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# Perceptions of Female Hiring in Educational Administration in Rural Pennsylvania Public-School Districts as Perceived by School-Board Members

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*Andrews University*

ABSTRACT


PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE HIRING IN EDUCATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION IN RURAL PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC-SCHOOL DISTRICTS AS PERCEIVED
BY SCHOOL-BOARD MEMBERS


by

Barbara J. Kelly


Chair: James A. Tucker

# ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

## Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE HIRING IN EDUCATIONAL
ADMINISTRATION IN RURAL PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC-SCHOOL
DISTRICTS AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL-BOARD MEMBERS

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### Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the selection practices and requirements

for administrators in rural Pennsylvania public-school systems. This study examined

aspects of the administrative hiring process in order to explain the significant lack of

women in the pool of administrators drawn from the rural Pennsylvania school districts.

The research question intended to discern whether school-board members perceived

gender bias of female applicants as a deterrent in their hiring or whether there was a

paucity of female applicants.

Method

A review of the literature traced the history of education as it pertained to the hiring of women from the 1800s to the present day, including the Federal Glass Ceiling Initiative and the Title IX Act.

An author-generated, large-group survey was presented to 45 school-board members on the boards of five different school districts in north-central Pennsylvania. The boards each consisted of nine members. Follow-up interviews consisted of one-to-one personal interviews of a randomly selected group of two members from each of the five school boards.

This research was divided into two parts. The survey covered questions regarding the school boards' hiring policies and perceived gender bias. The follow-up interviews provided a more in-depth questioning of the hiring process and gender issues.

Data were triangulated with frequency tables, interview responses, and member checks. Two outside readers read and documented like responses in the follow-up interview.

Results

Findings of the survey indicated that there are no perceived gender-bias issues in the hiring process of the selected school boards in the rural districts studied. However, responses from females in the follow-up interviews suggest that there have been instances of gender-bias. The common themes that emerged from the study suggest that the disproportionately greater number of male hirings was perceived to be based on the best fit for the job, the rural relocation, and the paucity of female candidates.

## Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the results of my study. The majority of respondents from the school boards of north-central Pennsylvania do not perceive gender-bias to be an issue in the hiring of female applicants for administrative positions. Most school-board members who participated believed that the rural location and the relocation to rural Pennsylvania may be a factor in how many female applicants apply. The school-board members surveyed felt that there was not adequate in-house candidacy to fill administrative positions.

Further studies could address comparing business and educational hiring, the "queen-bee syndrome" of females not hiring other females, the relevance of educational levels and school-board membership's knowledge of hiring procedures, and a comparison of male vs. female gender issues immediately after their hire in the school district.

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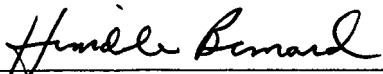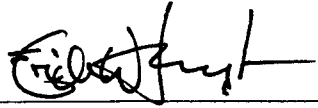
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Although human-resource departments make every attempt to avoid bias in their

hiring practices, there are occasions when such efforts fail. One such situation is evident

in the tendency of public-school systems to disproportionately hire male administrators

over female counterparts. This practice has been going on for some years unchecked

(Shakeshaft, 1987). This may be due to a lack of female applicants or a lack of having

experienced women as administrators. Over the years I had noticed a similar trend in the

schools districts in Northeastern Pennsylvania in which I have worked. As I considered

this condition, I wanted to discern whether the apparent bias of hiring so few female

applicants was intentional or whether it stemmed from a paucity of female applicants.

In order to understand why so few female administrators are hired, a careful look

needs to taken at the process of hiring. Administrators are typically hired by school

boards. As research indicates, administrators are often the key to well-run schools

(Tekeste, 1996). School boards are also concerned about well-run schools, but how to

achieve this through hiring processes needs to be studied in more depth. One problem has

been the lack of information about the career paths of women into school administration.

While there is a good understanding of the path that men take into school administration,

this path is less clear for women desiring to serve as school administrators (Shakeshaft,

1987). It has been the dissertation, more than any other source, which has provided some

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research on women in administration (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 10). My study was developed to further the knowledge of women's roles in school administration.

## Background of the Problem

Amott and Matthaei (1996) tell us that the "gender processes do differentiate women's lives in many ways from those of men in their own racial-ethnic and class group" (p. 32). Babcock and Laschever (2003), who also have studied women's progress in positions of leadership, note,

> Women's progress into positions of leadership in professions that were previously closed to them has been far from complete. Staggering figures show that between 1998 and 2001 women in administration fields increased by 1.8 percentage points. It suggests that we may have gotten as much mileage out of changes we have already made, and that new solutions need to be found if women's progress is to continue. (p. 20)

A similar trend was also noticeable when we look at the progression of women in the administrative role in schools. To understand the role of women who seek administrative positions, perhaps we should first look at the role of an administrator in the school environment.

The quality and effectiveness of the school administrator is the key to an excellent school. One of the responsibilities of the school principal is to act as the chief disciplinarian of the school, a role that is often associated with male, rather than female leadership. The principal is seen as the guiding light for school improvement and a role model for an effectively run school. Recognizing the importance of hiring well-rounded administrators should be a high priority for all public-school entities (DuFour & Eaker, 1988). Zanella (as cited in Gibney, 1987) states,

> The concern for the recruitment and selection process requires discretion. Making the wrong choice can be devastating for the district administrative team and the public

school system for years. It is a difficult process to dismiss an administrator who is incompetent. (p. 1)

"The hiring process of a vital administrator is pivotal to the success of a dynamic school system" (DuFour & Eaker, 1988, p. 8). The responsibility for hiring school administrators has been delegated by the state of Pennsylvania to the school boards. The Pennsylvania Department of Education describes the role and authority of the school boards in the following way:

A School Board whose members must live in the district governs each school district in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There are 501 school districts in the Commonwealth. Student enrollment ranges from 267 to 214,288 per district. The significance of the Pennsylvania General Assembly charge is School Boards are provided broad authority by the Pennsylvania School Code to establish, equip, furnish, and maintain the public schools in the district. School boards have the authority to employ the necessary qualified personnel to operate its schools. (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2005, p. 2)

This dissertation examines the role of the school-board member in the hiring process within rural Pennsylvania school districts.

To look at the practices connected to the hiring process, the coequality in the hiring of school administrators was addressed. An important longitudinal study conducted by Mertz (2003) over a 30-year period (1972 to 2002) examined and documented coequality in the hiring of female school administrators. Mertz studied females in various positions in a southeastern state. The Mertz study of 20 school districts included two urban, six suburban, five medium-sized city, and seven rural school districts. Mertz's research showed that in the hiring of assistant high-school principals, female roles had increased in the urban districts more than in the rural districts. Coequality after 30 years had not been achieved, but was increasing. The number of middle/junior high-school assistant principals in all districts increased, with women

showing gains over male counterparts, but this was true to a greater extent in urban districts than in rural districts. Moreover, coequality occurred to a greater degree in the elementary districts. There was an increase of 65.9% for urban districts, 81% for suburban districts, 80% for medium-city districts, and 41% for rural districts. While this progress is notable, Mertz indicated that, given the fact that Title IX of the Education Amendments had passed some 30 years earlier, "one might have expected greater advances in all positions in all types of districts over the period" (p. 9).

Data relative to the total number of administrators hired in the five rural Pennsylvania districts under study were tallied, and the total overall hiring of female administrators calculated. Table 1 shows that less than half (36.6%) of all hirings in the administrational field for these five districts from 2001 to 2007 were female.

Table 1

*Comparison of Female Hires With Total Hires*

| Year in District | Total Hirings | Female Hirings | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2001-2002 | 13 | 7 | 53.0 |
| 2002-2003 | 10 | 2 | 20.0 |
| 2004-2005 | 6 | 1 | 16.6 |
| 2006-2007 | 12 | 5 | 16.6 |
| Total | 41 | 15 | 36.6 |

*Note.* In the years 2003-2004 and 2005-2006, no hirings occurred in the administrative fields.

## Statement of the Problem

Nationally, the number of women in school administration roles is not proportionate to the number of women available to fill such positions. Such a condition seems apparent specifically in rural Pennsylvania, given the under-representation of females in the rural school districts there.

One interpretation of the role of the principal is a perception of a strong disciplinarian. Early perceptions of women's roles in discipline and order were established primarily because of women's smaller size and supposed lack of strength. This perception may still permeate the mind-set of the rural population and may therefore at least partially account for the under-representation of female administrators.

The focus of this study is the selection practices for hiring administrators in rural public-school systems in north-central Pennsylvania.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify gender-related role perceptions and hiring practices of those who hire school administrators in selected rural school districts in north-central Pennsylvania. I wished to discern the reasons for the obvious hiring imbalance and to determine whether it was related to gender-bias or other causes.

## Significance of the Study

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) supported this research. In 2006 it had already defined the subject of my research study as a need in the state (J. E. Henderson, personal communication, December 14, 2005).

Given the low number of studies on gender bias in the hiring of females at certain levels of school leadership, particularly in the role of assistant principal, it was my purpose to increase the general knowledge about the hiring of women for school-administration positions.

This research could impact decision making by women who plan to enter the field of educational administration. This study increases the transparency of hiring practices in rural areas and gives applicants a glimpse into the hiring practices of those who hire.

## Research Questions

The core questions of this study are listed here:

1. Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Three sub-questions are associated with this question: (a) Has the school-board member ever experienced difficulties they perceived to be gender related? (b) Has the school-board member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? (c) Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district?

2. To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

3. How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare relative to their being strong disciplinarians?

## General Method

For this study I adopted a mixed-method approach, using both survey and interview formats. I chose a mixed-method design because it involves "the precise measurement and generalizability of quantitative (numeric) research and the in-depth, complex picture of qualitative (text or image data) research" (Creswell & Clark, 2004, p. 32).

I administered a survey to the school-board members from five rural Pennsylvania public-school districts regarding their perceptions of the hiring process as it pertains to their district. Each board of the five rural school districts consisted of nine members. This meant I had a population of 45 school-board members ($N$=45). Twenty-seven school-board members responded to this survey ($n$=27). The findings are described in chapter 4. The quantitative data were compiled into frequency tables and analyzed according to frequency of responses.

To get a more detailed view of individual school-board members' perspectives as they relate to women in administrative roles, I interviewed two members from each of the five school boards (a total of 10 interviews). These members were selected randomly by the superintendent of each district.

I followed Wolcott's (2001) structure for gathering qualitative data through interviews. The interviews aimed at uncovering the history of hiring in the school district. This gave participants the chance to share their side of the story, akin to Wolcott's category of narrative data collection. Once I had transcribed all of the interviews, I conducted a member check for validity and accuracy by reading their responses back to them so that they had an opportunity to change or correct the response.

I also asked two colleagues, one an elementary principal familiar with hiring procedures, the other a university professor familiar with qualitative research procedures, to review the interview data and analysis. I gave them a general interview rubric to record their own analysis of the responses (see Appendix C). Both reviewers came up with similar results, confirming my analysis. In all of these processes, I strictly adhered to confidentiality.

I also used data that I received from the state about the actual number of people hired, with the relative breakdowns, to see how many women were hired during the years 2001-2007. These three streams of data I then organized around the basic issue of hiring female administrators in order to find answers to the three research questions (see chapter 4).

## Population and Sampling

The participants in the study were intentionally selected. The subjects consisted of all of the school-board members from five rural Pennsylvania school districts. The five districts sampled were chosen because of the demographic description of what constitutes a rural school district in the state of Pennsylvania: schools with the population of less than 2,500 students. The U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data survey done in 2003-2004 states that Pennsylvania has 3,247 schools that are considered rural. Forty-eight percent of Pennsylvania school districts are considered rural. Districts A-D in this study are among them. I am an administrator in one of the school districts in which the school-board members were interviewed. I reside within the school district in which I work.

The lack of a clear, accepted definition of *rural* has impeded research in the field of rural education. When defining the term *rural*, population and remoteness are important considerations, as these factors influence school organization, availability of resources, and economic and social conditions. A study titled *Condition of Education in Rural Schools* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) states,

> With respect to background characteristics, rural countywide school districts and rural non-countywide school districts had higher percentages of students from low-income families than mixed rural-urban districts. Rural countywide school districts also had higher total district expenditures and more total staff. (p. 2)

The five school districts surveyed showed a significant lack of females in the role of school administration in the field of principal, which is consistent with the previously reported general lack of women in the role of school administration.

Each school board in this study had nine members. Every member was given the survey. The population was chosen from school-board members representing diverse groups in rural north-central Pennsylvania.

I then used a random sampling technique to select 10 subjects from among board members of the five districts (A-E). This was done by randomly selecting two members—one female and one male—from each school board A through E for a follow-up interview. The large-group survey instrument was designed to obtain general information about board members' perceptions of the hiring process. The one-on-one personal interview procedure, the discussion with the candidate, the actual hiring, and the perception of or attitudes about what constitutes a good administrator on all levels of the public-school system were reviewed. All surveys included demographic information.

I personally spoke to the school-board members at their monthly meetings. I discussed my research and their participation in the survey. I explained how the follow-

up interview sessions would occur, and also relayed their choice to opt out if they did not want to be personally interviewed. I then left the survey with the superintendent to disperse. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the research was attached, including the endorsement of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) in a letter explaining the endorsement. The survey was given to the participants personally and/or by email. The participants had 2 weeks to respond. A postcard was sent to the entire board to encourage a response after the specified time frame had expired. Then a personal letter was written to the superintendents to remind the board of the survey. Phone interviews occurred when necessary, especially when the response was low.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

*Glass ceiling*: Artificial barriers that deny women and minorities the opportunity to advance within their careers (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1996).

*Member check*: A check done by me asking participants to verify the accuracy of the account of the interview.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*: The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), often abbreviated in print as NCLB, is a controversial United States federal law (Act of Congress) that reauthorized a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of U.S. primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools, as well as providing parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend. Additionally, the law promoted an increased focus on reading and re-authorized the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

*Title IX:* Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, now known as the Patsy T. Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act in honor of its principal author, but more commonly known simply as Title IX, is a United States law enacted on June 23, 1972, that states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (Title 34, 1972).

## Summary

The next four chapters review the literature, explain the methods used in this research, analyze the data, and bring the research to summation. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature, situating the history of women in administration. The history of the school boards in Pennsylvania is also addressed. The influence of the Glass Ceiling initiative, and the effect it had on the hiring of women in general, is discussed. Chapter 3 describes the methods used in this mixed-method study. The population, the sample selection, the instrumentation, and data analysis are addressed.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyze the quantitative and qualitative data collected and summarize the results, using a mixed-methods approach. The results were analyzed in terms of the research questions upon which this study was founded. Chapter 6 contains the summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE

**Historical Perspective of Women in Education**

The history of the United States is replete with literature stating that the "history

of women in school administration is intertwined with the history of women in teaching.

To understand the former one must understand the latter" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 23). "In

the colonial era teachers called school dames were the lowest on the ladder in pay and

acceptability. Female teachers earned one-fifth of what the headmaster made" (Bonn,

1974, p. 29).

In the 1820s, men were hired for positions of administration instead of women.

Shakeshaft (1987) states,

> School boards searching for male teachers found a dearth of men with the desired
> background. Most males were from lower socio-economic classes, many who might
> have had keen availability to enter the profession, but were not the kind of men the
> school board sought to hire. School boards wanted literate, middle-class men--men
> for whom there were other opportunities at much higher pay and status. (p. 24)

In 1838 women began to take administrative positions. A study done by Woody

(1996) stated, "In 1830, 57.2% of teachers in the US were women and by 1900 70.1%

were women" (p. 499). Early change agents were Margaret Haley (1910), leader of

Chicago's Teachers Federation; Ella Flagg Young (1910), president of the National

Education Association; and Grace Strachan (1910), leader of the equal pay charge in New

York City.

A piece written by Connolly (1919) predicted the limits for women in administrative roles: "This was usually in the supervision of primary work, or domestic work, or welfare work, and the women often were selected by a board of men" (p. 843). With this early perception a stage was set. According to Shakeshaft (1987), "In 1928, women were thought to be constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength" (p. 39). These types of studies may have set the boundaries for the types of administrative levels women could aspire to. These early perceptions emphasize the pertinent questions that exist today. This study reviewed the literature regarding changes that have occurred from the 1920s until the present.

Where administrators were not elected by popular vote, women seeking administrative positions still had to confront the ever-present bias of school-board members, most of whom were men. Board members tended to hire White, middle-aged men mostly like themselves. Early information written for school administrators by Elwood Cubberly (1929) stated that "businessmen were listed as the best candidates for school boards. Those to be kept off the school board included inexperienced young men, unsuccessful men, retired men, politicians, uneducated or ignorant men, saloonkeepers and all women" (p. 161). Shakeshaft (1987) concurs: "By 1942, a nationwide survey of school districts reported, 58% of school systems would not employ married women" (p. 43).

The 1950s and 1960s brought about great change in the lives of Americans. Racial wars were occurring. The school systems were changing. The United States was at war.

Shakeshaft (1987) reports, "In the 1950s and 1960s, consolidation of small schools, and white and black schools again limited job opportunities for women. In the 1960s many men entered the teaching profession to avoid the draft to Vietnam" (p. 45). This again put females at risk for advancement because of the male influx into the school settings. As the nation faced its turmoil both intrinsically and abroad, school systems endured ever more change socially. Males were thought to be able to handle the social climate at this time more forcefully. Neidig (1973) concurred, stating that "male school board members believed that women could not cope with the emotional and physical stress found in school administration" (p. 114). Shakeshaft (1987) stated that "in the late 1950s and early 1960s, women—married or single—began to be seen once again as the problem in education, instead of the solution" (p. 48).

Esler (1975) investigated two models or theories that were being developed that may explain the lack of female representation in the role of administrator.

> The Woman's Place Model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are a result of efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy Model is the other model, which assumes that the most competent people have been promoted consequently; women who were not promoted were deemed not competent. These early studies set the course for further research. (p. 82)

A significant study done in 1976 by Timpano and Knight documented specific behaviors in New York that discriminated against women in the hiring process. They found that certain filters occurred when the hiring process ensued. The hiring of women was restricted through the use of "bias filters" in the hiring process. Table 2 lists these filters.

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Table 2

*Discriminatory Hiring Filters Tested by Timpano and Knight (1976)*

| Bias filter | Description |
|---|---|
| Recruiting filters | Word of mouth recruiting through the old boy's network. |
| | Limiting eligibility to within the district when it is known that few women there are certified as administrators. |
| | Notifying women's organizations of only certain openings, such as director of home-economics. |
| | Advertising in journals known to have primarily male audiences. |
| Application filters | Including questions on applications about children, ages of children, and marital status. |
| | Questions about "lowest salary acceptable," which can lead to unequal pay for men and women. |
| | Separating applications received by sex. |
| Selection criteria filters | Using criteria with unproven validity as predictors of success, such as requiring a specific length of experience for specific requirements. |
| | Not allowing applicants to substitute comparable or superior alternative experience for specific requirements. |
| | Permitting men to skip steps on the career ladder but expecting women to complete each one. |
| | Requiring only women to hold state certification. |
| Interview filters | Having only men as interviewers. |
| | Asking women irrelevant questions about child care or how male subordinates may react toward them. |
| | Questioning applicants about personal matters that are excluded from the application forms by law and rejecting candidates who remind the interviewer of this. |
| | Focusing on the applicant as a woman, rather than as a qualified Professional, as in, "Why should such a bright and attractive woman ever want to be a superintendent?" |
| Selection decision filters | Regarding an aggressive manner in men as desirable but regarding women who display such traits as unfit. |

*Note.* From *Sex Discrimination in the Selection of School District Administrators: What Can Be Done?* by D. M. Timpano and L. W. Knight, 1976, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Title IX federal legislation and the Glass Ceiling Initiative have basically made the application filter section, a discriminatory practice that engages in recruiting, application, selection criteria, interview, and selection decision filters against certain segments of the population, prohibited by law. Shakeshaft (1987) states,

> As we move into the 1980s the percentage of women in administration was less than the percentage in 1905. Shakeshaft researched the 1985 climate and the demographic and social changes that occurred. She found that more unmarried women were available to teach than men in the education field. Teaching made it possible for women to support themselves when the male had left the home. These trends led to women educating themselves further. They found themselves moving into higher paying educational employment. (p. 66)

This demographic change opened the pathway for women who were seeking administrative roles. As women began gaining roles in administration, the salary barrier began to be noted. Women were usually, if hired at all, given less pay for the same positions.

Ortiz (1982) also recognized that women were being discriminated against in job hiring as they were given administrative roles but with different titles and different pay. He stated,

> The typical and atypical way for women to enter school administration was through specialist positions, supervisory posts and elementary principalships. The roles listed were generally called coordinator, director, or assistant administrator. The guidance counselor position was a good area to be in to move to administration for women as the job set a schedule that was more flexible; therefore, women were more available for administrative duties. (p. 67)

## The Role of Assistant Principal

The role of experience in dealing with disciplinary problems is often learned in the assistant principal role. Females who do not rise from the assistant principal role are

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therefore often at a disadvantage. The role of assistant principal itself has been a difficult

barrier for female administrators. Rosser (1980) notes,

> The emphasis on maintaining discipline as a component of the assistant principalship
> keeps women from being hired for those positions. Much research has shown that
> women are better than men at maintaining discipline. This has done nothing to dispel
> this misconception from hiring committees. (p. 70)

Rosser's (1980) research concluded "that athletic directors and coaches are

thought to be able to discipline. There is no evidence to support these conclusions, but

this belief has been used repeatedly to justify hiring a man, not a woman, in this position.

In all areas of administrative hiring, a subtle discrimination occurs" (p. 71).

Dr. Norma Mertz (2000) concurs with Rosser. In November 2000, Mertz

presented a paper at the University Council for Educational Administration in

Albuquerque, New Mexico. The paper presented was entitled "Conceptualizing the

Position of Assistant Principal." Although this research addressed how assistant

principals operate within the context they serve, the investigation was geared toward how

assistant principals perceive their place within the organization. What do they do? What

is the nature of their position? Addressing these types of questions relates to why women

may not be hired as principals.

Eight assistant principals in two urban high schools were intentionally selected.

All had been educators for two decades. In-depth interviews were conducted. Mertz

(2000) states that "assistant principals are the neglected actor in practitioner literature" (p.

3). The study included School A, with one male principal and two male and two female

assistants. School B had one male principal with one male and one female assistant.

Mertz noted that all three female assistants moved from the guidance counseling position

to assistant, and one was a former coach. Questions were asked about their background,

career path, and how they came to the position. They were also asked about what they thought of their duties.

Mertz (2000) reported that "new assistant principals are shocked at how unpracticed they are for the array of tasks they confront daily" (p. 7). The assistant principals who came from the elementary settings and guidance areas were surprised at the level or degree of difficulties in behavioral issues there were to deal with, as well as with the physical size of the students. The requirement of dealing with difficulties of the students had increased as the level of education increased. Discipline duties were part of the daily routine. Discipline included dealing with students sent to the assistant principal by teachers, meeting with parents, disciplinary hearings, and the monitoring of high-risk sites in the school setting. The assistant principals concluded that these activities made up the majority of their day.

The team approach was used in both schools. The principal was the boss and assigned the duties. One female respondent stated that when she was hired, an administrator from the central office stated that when a person is hired in this district, that person's job is to do as instructed by the principal and support whatever action or program he endorses. Most of the assistants agreed that their job was not to question but to serve.

In her conclusion to this study, Mertz (2000) found that, in general, being an assistant principal did not in fact prepare one to be a principal. There was no indication that their work involved the specialization it takes to be a principal. Mertz states, "If preparation means exposure to and understanding of the range of roles, or responsibility and task of running a school, assistant principal jobs did not allow for this" (p. 8). One of

the women in the study stated that when she wanted to work on a program, she first had to fulfill all of her regular assigned responsibilities, and thus did not have time in the day to do anything that could promote change. She certainly had to get approval from her principal for any change.

Mertz (2000) concludes, "While it is not extremely clear to what extent assistant principals seek to become principals the move to assistant principal is clearly a signal of interest" (p. 16). The success of hiring for either gender is the ability of the individual to play the role well.

## Perception of Hiring Discrimination: Conceptual Framework

The perception of hiring discrimination and gender-related challenges was studied by Riedel (2005), who completed a dissertation at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Riedel concluded from her review of research that future studies in the area of "sensitivity by board members and the central office personnel to gender-related challenges that women prospectively face in administrative positions is imperative" (p. 113). This dissertation's recommendations for further research opened an avenue for the research done in my study.

In the 1980s, Carol Shakeshaft reported that women had been largely ignored by traditional literature in the field of school administration. Her experiences examined the history of hiring women in schools and the process of women becoming administrators. Shakeshaft (1987) stated, "Most evidence suggests that people do not consciously discriminate. However evidence suggests sexual discrimination operates largely outside the conscious awareness. This denial of discrimination can be a survival mechanism for

one gender" (p. 206). In view of this invisible barrier, it is important for women to enter the interview process with a fair degree of self-confidence.

Andrews found that "a woman's self-confidence has a substantial impact on an individual's chances of being perceived as a group's emergent leader" (p. 9). Self-confidence when at the interviewing stage is perceived as being an important skill. The process of hiring at this level is more intense because the district is searching for a leader. Andrews (1984) reported,

> Women should be instructed at all levels on the most effective ways to confront bias in the personal selection as well as be given tools to understand the discriminatory practices. This defense would ease the internalization of rejection (lack of confidence and low self-image) and their labeling their efforts as failures. (p. 3)

In studying the process of hiring, there is a need to examine the interview and selection procedures. If bias is present, ways of overcoming it must be learned so that the best person is hired. "The issues of personal selection need to be examined in light of both gender and discriminatory practices. Those that hire must become aware of the subtle and not so subtle biases that we all hold towards women" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 208).

The negotiation of salaries for female administrators reveals that a more collaborative process by all involved may be needed. "Individual trickle-ups are not enough. The whole system must be changed if women in general, not just a hardy few, are to gain economic power" (Babcock & Laschever, 2003, p. 16).

Babcock and Laschever (2003) concluded a study at Carnegie Mellon University in 2002. People with Master's in Education degrees were surveyed. Starting salaries for men were 7% higher than women because men successfully negotiated the increase. Babcock and Laschever (2003) concluded their study by stating,

Society needs to accept that it is a good thing for women to promote and negotiate on their own behalf. Changing the context and cultural environment in which women live and work can change behavior of the people who live and work with them. (p. 12)

Babcock and Laschever (2003) also concluded,

In the year 2000, in the United States, 78% of women aged 25 to 54 worked outside the home, as compared to 64% in 1980. A 20% increase in 20 years. From 1998 to 2001, the increase for women in education administration increased at the slow rate of 1.8%. There is a need to convince women that they need to speak up for what they deserve, and to ask for what they want. If women expect life to be fair, it is up to them to make sure it is. (p. 1)

The studies done regarding the movement of women into administrative roles are

also useful in providing a new historical perspective.

Shakeshaft (1987) reported,

Until we can understand all human behavior in organizations, we are writing a history and practice of males in school administration. As scholarship, this is shoddy and deficient, as practice it is useful to only some practitioners. The most immediate action we can take then is to develop a research agenda that allows us to discover the factors that need to be taken into consideration if we are to respond to our woman student. (p. 208)

Hiring practices and research may enable women to recognize what aspects of the

process they need to understand to be successful.

## The Federal Glass Ceiling Initiative

The Federal Glass Ceiling Initiative (Martin, 1991) was an evaluation of research.

It was a landmark act in the hiring of women and minorities. This initiative opened

pathways both in the business and educational fields.

A study on the Glass Ceiling Initiative was done by Mixon (2004). She stated,

The term glass ceiling was first used in a 1985 *Wall Street Journal* article to describe an artificial barrier to the advancement of women into the corporate management positions. Senator Robert Dole introduced the Glass Ceiling Act, as part of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. President Bush then signed the Civil Rights Act and

established a bipartisan 21 member Glass Ceiling Commission. This commission had the duty of preparing recommendations on the issues at hand. (p. 1)

In 1991, Secretary of Labor Lynn Martin completed the Glass Ceiling Initiative report (Mixon, 2004). Senator Robert Dole praised the Glass Ceiling Initiative report and stated, "It showed the existence of barriers that blocked the advancement of women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder, with these findings assurance was needed for equal access and equal opportunities for all" (p. 1).

Mixon's studies revealed that women made up 45.7% of the total workforce and earned over half of the Master's degrees in education, yet 95% of senior management was comprised of men. Mixon (2004) found that "women at this time were earning $.72 for every dollar earned by men. Data collected for this review confirmed that inclusiveness in the workplace has a positive impact on the bottom line for companies" (p. 2). The study also showed gender bias in the potential earnings for women.

The term "shattering the Glass Ceiling" relates to the hiring of more females and minorities. The Break the Glass Ceiling Foundation (2004) stated, "The glass ceiling barriers include: lack of management commitment to establish workplace diversity towards upward movement, pay inequities, sex, race and ethic stereotyping, lack of family-friendly workplaces, and limited opportunities for advancement to decision making positions" (p. 1).

In 1993, a study of the Standard and Poor 500 companies revealed that "firms that succeed in shattering their own glass ceiling racked up stock market records that were two and one half times better than otherwise comparable companies" (Mixon, 2004, p. 1).

In a speech given at the Working Women's Summit, held in Philadelphia, Redwood (1996) reported,

We have moved from the farm to the assembly line to the computer. Information technologies, combined with global trade and worldwide investment, have shifted the economic ground we stand on. There is also a demographic shift in our work force and a restratification of society. The Glass Ceiling Commission chair Robert Reich calls this the revolt of the anxious class. (p. 1)

Redwood's speech referenced a 1996 study, which reported that there were nearly 60 million working women in America, more than 45% of the United States work force. Women and minorities constitute two-thirds of the population and consumers of goods. "Projections of the world's labor force indicate this number will continue to rise" (p. 2). Redwood (1996) also stated,

Cracks are in the ceiling and women are moving up the corporate ladder. Progress has been made, but we still have a long way to go. This progress did not include the executive women's pay. Surveys showed executive women in 1992 earning an average of $187,000, and men earning an average of $289,000—a difference of $102,000 in average annual compensation. (p. 2)

The Glass Ceiling commission report was published in 1985 and is an accepted part of the Title II Civil Rights Act of 1991. Five years later this report was reviewed, and there was a sizable difference in average annual compensation. The Glass Ceiling still exists. Redwood (1996) claimed further,

Equal education attainment does not guarantee fair compensation. It is this wage discrimination or pay inequity that is an indicator of the existence of glass ceilings. Despite identical educational attainment, ambition, and commitment to career, men still progress faster than women. (p. 4)

Redwood (1996) concurred with Shakeshaft's earlier study that "the underlying cause for the existence of the glass ceiling is the perception by many white males that they as a group are losing—losing competitive advantage, losing control, and losing opportunity as a direct consequence of inclusion of women and minorities" (p. 4).

The Glass Ceiling Commission identified three levels of external barriers in the advancement of women: Redwood (1996) examines societal barriers, which include barriers to educational opportunities, and job attainment; a difference barrier

manifested through conscious and unconscious stereotyping; and governmental barriers that include collection and honesty in employment related data. (p. 4)

Internal barriers included outreach and recruitment practices that are poorly equipped. There are climates that alienate women and minorities. Some fields have poor training, inadequate mentoring, and bias rating and testing systems that are inadequate. When change happens, a rigidity that denies the fragile family-and-work balance slights women in general.

"In the year 2005, women and minorities now are estimated as 62% of the United States' workforce. Corporate and educational leaders must recognize that they need the talent and input of women to better address the changing markets and global economy" (Redwood, 1996, p. 5). With global sustainability, both business and educational structures need to understand the new cultural environment and learn how to operate in it. Redwood (1996) stated, "Breaking the Glass Ceiling is an economic imperative. It is bottom line for every business in America and internationally, and a pocketbook issue for working women and their families" (p. 5).

Redwood (1996) concluded, "The government has a role to play in breaking glass ceilings. They must lead by example and make equal access and opportunity a reality for all" (p. 6). The Break the Glass Ceiling Foundation (1996) agreed with Redwood that "enforcement agencies need to enforce anti-discrimination acts, and improved data collection can give a clearer picture of progress women make by pinpointing areas of improvement needed" (p. 1). Every aspect of society is responsible for fair-hiring acts. This leads not only to business and educational involvement, but also to changes in the media and television. Redwood (1996) further asserted,

The media also plays a role in developing and eliminating stereotyping of individuals. Stereotypes affect the way workplaces view women and society at large. The educational community also plays a role. They can educate and develop positive images of diversity through cultural diversity programming. Students should come in contact with many career opportunities that are not gender related. (p. 7)

How are women to obtain such information as they prepare for their professional careers?

Redwood (1996) stated that "language is the new tool to success, and the language of international trade is not English. . . . It is the language of the customer. When glass ceilings are forever shattered, we will have succeeded in using our greatest asset—the people—to their fullest potential" (p. 7).

Robinson (1995) cited a 1991 report done by the Feminist Majority Foundation. The foundation predicted that it will take 475 years for females to reach equality in the administrative world at the rate they are going. She felt that this generation of women has a duty to inform the women of the next generation of the Glass Ceiling Initiative so they can better prepare themselves for the external barriers they face.

Women in educational leadership positions continue to face varying degrees of barriers. However, equipped with recognition of the existing barriers, the wisdom of research, mentors, and the call for additional qualities in leaders that women can offer, "aspiring females can benefit from those who have gone before and paved the way for those yet to come" (Robinson, 1995, p. 151).

Michael Fullan (2002) studied the barriers to school leadership. He stated that "one of the great strengths one needs, especially in troubled times, is a strong sense of moral purpose" (p. 19). He went on to say that the system is in deep trouble. "There is a huge need for new leaders, and at the same time there is a set of conditions that makes the

job unattractive—conditions that are well known to anyone working in schools" (p. 24).

Leadership has become a team effort, from the hiring by school boards to the job itself.

Fullan explained that leadership policies should be "judged not on how a given

leader affects the bottom line during his or her tenure but on how many effective leaders

who are committed to carrying on and going even deeper—the leader leaves behind" (p.

25).

Kayce Ataiyero (2004), an educational staff writer in Florida, reflected on the

path of women leaders:

> Change is on the horizon, one that could work in women's favor. Many women who
> hold central office positions are involved in the curriculum and instruction. With the
> increased national and local focus on accountability testing, and No Child Left
> Behind, educators say women could be well positioned to become superintendents as
> school districts seek candidates with strong curriculum based backgrounds. (p. 2)

In further statements, Ataiyero (2004) declared that school boards and

communities will see the slight advantage, as women generally have been classroom

educators for a longer average time than men before they decide to move to

administration. Ataiyero concluded, "There is still a belief out there that won't go away,

that women in tough leadership positions are not equipped to handle that. I think that the

more women who are successful and the more their stories are out there, the more school

boards will say gender issues don't matter" (p. 2).

**Pennsylvania's Shortage of Administrative Applicants**

*The Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Journal* featured an article by Kerr,

Cromley, Meister, Patterson, and Woods (2006) on "Securing Effective Leaders in Every

Pennsylvania School." In 2002, Pennsylvania legislators commissioned a study of the

501 school districts from urban, suburban, and rural districts at all building levels.

Within this study two recommendations were specified by the Department of Education: (a) to encourage development of mentoring programs for new administrators and to develop from within, and (b) to consider increased investment in recruitment and retention efforts. In response to these recommendations, Kerr et al. (2006) described the school administrator shortage in Pennsylvania, summarized selected literature on retention of school leaders, and proposed three policy changes: compensation, learning support system, and retirement with longevity incentives.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Equal Pay Law, 2003) found that there were 4,211 principalship positions in the state with 279 left unfilled during the 2001-2002 academic year. This was a 7% vacancy rate. Kerr et al. (2006) stated, "Of all the shortages experienced in administrative positions in the public schools, rural schools had the highest percent of vacancies in the six administrator categories" (p. 21). Forty-two percent of rural schools reported that high-school principals, supervisors, and senior-high assistant principals were the positions that had severe shortages. These rural districts filled these vacancies faster than the urban or suburban districts but experienced rapid turnover rates.

Kerr et al. (2006) further stated that "with respect to quality of applicants, the positions of supervisor, high-school assistant principal, elementary assistant principal, and middle school/jr. high assistant principal had the greatest number of less qualified applicants apply" (p. 22). The top reason for the experienced shortage among public schools was inadequate pay and compensation. Next was stress associated with lack of experience. Third was stress created by job conditions associated with excessive demands.

Researchers reporting in the Wallace Foundation Policy Brief (1994) stated that rather than a shortage of certified candidates for principalship, we have a shortage of these candidates who refuse to enter this career path. It is a pervasive-cultural condition issue. State-level policies, district hiring practices, and resource allocations need to be aligned.

Faced with the new role and changes over the past decade—such as unfunded mandates, increasing diversity, and limited revenue sources—principals in rural areas have found complicated barriers that reduce job satisfaction. Complicating these problems are work schedules that often do not include assistants. These rural leaders work long hours. They are expected to be present at all or most school and community events, despite salaries that are below their urban and suburban peers.

Howley, Chadwick, and Howley (2003) recommended four strategies for the recruitment and retention of rural school leaders: (a) publicize the satisfaction of the position, (b) encourage applications from women and minorities, (c) improve salaries and benefits, and (d) provide professional development programs so new administrators can meet the challenges of their roles. Professional development for rural educators may require the school districts to invest in distance learning, paid leaves for study, and setting up opportunities for professional networking.

The Wallace Foundation (2003) assessed that it is time to move away from increasing the number of certified candidates for the position of principal and focus more attention on reforming policies and practices. Their recommendations included (a) adjusting incentives and working conditions to enable non-competitive schools and districts to attract qualified leadership candidates, (b) bringing local recruitment and

hiring practices into line with heightened expectations for principal performance, and (c) redefining the job itself in ways that allow principals to concentrate on student learning above all else.

Howley et al. (2003) recommended four strategies for the recruitment and retention of rural school leaders; one recommendation was to improve salaries and benefits. A salary survey done in 2001-2002 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2002) showed that by comparison with salaries of teachers and administrators, principals received only $91.01 per week, or only 6% more than teachers do based on 52 weeks for administrators and 36 weeks for teachers. It was recommended that state legislators should enact and require a district to use a formula that would include a higher rate for administrators based on years of service. It was further recommended that all Pennsylvania districts should have a minimum principal salary, based on their teacher salary scale, and that districts that cannot keep pace should be stated funded.

The state's recommendations went on to assert that in rural areas with the lack of incentives, increased vacancies, and less sustainability for retention, a master principalship mentoring program should ensue. Mentoring programs should include principals from both genders with superior leadership qualities. A regional Leadership Center should be available in order to mentor new recruits.

Quinn (2001) reported a Harvard poll of surrounding public-school systems:

A recent poll done by Harvard Graduate School of Education (2001) sought to determine the most common strategies to solve the dilemma of the shortage of educational administrators. Thirty percent of the respondents said nothing was done, 20% tried a mentoring approach, 20% tried leadership academies, and 10% collaborated with a nearby college. The conclusive data showed that further research in this area is needed. One aspect that clearly is needed is the mentoring of newly hired female principals. It is a factor that needs to be researched and developed. (p. 27)

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Funding for mentoring other administrators and supporting recruitment came when the No Child Left Behind Act was initiated. Quinn (2001) noted that when the No Child Left Behind Act occurred, a $10 million initiative to support principal recruitment, retention, and training programs was to be funded. However, in 2002, the $10 million funding was removed from the federal fiscal-year budget. Professional organizations have been lobbying for its return to no avail.

Quinn (2001) suggested a Succession Planning System, which is designed to nurture the talent pool that exists in the school district and to groom that talent within. Schools in the future will grapple with a shortfall unless they discover how to address the hiring processes to include all. Failure to resolve this issue will weaken the new push for accountability and higher standards. Mentoring and funding of programs to elevate in-house candidates to administration positions in public-school systems may be the correct avenue for public education to go, given the noted lack of leaders (Quinn, 2001).

"Given the number of understaffed positions there is an open door for women to fill the gap of administrative positions" (Howley et al., 2003, p. 4).

### A Historical View and Hiring Practices of School Boards

In the United States, the lack of administrators at all levels has reached serious proportions. Across the nation, states are pondering what to do about the heavy administrator-attrition difficulty. Quinn (2001) reported, "A survey done by the Association of California School Administrators (2001) stated that 90% of respondents reported a shortage in the pool of applicants for the last advertised high school principal opening" (p. 26). A total of 84% of superintendents reported shortages in the middle

level, and 73% reported elementary shortages. Similar numbers are quite common across the United States. What is not clear is what districts are doing to change this situation.

The process of recruiting and selecting an administrator is the job of all who work in education. The hiring process itself is a difficult one. This chosen leader will steer a large body of people through a long process called education. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (2005) states,

> That a school board consists of members who must live in the district governs each school district in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. There are 501 school districts in the Commonwealth. Student enrollment ranges from 267 to 214,288. The numbers of school districts range from 1 to 264. The theory of the Pennsylvania General Assembly charge that School Boards are provided broad authority by the Pennsylvania School Code to establish, equip, furnish, and maintain the public schools in the district. School boards have the authority to employ the necessary qualified personnel to operate its schools. (p. 3)

The school board's role, which goes far beyond the rubber stamp, has both legal obligations and far-reaching implications for personnel policies.

Chance and Capps (1990) conducted research examining the turnover rates of administrators. They found that often-inappropriate interview questions were asked of females and that the "good ol' boy" system was used. Chance and Capps (1990) state that "to increase needed stability in school districts, boards must be more investigative in the hiring process, and state agencies must adopt a proactive attitude to address the issue of ineffective administrators" (p. 4).

Hertling (1999) presented steps to help school boards and district officials find qualified applicants for vacant school administration positions. Long-term strategies included increasing a candidate pool through career ladders and recruiting teachers through internships and training programs. Once a vacancy arises and the position has

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been announced with a job model or description accompanying it, the process of hiring

begins.

Most organizations have two pools of candidates to recruit from: the internal

candidates and the external candidates. Districts that have mentored or honed their staff

may have enough in-house candidates to select from. Hertling (1999) tells us of the

typical process:

> Typically, screening is a two-step process. After the personnel office has acquired
> the applications, the board members review resumes and applications; a more
> formalized process of paper screening is performed. Screeners should use a
> standardized ranking system to rank the candidates, before the interview invitation
> occurs. The district must ensure that an interviewer is trained to make the most of an
> interview. Interviews are more effective when all candidates are asked identical,
> predetermined, well thought out questions. (p. 4)

This process, although well-delivered and thorough, is not always followed. The election

of school-board members in a district brings together a plethora of individuals and

individual thought.

The school boards are elected by the public sector. They run for election on a

premise that is important to them and their constituents. As of the late 1980s, many

school boards still did not include female members.

Hertling (1999) reports,

> Interestingly enough women as school board members in the early 1980s were a mere
> 12% of the school board positions in the United States. The female board members
> were grossly underrepresented in this school service. One deterrent to females
> running for school board seats was the attitudes of other board members. It was the
> single major impediment to women seeking school board office. (p. 5)

Gaeddert and Horn (1984) examined the concept of gender as an influence on

hiring bias. They conducted a two-part study with 99 college students. In the first study,

the students developed descriptions of applicants that reflected gender characteristics,

such as male and female roles in the administration arena. In the second part, 63 college business majors (31 females and 32 males) responded to the bogus applicants developed in the first phase. The subjects were asked whether they would hire the applicant. The applicants were portrayed as feminine, androgynous, or masculine according to the roles made in the first study. The results showed that the androgynous applicant was considered most desirable, and the female applicant least likely to be recommended for hiring. These findings showed that "gender is linked with sex (example men should act like men) in socially prescribed patterns, with women being devalued by stereotypes that do not allow them to be seen as possessing masculine traits" (Gaeddert & Horn, 1984, p. 6). Therefore, hiring practices that involve stereotyping or bias may be learned at an early age.

In the historical view of hiring practices by a school board, the interview process for all administrators is daunting. Edson (1988) showed that women seeking employment as principals do not generally perceive any obstacles to being hired until they try to secure a position. Many women in her study of the Torrence Unified School District in California did not encounter discrimination practices until interviewing. Edson states, "One woman said that she thought she had a good shot at four different jobs, but found that school boards and superintendents are still reluctant to hang their hats on a woman. The conclusion, then, is that it comes down to if she can do the job" (p. 2).

Riedel (2005), in a dissertation done at the Lehigh University of Pennsylvania, concluded that the study of "increased sensitivity by board members and the central office personnel to gender-related challenges that women prospectively face in administrative positions is imperative" (p. 113).

McCreight (1999) presented an additional challenge: "The ethical question is how to increase female representation in administration when males with traditional ideas of gender-specific roles continue to control the gateway to advancement by holding the majority representation on school boards and superintendencies" (p. 8).

## Queen-bee Syndrome

One barrier to women being hired into a leadership position is the notion of the Queen-bee syndrome (Dobson & Iredale, 2006). They reported "that when presented with applications for promotion, women were more likely than men to assess the female candidate as less qualified than the male candidate" (p. 1). The study also concluded that women were more likely to interfere in another woman's prospect for promotion. Women were also assessed as being more controlling than men. The Dobson and Iredale study of 700 people found that "the queen bee syndrome of rivalry in the workplace may be as important as sexism in holding back women's careers" (p. 1).

The Dobson and Iredale (2006) study showed that female and older participants were more prejudiced towards the idea of a female leader than were the male and younger participants involved. These findings showed that there was an adopted stereotypical view that males were better leaders. The study showed bias for female candidates' promotion to and within leadership positions. Some women who hold roles of a demanding job and family look on other women as a threat and surround themselves with men.

Recent cases that illustrate the "Queen-bee syndrome" include a woman in London who was awarded 800,000 pounds in damages because she was bullied by four female colleagues. Garcia-Retamero and colleague Ester Lopez-Zafra, of the *The Sunday*

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*Times*, December 31, 2006, used 700 participants in southern Spain to evaluate credentials of a male and female employee of a fabricated company who was to be promoted. They were given a resume and the person's role in the company. They were to evaluate the chances of promotion, increased salary, and whether they had the correct skills to be promoted. The results of this study indicated that the female participants had, according to Retamero, "a stronger tendency than male participants to view the female candidate as less qualified than the male candidate" (p. 2). Also noted was the fact that women believed that the female applicant would fare worse in the future. Most women participants also felt that men would run a more laissez-faire program style.

The results of the Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006) study suggest that stereotypes about appropriate roles for women are still very strong, and there is still a cultural barrier for women in senior positions. The Dobson and Iredale (2006) study offered new light as to the barriers that exist for women who may deserve a job promotion, but are denied that opportunity by other women.

**Summary**

This literature review examines the development of women administrators in history, the Federal Glass Ceiling Initiative, and the school boards' history and hiring procedures. Barriers faced by women in the hiring process were identified. Overall, the literature review reveals that societal and external perceptions are still barriers when women seek administrative positions.

# CHAPTER THREE

## METHODS

### Introduction

My investigation of the literature written on the aspects of women and the process of hiring solidified my understanding of effective hiring skills and their relationship to women. The purpose of this study was to describe the hiring views of Pennsylvania rural school board's perception of women in the role of administrators. This study was focused on the views of the board members as I addressed the research questions.

For this study I adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both survey and interview formats. The mixed-method design involves "the precise measurement and generalizability of quantitative (numeric) research and the in-depth, complex picture of qualitative (text or image data) research" (Creswell & Clark, 2004, p. 32).

The large-group survey data helped examine trends across the school districts. I administered a large-group survey to the school-board members from five rural Pennsylvania public-school districts regarding their perceptions of the hiring process as it pertains to their district. Each board of the five rural school districts consisted of nine members. This meant I had a population of 45 school-board members ($N=45$). Twenty-seven school-board members responded to this survey ($n=27$). The large-group survey data helped examine trends across the school districts. The findings are described in

chapter 4. The quantitative data were compiled into frequency tables and analyzed by frequency of responses.

A "pure qualitative approach" (Patton, 1981, p. 26) was used to explain a naturalistic inquiry method and a qualitative data collection of information. Patten (2004) stated, "When we try to develop theories that explain events we have observed, we who practice qualitative research refer to this as grounded observation" (p. 27). I used grounded observation by collecting data on the perceptions of the hiring process and its effect on women. I built on key studies in the literature review to establish a basis for this study.

Qualitative research allowed these data to be explained with a written picture of perceptions. With this design, "the results are presented as discussions of trends and/or themes based on words, not statistics" (Patten, 2004, p. 19). Qualitative research is an inductive approach.

To get a more detailed view of individual school-board member perspectives as they relate to women in administrative roles, I interviewed two members from each of the five school boards. These members were selected randomly by each of their district superintendents. The follow-up interviews from the 10 school-board members selected for one-to-one interviews provided a more in-depth look at the specific perceptions of the school-board members.

I followed Wolcott's (2001) structure for gathering data through qualitative interviews. The interviews aimed at uncovering the history of hiring in the school district. This gave participants the chance to share their side of the story, akin to Wolcott's category of narrative data collection. Once I had transcribed all of the

interviews, I conducted a member check for validity and accuracy by reading their responses back to them so they had an opportunity to change or correct the response. I also asked two colleagues, one an elementary principal familiar with hiring procedures, the other a university professor familiar with qualitative research procedures, to review the interview data and analysis. I gave them a general interview rubric to record their own analysis of the responses. Both reviewers came up with the same results. In all of these processes I followed strict adherence to confidentiality (see Appendix C).

I also used data that I received from the state about the actual number of people hired, with the relative breakdowns, to see how many women were hired during the years 2001-2007. These three streams of data I then organized around the basic issue of hiring female administrators in order to find answers to the three research questions.

## Research Design

For this study, I used a mixed-method approach enhanced by the responses from the one-to-one follow-up interviews that address the following question: Why is there a shortage of female applicants in rural Pennsylvania? This study was designed to aid in understanding why there is an inequality of female administrators hired in rural Pennsylvania school districts. Research questions in this study were designed to obtain the perception of the school-board members and their vicarious experiences in the hiring process.

## Data Collection

Data gathering included Wolcott's (2001) categorizing techniques of participant observation, interviewing, and historical research. Data are presented from a survey of

the 45 school-board members. This research included responses from the overall large-group survey of the 45 school-board members and from the 10 school-board members selected for one-to-one interviews. Triangulation occurred with a qualitative review. The qualitative data were gleaned from semi-structured interviews, research records, and coded documentation.

The initial large-group survey was given to 45 school board members in five rural north-central Pennsylvania school districts. I then developed and analyzed clusters of average scores for each group of school board members being compared. The data were then converged for results.

For the qualitative review, the follow-up interview was conducted with the selected individual school-board members. The superintendent randomly chose 10 school-board members. The panel was given a note card on which each person placed his or her name, address, email address, and telephone number. I then distributed the initial survey, after which the school-board members handed their individual cards to the superintendent. The superintendent shuffled the cards and randomly picked two names. The recipients were asked if they were willing to answer five questions that were more in-depth in a one-on-one interview. In other words, they were given the option of declining. The superintendent then took the remaining cards and disposed of them.

In the five districts, six males and four females were chosen. Appendix B lists the questions used. The interview questions were provided in advance so interviewees could review and study them before the actual interview. The school-board members were given the three modes in which the interview could take place: face-to-face, email, and/or

telephone. Of the respondents, eight chose the telephone, one chose email and telephone, and one chose face-to-face.

The questions were coded into emerging themes. The responses were then analyzed for quotes that supported the themes. Replication logic or number of times a theme occurred throughout the responses was analyzed. Triangulation occurred as the analysis of the survey portion, the personal interviews, and field notes were reviewed.

### Population and Sample

The subjects consisted of the school board members of five rural Pennsylvania school districts. Each school board has nine members. The entire population of 45 school-board members was surveyed for this study. A narrower focus was formed by randomly selecting two members from each school board for one-to-one, qualitative interviews. The survey instrument was designed to obtain information on the hiring process, the interview procedure, the discussion of the candidate, the actual hiring, and the perception or attitudes of what constitutes a good administrator at all levels of the public-school system. The survey included demographic information.

I spoke personally to all of the school-board members while they were together at their monthly meetings. At each meeting, I discussed my research and their participation roles in the survey. I then explained how the follow-up interview sessions were to occur. I also relayed their opt-out choice for any board member who did not want to be personally interviewed. I then left the large-group survey with each member of the board. A cover letter explaining the purpose of the research was attached to the survey, as well as a copy of the endorsement of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA). The survey was given to the participants personally and/or by

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email. They each had 2 weeks to respond. Then a postcard was sent to each of the school boards to encourage further response. Next a personal letter was written to the superintendents to remind the board of the survey. Phone interviews occurred when necessary, especially when the response level was low.

## Research Questions

The core questions of this study are listed here:

1. Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Three sub-questions are associated with this question: (a) Has the school-board member ever experienced difficulties they perceived to be gender related? (b) Has the school-board member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? (c) Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district?

2. To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

3. How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare relative to their being strong disciplinarians?

A survey was used to assess the relationship between the hiring of female administrators and the attitude of school-board members in the hiring process. Questions were designed to query whether some administrative positions have male-dominant roles, such as the position of assistant principal. At the same time, the attitudes of hiring were explored by reviewing the survey responses and by telephone and one-to-one documented interviews with school-board members in a school setting.

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## Delimitations

This study was limited to five rural public systems in the north-central part of the state of Pennsylvania. All gathered information came from the school-board members who reside in the districts studied.

## Limitations

The data collected represented only 5 of 501 districts in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This study might be limited by the degree of honesty of the participants and by the knowledge of the hiring process that each board member possessed. Therefore, the results should not be generalized beyond the five districts.

## Data Analysis

Data from the board members of the five selected school districts were collected. A broad sample of content was chosen, with important material emphasized. The large-group survey and the follow-up interview questions were written to gain data that were critical to measure the perceptions of school-board members on the hiring process of school administrators (Patten, 2006).

Triangulation and member check were used to check validity and reliability of the data collected. Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Triangulation of data, according to Patten (2004), "is the method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (p. 21). The idea is one that can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to that same result.

Triangulation was done by collecting information from three different sources. First I distributed and collected the large-group survey, and then I obtained the follow-up

interview responses. The data were evaluated for same-theme responses. Selected independent readers One and Two read and analyzed the one-to-one interview responses. They completed a One-to-One Interview Rubric (see Appendix C) that I created. All data were transcribed to interpret the findings. The data included the one-to-one interviews, surveys, and field notes. I analyzed the data to confirm the results of the research and answer the research questions. Member check was applied to the follow-up interviews. When the surveys were finished, I read the exact responses they had said back to the 10 people interviewed for authentication. The triangulation included reviews of the interviews and the surveys from the five different school boards.

The data collected included historical research, ethnography, and statistics. Observation, field notes, email, post mail, a questionnaire survey, and interviews were also used.

## Summary

Chapter 3 developed the methodology that was used in this study. A mixed-method format was used. The research was initiated by using a large-group survey and a one-to-one interview format. Data were requested from 45 school board members in five rural Pennsylvania school districts. The population was purposefully selected. The survey was given to all school-board members at their monthly meeting. Data from the large-group survey included general hiring protocol questions and gender-bias related questions. In the follow-up interviews, two members of the nine-member school-board panel were randomly selected by the superintendent to meet with me in a one-to-one interview.

Content validity was established by using a broad sample of content in the surveys and interviews. Two validity checks were used: the triangulation of data and a member check of the information provided by the school-board members.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

## Introduction

The purpose of the study was to identify the perceptions of rural school-board members regarding the hiring of female administrators in rural-school districts of north-central Pennsylvania. The data collected contributed to the research regarding women in administrative roles in rural public-school settings.

Forty-five school-board participants (*N*=45) were given author-generated surveys that included 29 questions concentrating on the hiring process, their perception of this process, and their understanding of where females fit into the rural-school settings. Section A of the survey included demographics, Section B included school-board members' own personal journey in becoming a school-board member, and Section C dealt with the hiring of administrators in their particular district. In the follow-up interviews, the questions were more in-depth regarding the respondents' perspectives of the process of hiring female applicants for administrative roles.

Data from the survey were compiled. Twenty-seven of the 45 surveys were returned, yielding a 60% return rate. Percentages fluctuate throughout the data presentation because not all respondents chose to answer every question. To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, the districts were identified as District A, District B, District C, District D, and District E.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify gender-related role-perceptions and the hiring practices of those who hire school administrators in selected rural-school districts in north-central Pennsylvania. I wished to discern the reasons for the obvious hiring imbalance and to determine whether those reasons were related to gender-bias or other causes.

## Research Questions

The core questions of this study are listed here:

1. Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings? Three sub-questions are associated with this question: (a) Has the school-board member ever experienced difficulty they perceive as gender related? (b) Has the school-board member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? (c) Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district?

2. To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

3. How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare relative to their being strong disciplinarians?

I address these questions in three sections: the demographics of the respondents, the hiring process, and the recruitment of candidates. Questions in the survey were aligned with the research questions in order to gain the perspective of the responses to the

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core questions of the study. Therefore, the interview questions will not be presented in a numerical order.

## Demographics of the Respondents

In order to better understand the perspective of the respondents, demographic information was collected and included in this section. A more comprehensive understanding of the background of the participants will provide a clearer view of the perspectives of these rural school-board members. Table 3 indicates demographics for the ages of the participants.

The majority of respondents fell within the 46-55-year range with 13 respondents (48.1%). Seven (25.9%) of the respondents fell within the 36-45 age range, 18.5% in the 56-65 age range, and 7.4% in the 66-or-older age range.

The majority of the 27 school-board members in the five districts were male (66.7%). Table 4 shows the gender of the respondents.

Table 3

*Age of Participants*

| Age of participants | n | % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 36-45 years | 7 | 25.9 |
| 46-55 years | 13 | 48.1 |
| 56-65 years | 5 | 18.5 |
| 66 or older | 2 | 7.4 |
| Total | 27 | 99.9 |

Table 4

*Gender of Participants*

| Gender | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 18 | 66.7 |
| Female | 9 | 33.3 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

## Survey Question Number 1

In order to answer the question, What is/was your profession?, we must first look at responses to several survey questions.

In Table 5 the professions of the school-board members are detailed. This information provides insight into the backgrounds of the participants.

The responses show that these board members are employed in a wide variety of professions, with farming being the most frequently reported profession with five (18.5%) members.

## Survey Question Number 2

What is your racial/ethnic group? The racial/ethnic composition of the school boards was a 100% White population.

## Survey Question Number 3

What is your marital status? The marital status of the respondents was as follows: three (11.1%) single, one (3.7%) divorced, one (3.7%) widowed, and 23 (85.1%) married.

Table 5

*What Was or Is Your Profession?*

| Job Title | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Farmer | 5 | 18.5 |
| Business Owner | 4 | 14.8 |
| Health Care | 4 | 14.8 |
| Engineer | 3 | 11.1 |
| Corporate Director | 2 | 7.4 |
| Machinist | 2 | 7.4 |
| Retired | 2 | 7.4 |
| Bank Executive | 1 | 3.7 |
| Financial Consultant | 1 | 3.7 |
| Homemaker | 1 | 3.7 |
| Pastor | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total | 26 | 100.0 |

Survey Question Number 4

What was or is your profession? The most frequent profession reported was that of farmer. Table 5 references the positions in number, frequency, and percentage.

Survey Question Number 5

How long have you been a school-board member? This question was asked to determine the average term for the existing board members. Table 6 shows that the length of each school-board member's duration on the board was 1 to 5 years for nine

Table 6

*How Long Have You Been a Board Member?*

| Years of Service | n | % |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| 1-2 years | 9 | 33.3 |
| 3-5 years | 9 | 33.3 |
| 6-7 years | 2 | 7.4 |
| 8 or more years | 7 | 25.9 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

members (33.3%), 6 to 7 years for two members (11.0%), and more than 7 years for

seven members (26.6%).

## Survey Question Number 6

Survey Question 6 was, Will you run for another term on the school board?, and

was used to determine the turnover rate in the school boards' system in their districts.

Eighteen members (66%) of the respondents answered yes to this question. Nine

members (30%) said they would not.

## Survey Question Number 7

Who influenced your decision to pursue your position as a school-board member?

School-board positions are opened when a member retires, leaves, or passes away. The

decision to become a school-board member means commitment to long hours and public

scrutiny and potential exposure to public disfavor. A decision to run for this office is

often influenced by someone the candidate knows. This question was asked to gain that

information. Table 7 lists the sources of influence that provided encouragement for the board member to run for office.

Table 8 lists reasons why members sought their school-board positions. The most frequent reason reported for running for the office of school-board member was an interest in public service. Individual comments were, "I am a retired educator, I am not

Table 7

*Who Influenced Your Decision to Pursue Your Position as a School-Board Member?*

| Influence | $n$ | % |
|---|---|---|
| Family | 1 | 3.7 |
| Peer/work | 1 | 3.7 |
| Public service | 5 | 18.5 |
| Other | 4 | 14.8 |
| Peer/public | 2 | 7.4 |
| Family/public/change | 1 | 3.7 |
| Family/public | 2 | 7.4 |
| Public/other | 4 | 14.8 |
| Colleague/public | 1 | 3.7 |
| Colleague/family/public | 1 | 3.7 |
| Peer/public/change/other | 1 | 3.7 |
| Colleague/public/change | 1 | 3.7 |
| Public/change | 2 | 7.4 |
| Family/change | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

ready to stop contributing," and "Former teachers asked me to run." Most of the open-ended comments stated that former or fellow board members had approached them and asked if they were interested in the office.

## Survey Question Number 8

If a colleague encouraged you to run for the school board, what position or occupation do they hold? This question further advances the inquiry from the previous question.

This question was a follow-up to the question about who asked the respondent to run. Seven members (26.0%) responded that a board member had asked them. Four (18.5%) responded that an educator or teacher had asked them, and one (3.8%) said an attorney had asked. Open-ended responses included these statements: "A bank board member asked me to serve," "A school-board member asked me to run," and "The administrator at a local university asked me to help." The response that previous and present educators approached the candidate to run was also mentioned.

## Survey Question Number 9

Question 9 asked, Please indicate the gender of the person from question 8. In the series of questions regarding influences on the school-board member, this gender-related inquiry was added to ascertain the perception that board members held on the idea of females influencing a candidate to run for the office of school-board member.

Twelve members (44%) indicated that a male had influenced them to run, whereas three members (11%) stated that a female had influenced them.

## Understanding the Hiring Process

In this section of the survey, an attempt was made to understand the hiring process as perceived by rural school-board members.

### Survey Question Number 10

What are the major concerns that led you to your school-board position? This question inquires about the reasons why board members run for that position. It also summarizes what they feel is important for leadership in their schools. Important school decisions are affected by the type of leader a member perceives will do the best job. Table 8 summarizes the data collected for major concerns noted by board members.

Rising taxes and school curriculum were concerns mentioned by 10 (37%) respondents. Eight (29.6%) of the board members surveyed were concerned with leadership hiring issues. Nineteen (70%) respondents felt that serving the community was important. Building conditions were mentioned as a concern by six (27%) respondents. Teacher concerns received five (18.5%) responses. Six members (22%) offered open-ended comments such as "the educating of students and all that it involves" and "students being treated equally." Some members were concerned with the lack of communication with the public prior to making decisions. Other members stated they were concerned that every student be given equal opportunity in the school setting. Board-member concerns varied, but all of the concerns listed were student centered.

### Survey Question Number 11

Question 11 asks, What is the highest degree that you hold? One concern of the public is the degree to which the school-board members themselves are prepared to

Table 8

*What Are the Major Concerns That Led You to Your School-Board Position?*

| Concerns | Frequency per District | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | C | D | E |
| Rising taxes | 2 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| School curriculum | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Leadership/administrative hiring | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Serving the community | 5 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| School district building conditions | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Teacher concerns | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Other | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

accomplish their roles as representatives of the public-at-large. This question was not developed to be condescending; it merely asks about the respondent's education in order to assess the abilities of the total board in a variety of situations. Concerns may arise that call for certain expertise or common sense when items are being voted upon.

Table 9 illustrates the board members' educational levels. In the rural area of Pennsylvania that was surveyed, 10 (37%) of the board members held a high-school diploma. One respondent (3.7%) held a trade-school diploma. Nine members (29.6%)

Table 9

*What Is the Highest Degree You Hold?*

| Degree | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|
| High School | 10 | 37.0 |
| Trade School | 1 | 3.7 |
| College/Bachelors | 9 | 33.3 |
| Graduate/Masters | 4 | 14.8 |
| Specialist | 1 | 3.7 |
| Doctorate | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total | 26 | 100.0 |

held a college bachelor's degree, and one member (3.7%) held a specialist degree. Only one school board had a member who held a Ph.D. (3.7%).

## Survey Question Number 12

Have you attended school-board seminars on hiring practices? Question 12 in the survey again addresses the ability of the board members to understand the hiring process and to be able to adequately determine what an administrator or leader should be able to do for a district. Most districts surveyed had a team of members involved in the hiring aspect of the district; not all board members were on this team. Data collected from the 27 respondents indicated that 10 members (37%) had attended seminars on the hiring process. Sixteen members (59.2%) said that they had not attended any seminars on hiring.

Survey Question Number 13

Survey question number 13: Do you believe that the hiring process of administrators in your district is impacted by any of the following? The importance of impact on hiring is discussed. The respondents were to check all they felt applied to their district. This question helped focus the perceptions of the respondents on what they were looking for in an administrational candidate. Table 10 shows these results.

Responses to open-ended questions included these statements: "I feel that some persons are better suited for elementary administration, others are better for high school,"

Table 10

*Do You Believe That the Hiring Process of Administrators in Your District Is Impacted by Any of the Following? Check All You Feel Apply*

| Factor | Frequency per District | | | | |
| | A | B | C | D | E |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Particular people | 5 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Gender/balance | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Professional organizations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Appropriate documentation | 7 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Service to district | 4 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| Out-of-district applicants | 5 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Evidence of past roles | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Gender roles/i.e. assistant principals | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Willingness to relocate | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

and "Hire the best person for the position." Another comment was worded this way: "Too often people are hired who fit with current administrators. People we feel comfortable with, rather than people we feel can do the job." The need to find a fit and a person's personality were also listed as paramount. In the question of gender balance, one respondent stated, "I would not tolerate gender bias. Who is the best candidate for the district should be hired, and not hired to balance out. Whoever should get in on qualifications and knowledge!" Another member stated, "Our leadership tends to equate intelligence and ability with looks and personality." Next, in the area of belonging to a professional organization as an important ideal, one respondent (3.7%) thought this made a difference.

Appropriate documentation was something that 21 (77.7%) members thought a leader should have. One member said, "References should be checked on all hires." Service to the district was noted by 12 (44.4%) respondents. Out-of-district applicants was perceived important by 13 (48.1%). One member stated, "It is important to bring the most qualified individual into a position. Often that means bringing them in from out of the area because of the relatively rural locale." Another stated, "A common issue always brought into hiring is [whether] to hire from within or without."

The evidence of past roles brought a favorable response from 17 (62.9%) members. One respondent stated, "Past role experience says a lot. I not only look at what they have done as an administrator, but what they have done throughout their life that can enhance their administrative abilities." Another member responded in this way:

> Depending on the position (superintendent vs. assistant principal), past experience is always high on the list, but also new and fresh ideas can often impact the forward process of the district. We cannot afford to simply hold the line on education. We must be willing to implement improvements for the future of our children.

Willingness-to-relocate resulted in responses from 10 (37%) of the surveyed members. The rural setting presents challenges of its own. This concept of one's willingness to relocate to a rural area is an important feature to getting hired in the area. One respondent stated, "Willingness to relocate to be part of the community gives the community an applicant that can provide new ideas and views to the district."

## Survey Question Number 18

In question 18, respondents were asked, What time of the year does their school board begin the hiring process for administrators for the next school year? The time of the process does depend on the time the current administrator departs, but the question asks knowledge of a specific time. Sixteen (59.9%) respondents stated that the school board begins hiring in the spring of the previous year. Three (11%) indicated that hiring begins in the summer of the previous year. Several open-ended responses were offered, such as "Spring is the desired time; however, circumstances dictate many hirings," and "It depends on the time and the notice."

## Survey Questions Numbers 19 and 20

In order to understand recent hirings in general, questions 19 and 20 surveyed the number of administrators hired in a span of 6 years in each respondent's school district. Question 19 asked, On average how many administrators were hired by your board since the year 2001? Question 20 asked respondents to, Please identify the extent of hiring females as administrators as a percentage of new hires. The total number of administrators hired in the five-district range was tallied, and the total overall hiring of

female administrators was reflected. Table 11 represents the compilation of this information.

The total hirings for 2001-2002 was 13, with 53% being female. In the 2002-2003 year, 20% of the 10 administrators hired were women. In 2004-2005, a total of six administrators were hired with only one (16.6%) of them being a woman. In 2006-2007, 12 administrators were hired in a five-district span and 41.6% of them were women. The total hirings for the five districts from 2001-2007 were 41 new administrators; out of this administrational pool, 15 were women (36.6%). There was an 11.4% difference between female hirings in the years of 2001 and 2006. The largest gap was between the years 2001-2002 and 2004-2005 with a 36.4% difference in hiring. Outcomes showed that less than half of all hirings in the administrational field for these five districts from the years 2001-2007 were female. One district had hired two female principals, one female

Table 11

*Comparison of Female Hires With Total Hires*

| Year in district | Total hirings | Female hirings | % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2001-2002 | 13 | 7 | 53.0 |
| 2002-2003 | 10 | 2 | 20.0 |
| 2004-2005 | 6 | 1 | 16.6 |
| 2006-2007 | 12 | 5 | 16.6 |
| Total | 41 | 15 | 36.6 |

assistant principal, and one female special education supervisor during the 2001-2007 time period. One respondent stated, "I am not sure how many females we have hired, but there have been an adequate amount of females in administrative positions, and have been over the past years."

Survey Question Number 21

Survey question 21 asks, How does your school board advertise administrative openings? Table 12 reports responses to this query.

Table 12

*How Does Your School Board Advertise Administrative Openings? Check All That Apply*

| Method | *n* | *%* |
|---|---|---|
| Newspaper | 4 | 14.8 |
| Newspaper/board website/PDE/national website | 4 | 14.8 |
| Newspaper/PDE | 3 | 11.1 |
| National website | 2 | 7.4 |
| Newspaper/board website/PDE/local university | 2 | 7.4 |
| Newspaper/board website/PDE/other | 2 | 7.4 |
| Newspaper/national website | 2 | 7.4 |
| Newspaper/board website/other | 2 | 7.4 |
| No answer | 1 | 3.7 |
| PA Department of Education (PDE) | 1 | 3.7 |
| Newspaper/PDE/local university | 1 | 3.7 |
| Newspaper/board website/national websites/other | 1 | 3.7 |
| Newspaper/local university | 1 | 3.7 |
| Newspaper/other | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

*Note.* PDE = Pennsylvania Department of Education.

The school-board members reported that the newspaper was used most to advertise school openings. The Pennsylvania Department of Education sends out a monthly newsletter along with job postings and changes in educational policy. This information is disseminated to all administrators in all 501 school districts in Pennsylvania. Surrounding the five rural districts in this area of Pennsylvania are approximately five colleges and universities. The percentage for a search within the college rank was six (22%). The board websites were responsible for 13 (48%) of the responses. The idea of a national website opens up the possibility of external applicants. Nine (33.3%) of the school-board members stated that this was used. The other category was that openings for administrative positions went out in district paychecks, assuming that this information would then be dispersed in an in-house or community setting.

### Survey Question Number 22

This question was asked: Does your school board recruit in-house? Subsequently, school-board members were asked about the district's policies in recruiting in-house or within the district setting. Twenty-three (85.5%) of the school-board members responded that their board recruits in-house. Four (14.8%) of members did not perceive this as something their district does.

Respondents were asked to comment on this issue. Some responses were, "Both of our administrators were internal candidates," and "We have a goal to develop staff internally so they are qualified when positions open up." One board member stated, "We encourage professional staff to continue the pursuit of their education; we try to identify administrative prospects." The difficulty of size of the districts becomes an interesting fact. "We would like to promote from within, but experience is limited due to the size of

the district," one response read. Another said, "We always encourage qualified in-house applicants to apply, but they must go then to the same process as out of district applicants." Some district responses indicated that they did not know how well the district develops in-house applicants, while others suggested that in-house development is not used at this time. One said that they do not agree with in-house hiring practices as they have been unsuccessful. Twenty-three (85.5%) of the respondents believed that the district uses in-house encouragement and searching.

<center>Survey Question Number 23</center>

Does your school board recruit from other school districts in the surrounding areas? In rural areas the opening of an administrative position is at times competitive. Administrators can move between districts in search of better conditions and better pay. Seventeen (62.9%) of the board members stated that recruitment from other districts is common. Nine (33.3%) did not perceive this. One member did not respond. Open-ended responses included these: "Several candidates of the positions I am aware of came from surrounding districts" and "We do not raid." Several members stated that they were not aware of any such recruitment. One respondent said, "Recently I know we have, but I don't know about past practices." Others stated that resumes are accepted from all applicants and then are narrowed down.

<center>**Recruitment of Candidates**</center>

<center>Survey Questions Numbers 24 and 25</center>

Does your school board recruit from outside the state of Pennsylvania? And, question number 25, If it does recruit outside of Pennsylvania, does it focus on graduates

from New York State, or more widely in the United States? The last two questions in this

series were asked to gain information on where the recruitment for candidates may occur.

These questions sought to discover where the school-board members perceived applicants

to come from when they apply for administrative positions in their district. Table 13

summarizes the responses.

Seventeen (62.9%) of the school-board members surveyed believed that their

district recruits outside of Pennsylvania. Ten (37.1%) respondents did not answer the

question.

New York State borders the five Pennsylvania districts. Nine (33.3%) of the

members believe that their district recruits from New York State. Eight respondents

(29.6%) said that a more widely advertised search takes place for an administrative

position. Ten members did not answer this question. When asked to comment, several

board members responded: One said, "New York State certifications are different from

ours, but if the candidates have PA certification, they are welcome to apply." Another

Table 13

*If Your School Board Recruits Outside of Pennsylvania, Does It Focus on Graduates From: New York or Other Border States, More Widely in the US, Look for Diversity in Hiring Practices?*

| Area | n | % |
|------|---|---|
| No answer | 10 | 37.1 |
| New York State/other borders | 9 | 33.3 |
| More widely in the United States | 8 | 29.6 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

stated, "We have hired at least one administrator from New York State." Other responses were "Why limit the field" and "We look for the best fit, no matter where they're from." One respondent stated that their district did not do this as a rule.

## Survey Question Number 27

What types of applications were accepted (such as e-mail applications)? In other words, the queries sought to determine what candidates are accepted from the applicants' pool. In the responses to question 27—Does your school board accept email applications?—eight members (26.9%) responded yes, and 12 members (37%) said no. Seven did not answer the question. Most open-ended responses to this question indicated that the applicant must fill out a district application either online or in print. Some responded that they were unsure whether this practice occurs in their district.

## Survey Question Number 28

Who does the initial sorting of new applicants? Table 14 shows the initial stage of the sorting process. The most frequent response, from 15 members (55.6%), was that the superintendent did the sorting. Seven (25.9%) thought it began in the human resource department. Three members (11.1%) said it began in the administrative secretary's office. One member (3.7%) believed it happened in the business department. Some respondents did not know who did the initial sorting.

## Survey Question Number 29

In survey question number 29 the respondents were asked, Is there a written copy of your school board's hiring process available to applicants? The hiring process for school districts usually appears in a policy form. This policy is reviewed periodically.

Table 14

*Who Does the Initial Sorting of New Applications?*

| Source | n | % |
|--------|---|---|
| Superintendent | 15 | 55.6 |
| Human Resource Department | 7 | 25.9 |
| Administrative secretary | 3 | 11.1 |
| Business Department | 1 | 3.7 |
| No answer | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

This query provided information to discern whether applicants could gain insights into the hiring process before the interview phase. Twenty board members (74%) believed that a written copy of the school board's policy was available to applicants. Two members (3.7%) did not. Five members (7.4%) did not respond to this question.

A majority of respondents stated that a copy of this policy is available. One open-ended response stated, "If legally required to be available then sure it is." Five respondents stated that they did not know if a policy existed. One respondent stated that "a tentative timeline is given to all applicants."

Survey Question Number 30

The board was asked this question: Does your school board encourage recommendations from the teachers union? Another aspect of hiring is the opinion of the teachers union—teachers within the district who feel a particular candidate may possess the skills and knowledge to be a candidate. Eleven members (40.7%) felt that the board

accepts recommendations from the teachers union. Eleven members (40.7%) perceived they do not. Five members (18.5%) did not answer survey question 30.

One respondent concluded, "It depends on the position. Our last administrator hired had interviews with several diverse groups, and the teachers union was involved," and "I find no value in this." One respondent replied, "Teachers have been and are involved in the interview process." Another stated, "This is not a requirement." Another said, "It is mostly them and us" and "We are looking at a non-biased view point."

Survey Question Number 31

In the next question, the school-board members were asked about where human contact is in the board itself and whether it is available for the applicants. The question was stated this way: Is there a human point of contact within your school board where any applicant can gain information on his or her stage in the hiring process? The board members were then asked to comment with their responses.

Fourteen school-board respondents (51.9%) thought the district had a point of human contact within the board. Eight (29.6%) of the members did not. Five (18.5%) did not choose to answer the question. Open-ended comments included these: "They would go to the chairman of the professional committee," and "We would refer them to our human resource department." Another response was submitted this way: "The school board creates and dictates policy. Hiring any staff member should not be discussed with another school-board member. I think this is unethical." One respondent stated, "They go through the superintendent; the board should stay neutral. In the case of the superintendent, it should be the person chosen to do the search. We used PSBA

[Pennsylvania School Board Association] to help us." Two board members said, "We work through the board secretary." One added, "A school-board liaison is appointed."

Survey Question Number 32

Does your school board offer any incentives to newly hired administrators such as assistance in finding housing, meeting the public, or total district introduction? This query was asked to determine whether each district offers incentives for administrators who may be interested in their advertised positions.

Twenty (74.1%) of the school-board respondents agreed that their school district did in fact offer incentives to the newly hired administrator. Five (18.5%) of the members disagreed. Two (7.4%) did not answer the question.

Several members stated that public meetings were set up to introduce the new appointee. In-service day was the day most teachers met the new administrator. One stated, "This is done on a personal basis." Another said, "When we attempted introductions, not many people came to the public meeting." Some stated that this was negotiated when the employee was hired, and others said, "A moving stipend was given." Some board members stated that moving expenses were given but that the new hire met people on his own time.

The research questions 1, 2, and 3 will now be discussed in order to understand the significance of the survey questions that were asked.

**Research Question Number 1**

Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Survey questions 15, 16, and 17 were asked to glean information on the gender-bias issues in the hiring process. The three survey questions presented next speak to the gender-related aspects of the survey.

### Survey Question Number 15 (Research Question 1A)

Has the board ever experienced difficulty in the hiring of administrators that you perceive as gender related?

The perception of gender-bias issues in the hiring process is addressed. Each board member's perception of this issue is important to the school boards' understanding of the hiring process. Table 15 shows the participants' responses.

The respondents from Table 15 show that 100.0% of the respondents were female. Seven of nine females (77.8%)—certainly a majority—concluded that there was no gender bias in the hiring practices in the school district.

Open-ended answers to these questions follow: "I only have been on the board for a short period of time," "I have not encountered any," and "This school board is a good ol' boy association." One respondent stated that a male administrator had difficulty

Table 15

*Gender Bias by Gender*

|  | Yes | | No | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Female | 2 | 22.2% | 7 | 77.8% | 9 | 100.0 |

with a female administrator and she left because of this tension. Often questions of this nature in the survey brought little or no response. The qualitative, in-depth surveying did uncover more details.

Survey Question Number 16 (Research Question 1B)

Has the school-board member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? This question personalized the gender-bias issue internally within the school board. The question brought no open-ended discussion. This may be due to the fact that discussions of this nature generally stay within the board confines.

Relative to whether the boards ever experienced difficulty that was perceived to be gender bias, Table 16 presents a similar picture to the responses gained in question 15. Overall, 76% of the respondents believed that there was no gender bias, and both males and females seemed to be in one accord on the subject.

Table 16

*Perceptions of Difficulty Related to Gender Bias by Gender*

|  | Yes | | No | | Row Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Male | 3 | 12.0 | 13 | 52.0 | 16 | 64.0 |
| Female | 3 | 12.0 | 6 | 24.0 | 9 | 36.0 |
| Total | 6 | 24.0 | 19 | 76.0 | 25 | 100.0 |

Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district? This question was directed at the female population on the school board. Table 17 also supports the position that there were no perceived gender-related incidents in the school district, and by a wide margin. Overall, 96.2% of the respondents favored this position that there were no perceived gender-related incidents biased by gender.

One female respondent answered this question in this way: "At first I was given the impression that since I had replaced a male member, I should just sit and listen. A couple of slight comments were stated. Some sexist remarks about sweet talking and they'll do what you ask" were made.

I found pertinent outcomes showing that less than half of all hirings in the administrational field in these five districts from the years 2001-2007 were female. One district had hired two female principals, one female assistant principal, and one special education supervisor during this time period. One respondent stated, "I am not sure how many females we have hired, but there have been an adequate amount of females in administrative positions, and have been over the past years."

Table 17

*Perceptions of Gender-Related Incidents Bias by Gender*

|  | Yes | | No | | Row Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* | *n* | *%* |
| Male | 0 | 0.0 | 17 | 65.4 | 17 | 65.4 |
| Female | 1 | 3.8 | 8 | 30.8 | 9 | 34.6 |
| Total | 1 | 3.8 | 25 | 96.2 | 26 | 100.0 |

Rural areas themselves bring challenges of culture and diversity. Historically, most residents of north-central Pennsylvania are from an immigrant population who typically moved into an area and settled in the region. In the five districts surveyed, the history of the area is steeped in coal mining, farming, and logging. Movement into and out of the region has traditionally been sparse. There are few elements of the area that contribute to an increase in diversity. The universities and tourism bring diversity to the area, along with the opening of technological advances that require additional personnel for support.

Fifteen (55.5%) of the respondents perceive that their district considers diversity when they hire administrators. Nine (33.3%) do not. Four members did not answer the question. Open-ended comments included these statements: "We choose our candidates on their qualification for a position," and "Competency is given the highest consideration." One board member stated, "I cannot speak for the entire board, but I want the best candidate; best fit; race, diversity, gender do not matter." Another response was that "It hasn't been an issue."

## Research Question Number 2

To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings? Shakeshaft (1987) states, "Most educators have little awareness of the legacy of strong women leaders within the field" (p. 39). Becoming a leader who can deal with disciplinary issues is generally learned through the mentoring process. Quinn's (2001) study stated that having a good mentor is vital for women who miss the opportunity to learn how to deal with disciplinary issues due to not having the experience as assistant principals.

"Women traditionally have not had the support and encouragement needed to attempt a career, yet alone a career that has been identified as belonging to men" (Shakeshaft, 1987, p. 114). Early systems of mentoring came about as women began to break the barriers of the difficult process of finding and sustaining administrational positions. Survey question number 14 deals with this subject.

## Survey Question Number 14

In your opinion, are mentors important for women aspiring to an administrative position? This question was also opened ended and had several interesting responses.

Twenty-three (85.1%) respondents felt that mentoring for an administrator was important. Three (11%) of the members felt it was not important. Respondents addressed this question with varied responses: "Mentors are important for all individuals seeking leadership positions," and "I feel it is important for anyone aspiring to be an administrator to have a mentor." Another response was worded this way: "Specifically if their mentor is a woman that is in an administrative position." Some stated that gender was not an issue for a mentor.

One respondent stated, "Mentors always have an influence in any situation." Another responded that "they need to know what to expect, they probably need a shoulder to vent on, etc." One member said, "Women do not always get a fair shake when applying for management positions. A mentor could allow that women to gain experience and the edge she needs to get that position." One respondent thought of mentors in this way: "Mentors are good sounding boards to throw ideas off and therefore make a better thought-out plan of action." Another member provided a description of an ideal mentor: "Leadership is a key to measure, when mentoring an individual. Providing

guidance and ensuring that leadership tools are being taught to those aspiring to be leaders."

One respondent thought it depended on the person: "I think it depends on the woman. Some women are natural-born leaders and some are not. Those that wish to be in administrative positions need mentoring if they do not possess the natural abilities." Another respondent stated, "In today's complex administrative positions, whether male or female, a trusted mentor is a help for both person and the job being done."

One district respondent said, "If a person is qualified then regardless of gender they should be hired; we have not ever had mentors for administrative positions." In further questioning a district respondent stated, "It is more comfortable in our district to be a female teacher than in a position of leadership. We have few mentors." A female respondent stated that she had had a male mentor who was secure enough in his role that her rise up the ladder did not bother him. Another respondent said, "Mentors are needed for both male and females. There are too many bear traps in administrative positions."

The three survey questions presented next speak to the gender-related aspects of the survey.

Survey Question Number 26

What areas are you concerned about when you hire an administrator for your district? There is important evidence of the concerns the school-board members have in the perception that being a strong disciplinarian is a factor in the selection of women administrators in rural Pennsylvania public-school settings. This question tied together the issues of practice in the field of discipline, knowledge of diversity, and assistant principal experience. This question reflects the concern of rural board members as they

pursue the hiring of an administrative applicant. The question highlights the areas of importance the board members view as essential attributes one should have to lead a school district. Leadership skills are the top priority as noted by 25 (93.6%) board members. Knowledge of the curriculum, as noted by 21 (77.8%) respondents, was also seen as an important area for an administrator. Interestingly, the concerns about having a background in discipline practice and having principal experience were of concern to the respondents, with previous experience at 16 (59.3%) responses, and principal experience with 16 (59.3%) responses.

Special education knowledge and school/home relationships had 16 (59.2%) responses. Knowledge of diversity had 12 (44.4%). Practice in the field of discipline usually comes from experience an administrator gets at the assistant level; yet the response rated lowest in concern was the assistant principal experience with nine (33.3%) responses.

Open-ended responses included this statement: "Assistant principal experience is helpful but not a must." Most responded this way: "It depends on what the position to fill entails."

Table 18 reflects the concerns of the respondents on the topic of areas of concern when hiring district administrators.

### Research Question Number 3

How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare to their being strong disciplinarians? Large-group survey questions 13 and 26 addressed this concern.

Table 18

*Areas of Concern When Hiring District Administrators*

| Area of concern | Frequency per district | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A | B | C | D | E |
| Knowledge of curriculum | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 |
| Leadership skills | 8 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| Practice in field of discipline | 6 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| School/home relationship | 7 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Special education knowledge | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| Knowledge of diversity issues | 3 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Principal experience | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Assistant principal experience | 4 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 |

Responses that discuss solely areas of discipline will be included from the charts. The follow-up interview, which will be discussed later, had four questions that included the discussion of male and female administrators as disciplinarians.

Survey Question Number 13

Do you believe that the hiring process of administrators in your district is impacted by any of the following? This question helped focus the perceptions of the respondents on what they were looking for in a candidate for an administrative position. This question speaks to the ideal roles of administrators. The respondents were to check all items they felt applied to their district.

The evidence of past roles brought a favorable response from 17 (62.9%) members. One respondent stated, "Past role experience says a lot. I not only look at what they have done as an administrator, but what they have done throughout their life that can enhance their administrative abilities." Another member responded to this open-ended question in this way:

> Depending on the position (superintendent vs. assistant principal), past experience is always high on the list, but also new and fresh ideas can often impact the forward process of the district. We cannot afford to simply hold the line on education. We must be willing to implement improvements for the future of our children.

## Summary of Quantitative Data Analysis

The analyses of the findings were discussed relative to the research questions of this study. The response data of the large-group survey yielded the following information.

I conducted this study using a mixed-methods approach. A survey consisting of 33 questions was given to the 45 rural school-board members in the study. The survey was introduced to each school board in person by me. The instrument was administered during the 2006-2007 school year. A write-in comment opportunity was provided for the school-board members to use. This afforded the opportunity to respond in an open-ended section if they desired to do so. In their responses, these rural school-board members expressed that they found challenges to the process of hiring administrators in the respective districts.

"Nationally, the number of women in school administration roles is not proportionate to the number of women available to fill such positions" (Shakeshaft, 1998, p. 208). The under-representation of females in the rural districts of north-central Pennsylvania is then a reflection of the reported national condition.

## Research Question Number 1

Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school board members in selected rural Pennsylvania school settings?

In the hiring process, only one (3.7%) of the respondents was concerned about gender balance. The majority of board members responded with no knowledge of gender bias. The survey questions that included open-ended responses to questions of gender difficulty, personal gender bias, and female school-board member bias had minimal responses.

## Research Question Number 2

To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

This factor was discussed in response to question 26: What areas are you concerned about when you hire an administrator for your district? (see Table 18). Practice in the field of discipline or being a strong disciplinarian were important to participants in at least three districts who rated this as a high concern. The hiring in the field of assistant principal, where generally all of the discipline issues are referred, also rated high in three districts. These two areas of concern were factors that played a role in the selection of the school administrator as perceived by the school-board members.

## Research Question Number 3

How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare to their being strong disciplinarians?

How the male/female ratio relates to participants' records as being strong disciplinarians was noted in question 17, with the areas of interest in hiring an administrator. The data confirmed that more males were hired in the school districts than females in the 6 years of the study's collection of data (see Table 11). The total administrative, both principal and assistant principal, hirings in all of the districts was 41; 15 of them were women. The data above showed that less than half of all hirings in the educational administrative field for the five Pennsylvania school districts studied, from the years 2001-2007, were female.

In this study I received not only quantitative but also qualitative data through write-in answers on the initial questionnaire and non-structures responses in the follow-up interviews. These qualitative data will be addressed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

I have two types of qualitative research data: the answers to opened-ended

questions in the survey and the follow-up interview responses. I will first present the

findings from the open-ended questions, and then the interview questions will be

reviewed.

Open-ended Questions

In qualitative research, interviews are used to enhance the process of yielding

words as data. The open-ended responses further the information given by extending a

reason for the respondents' answers they chose to the survey question. The respondents

had the opportunity to comment after each of the questions in the survey.

In the first section of the survey, the demographics of the respondent group, few

extraneous comments were added.

In the second section—Decision to pursue the school board position—several

school-board members commented, "A fellow board-member encouraged me," and "My

experiences in education were good." Another comment that occurred several times was,

"I feel the need to give back to my community," or "I have an interest in public service."

One question that generated larger open-ended responses was a question that concerned mentoring for women who aspired to be administrators. One board member responded that "I feel that anyone who needs a mentor should have one, male or female"; another response was, "We don't have mentors, an administrator should be ready to do the job." A female respondent stated, "I feel women need to have good role models; it would be good for a woman to have a female mentor in a like position."

Questions that contained gender-bias issues rated the highest responses by female board members. "Our board is a good ole boy type, usually hiring men," and "I have personally experienced gender-related issues as a board member because I hold a better job than some men on the board." Another comment came from a male school-board member: "I find it very hard when it comes down to choosing between a man or a woman, so much comes into play."

In the third section of the large-group survey, Hiring of Administrators, questions revealed the school-board members' hiring knowledge. When asked whether the board recruited in-house, several respondents concluded that movement from teacher to administrator was often difficult for the applicant involved who would now supervise one who may have been a peer. Another board member responded, "We do not have enough viable candidates in-house; they don't have the training needed." One suggestion was, "We need to start sending interested people to training in order to fill needed administrative positions."

Also in this section of the survey, the areas of concern the school-board members had when they hired an administrator were practice in the field of discipline, principal experience, and leadership skills. Comments were, "We look at the total person, what

they have done in their career so far, what they have done in their community, and will they 'fit' in our rural area," and "I need to hear them say in the interview that they are ready for the challenges that come with administration positions."

Not all respondents to the large-group survey made comments to all of the questions asked. The responses were randomly given and were linked to the interest of the school-board members who chose to respond to the open-ended questions.

The one-to-one interview questions opened a more in-depth opportunity to comment on subjects relating to hiring, gender, and leadership issues.

## Interview Questions

This section investigates the follow-up interviews of 10 school-board members who were picked randomly by their respective superintendents. I interviewed the subjects with five questions to gain a more in-depth understanding of the hiring of female administrative applicants in the rural school districts studied. The participants are all currently serving as board members within the five school districts studied. I am an employee of one of the school districts in the study.

All 10 interviews were returned by mail with the questions answered briefly so these data, along with the one-to-one speaking interviews, were recorded. Significant interview comments were gleaned from this section of the survey. The member-check for accuracy of the responses took place after the interview as each school-board member listened while I repeated the responses to each interview question. The members were given ample time to change and/or repeat their answers. The same rubric was used in each interview to ensure accuracy and validity.

The responses from each interview question were analyzed for content and coded in terms of multiple interacts (common responses stated several times by both male and female respondents) and emergent themes as discussed by Patten (2002). In the content analysis, the questions were coded as a male/female response. Six males were coded as MA, MB, MC, MD1, MD2, and ME. The four female respondents were coded as FA, FB, FC, and FE. Past and current experience was noted for emergent themes.

Two external readers, One and Two, were given the follow-up interview B responses to identify emergent themes and multiple interacts.

**Interview Question Number 1**

What specific experience(s) in your life led you to the position of school-board member? The emerging themes of the male responses consistently addressed four focus points. Three of the six males reported that they needed to give back to the community. Sample responses were, "I have a desire for building leadership in my community," and "I enjoy learning and making changes in my community; I feel I am giving back."

Regarding the fact that four of the six board members have or have had children or a relative in their present school system, respondents said, "I see problems of fairness for all children," "I have two children going through the schools; I felt it was time to help," and "I have a relative who was a public school teacher, and kids going through the schools." One respondent stated that he had "worked with leadership in youth groups and family in school activities."

Three male board members were concerned about making changes in the district and were dissatisfied with the present board. One member stated that his school board "was out of control." Another stated, "We need common sense, truthfulness, and

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patience on our board." Finally, one member stated, "We need team players on our board."

In contrast, the emerging themes of the four female respondents were that they had had positive school experiences. One member stated, "My public school experience was very positive; it was of great benefit to me. I want to be sure others have the same experience." Another stated, "My parents led by example; they were very strong advocates of education."

Four of the female respondents stated that they wanted to make changes in the district, but all responses were changes that benefited the students. This was one response: "I attended the schools in this district; I see a need for a better guidance department; kids need to be the main concern for the school board members, which has not always been the case."

Another concern that came from the female respondents was dissatisfaction with the previous school board. Responses included these statements: "I thought instead of complaining about the current school board, I had no business complaining if I didn't run for board member," "I hedged because this felt like a political office," and "I was approached by a male board member to run." One member stated that she was new to the board and was just learning.

Almost all of the respondents ran for school-board membership because they wanted to give back or help the community in some way. The "way" that they wanted to give indicated a contrast between males and females. The male response was of obligation to make changes in the community as a whole, whereas the females wanted to make changes that helped the students. Of the 10 respondents, 7 of them were

dissatisfied with the present school-board membership. Six wanted to make some type of change. These two factors were prevalent for both groups; their approach to change, however, differed. In this question these two factors, based on similarity, were consistent between the groups. The desire to make changes led to running for school-board membership. However, the male/female contrast seemed to focus on a perception of how and where the effective change should occur.

**Interview Question Number 2**

Have you faced or experienced any gender-related incidents while in your tenure as a board member? The emerging themes stated by the male respondents were that most were not aware of any incidents (four of the six respondents), and if incidents occurred they were minor incidents (two of the six respondents). Responses generally were represented this way: "No, none that I am aware of, none that have happened to me," and "No, I haven't. We are fair on this issue; we have hired three new administrators that are women." A response regarding minor incidents was worded this way: "I haven't, but street say or hearing say is that we should hire male administrators, they would be more domineering, like a superintendent or principal." Another response was, "Not really, we hired a female in a teaching position; some said it should have been male who could coach. We have had at least two female board members; no problems there. I feel we need more male teachers at the elementary level." Another statement: "We did have a minor incident where a male board member thought that a female would not do as well as a male in a tough classroom. It blew up on him because she did a great job." Another male board member stated that "an incident of personality conflict occurred and the

woman administrator was sort of forced out. Sometimes with males it is black or white, no gray areas. Some men cannot easily accept a female in charge."

The female responses centered on incidents of gender bias both on the board and in the hiring of administrators. Three of the females said they faced and are facing gender-bias issues. Three knew of specific incidents that had occurred and one said she knew of none. Two responses were, "I am not aware of any adversity procedures in hiring, maybe once in the hiring of a female teacher," and "No, none that I know of." A response to personal bias or bias incidents was worded this way:

> I have personally faced gender-biased comments from male school board members. Underlying tones are always there. One board member was always trying to mold me and coerce me into thinking his way. He got angry when I didn't. He became upset when I spoke for myself. Sometimes I see small-mindedness in rural areas.

Another responded, "Yes, it's a good ole boys' club. Some male board members make comments from time to time. One member turns his back to me. At the present time I hold a good job, they resent my presence, and like to go against what I say."

The responses suggest that all had seen some incidents of gender bias either in the hiring or in the board itself. What differed was that the female majority felt this bias was due to their holding better positions in the community; also, some female participants felt that their voice on the board sometimes went unheard or was discouraged when they did not follow the male majority's intentions. A causal factor for fewer women running and maintaining board positions and applying for administrative positions may be influenced by the awareness of how these women felt and feel about the process they have experienced.

**Interview Question Number 3**

Do you perceive the hiring process your board uses as up-to-date? Fair? Are there items you would like to change or update in regard to Title IX and gender-related issues? This question was multifaceted to gain the board members' opinion of the laws and practices of hiring.

Regarding recurring themes in male responses, all six members thought the hiring practices may need changing or tweaking. Three felt that education should learn from the way people are hired in business. Three of the six knew the hiring process well. Four felt that the hiring process worked in its present state.

One male respondent said, "I have not yet seen any practices that I would determine unfair or biased. Given more time and awareness and review of the practices could initiate change. I do not have any recommendations at this time," and "I feel our practices are adequate for the positions we are hiring for. We don't need change at this time." One male board member stated, "Title IX should be able to use culture in the area, not as a blocking, but be sure that person wants to be here. We shouldn't use Title IX as a resort to bring cultural diversity here when they don't want to be here." Another response was, "I have never been on the hiring committee. I think we should do this more like business does. Forms should be different. They should lead to a selective interview." One male board member expressed these thoughts: "Principals should hire principals, and teachers should hire teachers. We should rank them by levels, and voting done by whoever gets the highest points come through, background should be covered too." Another male response to this query was worded this way: "Are we ever up-to-date in north-central Pennsylvania? We use the PSBA, the Public School Board Association

and the Pennsylvania Rural School Board Association to help us, and then we have very few issues."

Here is another response to question 3: "I think we have gone through a big change recently. It used to be our board did all the hiring process. They had say at every level. Now the administrator does the interviewing. Board members can attend. Then a recommendation goes to the board." One male board member stated, "Education for board members may be needed." On the Title IX issue, this response was provided: "Outside race/sex issues are looked at as not a general lineage flow, they tend to look into themselves." This statement was also offered: "Having big ideas for small schools is an issue. Administrators need foresight to see change is difficult here, but if no change happens then people complain."

The change or tweaking process was described by this member:

Hiring processes need tweaking. Title IX is a good law. We try to have a team when we hire an administrator: the guidance person, usually two teachers, and an administrator from inside that building where the person will work with the team. Then the board decides; I have a problem with this.

He goes on to explain,

When we have three or four openings, we usually have 140 applicants; sometimes administrators are called and asked why a certain person did not get an interview. It puts the administrator in a bind. This is where I think administrators need backbone and should be honest.

One member said it should be simple: "The applicants should be the best ten, then do paper trails, pick the best three. Then present the three, and then recommend the best to the school board."

The females who responded were consistent in their perceptions. All four perceived the hiring process as fair, but differed in their reasons why. One respondent

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said, "I am not totally aware of adversity, or the procedures in hiring." One member stated, "We are fair because the teachers keep us fair." Another said, "I cannot think of any gender-related issue." One female respondent stated, "The hiring process should not be by gender; the worthy applicant should get it." Another stated, "I am fairly new at this job and have minimal knowledge of the process, but it seems good up to this point." One board member said, "Our board does not interview teachers or support staff. We hire based on the superintendent's recommendation. I agree with this, but now the administrator interviews and recommends to the superintendent; it was sharper this way. They check references in a better way now." Another response was, "Our district has a tendency to go outside; we also look at our long-term substitutes."

In general, all responses led to the perception that the hiring process in itself, although different from district to district, was fair but needed changes to the process. Males perceived that a business-type hiring would be good for educational hiring. Female respondents felt that the best candidate should be hired. Most board members knew the process, but some were not directly involved with it.

**Interview Question Number 4**

What challenges do you face as a school-board member in the hiring process of administrators in your district? There were a few recurring themes among male respondents: Four perceived that they needed the best fit for the job, four also felt relocation to a small area was a concern, two thought that applicants should know the schools they are applying to, and two felt that the board lacked a good number of applicants for the administrative position.

One male board member stated the focus of best fit for the job in this way: "The primary focus continues to benefit the best person based on character, qualifications, and the best fit for the local area." Another said, "We try to find the most qualified, ones that match teachers and the area." Another board member said, "When we hired our superintendent, we had great applicants from out of the area, it was hard to check their references if they weren't local." Another respondent stated, "We had a lady apply from a big city in PA, I got the sense she would have trouble fitting in. Her credentials were good, but we needed a good fit."

One member stated, "Administrators need control and function, but our biggest challenge, which comes from our culture, is number of applicants. We may not get a wide range because of our rural area." Along this vein one board member stated, "Our number of applicants is low. It may be money issues or relocation to a small area."

Some male respondents look to the board itself:

> Peers on the school board haven't had to hire or do evaluations in their own job, so they do not know the hiring process. We haven't had to hire many administrators, longevity is good. Our biggest roadblock to hiring is the lack of experience, knowing how to hire, what to look for, and having school board peers that don't do this as a school board member.

One male board member answered the question this way:

> Sometimes the process is ham-handed [*sic*]. One committee member was sacked because they didn't take the superintendent's view. The superintendent asks the committee to give him a range of people, and he personally checks them. Sometimes he lobbies if he feels we can be swayed. It is humorous to watch him do rope tricks. I always say sometimes people like this hang themselves!

One member stated, "I feel privileged talking to some of the smartest people on earth, they must be good communicators."

Emergent themes were also apparent among the female school-board members. All four felt relocation was an issue. Two perceived that the applicant should fit the job; two believed that lack of knowledge by the school-board members was an issue and wages were also an important deterrent for the new administrator. One member responded, "We need to push for professional growth or development. People need to see the rural area as a positive; you can grow here. You need to have a good attitude about this, although there is no big district feel or opportunities." Another said, "Getting qualified people and getting someone to relocate to the back of beyond is our problem." The next response adds to this perception: "Pay, rural location, always decreasing budget, and lack of knowledge in the interview process itself by school-board members are our problems." One stated, "Wages, location, and high utility bills don't help us."

Although most of the respondents believe that relocation and wages are serious issues for rural areas, the male respondents focused mostly on the fit of the person to the job. The females all stated that relocation, wages, and fit were important, but that knowledge of the hiring processes by the board itself was an issue. The female respondents also mentioned the lack of growth from the inside and noted that training should be taking place to promote people from within.

**Interview Question Number 5**

What are some strategies or experiences you have had that would give to applicants that may better prepare women to interview and become administrators in your district? A few recurring themes were apparent among the male respondents: Five thought qualifications and certifications were of major importance; three felt that

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knowing about the position was important, as well as knowing about the community. Again, best fit for the job was mentioned.

One male board member stated, "Ensure you have the correct certifications and that it is current for the position. Pick a specific direction of administrative focus and ensure your experiences are in line with the goal. During the interview be yourself, and before the interview get to know the community." This member also stated, "As for women, be professional; important are appearance, form, and function, and fit." Another respondent stated, "I'd give this same advice to either gender, the best person is the best person, we are looking for energy that has been spent educating yourself."

One member provided this advice: "Discuss experiences in the educational field; know the school numbers, strengths and weaknesses, and the background of the school. Address your strengths, tell why you are here and how you achieved this, assert yourself." Another said that "being a team player and being to the point" was important. He also said, "As team players, know your part of the administrative team; you should know what everyone should be doing." Another member stated, "Never mention your weaknesses."

Another school-board member responded, "Have a resume that will stand out to get you to the first interview. Research and know about the position so you can ask educated questions." One member felt strongly about this subject: "If you apply, make sure you want it and it is not just a stepping stone."

Another male board member perceived these subjects as important to hiring: "Have knowledge of the Pennsylvania state assessment, testing, and curriculum. Be knowledgeable about special education; an example would be the new IDEA results.

Have budget knowledge." One member also said, "I hate it when it is male versus female, it becomes a her-versus-his personality debate. It also is difficult when the board has a split vote."

This board member's suggestion pointed at the actual interview: "Speak clearly, sit up straight, and know what people are talking about and act interested. You need clear, precise vocabulary; don't be wordy." He also stated, "Can you deliver the goods? Are you confident in that area? Arrogance and being confident is good in some points, we need people who are confident and who listen."

Another suggestion by this member was, "Be prepared for the unexpected question, be aware of the path you leave behind. Leave out the gossip; don't compromise yourself for any reason. We will hire any candidate that has all of the qualifications and shows competence."

Emergent themes and considerations of this question among female respondents revolved around the ideals of leadership skills, portfolio, credentials, confidence, appearance, and the ability to watch for biases.

One female board member stated, "Competency, education, leadership skills, and presentation are important. Being a good researcher is also good, but leadership is invaluable." Another member said, "Make sure you come to the interview adequately prepared and not overconfident. Most men do not like pushy females. Most boards are generally men. There is quiet confidence that sells, being overbearing does not." Another stated,

> Bring a portfolio that is not overwhelming. Remember the people looking at it are probably not as well versed in the educational field as you are and therefore, need a short summation of contents that are understandable to them. Don't be condescending.

A female member responded by saying, "Keep answers to questions brief, but not one-word answers. Know the school system that you are interviewing for, know the details of the school's test scores. Dress appropriately, very business-like." Another member said, "Be well-prepared, look the part, dress well, be educated well, and take the time to find out how the district runs. Last, ask good questions."

A most interesting female response was this one:

Be prepared to have the door closed, not because of education or qualification, but because you're a woman. Don't stop; go to the next door; you have to fight because this is always going to be there.

She continued,

Some people do not like intelligent people no matter the sex. Watch out for heard-it-on-the-street gossip. When women interview for a job, they should know the job backwards and forwards and inside out. If someone interviews, regardless of gender or race, and can't answer basic questions about the job, I don't have the time of day for them.

The majority of all respondents felt that qualifications and certification were essential; personal appearance was also important. Knowing the district and community was stated many times by both genders. The differences in male/female responses were that males believed that the best fit or better fit was the most important factor regardless of gender. Females, on the other hand, talked about biases that may exist, and the need for strong leadership skills. The female answers dwelled heavily on looking and being the part, whereas male responses dealt with knowing the job and having the qualifications.

## Thematic Analysis

In the last two sections, I have defined the open-ended questions and interview responses. I will now analyze these data to indentify common themes that emerged. Attention was given to word-repetition key words, which is a common procedure in qualitative research.

An article written as part of the National Science Foundation's Methods for Conducting Systematic Text Analysis stated, "Thematic identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research. Word repetitions, key indigenous terms, and key-words-in-context (KWIC) all draw on simple observation. If you want to understand what people are talking about, look at the words they use" (Ryan & Bernard, 1992, p. 1).

For this study a key word in context review (KWIC) was done. This encompassed the entire response data from both write-in answers of the survey and interviews. I looked for common themes or patterns that would relate to the research questions addressed in this study. When the themes and/or patterns arose, careful consideration was used in stating exact expressions, but also to state comments so that the source could not be identified.

Themes that emerged from the participants' stories or comments were pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of their collective experiences. Three continuous themes appeared within my study. The first was "Leadership Skills." What are the skills the candidate brings to the table? The second was "Fit." Does the applicant fit what the position is asking for in the school setting, in the school district, and in Pennsylvania rural schools at large? The third thematic issue that was consistent was "Gender Issues," both in the hiring of administrators and within the board itself.

Straus and Corbin (1994) urge investigators to be sensitive to conditions, interactions, and consequences of the phenomenon and how one orders these items when considering moving themes and patterns into theories. They speak of a conditional matrix to pinpoint the themes chosen. This matrix is a set of "concentric circles, each level corresponding to a different unit of influence. The center being actions and interactions, the inner rings representing individual and small group influences on these actions" (p. 5). The outer rings represent outside influences.

The concentric circles I used included the center themes that emerged from the key word search: Leadership Skills, Fit, and Gender Issues. In the circle of Leadership Skills, the inner ring, individual and small group influences, were mentoring, ability to discipline students, and background experience. The outer ring or outside influences were community experience, diversity, and willingness to relocate.

In the circle of Fit, inner rings were right person for the job, educational experiences, and willingness to belong to the administrative team that had been established in the district. The outer ring or influences were willingness to relocate and bringing fresh ideas.

In the concentric circle of Gender Issues, the inner rings of influence were preconceived ideas of a woman's role in education, diversity in hiring of administrators, and good ole' boy system of hiring. The outer rings or influences were internal gender issues within the board itself and the history of hiring found from the years 2001-2007 in the selected rural-school districts.

In order to combine the research questions and the three continuous themes, leadership, fit, and gender issues were discussed with respect to the following research questions.

1. Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Three sub-questions are associated with this question: (a) Has the school-board member ever experienced difficulty they perceive as gender related? (b) Has the school-board member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? (c) Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district?

2. To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

3. How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare relative to their being strong disciplinarians?

Leadership Skills

To address the research questions, I studied the hiring procedure itself. What were the school-board members looking for when a candidate stood before them? The first theme that emerged was leadership ability. In research questions 2 and 3 I asked how the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare relative to their being strong disciplinarians and to what extent being a strong disciplinarian is a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings.

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Was this idea that woman could not discipline as well as men a deterrent to them being hired? Discipline was an important factor, but was not the most dominant leadership skill that concerned the school-board members. The idea of the applicant's qualities of fitting into the position was more important.

Nevertheless, research has shown that discipline is also a major concern. A study done by Rosser (1980) noted that the emphasis on discipline as a major factor of hiring may lead to misconceptions from hiring committees.

> The emphasis on maintaining discipline as a component of the assistant principalship keeps women from being hired for those positions. Much research has shown that women are better than men at maintaining discipline. (p. 70)

In my study, many responses concentrated on several factors. One was which candidates were the most qualified; another was what the references say about the candidates' character and history. Another factor was what the applicant did before applying for this position. They were interested in the work lives of the candidate—his or her community experiences. Their interest was focused on the person's total life experience in education as well as in the community. Discipline was only one aspect of need, according to school-board members.

One respondent stated, "Past role experience says a lot. I not only look at what they have done as an administrator, but what they have done throughout their life that can enhance their administrative abilities." Another member responded in this way:

> Depending on the position (superintendent vs. assistant principal), past experience is always high on the list, but also new and fresh ideas can often impact the forward process of the district. We cannot afford to simply hold the line on education. We must be willing to implement improvements for the future of our children.

Many responded to the idea that candidates from within the system had a more difficult time because they were already known, and this made it difficult for them to take

on a leadership role. Several school-board members suggested that the district should educate more internal candidates for administrational moves. They felt that candidates from nearby districts usually had less difficulty in this matter. The applicants from other districts came with fresh ideas and did not have the internal biases of knowing other educators on a teaching level and then moving into an administrative position. The move of an internal teacher to administrative position occasionally causes difficulties with former peers. One member stated, "It is important to bring the most qualified individual into a position. Often that means bringing them in from out of the area because of the relatively rural locale." Another stated, "A common issue always brought into hiring is [whether] to hire from within or without." Respondents were asked to comment on this issue. Some responses were, "Both of our administrators were internal candidates," and "We have a goal to develop staff internally so they are qualified when positions open up." One board member stated, "We encourage professional staff to continue the pursuit of their education; we try to identify administrative prospects." The difficulty of size of the districts becomes an interesting fact. "We would like to promote from within, but experience is limited due to the size of the district," one response read. Another said, "We always encourage qualified in-house applicants to apply, but they must go then to the same process as out of district applicants." Some district responses indicated that they did not know how well the district develops in-house applicants, while others suggested that in-house development is not used at this time. One said that they do not agree with in-house hiring practices as they have been unsuccessful.

Another response of concern was paucity or low numbers of applicants. This response surfaced many times throughout the research. One member stated,

"Administrators need control and function, but our biggest challenge, which comes from our culture, is number of applicants. We may not get a wide range because of our rural area." Along this vein one board member stated, "Our number of applicants is low. It may be money issues or relocation to a small area."

Recruitment and keeping principals in rural areas were also factors. One school-board member responded, "We need to push for professional growth or development. People need to see the rural area as a positive; you can grow here. You need to have a good attitude about this, although there is no big district feel or opportunities." Another said, "Getting qualified people and getting someone to relocate to the back of beyond is our problem." The next response adds to this perception: "Pay, rural location, always decreasing budget, and lack of knowledge in the interview process itself by school board members are our problems." One stated, "Wages, location, and high utility bills don't help us."

Some respondents felt that relocation and wages are serious issues for rural areas. School-board members were concerned and willing to learn new techniques to hire and retain good administrative personnel.

Retaining administrators in rural areas was a concern for the five school districts surveyed. A study done by Howley et al. (2003) recommended four strategies for the recruitment and retention of rural-school leaders: (a) publicize the satisfaction of the position, (b) encourage applications from women and minorities, (c) improve salaries and benefits, and (d) provide professional development programs so new administrators can meet the challenges of their roles. Professional development for rural educators may

require the school districts to invest in distance learning, paid leaves for study, and setting up opportunities for professional networking.

Lastly, respondents felt that leadership meant that fairness should be given to all students, candidates should be student-focused, and decisions should be based on this premise. The idea of willingness to relocate to be part of the community was an important feature to getting hired. They felt becoming a community member gave credibility to the position.

## Fit of the Applicant

Another theme that may answer these research questions is the most prevalent response: the idea of "fit." Does the candidate fit the position with experience in the fields needed? Several respondents felt their district did not limit the hiring field and looked for the best candidate no matter where they came from. Responses included the idea that they need to "fit" with the present administration as a team member. They must "fit" the position advertised. Several other responses covered experiences of the candidates, assertiveness, money/wage issues, and the character and qualifications of the applicant, along with the concept of fitting in to the community and the school district. One respondent answered when finding the best "fit," the candidate's race, diversity, and gender did not matter; they had to be willing to relocate and to "fit" in the rural community and school system. Other responses were, "Why limit the field," and "We look for the best fit, no matter where they're from."

School-board members' responses to the idea of "fit" for the administration position were equally important in both male and female responses. One male board member described the focus of best fit for the job in this way: "The primary focus

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continues to benefit the best person based on character, qualifications, and the best fit for the local area." Another said, "We try to find the most qualified, ones that match teachers and the area." One female member responded, "We need to push for professional growth or development. People need to see the rural area as a positive; you can grow here. You need to have a good attitude about this, although there is no big district feel or opportunities."

Although most of the respondents believe that relocation and wages are serious issues for rural areas, the male respondents focused mostly on the fit of the person to the job. The females all stated that relocation, wages, and fit were important, but that knowledge of the hiring processes by the board itself was an issue. The female respondents also mentioned the lack of growth from the inside and noted that training should be taking place to promote people from within.

## Gender Issues

The third theme of the findings was gender issues. This concept was approached with hesitation by several members of the school boards. Some questions on gender issues brought no responses or comments to questions, such as the following survey question: Have you personally experienced a gender-related issue in the hiring of an administrator? The response was predominantly no, with no comments listed by any member of any district's school boards. This could be due to two factors: one, they hadn't seen the bias, or two, they had, but felt uncomfortable talking about it.

Research question number 1 was, Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

The responses to the large-group survey and one-to-one interviews spoke to the sub-questions associated with research question 1.

Sub-question A, Has your board ever experienced difficulty that you perceive as gender related? The emerging themes stated by the male respondents were that most were not aware of any incidents (four of the six respondents), and if incidents occurred they were minor incidents (two of the six respondents). Responses generally were represented this way: "No, none that I am aware of, none that have happened to me" and "No I haven't. We are fair on this issue; we have hired three new administrators that are women." One male member stated that small-mindedness prevails in rural areas sometimes.

The female responses centered on incidents of gender bias both on the board and in the hiring of administrators. Three of the females said they faced and are facing gender-bias issues. Three knew of specific incidents that had occurred and one said she knew of none. Two responses were, "I am not aware of any adversity procedures in hiring, maybe once in the hiring of a female teacher," and "No, none that I know of." A response to personal bias or bias incidents was worded this way:

> I have personally faced gender-biased comments from male school-board members. Underlying tones are always there. One board member was always trying to mold me and coerce me into thinking his way. He got angry when I didn't. He became upset when I spoke for myself. Sometimes I see small-mindedness in rural areas.

Another responded, "Yes, it's a good ole boys' club. Some male board members make comments from time to time. One member turns his back to me. At the present time I hold a good job, they resent my presence, and like to go against what I say."

In research that includes studies of discrimination that occurs without conscious thought, Shakeshaft (1987) stated, "Most evidence suggests that people do not

consciously discriminate. However evidence suggests sexual discrimination operates

largely outside the conscious awareness. This denial of discrimination can be a survival

mechanism for one gender" (p. 206). In view of this invisible barrier, it is important for

women to enter the interview process with a fair degree of self-confidence.

To confirm Shakeshaft's position, a study done by McCreight (1999) presented an

additional challenge: "The ethical question is how to increase female representation in

administration when males with traditional ideas of gender-specific roles continue to

control the gateway to advancement by holding the majority representation on school

boards and superintendencies" (p. 8).

In another study, Esler (1975) discussed theories based on institutional patterns.

She investigated two models or theories that were being developed that may explain the

lack of female representation in the role of administrator.

> The Woman's Place Model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are a
> result of the efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy
> Model is the other model, which assumes that the most competent people have been
> promoted; consequently, women who were not promoted were deemed not
> competent. (p. 82)

Increasing awareness of discrimination, albeit not intentionally done in a

conscious manner, and increasing female roles in the administrative field where male

representation is prominent, are subjects that a school board should consider in the hiring

process of administrators.

Personal perception of bias in the female administrative hiring process is

discussed in sub-question B: Have you personally experienced, while on the board, a

gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator? Two respondents commented

that one male board member stated, "Women would not do as well as a male in a tough

classroom," and then went on to state that the female did very well in that setting. Another school-board member commented that an incident occurred when a female principal was hired that a male should have been hired so he could coach a sports team. Another stated that due to a conflict within the district, a female principal was forced out. One member stated that she heard someone say that a male would be more domineering in the roles of principal or superintendent.

The last sub-question brought the concept of the hiring of women to the school-board itself. Sub-question C brought many comments and responses. If you are a female board member, did you face any gender-bias issues during your hiring process from the community or district?

Several interviewed female school-board members had faced or are facing gender-bias. One member stated that a male board member tried to coerce her to vote his way and got angry when she did not. Another female school-board member stated that she was asked to "sweet-talk" male board members and that they would do what she asked. One member stated that she felt gender-bias because she held a better paying job than the men on the board and they excluded her in discussions at times.

Another comment by a female board member was to be prepared to have the "door closed because you are a women." She furthered this statement by saying, "Don't stop trying because another door would open, and women have always had to fight this bias." One school-board member thought a teaming approach stopped most of the gender-bias issues. A female board member thought showing confidence during the interview process helped alleviate gender-bias situations.

The idea that women should be informed of the biases that may lie ahead for them in the hiring process was discussed in a study by Andrews (1984), who reported,

> Women should be instructed at all levels on the most effective ways to confront bias in the personal selection as well as be given tools to understand the discriminatory practices. This defense would ease the internalization of rejection (lack of confidence and low self-image) and their labeling their efforts as failures. (p. 3)

Despite the comments indicating the existence of bias in some colleagues, most school-board members perceived that the reason for the low rates of female hiring was due to low numbers of applicants and "fit" of the position, not gender issues. Findings show that school-board members may have to look at the hiring practices they use within their respective boards as they hire new board members to serve, as well as hiring of administrative staff.

## Discussion

From 2001 to 2007, 41 new administrators were hired in the five districts studied. Fifteen of them were women (36.6%), which is less than half of the hirings. Comments about this were that the board members felt that an adequate amount of females were hired in the districts. Other responses stated that there was a lack of applicants in general for principal positions because of the pay, the long hours, and the relocation to the rural area setting. Due to the shortages of administrators in rural-school districts at large, school boards and the districts that they represent experience rapid turnover rates in the administrative field.

A study that reflects shortages of administrators in rural-school districts was done by Kerr et al. (2006), who stated,

> Of all the shortages experienced in administrative positions in the public schools, rural schools had the highest percent of vacancies in the six administrator categories.

Forty-two percent of rural schools reported that high-school principals, supervisors, and senior-high assistant principals were the positions that had severe shortages. These rural districts filled these vacancies faster than the urban or suburban districts but experienced rapid turnover rates. (p. 21)

The school boards may then need to look within their hiring practices to expand the applicant pool.

Although the data in this study secured the perception that gender bias rarely existed in the hiring of female administrators in the five rural-school districts selected, the research uncovered another vein of study in the hiring process for women. The issue of hiring of women to school boards in the rural-school district arena may be a venue of further research studies.

## Validity of Data

To show the validity of data, two procedures were used. The first discussion will be the triangulation of the data and then the external readers One and Two's analysis of the responses to the one-to-one interviews.

## Triangulation

Results in this study were established by the triangulation of data. Triangulation is the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. Triangulation of data, according to Patten (2004), "is the method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data" (p. 21). The idea is one that can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result.

One aspect of the triangulation of data involved using two outside readers: One and Two. Data from the follow-up interviews were given for an independent determination of themes, and interpretations of the data were used to review the findings.

Data used were survey responses, field notes, and observational reports. Readers One and Two reached the same conclusions and interpretations from the data. They concluded that diverse pieces of evidence and perspectives showed multiple forms of overlapping or emergent themes. The data do not support the allegation that there is gender-bias in the hiring of school administrators in the school districts studied.

### External Readers One and Two's Analysis

The external reader One, who read the follow-up interview, also found that the similar emergent-themed responses to question 2, 3, and 5 showed no gender issues with regard to hiring practices by the six male board members. According to reader One, two of the four female responses suggested that there were gender-bias issues; gender issues were not prevalent in board hiring.

External reader Two, who read the follow-up interview, felt that in question 1, the male respondents had an emergent theme: giving back to the community and that most of them had parents who were teachers and/or administrators in the school system. Also, most of the male respondents had children within the system. One significant finding from the males was the discernment of what were the ideal qualifications in a leader. Among the female respondents, several were supportive of previous experiences the applicant had had and thought community service was important.

In follow-up interview question number 2, both female and male respondents had similar emergent themes, with no perceived gender bias. Both reader One and reader Two

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agreed that the respondents had similar emergent themes. The standout quote for reader Two was, "She thinks like a man."

In follow-up interview question number 3, both male and female board members stated they were not aware of gender bias in the hiring process. Again both reader One and reader Two agreed that both male and female respondents stated that they were not aware of gender bias in the hiring process.

In follow-up interview question number 4, the male respondents, according to reader Two, thought fit, character, and qualification were important roles for an administrator, while the females, again according to reader Two, were concerned with the low pay and the rural area fit. The standout quote for reader Two was, "Our board is sometimes ham-handed," which apparently means that the board was clumsy, bumbling, and inept.

Relative to follow-up interview question 5, reader Two saw the emergent themes of being prepared, being qualified and competent, knowing the school district's strengths and weaknesses, and speaking clearly as the males' concerns. This reader also perceived that the females' concerns were being prepared, qualified, and confident; appearance; and knowing the district's strengths and weaknesses as important to guide an applicant through an interview. Reader Two also reiterated that gender bias was not perceived by school-board members in the hiring of female applicants.

## Summary

Ten board members, selected randomly by their superintendent, were asked five in-depth follow-up questions. In examining the replies, several female school-board members expressed the perception of having experienced gender-bias challenges both in

their role as board members and in the hiring of women administrators. Several male

respondents concurred.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS,

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

Nationally, the number of women in school administration roles is not

proportionate to the number of women available to fill school-administrative positions

(Shakeshaft, 1987).  Given the under-representation of females in rural districts of north-

central Pennsylvania, there are disproportionately low numbers of female administrators

present in these districts.  My study was done to determine both the perceptions of

school-board members relative to the hiring of women for administrative positions and to

find possible reasons for the existing gap in female vs. male hiring in administrative

positions in five rural Pennsylvania school districts.

Although human resource departments make every attempt to avoid bias in their

hiring practices, there are occasions when such efforts fail.  One such situation is evident

in the tendency of public-school systems to disproportionately hire male administrators

over female counterparts.  The disproportionate hiring practice of hiring more male than

female administrators has been going on unchecked for some years (Shakeshaft, 1987).

A look at the hiring data in selected rural Pennsylvania school districts chosen for this

research showed that only 36% of females were hired in administrative positions between

the years 2001-2007. The focus of this study was, therefore, the selection practices for hiring administrators in these school districts.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to identify gender-related role perceptions and the hiring practices of those who hire school administrators in selected rural-school districts in north-central Pennsylvania. I wished to discern the reasons for the obvious hiring imbalance and to determine whether this imbalance was related to gender bias or other causes.

## Research Questions

The study involved three research questions regarding how rural Pennsylvania school-board members perceive the hiring process of administrators and whether there was a gender-bias issue or a paucity issue when hiring females in this role. Responses to the large-group survey and the follow-up interview, responses to open-ended questions, transcripts of interviews, and the corroboration of outside readers served as the basis for analysis in my study.

The research questions of this study were as follows:

1. Is gender bias apparent in the hiring of women in leadership roles on the part of school-board members in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Three survey questions were associated with this research question: (a) Survey question number 15: Has the school-board member ever experienced difficulty they perceive as gender related?, (b) Survey question number 16: Has the school board-member personally experienced a gender-related incident in the hiring of an

administrator?, and (c) Survey question number 17: Have the female board members ever faced any gender-bias issues during their hiring process from the community or district?

2. To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of women administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

3. How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to hiring male and female administrators compare to their being strong disciplinarians?

Responses to the large-group survey and the follow-up interviews, responses to open-ended questions, transcripts of interviews, and the corroboration of outside readers served as the basis for analysis in my study.

## Conceptual Framework

This study draws on two models presented by Esler (1975). She explains the lack of female representation in the role of administrator:

> The Woman's Place Model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are a result of efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy Model is the other model, which assumes that the most competent people have been promoted consequently; women who were not promoted were deemed not competent. These early studies set the course for further research. (p. 82)

In the 1980s, Carol Shakeshaft reported that women had been largely ignored by traditional literature in the field of school administration. Her studies examined the history of hiring women in schools and the process of women becoming administrators. Shakeshaft (1987) says, "Most evidence suggests that people do not consciously discriminate. However evidence suggests sexual discrimination operates largely outside the conscious awareness. This denial of discrimination can be a survival mechanism for one gender" (p. 206).

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Robinson (1995) cites a 1991 report done by the Feminist Majority Foundation, predicting that it might take 475 years for females to reach equality in the administrative world at the rate they are breaking into administrative positions. In analyzing the conditions for this slow change, Robinson found several barriers that do not allow women the necessary competency to be deemed promotable as competent. She suggested ways to overcome barriers that prevent women from making progress to dispel the notion of female incompetence, such as research and development of these competencies through mentors so that "aspiring females can benefit from those who have gone before and paved the way for those yet to come" (Robinson, 1995, p. 151).

## The Historical Context

The literature review examined the historical development of women in educational administration, the Federal Glass Ceiling Initiative, and the school boards' history and hiring procedures. Barriers faced by women in the hiring process were identified. Overall, the literature review reveals that societal and external perceptions are still barriers when women seek administrative positions.

In the 1820s, men were hired for positions of administration instead of women. Shakeshaft (1987) states,

> School boards searching for male teachers found a dearth of men with the desired background. Most males were from lower socio-economic classes, many who might have had keen availability to enter the profession, but were not the kind of men the school board sought to hire. School boards wanted literate, middle-class men—men for whom there were other opportunities at much higher pay and status. (p. 24)

According to Shakeshaft (1987), "In 1928, women were thought to be constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength" (p. 39).

A piece written by Connolly (1919) predicted limits for women in administrative roles. Women often were "selected by a board of men" (p. 843). Connolly's study shows that the questions central to this study have had a long history because problems in hiring female administrators still exist today.

When focusing on specific behaviors relative to women in the hiring process, Timpano and Knight (1976) conducted a study in New York that found discrimination against women in the hiring process. Certain filters occurred in the hiring process of administrators in the school system. The hiring of women was restricted because of "bias filters" in the hiring process.

In the face of the continuing challenges in hiring women for administrative positions in the school settings, Riedel (2005), in her dissertation at the Lehigh University of Pennsylvania, suggested that further studies in the area of "sensitivity by board members and the central office personnel to gender-related challenges that women prospectively face in administrative positions are imperative" (p. 113). This study was built on Riedel's recommendations for further research.

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) supported this research. In 2006 PASA had already defined the subject of my research study as a need in the state.

## Methodology

For this study I adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both survey and interview formats. This mixed-method design involves "the precise measurement and generalizability of quantitative (numeric) research and the in-depth, complex picture of qualitative (text or image data) research" (Creswell & Clark, 2004, p. 32).

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The surveys and interviews were conducted during the 2006-2007 school year in the selected rural districts of north-central Pennsylvania. The subjects consisted of all the school-board members from five rural Pennsylvania school districts. The five districts were chosen because of demographic characteristics as rural-school districts. The state of Pennsylvania considers a district "rural" when it has schools with a population of less than 2,500 students. The U.S. Department of Education Common Core of Data survey done in 2003-2004 states that Pennsylvania has 3,247 schools that are considered rural. Forty-eight percent of Pennsylvania school districts are considered rural. Districts A-D in this research study are among them. I am an administrator in one of the school districts where the school-board members were interviewed. I reside within the school district in which I work.

The survey was sent to all the school-board members from five rural Pennsylvania public-school districts regarding their perceptions of the hiring process as it pertains to their district. Since each board of the five rural school districts consists of nine members, a total of 45 surveys were given out. Twenty-seven school-board members responded to this survey ($n=27$), resulting in a 60% return rate.

The survey questions were developed with the intention of understanding the hiring process as perceived by the school-board members. Demographic questions were asked to show the range of participants in the chosen area. Survey questions about the participants' own path to becoming board members gave understanding as to how they perceived their own hiring as a school-board member. The third section dealt with questions of the actual administrative hiring process, and the respondent's views on gender-bias issues, if such had occurred. Prior to administering the survey, I used my

doctoral cohort as a sounding board to ascertain if the questions in the survey and follow-up interview accurately relayed the desired information and asked clear and concise questions.

The survey was given to all school-board members at their monthly meeting. The survey consisted of 32 questions related to the purpose of my study, to examine the hiring process of the school districts involved, specifically as the process relates to the hiring of female school administrators in those districts.

The survey consisted of three sections. The first section focused on the board members' demographics. The second section of the survey asked board members what influenced them in their decision to pursue their own school-board position. The last section of the survey focused on the hiring of administrators in the board members' district. There was also room for write-in answers in sections two and three, yielding some qualitative data. Content validity was established by using a broad sampling of content in the survey and the interview concerning hiring of administrators in rural Pennsylvania school districts.

To preserve the anonymity of the respondents, the districts were identified as District A, District B, District C, District D, and District E. Not all respondents chose to answer every question. The findings are described in chapter 4.

To get a more detailed view of individual school-board member perspectives as they relate to women in administrative roles, I interviewed two members from each of the five school boards. The interviews were conducted after the initial survey was completed. Each superintendent from the five respective school districts randomly chose two school-board members. The board members selected were given the option to meet with me

face-to-face or be interviewed by telephone and/or by e-mail. Of the 10 interviewees, one chose the face-to-face format. Seven chose telephone interviews, and one chose the telephone and e-mail interview option. The interview consisted of five in-depth interview questions about the research themes (Appendix B).

I followed Wolcott's (2001) structure for gathering data through qualitative interviews. The interviews aimed at uncovering the history of hiring in the school district. This gave participants a chance to share their side of the story, akin to Wolcott's category of narrative data collection. Once I had transcribed all of the interviews, I conducted a member check for validity and accuracy by reading their responses back to them so they had opportunity to change or correct the response. I also asked two colleagues, one an elementary principal familiar with hiring procedures, the other a university professor familiar with qualitative research procedures, to review the interview data and analysis. I gave both colleagues a general interview rubric to record their own analysis of the responses (see Appendix C). Both reviewers came up with similar results. In all of these processes, strict confidentiality was protected by using only code numbers for the school districts and all subjects.

I also used data that I received from the state about the actual number of people hired, along with the relative breakdowns, to see how many women were hired during the years 2001-2007. I then organized these three streams of data around the basic issue of hiring female administrators in order to address the three research questions.

Esler (1975) discussed theories based on institutional patterns. She investigated two models or theories that were being developed that may explain the lack of female representation in the role of administrator.

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The Woman's Place Model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are a result of the efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy Model is the other model, which assumes that the most competent people have been promoted; consequently, women who were not promoted were deemed not competent. (p. 82)

## Findings and Discussion

Findings from both the survey and interview are analyzed in this section. I will summarize and discuss the results of my study.

### Research Question Number 1

Research question number 1 asks, Is the hiring of women in leadership roles in selected rural Pennsylvania public-school settings impacted by gender-bias as perceived by school-board members?

In the hiring process only one (3.7%) of the respondents was concerned about gender balance within the administrative team in their district. Yet when asked about gender difficulty, personal gender bias, and female school-board member bias, all nine of the female school-board members (33.3%) answered that they had experienced bias either in their hiring or had seen bias in the hiring of female administrators. Still, the majority of board members responded with no knowledge of gender bias. The survey questions that included open-ended responses to questions of gender-difficulty, personal gender bias, and school-board-member bias against females yielded minimal responses. Gender bias may still be a difficult issue to discuss. Gender bias may not be done openly, but there was evidence that it did occur in some incidences.

As early as 1919, a review written by Connolly indicated this tension of women being selected by predominately male boards. The piece commented on the selection of

women in the roles of supervision of primary work, or domestic work, or welfare work. Connolly noted that women often were selected by a "board of men" (p. 84).

While the obvious use of what Timpano and Knight (1976) called "bias-filters in the hiring process" was not found in Pennsylvania rural-school districts that I studied, some of the responses, especially by female board members, suggested that more subtle bias-filters still exist.

The majority of female school-board members felt that this bias was due to their holding better jobs or positions in the community and to the fact that their voices on the board sometimes went unheard or were discouraged when they did not follow the male board member's suggestions. All female school-board members reported having seen some incidents of gender bias, either in the hiring of administrators or in the hiring of board members themselves.

This finding concurs with a study done in 1975 by Esler. She investigated two models or theories that may explain the lack of female representation in the role of administrator. The Woman's Place Model draws on the assumption that institutional patterns are a result of efforts of one group to exclude participation of another. The Meritocracy Model is the other model, which assumes that the most competent people have been promoted; consequently, women who were not promoted were deemed not competent (p. 82).

The pattern of hiring fewer females in administrative roles and as members of the school boards in rural Pennsylvania may be explained by The Woman's Place Model.

Research Question Number 2

Research question number 2 asked, To what extent is being a strong disciplinarian a factor in the selection of woman administrators in these rural Pennsylvania public-school settings?

Three districts rated the ability to maintain good discipline as a high concern. The same concern showed up in the question about the assistant principal, who is typically the student disciplinarian. This was also an area of high interest for the board members, but it rated lower than general concern discipline in general. These two areas of concern were a factor in the selection of the school administrator as perceived by the school-board members. However, these perceptions apparently are no longer as strong as they were in the studies by Shakeshaft (1987), who discussed a study from 1928. "In 1928, women were thought to be constitutionally incapable of discipline and order, primarily because of their size and supposed lack of strength" (p. 39). However, the findings of my study do indicate that the issue of being able to step into the disciplinarian role remains a concern for the selection of school administrators.

Anecdotes from two female board members indicated some male board member stated, "Women would not do as well as a male in a tough classroom." Some board members also indicated, through discussion, that a female teacher recently hired in the school district did very well in that setting. Another school-board member commented that an incident occurred in which a female principal was hired and some felt that a male should have been hired so he could coach a sports team. Another stated that, due to a conflict within the district, a female principal was forced out. One member stated that she

heard someone say that a male would be more dominant in the role of principal or superintendent.

Another early study done by Elwood Cubberly (1929) stated that board members tended to hire White, middle-aged men, mostly like themselves to the school boards. The hiring of mostly men on the school boards in rural north-central Pennsylvania appears to follow this long-established trend.

Research Question Number 3

How do the perceptions of school-board members relative to the hiring of male and female administrators compare in reference to their being strong disciplinarians?

Both male and female respondents were equally concerned about this issue. No direct data were gathered that showed a difference between male and female school-board members' perceptions of discipline. As to whether females or males are better able to perform in this venue, the majority felt that the ability to discipline in the school setting was something they looked for when hiring any candidate. Eighteen out of the 27 total responses in the survey stated that discipline and the ability to discipline was an important hiring factor to all school-board members.

Discipline perceptions are explained historically with the passage of Title IX in 1972, and with the glass ceiling initiative (part of Title II, part of Civil Rights Act of 1991). When Title IX and social pressures began to help change diversity in administrative hiring, women began to join the ranks of administrators. In some cases in which a woman was already hired, it was more difficult for another woman to be hired as an administrator because the district felt it had already filled its quota of female administrators.

The process of recruiting and selecting an administrator is the job of all who work in education. The hiring process itself is a difficult one. This chosen leader will steer a large body of people through a long process called education.

In the survey I found that most school-board members perceived that there was little or no evidence of gender-related issues in the hiring of administrators within their school board. In contrast, within the follow-up interviews I found that several female board members had voiced concerns that they perceived as gender-related issues. These reported incidences took place in the hiring of administrators as well as internally within the school board itself.

## Conclusions

It is a fact that more male than female school administrators have been hired in north-central Pennsylvania. This study investigated the possible influence of gender bias as reason for this condition. After surveying and interviewing school-board members, the following conclusions can be drawn from my study:

1. In the 6-year span from 2001-2007 in the five school districts studied, 41 administrators were hired and 15 of them were women. The districts studied have consistently hired a majority of male administrators.

2. The imbalance of gender in administrative hirings was explained by most school-board members as being due to the shortage of female applicants, because of the rural location of the district and the required relocation to the district. The school-board members surveyed felt that there was not adequate in-house candidacy to fill administrative positions.

3. In the process of hiring, the primary focus for the school-board members surveyed was the idea of fit of a particular person for a particular position.

4. The concern of adequate knowledge and the ability to govern student discipline for candidates was important in hiring individuals for school-administration positions.

5. The majority of respondents from the school boards of north-central Pennsylvania do not perceive intentional gender bias as an issue in the hiring of female applicants for administrative positions. However, subtle gender-bias tensions may be present.

## Recommendations for Further Practice

Information gathered in this research was meant to reveal aspects of hiring females into the ranks of school administration. It is hoped that this study will encourage a greater sensitivity of hiring females in the rural-school districts in Pennsylvania or a greater knowledge of the complex issues surrounding hiring issues for women. School districts should develop comprehensive hiring guidelines that include the sensitivity in female hiring by developing a pool of female mentors who will mentor aspiring administrators in order to minimize administrative shortages.

## Recommendations for Further Research

Due to the limited number of rural districts involved, the results and conclusions of this study should be viewed with caution. However, a review of the findings of this study suggests the following areas for further research:

1.  A study including a broader sample of participants, including more rural school districts in Pennsylvania, as well as questions in the survey including more in-depth gender-related questions to aide in generalization throughout Pennsylvania.

2.  Explore the relevance of the levels of education that school-board members have acquired and their knowledge of hiring administrators.

3.  Examine the hiring perceptions of school-board members and school administrators who lead the school district's educational choices for administrative positions.

4.  Explore research that studies the difference between the perceptions of males vs. females regarding what may be a more insidious form of bias in the hiring of administrators—bias that is denied even when being experienced.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

HIRING SURVEY

Hiring Survey

Thank you for answering this survey.

Instructions:

1. Please answer every question.
2. Your anonymity will be maintained.
3. Please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope

**Section A: Demographic Information**

1. Age  ___ 25-35  ___ 36-45  ___ 46-55  ___ 56-65  ___ 66-75

   Gender _____

2. What is your racial/ethnic group?

   _____ Asian          _____ Black

   _____ Hispanic       _____ Native American

   _____ White          _____ Other (be specific)

3. What is your marital status?

   _____ Single         _____ Married

   _____ Divorced       _____ Widowed

   _____ Separated

**Section B: Decision to Pursue This School Board Position**

4.  What was /or is/ your profession?

    _____

5.  How long have you been a school board member?

    _____1-2 years   _____3-5 years   _____5-7 years   _____longer?

6.  Will you run for another term on the school board?

    _____ Yes        _____ No

7.  Who influenced your decision to pursue your position as a School Board member?

    _____ Peer/friend(s)    _____ Interest in public service

    _____ Family            _____ Public service

    _____ Peer/work         _____ Wanting to make changes

8.  If a colleague encouraged you to run for the school board, what position or occupation do they hold?

    _____

9.  Please indicate the gender of the person from question 8.

    _____ Male       _____ Female

10. What are major concerns that led you to your school board position?

_____ Rising Taxes             _____ Serving the community

_____ School Curriculum       _____ School District building conditions

_____ Leadership/administration hiring _____ Teacher concerns

_____ Other

11. What is the highest earned degree that you hold?

_____ High School              _____ Graduate: Masters

_____ Trade School            _____ Doctorate

_____ College: Bachelors

12. Have you attended School Board seminars on hiring practices?

_____ Yes         _____ No

13. Do you believe that the hiring process of administrators in your district is impacted by any of the following? Check all you feel apply.

_____ Particular people for particular positions

_____ Gender/balance issues

_____ Professional organizations influence

_____ Appropriate documentation, i.e. portfolio, resumes, certification

_____ Service to the district

_____ Bringing in out-of-district applicants

_____ Evidence of past roles in administration

_____ Gender roles in certain positions of administration, i.e. secondary principal,

assistant principal, elementary principal

_____ Willingness to relocate

_____ Other: _____

Please explain any items you feel strongly about.

_____

_____

14. In your opinion are mentors important for women aspiring to an administrative position.

_____ Yes        _____ No

Please explain your answer to question 14.

_____

_____

_____

15. Has your board ever experienced difficulty that you perceive as gender related?

_____ Yes          _____ No

If yes, can you briefly explain?

_____

_____

16. Have you personally experienced, while on the board, a gender-related incident in the hiring of an administrator?

_____ Yes          _____ No

If yes, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

17. If you are a female school board member, did you face any gender-bias issues during your hiring process from the community or district?

_____ Yes          _____ No

If yes, please explain briefly.

_____

_____

_____

## Section C: Hiring of Administrators

18. At what time of the year does your school board begin the hiring process for administrators for the next school year?

19. On average how many administrators were hired by your board since 2000?

   2000-2001 _____    2001-2002 _____    2002-2003 _____    2004-2005 _____

20. Please identify the extent of hiring females as administrators as a percentage of new hires:

   0-5% _____    6-10% _____    10-15% _____    Other _____

21. How does your school board advertise administrative openings? (check all that apply)

   _____ Newspaper

   _____ Board Website

   _____ Pennsylvania Department of Education

   _____ Local Universities

   _____ National search websites

   _____ Other (please specify)

22. Does your school board recruit in-house?

_____ Yes          _____ No

Comment_____

23. Does your school board recruit from other school districts in the surrounding areas?

_____ Yes          _____ No

Comment_____

24. Does your school board recruit from out side the state of Pennsylvania?

Comment_____

25. If your school board does recruit outside of Pennsylvania does it focus on graduates from:

_____ New York State or other border states?

_____ More widely in the U.S.?

_____ Look for diversity in hiring practices?

26. What areas are you concerned about when you hire an administrator? (check all that apply)

_____ Knowledge of curriculum

_____ Leadership skills

_____ Practice in the field of discipline

_____ School/home relationships

_____ Special education knowledge

_____ Knowledge of diversity issues

_____ Principal experience

_____ Assistant principal experience

27. Does your school board accept email applications?

_____ Yes          _____ No

Comment_____

28. Who does the initial sorting of new applications?

_____

29. Is a written copy of your school board's hiring process available to applicants?

_____ Yes          _____ No

Comment_____

30. Does your school board encourage recommendations from the teachers union?

_____ Yes .        _____ No

Comment_____

31. Is there a human point of contact within your school board where any applicant can gain information on his or her stage in the hiring process?

_____ Yes        _____ No

Comment_____

32. Does your school board offer any incentives to newly hired administrators such as assistance in finding housing, meeting the public or total district introduction?

_____ Yes        _____ No

Comment_____

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF HIRING PRACTICES BY RURAL SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

I would appreciate brief responses to the following questions (you may use additional paper if necessary).

1. What specific experience(s) in your life led you to the position of school board member?

2. Have you faced or experienced any gender related incidents while in your tenure as a board member? Please explain.

3. Do you perceive the hiring process your board uses as up to date? Fair? Are there items you would like to change or update with regard to Title IX and gender related issues?

4. What challenges do you face as a school board member in the hiring process of administrators in your district?

5. What are some strategies or experiences you have had that would give to applicants that may better prepare women to interview and become administrators in your district?

APPENDIX C

ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW RUBRIC

One-to-One Interview Rubric


Question ____



Male responses                   Female responses

MA                               FA

MB                               FB

MC                               FC

MD1                              FE

MD2

ME



Similar Emergent Themes




Male                             Female




Multiple Interacts (common themes)



Male                             Female

APPENDIX D

LETTERS

37 First Street
Mansfield, Pa. 16933

Date **, 2006

Dear School Board Member,

My name is Barbara J. Kelly. I am the Director of the English as a Second Language
Program, and the At-Risk Consultant for the Wellsboro Area School District. I am a
doctoral candidate at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. In partial
fulfillment of the requirements for my degree, I will be conducting a study on the hiring
of administrators as perceived by the local school boards in a five county public school
system.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return it by ****, 2006, in the self-addressed,
stamped envelope provided. The information provided will remain confidential and will
be used for this specific research project. All data will be reported within the research
thesis. No individual will be identified at any time. I will at a later date randomly choose
two members of your board for a follow-up interview. If you do not wish to be
interviewed after your name has been drawn, I will draw another name. I believe that the
results of this survey will help administrators better prepare for filling administrative
positions in their respective school systems.

Thank you in advance for your help with this survey.

Sincerely,

Barbara J. Kelly

PASA Research Fellow Letter (will provide original)

Dear Barbara,

I have reviewed your research proposal, "The Perception of Female Hiring in Educational Administration in Rural Pennsylvania Public School Districts as Perceived by School Board Members." It is an impressive PASA Research Fellow application and the proposed research certainly fits within the study interests of our Association.

Accordingly, please accept my congratulations on your selection as a PASA Research Fellow.

Please understand that this selection does not constitute any financial award or other obligation on the part of PASA. Rather, this designation is honorary and will enable you to approach PASA members throughout the Commonwealth as you attempt to pursue your research. In essence, this designation says to the practicing school leader that your research carries PASA's "Seal of Approval."

Thank you for your service to our profession and please do not hesitate to call upon me if I may be of assistance. I look forward to receiving an abstract of your research findings when your study is completed so that I may share those findings with the PASA membership.

Best wishes,

Jim Henderson
Chair, PASA Research and Development Committee

P.S. I will be sending a hard copy of this letter to your home address as well.
P.P.S. Please give Jim Tucker my best regards!

James E. (Jim) Henderson, Ed.D.
Professor of Educational Leadership
Duquesne University School of Education
Director, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders
405 Canevin Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15282
(412) 396-4880   FAX: (412) 396-6100
henderson@duq.edu / www.education.duq.edu/idpel/idpel.html

"Great leaders rally people to a desired future."
Marcus Buckingham, author of The One Thing You Need to Know.

This e-mail is intended solely for the use of its designated recipient. If you have received the transmission in error, please delete it immediately. Please be kind enough to notify the sender to assure you will not receive additional misdirected e-mails. Your cooperation is appreciated.

REFERENCE LIST

# REFERENCE LIST

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