership in the association you dropped most recently.(Please check one)

Dissatisfied with association performance

Did not receive the expected value to justify the cost of dues

Change of professional interest

Change of residence

Not enough local programs offered

Association was ineffective in representing your field

Disagreed with association's political/advocacy positions

Change of job

Change of career focus

Change of affiliate/regional relationship with association

Dissatisfied with the affiliate/region

Employer stopped paying membership dues

Did not feel welcomed in the group

The group was not the right one for me

9. What was the main reason you dropped membership in the association you dropped most recently? (Feel free to repeat from the list above or add your own reason if not covered above.)

*** 10. Would you say that there are too many associations in your professional area of interest, too few, or is the number about right?**

Too many

Too few

About right

Can't Say

*** 11. Do you think there will be a greater or lesser need for associations five years from now?**

Greater

Lesser

About the same

Can't Say

*** 12. The rest of the questions refer to the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). While you may belong to other associations, please answer all questions about only the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA).**

Are you currently a member of NCSA?

Yes (go to question 14)

No (continue)

13. Have you ever been a member of NCSA?

Yes (continue)

No (Thank you for participating in this survey, you do not need to continue on)

*** 14. How important were the following in your decision to join NCSA?**

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Access to career information and					

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
employment opportunities					
Access to products, services and suppliers (e.g.insurance, publications, etc.)					
A reference directory of members/practitioners					
Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field					
Opportunities to gain leadership experience					
Member discounts or group purchasing activities					
Access to the most up to date information available in your field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 15. How satisfied are you with the performance of this association in delivering benefits and services to you in the following areas?**

	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	No Opinion	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Access to career information and employment opportunities					
Access to products, services and suppliers (e.g.insurance, publications, etc.)					
A reference directory of members/practitioners					

	Unsatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	No Opinion	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field					
Opportunities to gain leadership experience					
Member discounts or group purchasing activities					
Access to the most up to date information available in your field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 16. How important were the following benefits to your field or profession in your decision to join NCSA?**

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Attracting competent people into the field					
Conducting research on significant issues affecting the field					
Gathering, analyzing and publishing data on trends in the field					
Influencing legislation and regulations that affect the field					
Maintaining a code of ethics for practice					
Promoting a greater appreciation of the role and value of the field among practitioners					
Promoting greater public awareness of contributions in the field					
Providing standards or guidelines that support quality					

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Supporting student education and entry into the field					
Providing awards or recognition for excellence in the field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 17. How satisfied are you with NCSA's performance in delivering benefits to your field or profession in the following areas?**

	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	No Opinion	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Attracting competent people into the field					
Conducting research on significant issues affecting the field					
Gathering, analyzing and publishing data on trends in the field					
Influencing legislation and regulations that affect the field					
Maintaining a code of ethics for practice					
Promoting a greater appreciation of the role and value of the field among practitioners					
Promoting greater public awareness of contributions in the field					
Providing standards or guidelines that support quality					
Supporting student education and entry into the field					

	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	No Opinion	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied
Providing awards or recognition for excellence in the field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 18. How did you first learn about NCSA? (Check one)**

Colleague or co-worker

Professor or instructor

Telephone or email inquiry

Direct contact from the association by postal mail

Direct contact from the association in person

Direct contact from the association by telephone

Direct contact from the association by email or other electronic means

A workshop, conference, or meeting

University or college program

Browsing on the Internet

Booth at a trade show

News story

Do not recall

Other (please specify)

*** 19. In the last 12 months, have you volunteered for NCSA in any of the following ways? (Check all that apply)**

Served on a committee for the parent organization (NCSA)

Served on a committee for a local chapter or section (Affiliate)

Served on the Board for the parent organization (NCSA)

Served on the Board for a local chapter or section (Affiliate)

Spoke or presented a paper at a convention, regional meeting, or other educational event

Submitted a paper for publication

Participated in expert panel or report

Served on a technical committee or special interest group

Have not volunteered for NCSA in the last 12 months.

Other (please specify)

*** 20. How likely is it that you would recommend membership in NCSA to a friend or colleague?**

	Not Likely	Somewhat Not Likely	No Opinion	Somewhat Likely	Likely
Recommend membership					

*** 21. Who pays for your NCSA membership fee?**

Self

School District

You pay part and School District pays part

Someone else

Other (please specify)

*** 22. Do you expect to renew your membership in NCSA during the next renewal cycle?**

Yes

No

Not Sure

*** 23. What year were you born? (i.e. 1973)**

*** 24. What is your gender**

Male

Female

*** 25. Please indicated your "administrative title"**

Elementary Principal

Middle School Principal

High School Principal

Assistant Principal

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent

Other: _____

Other (please specify)

26. Please use the space below to list the associations other than NCSA to which you belong now.

27. If you listed any association above, would you say that you consider NCSA your primary professional affiliation or does another association fill that role for you?

I consider NCSA to be my primary affiliation

I consider another association to be my primary affiliation

Neither, I don't consider any association to be my primary affiliation

28. If you would like to make any additional comment, please use the space provided below.

Done

APPENDIX C
NONMEMBER SURVEY

Non Member Survey

[Exit this survey](#)**1. Association Member Survey**

Note: The term "association" in all questions in this study refers to any scientific, scholarly, academic or professional organization comprised of individual members who seek to benefit from collective activities such as education, networking, or advocacy.

*** 1. What is your overall attitude toward associations as defined above? Please select your rating on the scale provided below.**

	Unfavorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	No Opinion	Somewhat Favorable	Favorable	No opinion
Overall Attitude						

*** 2. Do you believe associations are capable of addressing the practical needs of individual members?**

	No	Somewhat No	No Opinion	Somewhat Yes	Yes	Can't say
Capable						

3. What do you think are the most important functions of an association? (Please check up to three choices.)

Representing the field to the public

Representing the field within the industry or discipline

Representing the field to the government

Providing timely information about the field to members

Providing technical information to members

Connecting practitioners within the field to each other/networking

Creating and disseminating standards of practice

Providing certification opportunities

Providing training/professional development to members

Other (please specify)

4. How do you prefer to receive information about your profession or field? (Please check up to three choices)

At conferences or meetings

Through traditional broadcast media (television or radio)

Through your network of peers (word of mouth)

In magazines or journals serving your field

In general interest magazines

In newspapers (print)

In print sources other than magazines or newspapers

By searching on the Internet

In E-newsletters

Through blogs or podcasts

Through communities of practice (e.g. Special Interest Groups, user groups, etc.)

Through an association website

Other (please specify)

*** 5. Over the years, associations have identified some common challenges that concern professionals across fields. Some may not apply to your field. These challenges are summarized below.**

Please rate how well you think associations address each of those challenges

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	No Opinion	Somewhat Well	Well
Challenging regulatory environment (needed relief from regulations)					
Liability exposure, risk management					
Undesirable pending legislation					
Inadequate recognition of the value delivered by your profession or discipline to the larger society					
Inadequate supply of capable professionals					
Inadequate supply of personnel (teachers)					
Keeping pace with technology					

	Poor	Somewhat Poor	No Opinion	Somewhat Well	Well
An expanding body of knowledge					
Inadequate sources of funding or revenue					
Keeping up with new information in the field					
Lack of public awareness of your field					
Achieving high quality outcomes					

6. If you think there are other challenges that have an impact on your field today, please use the space below to describe them.

***7. Have you ever dropped membership in an association?**

Yes (continue)

No (please skip to question 10)

8. Which of the following played the biggest role in your decision to drop membership in the association you dropped most recently. (Please check one)

Dissatisfied with association performance

Did not receive the expected value to justify the cost of dues

Change of professional interest

Change of residence

Not enough local programs offered

Association was ineffective in representing your field

Disagreed with association's political/advocacy positions

Change of job

Change of career focus

Change of affiliate/regional relationship with association

Dissatisfied with the affiliate/region

Employer stopped paying membership dues

Did not feel welcomed in the group

The group was not the right one for me

9. What was the main reason you dropped membership in the association you dropped most recently? (Feel free to repeat from the list above or add your own reason if not covered above.)

*** 10. Would you say that there are too many associations in your professional area of interest, too few, or is the number about right?**

	Too Few	Somewhat Few	No Opinion	Somewhat Right Number	Right Number
Number of Associations					

*** 11. Do you think there will be a greater or lesser need for associations five years from now?**

	Lesser	Somewhat Lesser	No Opinion	About the Same	Greater
Five Years from Now					

*** 12. The rest of the questions refer to the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA). While you may belong to other associations, please answer all questions about only the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA).**

Are you currently practicing as a School Administrator?

Yes (continue)

No (Thank you for participating in this survey, you do not need to continue on)

*** 13. Are you currently a member of NCSA?**

Yes (Thank you for participating in this survey, you do not need to continue on)

No (continue)

*** 14. Have you ever been a member of NCSA?**

Yes

No

*** 15. Have you ever been invited to join (or rejoin) NCSA?**

Yes (continue)

No (go to question 19)

16. Which of the following invited you to join or rejoin NCSA?

A member

Someone on the association staff

Someone else

17. How were you contacted when you were invited to join or rejoin NCSA?

Someone contacted you in person (face to face)

By telephone

By mail

By e-mail

In another way

18. What was the main reason you did not join NCSA when you were invited to join the last time?

*** 19. How familiar are you with NCSA right now?**

Very familiar

Familiar

Have heard of it but not familiar

Never hear of it (go to question 21)

20. How did you first learn about NCSA? (Check one)

Colleague or co-worker

Professor or instructor

Telephone or email inquiry

Direct contact from the association by postal mail

Direct contact from the association in person

Direct contact from the association by telephone

Direct contact from the association by email or other electronic means

A workshop, conference, or meeting

University or college program

Browsing on the Internet

Booth at a trade show

News story

Do not recall

Other (please specify)

*** 21. In the next two years, do you think you will join (or rejoin)NCSA?**

Yes

No

Don't know

*** 22. If you were considering joining NCSA, how important would the following personal benefits be in your decision to join?**

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Access to career information and employment opportunities					
Access to products, services and suppliers (e.g.insurance, publications, etc.)					
A reference directory of members/practitioners					
Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field					
Opportunities to gain leadership experience					
Member discounts or group purchasing activities					

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Access to the most up to date information available in your field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 23. If you were considering joining NCSA, how important would their activities on behalf of your field or profession be in your decision to join?**

	Not Important	Somewhat Not Important	No Opinion	Somewhat Important	Important
Access to career information and employment opportunities					
Access to products, services and suppliers (e.g.insurance, publications, etc.)					
A reference directory of members/practitioners					
Opportunities for you to network with other professionals in your field					
Opportunities to gain leadership experience					
Member discounts or group purchasing activities					
Access to the most up to date information available in your field					
Professional development or educational program offerings					

*** 24. If your school district or someone else was willing to pay your membership dues in NCSA would you join today?**

Yes

No

Not sure

Other (please specify)

***25. Does your school district pay for dues in any associations?**

Yes

No

Don't know

***26. What year were you born? (i.e. 1973)**

***27. What is your gender**

Male

Female

***28. Please indicated your "administrative title"**

Elementary Principal

Middle School Principal

High School Principal

Assistant Principal

Superintendent

Assistant Superintendent

Other: _____

Other (please specify)

29. Please use the space below to list the associations other than NCSA to which you belong now.

30. If you would like to make any additional comment, please use the space provided below.