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BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS TO CAREER ADVANCEMENT BY TOP-LEVEL,
ENTRY- LEVEL AND NON- ADMINISTRATIVE WOMEN IN PUBLIC SCHOOL
DISTRICTS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

A Dissertation in

Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. The need to increase the awareness of the barriers which might contribute to the low incidence of women is vital in achieving gender equity in school administration. An explanatory mixed method design was used, which involved collecting qualitative data after a quantitative phase to further explain or follow up the quantitative data in more depth. In the quantitative phase of the study, a survey was used to collect data from women occupying administrative and non-administrative positions at rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. In the qualitative phase of the study, the barriers and facilitators to career advancement are tentatively explored with a purposeful sample of women administrators and non administrators. The overall, purpose of the explanatory design was to interpret, explain and build on the findings of the quantitative data.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background of the Problem

In the last thirty years women have been moving into organizations in increasing numbers. Women occupy 50% of managerial and specialized professional positions in organizations (Sands & Kolb, 2001). However, even with these positive trends, the dearth of women in top administrative positions is striking. Specifically in American public schools, although the representation of women has increased since the 1970s, when both Title IX of the Educational Amendment Act of 1970 and the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1975 first applied to public education, the situation of women in the workplace has not improved as one would like to believe (Gerds, 2003).

Looking at American literature in the 1970s and 1980s, we noted that research shows that there is no difference between men and women as leaders and that women are no less effective than men (Adler, Laney & Packer, 1993). More recently, Grove and Montgome (2002) concluded that good school administration is more attributed to feminine rather than masculine modes of leadership behavior. Female characteristics of being empathetic, compromising and caring are mostly associated with good school administration. However, while women possess some of the best qualities for leadership in primary and secondary education, they are still facing slower career advancement. Educational administration remains a male-dominated field, proof of which comes from the gender of those in the highest posts: The key educational leadership positions are mostly held by males. So, while women fill the elementary and secondary teacher

positions, men continue to control the key educational administrative positions (Wolverton, 1999; Hudson, 1998; Baudoux, 1995; Blount, 1999).

If women have the competencies of good educational leaders and perform better than men in top administrative positions (Dana & Bourisam, 2007), why aren't they filling the ranks of the top administrative positions in public schools? Why don't women move through the ranks from teaching to occupy the top administrative positions? These questions have spawned a number of studies in the field of public school administration focused on identifying the barriers and the obstacles that keep women from occupying top school administrative positions and the strategies for eliminating these barriers. These studies have, in turn, resulted in two distinctive streams of research literature: the first stream of literature is comprised of studies designed to identify the personal and the organizational barriers to female advancement to top educational leadership positions (Berman, 1999; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Kiamba, 2008; Stufft, 2009; Henry, 2010; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Hughes, 2011; Jones & Palmer, 2011; Pirouznia, 2011), while the second stream of the literature is comprised of studies designed to identify the hindrances to women becoming educational administrators through testimonies of women who have succeeded in obtaining top administrative positions (Grogan, 1996; Gerds, 2003; Bacon, 2008; Kariuki, 2008; Mullen, 2009; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011).

In the studies of barriers encountered by women seeking leadership positions, female superintendants and principals are the most commonly studied positional leaders (Isaacson, 1998; Gramke, 2007; Harris, 2007; Katz, 2008; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011) What has been learned as a result of these studies is that women seeking to obtain top educational leadership roles or positions face many internal as well as external barriers. Internal barriers are those that can be overcome by individual change, while external barriers are those that require institutional

and organizational change (Shakeshaf, 1989; Hoferek, 1986). Studies have shown that barriers do exist in the form of perceptions that women cannot perform the job; in the image that an excellent school administrator is a tough male figure; and in the form of social expectations that a woman's first responsibility is housekeeping and child rearing. (Hofrek, 1986, Hoffman, 1995; Loughheed, 2000; Sands, 2001; Gerders, 2003; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Researchers also identified the barriers to female career advancement and the strategies to eliminate these barriers by examining the stories told by women who have succeeded in obtaining top-level administrative positions in public education (Grogan, 1996; Gerds, 2003; Bacon, 2008; Kariuki, 2008; Mullen, 2009; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011). What has been learned as a result of these stories is that gender, more than age, experience, and competence are still major determinants for the position an individual will occupy within an educational administrative organization (Erickson & Pitner, 1980). Most women administrators state that gender is the major barrier to those women seeking to occupy administrative leadership positions in education. Although the participants in most of these studies met all the standards of success as school administrators, they still face covert and overt challenges to their abilities, which they attributed "to being seen as women" (Skrla, Reyes & Scheu, 2000, p. 57). Moreover, a considerable amount of these stories reported comments by these women administrators on the lack of mentoring, socialization, networking, support systems and role-conflict as other explanations for women's exclusion from influential administrative positions in education.

Although these stories provide insight into the barriers that keep women from becoming school administrators, they do not articulate in a systematic way what barriers do exist and the salience of each barrier in preventing women from entering school administration. Accordingly, as indicated previously, the largest body of research studies focuses on examining the barriers to

female advancement and the strategies to overcome them among female administrators (Isaacson, 1998; Gramke, 2007; Harris, 2007; Katz, 2008; Gammill & Vaughn, 2011). However, it leaves the field devoid of information about women occupying other administrative positions and non-administrative positions and how their perceptions differ from these women administrators occupying top-level positions. Furthermore, the examples of women who have succeeded in occupying top-level positions do not explain the nature of the barriers, how salient each barrier is in preventing women from entering public school administration in both rural and urban school districts and what are the professional strategies that may help other women seeking to occupy administrative positions in education.

Statement of the Problem

Accordingly, the barriers today are not different from the barriers that kept women from becoming school administrators in the 1900s or 1930s (Shakeshaft, 1989). However, there is still a clear gap in the research literature on women in public school administration between what is known about the perceptions of barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women occupying administrative and non-administrative positions in public school districts. No effort was made in this respect to distinguish between women administrators and non-administrators in rural and urban school districts (Berman, 1999).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. An explanatory mixed method design will be used, and it will involve

collecting qualitative data after a quantitative phase to explain or follow up on the quantitative phase in more depth.

Research Questions

The literature on women in public school administration has been examined to verify that there are gaps in what is known about the barriers among women administrators in entry level and non administrative positions and how their perceptions differ from women occupying top level administrative positions in both rural and urban school districts. The following research questions are designed to fill this research gap:

1. What are the perceptions of women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry–level positions, and those in non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement in rural school districts?
2. What are the perceptions of women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry – level positions, and those in non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement in urban school districts?
3. Are there any differences in perceptions of women regarding the nature of these barriers between the rural and the urban school districts?
4. What are the perceptions of women administrators and non-administrators regarding the facilitators that can be followed to overcome these barriers in rural school districts?
5. What are the perceptions of women administrators and non–administrators regarding of the facilitators that can be followed to overcome these barriers in urban school districts?
6. Are there any differences in the perceptions of women between both the rural and urban school districts concerning the nature of these facilitators?

Definition of Terms

To ensure accurate interpretation of the study, it is necessary to provide definitions of the terms central to the research study.

- Top-level administrative positions are defined as positions at the executive level of public schools who are given the ultimate responsibility of oversight for every school within the district from elementary through high school (i.e. the superintendent) or everything that happens within one school (i.e. high school principal).
- Entry-level administrative positions are defined as positions at the executive level of public school that are given secondary authority to the superintendent or the high school principal with regard to the school governance or leadership (i.e. assistant superintendent & assistant principal).
- Non-administrative level positions refer to those who are not given any authority at the executive or the administrative level within a school (i.e. teachers).
- Public School is a type of school required for children of the general public and funded by local government tax revenue. School districts serve to operate the public schools. They are a corporate body governed by a legislative body called a school board. The Public school system is split into three stages: primary or elementary school (kindergarten to 4th or 5th or 6th) junior high or middle school (5th, 6th, and 7th to 8th or 9th) and high school or secondary school (9th or 10th to 12th).
- Rural and urban school districts are identified using the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's definition. A school district is considered rural if the number of persons per square mile in the district is below the statewide figure of 274 persons per square mile. A district is

considered urban if the district density is at the statewide figure (The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, 2005).

Study Design

Based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), the best mixed methods design to use in order to address this study's purpose is the Explanatory Design. The Explanatory Design is well suited to this study in which the researcher uses qualitative data to explain the significant results of the quantitative component of the study. The Explanatory Design is a two-phase mixed methods design starting with the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This first phase will be followed by a subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The qualitative component of the study is designed to supplement the quantitative component. The two components are then integrated during the interpretation stage of the study. The overall purpose of the Explanatory Design is that "qualitative results help to explain, interpret, and examine the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2002).

Limitations

1. This study is limited to women occupying administrative positions and non-administrative positions in rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania.
2. This research study is limited to include women administrators occupying top-executive positions (superintendent & high school principals), and entry-executive positions (assistant superintendent & assistant high school principals).
3. This study is limited to include high school women teachers. The researcher focuses on the high schools because while the female elementary principals outnumber their male colleagues three to one, this ratio is reversed at the secondary level. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2007), the percentages of the female elementary

schools increased from 41 to 56 percent, between 1993-1994 and 2003-2004, and from 14 to 26 percent in high schools. According to Young and McLeod (2001), the small percentage of the female high school principals is significant because promotions to the senior administrative positions including superintendency occur from this level (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010).

Assumptions

This research study is rested upon four assumptions:

1. The women, at different levels, selected for the interviews provide accurate information of their perceptions of the barriers to career advancement and the facilitators for eliminating these barriers.
2. The participants in this research study have some personal as well as organizational barriers to advancement to leadership positions in education.
3. The women, selected at different administrative levels, in public school districts for this research study provide a clear picture of the level of development of barriers and facilitators for overcoming these barriers to career advancement among women administrators.
4. The selected high schools provide representation of the significant differences in the perceived barriers and facilitators identified by women administrators between both urban and rural public school districts.

Significance of the Study

As women become more and more prevalent in leadership roles, research regarding the barriers to female advancement in educational leadership positions becomes more important. One obvious reason is to further understand what barriers exist, how prominent each barrier is

in constraining women from entering school administration at different levels, and how these barriers differ based on demographic location. Also, women's perceptions as school leaders of the barriers to upward mobility and the strategies used for overcoming these barriers have value and their knowledge should be disseminated to male leaders, other professional women, policy makers, and employers.

Moreover, the strategies used by women leaders to overcome barriers on their way to different administrative positions in public education have much to teach other women seeking to obtain equal positions. In other words, the strategies which have worked for these women in both top and entry level administrative positions may help other women in the field seeking to enter the same administrative positions in educational institutions.

Finally, the largest and most recent body of research knowledge on women in public school administration deals primarily with personal as well as organizational barriers to female career advancement from the perspective of women occupying mostly top-level administrative positions (i.e. superintendent and principals). Thus, this study is significant in filling the gaps of what is unknown by focusing not only on the perception of the most elite group of women in public education but also on these women occupying other administrative and non-administrative positions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This research study investigates barriers and facilitators to career advancement among females occupying administrative and non-administrative positions. There are two main objectives for this chapter. First, a synthesis of the research on the major barriers to women's advancement into administration is the focus of the first section of this review. Second, the facilitators that can have some form of documented success are examined in the second section of this review.

Barriers to Women's Career advancement into School Administration

Since the early 1970s, concern has been voiced about the place of women in education and the barriers to women's advancement in school administration. One way to examine restraints to women's career advancement is to place them within the domains of internal and external barriers. Internal barriers are within the women themselves and can be overcome by individual change, whereas external barriers affect women administrators and require social and institutional change (Hoferek, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Internal barriers. Internal barriers can be viewed as an outgrowth of how women perceive the social context. The most common explanation for the underrepresentation of women in school administrative positions, both in research literature and the popular press, has centered on women's inadequacy (Sands & Kolb, 2001; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). The most common internal barriers identified are lack of confidence and lack of inspiration or motivation. However, these internal barriers as an explanation of women's lack of achievement seem inappropriate (Shakeshaft, 1989; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Pirouznia, 2011). The following examination of these barriers will illustrate this point.

Isolation. Isolation is one of the major obstacles for women administrators occupying entry level administrative positions (i.e. assistant principals). In a study (Russell, 1995) designed to investigate the barriers encountered by 43 (21 females and 22 males) middle managers in education and public administration in Ontario, Canada, interviewees were asked a number of questions to test their awareness and their sensitivity to barriers to career advancement and their strategies for dealing with them. For women middle managers, isolation remained one of the main problems. One of the interviewees said, “Being a principal is very lonely for a woman” (Russell, 1995, p. 130).

Women have fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems, which often lead to fewer opportunities to receive feedback regarding institutional issues (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Jones & Palmer, 2011). Women interviewees seemed to become accustomed to not being included in work related social activities and thus remained isolated. This limited participation in the social aspect of work appears to result in a more limited opportunity to present themselves and their leadership abilities and denies access to socialization to organizational norms and beliefs. This in turn prevents women middle managers from occupying top-level administrative positions (Russell, 1995).

Women's lack of motivation. A number of studies indicate that women's lack of success in occupying educational leadership positions is due to a lack of motivation on the part of women (Estler, 1975; Dias, 1975; Miller, 1976; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Although it is true that there are few women employed as school leaders (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006), there is little evidence that the causes behind this can be related to women's lack of motivation.

Based on the National Center of Education Statistics (2006), the superintendency, for instance, is the most male dominated executive position of any profession in the United States.

School leadership programs now enroll more women than men. School boards who consist mainly of men, for instance, value a candidate having gone through the ranks. Female candidates spend half of their careers in teaching. Moreover search firms, who assist school boards in selecting and recruiting candidates, often screen out female applicants for administrative positions. “Of even greater concern is that female applicants are at a disadvantage even before they apply” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 108). Women are clearly motivated to occupy school administrative positions, but it is a gender structured society and the lack of opportunity which prevents women from occupying key administrative positions in public education (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Stufft & Coyne, 2009).

Other evidence that women's lack of motivation is an inadequate reason for women's lack of achievement is that women experience significant stress stemming from role conflict (Jones & Palmer, 2011). The responsibility placed on the women as mothers, wives, and employees with the lack of support from society represent a form of depression (Adler, Laney & Packer, 1993). Again it is not motivation which causes women from occupying school administrative positions, but the reality of a world that forces women to endure the full weight of responsibilities both inside and outside the home (Pirouznia, 2011). For most women, work requirements are added to home duties to give them double the workload. In effect, this equals to two full-time jobs. Not wanting to take on two jobs says nothing about inspiration but rather reflects an evaluation of the number of hours in the day and the limit of the human body (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Role conflict. Most women in administrative positions experience role conflict (Sanchez & Thornton, 2011), which refers to logistics, such as time commitment and energy involved in fulfilling the requirements of one’s professional careers and personal life (Hoferek, 1986). Role conflict becomes a serious barrier to women’s advancement in school administration when

women combine the roles of wife, mother and leader (Jones & Palmer, 2011). In addition to being overloaded with time and energy demands, these women are struggling to find a balance between their professional career and personal life. Research supports a history of limited success for women with families because competing demands between the professional career role and the mothering role cannot be manipulated where the family's status is secondary to the males. In this case, the woman is twice a victim; conflict exists within her roles as professional and mother and between herself and her husband in their parental and career roles (Weber, 1981).

In a number of studies, the main reason suggested by women for not ascending into upward positions is conflict between work and family roles (Harris, 2007; Kiamba, 2008; Hertneky, 2010; Pirouzia, 2011). Adler, Laney and Packer (1993) found that women recognize conflict and guilt in combining the roles of carer with their career. The responsibility placed on them as wives and mothers combined with a lack of childcare support in society represents a form of depression. One of the participants in the study commented that: "There is always anxiety about being working and being a mother: no matter how old they are, I rush from one of responsibilities to another" (p. 28). The participants in the study do not view childcare negatively, but they do recognize the sense of conflict it causes. They view the accession of men into senior administrative positions as an attempt to drive women back into the home.

Also, in another study by Gerdes (2003) designed to investigate the sources of stress for women seeking to occupy administrative roles in education, it was found that the stress reported by 98 senior women was quite high. This stress appeared to result from continued cultural and social expectations of women both in their professional career and personal lives and the insufficient time to meet all the expectations. These findings may help explain why the

combination of work, marriage, and parenthood has different effects on the career and advancement of both men and women. For men, it may provide a support for career advancement, while for women the opposite seems true. This may be due to cultural expectations associated with the role of women and feminine characteristics defined by traditional standards of the society (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Jones & Palmer, 2011).

However, managing these multiple roles can be stressful. A study by the Center for Women in Educational Leadership (2001), for instance, indicated that American women can achieve a great deal professionally but they have not yet fused the new values with traditional ones. Thus, they experience internal role conflict. What American women need to understand is that they can be professional women, mothers and leaders, but not without the personal stress. They need to develop a realistic approach to their roles in order to resolve their conflicts (Woo, 1985), change themselves as their life circumstances change, and make deliberate choices related to their career progression (Myer, 2001).

External barriers to women's advancement into school administration. Many studies have illuminated the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Stufft & Coyne, 2009; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Johnson, 2011). They reported that the higher the occupational role, the greater the underrepresentation of women. According to Hoff and Mitchell (2008); Pirouznia (2011); and Johnson (2011) it is the external barriers (e.g., gender discrimination, and lack of socialization) rather than the internal barriers that would continue to produce an underrepresentation of women leaders. The following describes the major external barriers to women's advancement opportunities in school administration.

Gender discrimination. In the largest body of research, gender discrimination is the barrier that prevented women from career advancement (Estler, 1975; Adkison, 1981; Bonuso &

Shakeshaft, 1983; Shakeshaft, 1989; Collay & LaMar, 1995; Edson, 1995; Russell, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1995; Taylor, 1995 ; Baudoux, 1996; Rowe, 1997; Caupton & Rosario, 1998; Lougheed, 2000; Skrla, Reyes & Scheu, 2000; Myer, 2001; Tripses, 2004; Curdova, 2005; Dana & Bourisan, 2006; Witmer, 2006; Brunner & Crogan, 2007; Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010; Pirouznia, 2011).

In 1981, Judith Adkison published an influential article in the *Review of Educational Research* which documented that most of the reasons given for not promoting women have only to do with the fact that they are women. She analyzed women's career barriers from gender-role stereotyping to gender-role socialization. The gender-role stereotypes and gender- role socialization relate to discrimination of the gender- role and occupational stereotypes in the culture for several reasons. The community does not accept women in school administrative positions. Decision makers, e.g., school boards, boards' trustees, departments of education and educational administration often do not hire women for managerial roles. The selection and traditional recruitment strategies favor men. Moreover, subordinates do not want to work with women. Attitude surveys provide much of the data collected within this framework.

In 1975, Estler used the Discrimination Model to explain the lack of women in administrative positions. This model draws on the assumption that "institutional patterns are a result of the efforts of one group to exclude participation of another" (Estler, 1975, p. 369). It stated that women are the subject of discriminatory practices in job recruitment and promotional policies. Women are paid less than men for the same job. They are also required to have higher qualification for employment than men and must respond to a wider variety of demands on their lifestyles than their male counterparts.

Despite the passage of several pieces of legislation (e.g., Title IX, the Civil rights Act, Equal Pay Act and Women's Educational Equity Act) to protect women from employment discrimination, women still lag in every aspect of educational administration (Shakeshaft, 1989; Taylor, 1995; Gupton & Rosario, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). Although some women state that gender discrimination no longer exists, the existence of both overt and covert gender discrimination is still well documented (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008; Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). It may take the form of refusing to hire a woman because of her gender (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010), or it may be rationalized in an indirect way (Shakeshaft, 1989). In the following section, both overt and covert discrimination will be discussed.

Overt gender discrimination. Many studies document the existence of evident gender discrimination against women. In these cases, being a woman was a main issue in interviewing, in being hired, and in working. Female candidates are judged differently than male candidates (Baudoux, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Myer, 2001; Carli & Eagley, 2002). This is particularly true at the secondary level where problems occur not only with selection, but also with encouragement and support, and with the phenomenon of favoritism. A comment from an aspiring school administrator indicates that obvious sex discrimination is practiced against women seeking to occupy educational leadership positions: "Lately, I went through something awful. There was an opening for a Director of Instruction. We got together to talk about our priorities. One of the men principals said that "his only priority was 'gender' and that he did not want women that year" (Baudoux, 1995, p. 72).

The above quote came from a study designed to investigate criteria that indicate systematic discrimination against women. Systematic discrimination can be accomplished by means of criteria that exclude a given social group. The rejection of women applicants could take the form

of favoritism such as giving preferences to candidates who are also members of male-only social clubs. Such discrimination could also occur in situations where experience is a primary qualifier. Usually, men have more impressive job experience because they are usually appointed in temporary administrative positions, unlike female candidates who spend half of their professional life in classrooms. The results of this study reflect that most of the positions are filled without a selection committee meaning that no objection criterion is enforced during the hiring process. This is to men's and not to women's advantage; selection committees discriminate against women, although not in the form of favoritism (Baudoux, 1995).

Thus, as educators climb the institutional ladder, the rate of selection of men over women increase mainly because both school board members and search firms recruiters apparently strongly discriminate against women and frequently screen out female applicants for administrative positions (Logan, 1998; Witmer, 2006). Shakeshaft's studies of male superintendents also found that one reason some men didn't hire women in key positions was that men believed that potential gender tension would be too powerful. For this reason, male administrators clarified that they preferred to work with men, rather than women.

Many studies attributed such evidently discriminatory treatment against women to gender-role stereotyping and misguided perceptions of women's roles, abilities, and skills (Stufft & Coyne, 2009; Johnson, 2011). These gender-role stereotypes create discriminatory practices that exclude women who seek leadership positions and reduce the possibility of career advancement. Gender-role stereotyping is evident when the interview questions posed to a woman, for example, inquire about her husband, children and whether or not her husband is likely to relocate in his career (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Curdova, 2005; Loughheed, 2000, Pirounzia, 2011).

Covert gender discrimination. Gender discrimination plays out in a number of distinct ways that limit women's career advancement, but are not directly traceable to unfair practices (Hughes, 2011). The expression "soft wall of resistance" used in one of the studies (Russell, 1995, p. 131), identified the barriers encountered by women seeking administrative positions in public education to refer to invisible discriminatory practices which work against the career advancement of women. Two of the participants in this study, Janice, a middle manager in public service and Eric, a male high school principal, describe this phenomenon. They talked about the invisible sex discrimination created for women by the assumptions and attitudes of their supervisors who make judgments about their willingness to relocate without consulting them. Moreover, the most subtle example of "covert sexism" is expressed by the participants: "While overt sexism is not seen anymore, it is still there. It's just invisible; nothing has really changed for women. They may get more computer and scientific training, but they do not get preparation to manage these functions" (Russell, 1995, p. 132). They also observed that the sexism of the system itself is of a greater issue than the sexism of individuals. One of the women commented that women feel held back by the lack of acceptance of their different styles of management, while the system may be integrating some features of that style (Russell, 1995).

Women who experience discriminatory treatment are often silent about it. Skrla, Reyes and Scheurich (2000) found that silence proved to be a key topic of conversation during a focus group interview with three superintendent women. The discussion occurred as a part of a qualitative case study designed to investigate how women leaders in education think and perceive gender as a barrier to entering leadership positions. They experienced gender discrimination in the forms of questioned competence, gender-role stereotyping, and even intimidation. Although the participants met all the measures of success as administrators, they

still encountered challenges to their abilities which they attributed to negative perceptions of the female gender. For example, one of the participants, Leslie, stated that people were uncomfortable with having a woman superintendent, and that discomfort resulted in questioning of her leadership skills, she stated: ‘The community members were, I think very concerned that a woman was put in charge. I heard through the grapevine, “we don’t need that... woman telling us what to do” (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000, p. 58).

Another manifestation of gender discrimination according to the participants in this study came in the form of stereotypical expectation from the school board and community. These gender- role stereotypes fell into three categories- perceptions of malleable personalities, assumptions about appropriate activities and expectation of feminine behavior.

Other indicators of gender discrimination encountered by the participants of the study in the superintendency included intimidating tactics and certain behaviors of board and community members. The participants attributed these actions to their femaleness. A phrase they repeated was, “they never would have done that to a man” (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000, p. 61). In spite of this, the women superintendents in this study proceed in their job as if gender was not a factor. They stated their unawareness of gender issues in their work lives and linked this unawareness to inadequate training and preparation. As one woman said: “I went into this not knowing a lot... about gender. I had not really given it a lot of thought, nor the degree of conflict that developed because of it. I never pictured in my mind” (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000, p. 64).

Lack of organizational socialization. Organizational socialization is the process whereby the organization teaches the individual “the ropes, the skills and the knowledge of a particular organizational role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Many studies suggest that women's lack of success in occupying administrative positions in education is due to their limited opportunities for socialization among the aspiring administrative roles. Limited opportunities for socialization within the schools make the transition into administration difficult for women. Hart (1995), for example, found that none of the women who participated in his study received any formal socialization for their roles. Significant role models who can provide exemplary professional examples were absent.

Women aspiring to school administration should receive a special organizational socialization to understand the norms, unwritten and otherwise, of organization (Hart, 1991). This process is very complex and women are required to exert some efforts to understand the organizational dynamic that influence this process. However, this process is very important in the preparation and the advancement of women into senior level and presidential positions (Twombly & Rosser, 2002).

Facilitators to Career Advancement

After identifying the most serious barriers to female advancement, educators can formulate some strategies that are helpful to female administrators and can develop their talents. The strategies which could encourage women to seek administrative positions are often not available in school districts (Hoffman, 1995). However, these strategies depend upon a conceptual approach, a response to full understanding of the inhibitions to women in administration. If one believes in internal barriers, an approach that tries to change the woman is required. On the other hand, if one believes that the barriers are mainly the outcome of the devaluation of women; the strategies for increasing the presentation of women in administration will take a more wide-range perspective than that of one who is working from the view that the woman herself is the problem (Shakeshaft, 1989). Looking at the research, one can find that most of the strategies that have

been used previously are formulated either from individual or organizational perspectives. Very little effort has been made to change larger social contexts. The following describes the strategies that could be used for breaking down the barriers to women's advancement in school administration.

Support system. Women often lack the support and the encouragement in the workplace needed to help them to advance in their career (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Women superintendents and principals who have been successful not only in acquiring an administrative position but also in succeeding in that position maintain that the support in their lives came mainly from their families because they were the people who believed in them most (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). Accordingly, an early strategy was to build in the organizations a system that could help women to find and keep an administrative position (Shakeshaft, 1989).

Experience informs women to seek the support and the encouragement of sponsors and to use mentors to develop in and participate in networks. Support systems can reinforce women's aspirations and provide them with enough mentors, sponsors and advocates who can create beneficial opportunities to develop the administrative skills of whom they advocate and can help them search for open administrative positions.

In a study designed to investigate the direction of the female movement and the sources of strength and support among forty-three school administrators (21 females and 22 males), one of the women stated that having a support system is one of the most important strategies to help women advance in their professional careers. Women perceive themselves as having support systems which are "Collegial "not" backstabbing", as they believe the men's groups tend to be. Mary, one of the participants in the study, stated the necessity of "a very important kind of support, the kind of support you need is having someone who calls to see how you are when they

know you are in the middle of a crisis” (Russell, 1995, p.133). These women seem to know the importance of support systems later in their careers more than their male colleagues.

Sponsorship. Sponsorship is another important factor in increasing women’s advancement opportunities (Bierema, 2005). It is a practice that involves serving as an advocate and supporter for someone else. The sponsor is a well known person who relates effectively to other leaders who have major decision responsibilities that include employment and promotion. Sponsors “have their ears tuned in to opportunities that may surface for promoting someone” (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006, p. 185). These Sponsors make sure that those they support have their names among the candidates who have strengths if the opportunity were offered to that person.

For women who seek administrative positions, acquiring sponsorship may require more investment of their time than for men because it has not been a conditioned practice for women. Having a difficult time developing sponsorship will give a good return for women's investment of their time (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

Sponsors provide women with excellent opportunities to be socialized regarding the position they seek. They are people who know how to develop effective relationships with senior leaders in the system, connect women to career opportunities, increase their visibility, advocate to their next promotion (Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2010).

Mentoring. The term mentoring is defined as guidance training and one-on-one counseling that can be either formal or informal (Witmer, 2006). The mentor is usually a more experienced person who aids the career advancement and socialization process of those who are less experienced (Pence, 1995; Witmer, 2006).

While the concept of mentoring is not new, it received little attention until the 1970s, except in connection with men in the “old boys’ network”. It was then that organizations began

to use mentorship to help guide women to executive ranks (Pence, 1995). Mentoring has become an important focus in women's career paths and more applicants to administrative positions are seeking mentors. Administrative positions have become highly competitive and more aspirants are seeking an edge in the job market; mentoring provides that edge (Witmer, 2006).

Research has shown that mentors are critical to the career advancement of women (Anderson, 2005; Bower, 2009; Ellen, 2010). An experienced mentor capable of giving advice, visibility, integration, and socialization is a major factor in helping women advance their careers towards administrative positions and thus influence decision making and policy (Tack & Flanagan, 2001; Twombly & Rosser, 2002; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Witmer, 2006). Mentors negotiate and discuss job opportunities and provide some job shadowing and a model (Wisker, 1996). Sometimes mentoring programs involve women and men in senior positions who mentor young employees seeking to occupy administrative positions.

A study was designed to ask those women in possession of administrative certificates about their career pathways and the function of mentors in Pennsylvania school districts. The participants stated that career mentoring had been critical to their career advancement. Moreover, they mentioned that the top five functions of mentorship are support and encouragement, enhancement of participants, self-confidence, friendship (psychologically), sponsorship and the providing valuable career information (Pavan, 1987).

Sally, a protégé in an Oregon mentorship shared her view of the program's importance:

“You can read about leadership, until you're blue in the face, but to try to go out and do it is another thing. I mean you've got to have that transfer. I do not think it happens naturally. I think just because you know something in a book does not mean you have to go out and make it happen” (Erickson & Pitner, 1980 as cited in Pence, 1995).

Networking. Until the 1980s, networking was a biological term; today, networking has a strong hold on our institutional vocabulary. Prior to the use of networking as a term to define a support system, there was the phrase “Old Boys’ Club”. While the meaning of networking and the Old Boy’s Club is similar, a network implies a broader concept than the OBC, and a network is not limited to a male support system.

Network and OBC are a set of relationships within such systems which allows an individual to move from a one-on-one partnership to a group of collaborators and to access information not otherwise available. The main goal of networking is the use of one another’s resources and the driving force for the connections not just taking but giving as well and presenting ways that enable all participants to support, guide, and trust each other (Witmer, 2006).

Networking should be a continuous personal and professional goal, especially for women in education. While it is significant to maintain communications with one’s peers, it is even more important to those who aspire to occupy administrative roles, to develop communication beyond those in higher ranks, and to recognize disciplines different from one’s primary expertise. The idea is to create a professional setting where women can demonstrate and develop their talents and skills (Geupton & Rosairo, 1998).

Networking can be either formal or informal. The formal network in an educational system is its organizational chain. Everyone within knows the hierarchy depicting who occupies what position in relation to everyone else and relationships can be generated. However, the informal network is composed of various people. The informal network provides the links among these people. It may not be obvious to understand, but it is behind most of the major decisions in any organization.

Research has documented these relationships as one of the most significant strategies for women aspiring to hold administrative positions, become school administrators or meet the needs of other women with similar interests (Hoffman, 1995; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sageria & Rychen, 2002; Donnelon & Langowitz, 2009). For instance, Janell Chung wanted to develop her ability to demonstrate her competencies regarding educational administrative standards. At that time, it was difficult for her to apply to any administrative position in her school district. Thus, she decided to develop a network with her peers and the principal who was her advisor. She commended her principal for the opportunities he has given to her to grow and learn and practice most of her administrative skills. She then applied to the principal position that was open in her school district. To her surprise, she was hired (Dana and Bourisaw, 2006).

A number of studies indicate that there are obvious differences between the “Old Boys” network and women’s network. The system of men’s network has three main characteristics: it is unconscious, informal, and private (Schmuck, 1986). Men usually do not make conscious decisions about whether or not to join networks to communicate. However, women’s strategies have none of these characteristics. Women growing up often do not absorb the lesson that they need one another. For women to network, they must consciously maintain that 1) I am a woman 2) I am a woman who must connect myself to other women. For this reason, women’s networking organizations struggle: due to members’ ambivalence about identification with women’s groups. Women who occupy the top positions disassociate themselves from women’s networks (Schmuck, 1986; Funk, 2006). This may be because “some women administrators, because they work in a male dominated environment, are reluctant to join networks of women” (Tripses, 2002, p. 2). This is why women’s networks are smaller and explains why women are underrepresented in managerial roles (Russell, 1955).

Moreover, unlike women's networks, men join openly to advance their careers. For men, knowing people who hold power and network with other people for what they do rather than for what they are is very important. Men tend to nurture their networks through casual socializing or through shared sporting activities such as golf.

Finally, networking has value as a form of support. Women should request networking opportunities if their institution does not offer it, use it, and be ready in turn to provide similar support to guide and help future "rookies" once they are established within the organization (Tack & Flanagan, 2001, p. 172).

Chapter 3

Methodology

While there is overwhelming literature addressing women's perceptions of barriers and facilitators to career advancement in educational administration (Tripses, 1980; Adkison, 1981; Hofrek, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1989; Hoffman, 1995; Russell, 1995; Alson, 1996; Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000), most of these studies have been conducted using either a qualitative or a quantitative method. This study moves beyond this and uses a mixed-method design, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. It captures the best of quantitative and qualitative data to have a better understanding of the research problems than either method by itself (Creswell, 2008, p.552). This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, research questions, and provides a detailed description of its mixed methods design. It also explains the data collection procedures and the data collection analysis.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women administrators occupying top-level positions, entry-level positions and non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. In order to understand the perceptions among women occupying administrative and non-administrative positions, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry – level positions, and those in non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement in rural school districts?

2. What are the perceptions of the women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry – level positions, and those in non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement in urban school district?
3. Are there any differences in the perceptions of women regarding the nature of these barriers between the rural and the urban school districts?
4. What are the perceptions of women administrators and non-administrators regarding the facilitators that can overcome these barriers in rural school districts?
5. What are the perceptions of the women administrators and non – administrators regarding the facilitators that can be followed to overcome these barriers in urban school districts?
6. Are there any differences in the perceptions of women between both rural and urban school districts concerning the nature of these facilitators?

Design of the Study

Taking into consideration the purpose of the study, the researcher decided that the best design in order to conduct this study is a mixed-method design. Methodologists, e.g., Onwuebuji (2007), Taskakkori and Teddlie (2003) have devoted a great deal of attention to classifying the different types of mixed methods designs. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) have summarized all of these classifications. They stated that the four major types of mixed methods designs are the Triangulation Design, the Embedded Design, the Explanatory Design, and the Exploratory Design.

Based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2007), the best mixed-method design to use in order to address the study's purpose is the Explanatory Design. In this study, the researcher needs qualitative data to explain the significant results of the quantitative component of the study. The Explanatory Design is a two-phase mixed method design, starting with the collection and

analysis of quantitative data. This first phase will be followed by a subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The two components are then integrated during the interpretation stage of the study. The overall purpose of the explanatory design is that “qualitative results help to explain, interpret, and examine the findings of the quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2002).

The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire administered to the census of women administrators and a sample of high school teachers (non-administrative positions) in public school districts in central Pennsylvania. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items developed by the researcher to examine the respondents’ perceptions regarding the barriers as well as the facilitators to career advancement. It also included some items intended to collect some demographic and professional information from the study’s participants (See Appendix A). The qualitative component of the study consisted of one-on-one interviews with a sample of women administrators occupying top-level positions and entry-level administrative positions and a sub-sample of those teachers surveyed. The interviewees were selected based on their significant responses to the survey questions. For example, interviews were conducted with teachers who gave some consideration to moving into an administrative position in education. The interviews were conducted in order to better understand how women occupying administrative and non-administrative positions perceive career advancement in their field. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were guided by a set of questions (See Appendices C, D, E, and F).

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was women administrators occupying top-level positions (i.e. superintendents and high school principals), those occupying entry- level positions

(i.e. assistant superintendents and assistant high school principals, and those in non-administrative positions (i.e. high school teachers) in central Pennsylvania. The researcher “sampled” the teachers and “censused” the administrators. The sample survey gathered responses from the women in both rural and urban school districts. The researcher found that there are 22 counties located in central Pennsylvania. Based on a list provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the study involved a census of 104 women administrators within the counties of central PA as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Women Administrators and teachers in Urban and Rural Public School Districts in Central Pennsylvania

No. of women administrators (104)		Women administrators				Teachers
Urban	Rural	Top-level positions		Entry-level positions		
		Superintendents	Principals	Assistant superintendents	Assistant Principals	
O 58*	Δ46*	O 17 Δ 5	O 11 Δ 14	O 23 Δ 7	O 17 Δ 10	O 57 Δ 44

*Note. Urban school districts= O and rural school districts= Δ

Using a list of the high school teachers provided by public school districts in central Pennsylvania, the researcher found that the high school teachers totaled 700. The study involved a random sample of women from this pool. The random sample was determined by the size of the census, based on a formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Because the total number of the population of high school teachers in central Pennsylvania was 700, a total

number of 255 teachers was needed to have a representative sample of the population in order to be able to generalize the results to the entire population.

Data Collection Procedures

On the survey, the participants were asked if they are willing to participate in a focused interview in order to interpret or elaborate on some of their responses. Based on the quantitative results, the researcher used a purposeful sample to select from those who were willing to participate in the interviews and help explain the significant quantitative results.

Step 1: permission from The Pennsylvania State University. In order to distribute the questionnaires among the study's targeted population, the researcher obtained permission from Office for Research Protections.

Step 2: design and development of the instruments. The second step included the design and the development of the two instruments used for the data collection. Based on the study's research questions and the related literature, the researcher designed the questionnaire and the interview protocols (See Appendices A, C, D, E and F).

Step 3: questionnaires. The questionnaire was administered to a census of 104 women administrators and a sample of 225 high school teachers in both rural and urban school districts in central Pennsylvania. The invitation email explained the main purpose of the study. It served to convey to the participants that the survey was important and that their accurate and honest responses were critical to the success of the study. Confidentiality was assured. Respondents received a brief summary of the results in order to reward them for their participation. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the first section utilized a likert-type response scale to provide the participants with 30 statements to enhance our understanding of the barriers (e.g., isolation, lack of motivation on the part of women, conflict between work and family roles, fear

of failing upon occupying the administrative roles, lack of organizational socialization into the aspiring administrative positions, and gendered- structured society) and facilitators (e.g., sponsorship, networking , training, mentoring and community, school and family support systems) to career advancement. The respondents were asked to prioritize these statements on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The second section of the questionnaire solicited information concerning the personal and professional characteristics of the participants,

The survey was pre-tested on a convenience sample consisting of two superintendents, two principals, two assistant superintendents, two assistant principals and four teachers. They were asked to record any comments, errors, and any other indicators of potential problems during completion of the survey (to be used to frame follow up questions). They were also asked to comment on the length of the survey specifically, how long it took them to complete the survey. The sample reported that the instructions were clear. They had no suggestions to improve the survey. The response time ranged from one to two days.

The researcher sent an online pre-notification for the participants. Using Survey Monkey, the questionnaires were sent to the participants electronically via email addresses.

Step 4:one-on-one interviews. Based on the analysis of the quantitative data, the researcher selected a sample of women administrators and a sub-sample of non-administrative women (high school teachers) for the interviews. The purpose of conducting these interviews is to interpret and build upon the quantitative data results. The procedures for the interview data collection were as follows:

1. Identified the interviewees: participants selected for inclusion in the sample were based mainly on their responses to the survey questions as well as their willingness to help interpret the quantitative data.

2. Contacted the interviewees to schedule in person interviews at the participants' place of employment.
3. Reviewed the study's objective with the interviewees during the interview.
4. Obtained permission from the participants to make an audio recording of the questions and responses.
5. Developed an interview protocol for structuring the interview and taking careful notes. The interview protocol contains the questions to be asked and space to notate responses from the interviewee.
6. Looked for example during the interviews that can enhance understanding of the barriers and the facilitators encountered by women. They will help the researcher to explain the nature of the barriers, how salient each barrier is for preventing women from entering public school administration in both rural and urban school districts, and what are the survival strategies that may help other women seeking to occupy administrative positions in education.
7. Used probes under each question to elicit more information from the participants.
8. Thanked the participants for their time and cooperation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis. In order to address the research questions, the researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data collected from the survey. Upon the return of the completed questionnaires, the researcher selected a computer program in order to analyze the data. The statistical package used for the data analysis was SPSS student version 17.0. After selecting the statistics software program, the researcher input the data from the questionnaires into the computer program. The

researcher then cleaned and assessed the database for any missing data. Once the data was prepared and organized, the researcher analyzed it using the following types of statistical analysis:

Descriptive statistics. In order to investigate the perceptions of women regarding their career advancement, descriptive statistics were used. Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviation) were used to indicate the overall tendencies in the data, provide explorations for any variations in the scores, and compare the stance of each score with others (Creswell, 2008).

Inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze descriptive questions. On comparing the perceptions of women between rural and urban school districts, inferential statistics was used. Chi-square was used to investigate the differences in the perceptions of the women

Validity and reliability. The survey was reviewed for content validity and approved by an expert panel. Because there are two constructs assessed using a summated likert score, it was important to examine the internal consistency of these scores. Cronbach's alpha (α) provides a good indicator of internal consistency (Black, 1999). It is also a reasonable indicator of reliability for homogenous sections of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha of the results of the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS version 17.0. The standardized item alphas reveal that all survey questions had values above .7 which is identified as acceptable by Issac and Michael (1996).

Volunteer bias. Participants who volunteered for my research investigation may differ on particular characteristics from non-volunteers. The non-volunteers for my study may have had decent career advancement. They might not be worried about their

job advancement at all or they might not have given any consideration to moving up in their career. The reason that I may not have received a representative sample of the teachers is that most of the non-volunteer teachers are not aspiring to climb the administrative ladder or even if they are considering it, they do not have time to participate in my study. I received some email messages politely declining to participate due to current enrollment in similar studies, but they are currently participating in similar studies and lack of time to complete any others.

Qualitative data analysis. The researcher began with a full description of my personal experiences with the phenomenon under scrutiny in order to focus solely on the participants in the study. Once the interviews were completed, the researcher performed a phenomenological interview analysis and presentation. In the first level of my analysis, the data was transcribed by converting the audio tape recording into text data. This first step helped collect a general sense of the data. In the second level of the phenomenological analysis, each interview transcript was coded and read several times in order to develop a list of “significant sentences” about the participants’ experiences. This step is often called horizontalization of the data. Next, I developed what Creswell calls (2007) “clusters of meaning” from these significant sentences into general and unique themes.

Thematic development was critical to answer research questions and understand in depth the research problem. This level of analysis was the beginning of a more detailed analysis (Cope, 2005). In the third level of analysis, I used the significant quotes to develop a “textural description” of the barriers and facilitators to career advancement, and a “structural description”. Finally, I wrote what Creswell calls (2007) composite

description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. This passage represents the ultimate aspect of the phenomenological aspect of the study. “It tells the reader what the phenomenon the participants experienced the phenomenon and how they experienced it” (Creswell, 2007, p.159).

Verification and validity concerns. First, how do I know if what the women said is accurate or not? I relied on triangulation of methods to address the threat of self-report bias. I compared questionnaires with personal interviews in order to provide corroborating evidence.

Second, how do I know if I am biased toward the participants’ data?

I relied on member checking to deal with the validity threat of this concern. Member checking is one of the most common techniques for establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is also one of the most validated strategies in qualitative research. I took my analysis back to the participants in order to evaluate the accuracy of my analysis. Moreover, from the outset of the analysis, I clarified the biases that might impact the phenomenon under study.

Ethical Concerns

First of all, the risks were avoided with this research. I assured the participants they would not be troubled because of their participation in the study. This commitment is included into the consent forms. I bind myself to respect the confidentiality of the participants. In addition, the researcher disguised the identity of the participants. The records of data are reserved in a way consistent with the sociological standards codes of ethics.

Chapter 4

Quantitative Results

This study examined the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions and those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative position in both rural and urban school districts in central Pennsylvania. There has been extensive research and literature addressing the obstructions to female advancement. However, no effort was made to distinguish between perceptions of women occupying administrative and non administrative positions regarding the nature of these barriers and enablers to career advancement between the rural and the urban school districts. In addition, most of these studies have been conducted using either a qualitative or a quantitative method. This study uses a mixed methods design which captures the best of quantitative and qualitative data to have a better understanding of the research questions.

In the first section of this chapter response rates are analyzed at the administrators and the teachers' levels. In the second section, demographic information of respondents is examined. Lastly, in the final section statistical analyses of the quantitative data set are presented. The data analysis was completed using SPSS (Statistical package for the social sciences, version 17.0). The analysis includes descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.

Profile of Study Participants

In the first section of the questionnaire (questions 1 – 7), the administrators were asked about demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, profession, education level, experience, and membership to professional organizations. Teachers were also asked to provide the same information about their demographic characteristics. It was found that 67% of the administrators surveyed worked in urban school districts and 32% worked in rural school

districts. In the urban school districts, 30% of the administrators surveyed reported being superintendents, 30% reported being assistant superintendents, 15% reported being principals, and another 15% also reported being assistant principals. Furthermore, 67% of the administrators reported having doctorate degrees and 33% reported having master degrees. In rural districts, 4% percent of the administrators surveyed reported being superintendents, 20% percent reported being assistant superintendents, 40 % percent reported being principals and 36% percent also reported being assistant principals. In the same category, 62% of the administrators surveyed in rural districts reported having master degrees and 38% of the administrators surveyed reported having doctorate degrees. Sixty three percent of the administrators surveyed in urban school districts reported being married, while 61% of the administrators surveyed in rural school districts admitted to having spouses. Overall, most of the administrators occupying top-level positions in both rural and urban school districts are single. However, the majority of the administrators surveyed reported having children. Fifty nine percent of those who reported having children worked in urban school districts and 61% in rural school districts as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency Distributions of Administrators' Demographics from Urban and Rural Public School Districts Based on Urban (n= 32) and Rural (n=26)

Variable	Urban	Rural
	55.17 %	44.82%
Current marital status		
Married	32.75%	25.86%
Not married	22.41%	18.96%
Have children		
Yes	19%	22.41%
No	36.20%	22.41%
Highest education level		
Bachelor	-----	1.72%
Master	25.86%	18.96%
Doctorate	29.31%	24.13%
Membership in professional organization	100%	100%
Position		
Assistant principals and assistant superintendents	25.86%	24.13%
Superintendents and principals	29.31%	20.71%

Sixty-three percent of the teachers surveyed taught in urban schools and the remaining 37% belonged to rural schools. The majority of the teachers surveyed are married; 74% of them work in rural districts and 70% in urban school districts. Fifty one percent of the teachers surveyed in urban schools reported not having children and 67% of the teachers surveyed in rural schools reported having children. Interestingly, the majority of the teachers in these districts had not given any consideration to advancing into administrative positions, although most of them are members of professional organizations (ninety percent in urban school districts and ninety-nine percent in rural school districts), and hold master degrees (seventy percent in rural school districts and sixty-nine percent in urban school districts) as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Frequency Distributions of Teachers' Demographics from Urban and Rural Public School districts Based on Urban (n=57) and Rural (n=44)

Variable	Urban	Rural
	56.43%	43.56%
Current marital status		
Married	36.63%	33.7%
Not married	20%	10%
Have children		
Yes	34.7%	25.7%
No	21.8%	17.8%
Highest education level		
Bachelor	16.8%	13.9%
Master		
Doctorate	39.6%	27.8%
Membership of professional organization		
Belong to a professional organization	90%	99%
Do not belong to professional organization	10%	1%
Consideration of moving into administrative positions	63%	30%

Survey Response Rates Survey

Survey response rates are presented at the total sample level. These rates are examined across the employee groupings of administrators and teachers. A summary of the response rates is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Response Rates to the Survey by the Administrators and the Teachers from Urban and Rural School Districts

Analytical Grouping	Total population of the employees	Sample total	Sample as percentage of population	Surveys returned	Survey returned as percentage of total population	Survey returned as percentage of total sample
Administrators	104	104	100%	58	55.77%	55.77%
Teachers	700	250	35.7%	101	14.42%	40.4%

An examination of Table 4 reveals that the study involved a census of 104 women occupying administrative positions in public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Out of the surveys sent electronically, a total of 58 were returned, which represents 55.76% of the population total. The table also reveals that the number of high school teachers is 700. Of this number, 250 teachers were randomly selected to receive the survey electronically. Of the surveys sent, a total of 101 were returned, which represents 14.42% of the population total and 40.4 % of the sample total.

Women's Perceptions of Barriers at All Job Levels in Rural School Districts

The first category of questioning was as follows: What are the perceptions of women administrators occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry level positions and those in non administrative positions?

Under this section, women occupying top-level positions, entry-level positions and non administrative positions had been asked to report on eighteen statements where they had to rate their perceptions regarding the challenges facing women today as they plan their career advancement in their rural school settings. Respondents were asked to rate each of the barriers using a five point, likert- type scale. The respondents were then asked to prioritize these statements on a scale of one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

The responses to the 18 items were totaled and descriptive statistics for the women's perceptions of the barriers to their career advancement in rural school districts were calculated and are presented in Table 6 below. Entry-level positions (assistant superintendents and assistant principals participants) (M= 3.23), top-level positions (M= 2.90), and teachers (M= 2.48). It is noteworthy to indicate that teachers showed slightly lower means in their perceptions than the women occupying administrative positions.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Barriers in Rural Public School Districts

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. error
Barrier score	Assistant principal and assistant superintendent	13	3.2	.80	.22
	Superintendent and principal	10	2.9	.91	.29

Teachers	40	2.5	.80	.1
Total	63	2.9	.81	.10

The descriptive distributions for the eighteen items representing the barriers to women's career advancement in rural school districts (Appendix B) reveal the responses to the items: women do not have support from the large community outside the school setting (teachers (62.5%), top- level administrators (60.0%), entry-level positions (53.9%)); women struggle to balance personal and professional lives (top –level positions (80.0%), entry- level positions (76.9%), and teachers (77.0%)); women are overloaded with professional and personal commitments (top-level positions (70.0%) , entry-level positions (84.8%), teachers (77.5%)); there are cultural and social expectations regarding female responsibilities (top-level positions (90.0%), entry-level positions (84.1%), teachers (77.5%)); selection strategies for job advancement favor men over women (top-level positions (60.0%), entry- level positions (61.7%), and teachers (50.0%)); and our society has misguided perceptions of women's roles, (top-level positions (50.0%), entry-level positions (69.2%), and teachers (50.0%)). The issue listed appeared to be the most common barriers facing women today as they plan their career advancement in their rural school district. The responses to these questions had the most uniform response distribution across all positions in the rural school settings for the “agree” and “strongly agree” responses combined.

However, the responses to the following statements: women do not aspire to occupy administrative positions (top-level positions (80.0%), entry-level positions (69.3%), and teachers (83.3%)); women have a fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions (top- level positions (100%), entry-level positions (84.6%), and teachers (62.5%)); women have limited opportunities for socialization into the aspiring administrative roles (top-level positions

(70.0%), entry- level positions (61.5%), and teachers (55.0%)) indicated that the participants “strongly disagree” or “disagree” that the above items are not barriers to their career advancement in the rural school settings. Unlike the teachers, women occupying top-level positions and entry- level administrative positions in the rural school settings agree or strongly agree that women have limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills (top level positions (60.0%), entry-Level positions (53.2%), and teachers (14.3%)), and women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities (top-level positions (45%), entry-level positions (64.8%), and teachers (12.5%)).

To conclude, assistant superintendents and assistant principals in the rural school settings believe that there are limited opportunities for women to be included in work activities, women feel isolated in the school setting and job promotional policies favor men over women teachers, principals, and superintendents were less supportive that the above items are barriers to their career advancement.

Women’s perceptions of Barriers at all Job levels in Urban School Districts

The second research question examined the perceptions of women occupying top level positions, those occupying entry level positions, and those in the non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement in urban school districts. 18 items were used to measure these perceptions. The responses to those 18 areas were also totaled and descriptive statistics is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Barriers in Urban School Districts

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Barrier score	Assistant Principal and assistant superintendent	16	2.80	.88	.22
	Superintendent and principal	13	3.0	.87	.24
	Teachers	56	2.71	.50	.067
	Total	85	2.77	.64	.070

Table 6 summarizes scores by the position of the respondents. Although women occupying top-level administrative positions scored high (M=3.00) and on average they were neutral on their responses to the barrier items, the data supports the conclusion that assistant principals, assistant superintends (M=2.7), and those in non-administrative positions (M=2.7) are less likely to be neutral than those in the top level positions.

The descriptive distributions for the 18 items representing the barriers to women's career advancement in urban school districts (Appendix B) indicates the following responses: women struggle to balance personal responsibilities and professional life (top-level positions (71.4), entry-level positions (58.8%), and teachers (71.9 %)); women are overloaded with professional and personal commitments (top-level positions (71.4%), entry-level positions (48.1%), and teachers (77.2%)); there are cultural and social expectations regarding female responsibilities (top-level positions (85.7%), entry-level positions (88.3 %), and teachers (92.9%)); society has misguided perceptions of Women's roles (top-level positions (51.0%), entry-level positions (52.9%), and teachers (58.9%)). These results appear to be the most common barriers facing women as they plan their career advancement in the urban school setting. However, the

responses to the statements that women have limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills (top-level positions (64.3%), entry-level position (75.6%), and teachers (85%)); there are limited opportunities for women to be included in work social activities (top level positions (57.1%), entry-level positions (58.8%), and teachers (76.7%)); women do not aspire to occupy administrative positions (top-level positions (77.9%), entry-level positions (81.3%), and teachers (81.7%)); women have a fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions (top-level positions (70.2%), entry –level positions (87.5%), and teachers (68.3%)) and finally that; school peers do not support women to occupy administrative positions (top-level positions (70.2%), entry-level positions (68.8%), and teachers (81.7%)) indicated that the participants strongly disagree or disagree that the above items are no longer barriers to the women’s career advancement in the urban school setting. Therefore, this portion of study concludes that gender discrimination is still prevalent in today’s work environment.

Unlike the assistant superintendents and assistant principals in the urban setting who believe that women do not have support from the community outside the school setting, teachers, principals, and superintendents were less supportive of the above item as a barrier to their job advancement. Moreover, while the superintendents and the principals disagree that the society forces women to endure the brunt of career, both the teachers, the assistant principals, and the assistant superintendents believe that the above situation is a challenge to their career advancement in the urban school setting.

Finally, while the women occupying both the administrative and the non-administrative positions disagree or strongly disagree that promotional policies favor men over women, and doesn’t make sense for either argument for or against, they are neutral about whether selection strategies for job advancements favor men over women and whether there are still social

attitudes that suggest that women lack administrative skills are still barriers to the women's career advancement in the urban school setting.

Although there are some dramatic differences in the perceptions of upper level women administrators, women occupying entry-level positions, and those in non-administrative positions regarding the barriers to career advancement between the rural and urban school districts, the third group of questions focused on examining whether or not those differences are statistically significant. Are there any differences in perceptions of women regarding nature of the barriers to career advancement between the rural and urban school districts?

Table 7

Results of an Analysis of Variance Comparing Women from Rural vs. Urban School Districts on Work Related Barriers

		Sum of				
		squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Barriers score	Between groups	.90	1	.90	1.60	.210
	Within groups	78.29	.150	.529		
	Total	78.18	.150			

The one-way analysis of variance results are summarized in Table 7. The average amount of difference between group means relative to the average amount of variance within each group resulted in an $F = 1.691$ statistical significance ($p = 0.210$) indicating that the differences are not statistically significant between the rural and urban school districts regarding the barriers facing women today as they plan their career advancement.

Women's perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators at all Job levels in Rural Public School

Districts

The fourth question examined the perceptions of three subject categories regarding the facilitators to career advancement in the rural setting, 12 items were used to measure these perceptions. The responses to the items and descriptive statistics were calculated in Table 8.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators in Rural Public School Districts

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Strategy score	Assistant principal and assistant superintendent	13	3.98	.33	.092
	Superintendent and principal	10	3.80	.26	.084
	Teachers	40	3.92	.42	.068
	Total	63	3.91	.39	.049

Table 8 summarizes scores for the facilitators to career advancement by position of the respondent. The data supports the overall conclusion that women occupying top-level positions, superintendents and principals ($M=3.97$, $SD=0.33$), entry-level positions ($M=3.80$, $SD=0.266$), and teachers ($M=3.92$, $SD=0.42$) generally agree on most facilitators. An examination of the distributions for the twelve responses (Appendix B) indicate that the respondents agree that the included strategies help women seeking to occupy administrative positions in the rural school setting. However, although almost all respondents agree or strongly agree that women should communicate with male networks (top level positions (80%), entry level position (82.34%) and

non-administrative positions (65%)); they disagree that male networks are more effective than women, top level position (50%). Entry level position (61.6%) and non-administrative position (77.5%). Furthermore, unlike the women occupying entry-level positions and those in the non-administrative (84.04%) positions, women occupying top level positions (30.01%) were less supportive of the idea that the workplace should help women advance their careers.

Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators at All Job Levels in Urban School Districts

The fifth question also examined the women's perceptions regarding the facilitators to their career advancement in urban school districts. Table 9 summarizes scores for the facilitators by position of the respondents in urban school settings. The scores indicates that while the women occupying entry- level positions scored $M=3.92$, $SD = .39$ and teachers scored $M = 3.88$, women occupying top- level positions should slightly lower scores ($M=3.60$, $SD = .35$).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators in Urban Public School Districts

	N	Mean	Std Deviation	Std. Error
Strategy score Assistant principal and assistant superintendent	16	3.93	.36	.088
Superintendent and principal	13	3.7	.40	.108
Teachers	56	3.9	.32	.04
Total	85	3.88	.33	.037

An examination of the distributions for the 12 survey questions representing women's perceptions of the facilitators to their career advancement in rural public school districts

(Appendix B) reveals that the respondents agree that most of the proponents are helpful for women seeking to occupy administrative positions. However, women occupying top level positions are less certain that the workplace should help women find an administrative position; they disagree that the workplace should help women who are interested to find an administrative position.

The last category examines the significance of the differences in the perceptions of women between both the rural and urban school districts concerning the enablers to career advancement

Table 10

Results of an Analysis of Variance Comparing Women from Rural vs. Urban School Districts on Work- Related Facilitators

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Strategy score	Between groups	.048	1	.048	.371	.54
	Within groups	19.09	.148	.130		
	Total	19.1	.148			

The one-way analysis of variance results as shown in Table10 reveal that the average amount of difference between group means relative to the average amount of variance within each group equals $F = .371$ with statistical significance ($p = 0.544$). Therefore, the researcher can conclude that there are no statistical differences between the rural and urban school districts regarding the facilitators to career advancement.

Discussion

The quantitative results provide important additions to current literature in terms of understanding the barriers and the facilitators to upward mobility of women occupying top-level, entry-level and non-administrative positions in public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Much of the literature focuses on examining the restraints to and the promoters to upward mobility in general, regardless of the school setting. However, the data from this study indicates the nature of the barriers, and how salient each barrier is in preventing women from occupying administrative positions in both rural and urban school settings respectively.

First, the researcher found that the main factor given by women in public education in both school settings in prohibiting forward advancement is role conflict. This finding is consistent with much of the prior research regarding the continued scarcity of women in top administration in United States. Research supports a history of limited opportunities of career advancement for women with families; due to competing demands between the professional and mothering roles cannot be manipulated. According to Grogan (1996) documented that while 92 % of male principals have spouses, only 59% of female principals are married. Women who often struggle to succeed as employees in the school setting might be influenced by personal conflicts. Inversely, women who do succeed in these positions sacrifice their personal lives in order to do so. Job advancement requires women to make work a priority over their other responsibilities. This is an accepted practice for men on their wives to handle household chores and provide them with psychological and emotional support. Women, on the other hand, felt so bound by the discourses of partnering, mothering and homemaking that all other considerations became subordinated to it (Grogan, 1996).

Second, the researcher found that women's lack of success in occupying administrative positions is no longer due to a lack of inspiration or confidence on the part of women. This finding contradicts the reports of some other writers (e.g., Pigford & Tannsen, 1996) who documented that women's fear of failing in administrative positions is one of the internal barriers that restrict women's access to the administrative level. While men enter teaching with the intention of occupying administrative positions quickly, women are less likely to do so. Previous research documented while that 51 % of beginning male teachers expressed a desire to be school administrators, only 9 % of the single women, 8 % of the married women and 19 % of the widowed, separated and divorced women expressed similar aspirations. Shakeshaft (1989), on the other hand indicated that it is not women's lack of inspiration, but organizational structure that limits the opportunities of women. In her five-year study of Industrial Supply Corporation, Kanter (1996) found that because female have limited opportunities to advance into upward administrative positions, they reflect their unfortunate situation in the form of depressed aspirations. Men teachers, on the other hand, have many opportunities to move up and consequently tend to have higher aspirations (Kanter, 1996). The results in this study indicated that women occupying administrative and non-administrative positions in both rural and urban school settings agree that women do aspire to these positions and women do not have a fear of failing, but it is the lack of opportunity and the reality of a world that forces women to endure full responsibilities both home and work live that prevents them from occupying key administrative positions, regardless of the school settings.

Third, the researcher found that while women in rural school settings believe that a lack of support from the rural community is one of the factors in not moving up into upward higher positions, women in urban school settings were inclined to disagree that the above situation is

still a prevalent barrier the career advancement in the urban school setting. More precisely, women from urban backgrounds stated that they receive more support from their surrounding communities. This finding is consistent with much of the prior research (e.g., Sherman, 2000). Previous studies found that women who moved into administrative positions or intended to occupy top level administrative positions in rural school setting from nearby communities found it difficult to gain community support and often report feelings of isolation and marginalization. As one woman described it “I will always be away, even though I have been here over ten years” (Susan, 1998, p. 9).

Fourth, the results indicated that while women in rural school settings believe that selection strategies for job advancement and upward mobility favor men over women, women in urban school settings were neutral regarding this topic. Given this disagreement, this finding is only partially consistent with most of the prior studies (e.g., Estler, 1985; Adkison, 1981; Grogan, 1999; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000), which documented that gender discrimination is still the barrier that was identified in the largest body of research. Although women sometimes state that gender discrimination no longer exists, the existence of it is still well-documented. However, the educational administration profession is largely silent on about the issue of discrimination that these women face. In their qualitative case study, Skrla, Reyes, and Scheurich (2000), the superintendents who participated in the study stated that educational administration is a profession in which the concerns of women superintendents about discriminatory treatment were not addressed nor even heard” (p. 64).

Moreover, women occupying top and entry-level administrative positions in rural school settings believe women still have limited opportunities to represent themselves, unlike women occupying the same administrative positions in urban school settings who were less supportive of

this belief. More women in urban environments did not find these limitations to career advancement in their work place. Also, unlike rural school settings, women occupying entry-level administrative positions in urban school settings disagree that limited relocation ability due to personal responsibilities particularly responsibilities to her partner is a constraint to career advancement. This finding contradicts Grogan's case study which documented that it is always woman who should satisfy the employment needs of her husband. As one woman described it in Grogan's case study on the voices of women aspiring to the superintendency: "I would not go to another district, unless there was something for (my husband)" (Grogan, 1996).

Unlike women occupying administrative positions, women teachers tended to disagree were less supportive that the following scenarios: women have limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills, women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities, women have limited opportunities for socialization, women often feel isolated in the school settings are still restraints to upward mobility. This disparity may be related to the fact that most of the female teachers in this study have not given consideration of moving into administrative positions.

In general, the results revealed that the most effective strategies for breaking down the obstacles to women's advancement in school administration involved family support, sponsorship, mentoring and networking. However, unlike the women occupying entry-level positions and those in the non-administrative positions, woman principals and superintendents in both rural and urban school settings in general were less supportive that the workplace should support women in acquiring of administrative roles in education. This finding is consistent with most of the prior studies. According to Dana and Bourisaw (2006) women superintendents and principals who have been successful not only in acquiring an administrative position, but also in

succeeding in that position maintained that their support came mainly from their families, as they were the people who believed in them most.

Finally, women occupying top-level positions in urban school setting in particular were less supportive that sponsorship and mentoring programs that involve males as a means of enabling women to occupy administrative positions. Previous studies, however, have documented that there is a strong opinion expressed by the participants that women seeking to occupy administrative positions need sponsors and mentoring programs that involve both male and female mentors (Witmer, 2006; Flanagan, 2001; Twombly & Rosser, 2002; Hewlett, 2010). Sponsors and mentors provide women with excellent opportunities to be socialized in the fields they wish to enter. Research has shown that tools such as these are critical to the career advancement of women (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Witmer, 2006; Flanagan, 2001; Twombly & Rosser, 2002). One major reason for their success in assisting women stems from negotiation and discussion of job opportunities (Wisker, 1996). To clarify, the disparity between my findings, and others, may be related to the fact I used a quantitative approach, whereas most of these previous studies have relied on qualitative methods approach.

Chapter 5

Qualitative Results

This chapter summarizes the findings from interviews with 24 women in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. The following section provides an overview description of the participants. Based on the explanatory mixed method design, this chapter is constructed to follow the quantitative component. In other words, the overall purpose of this chapter is to examine, explain and refine the results of the quantitative data. This refinement will result in “probing key results in more detail” (Creswell, 2008, p. 560). Based on the findings of the quantitative data, this chapter provides a descriptive account of the barriers and facilitators to career advancement which have been identified by women in top-level, entry-level, and non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania.

Description of the Participants

The personal and professional information about the women who participated in this study is derived from the participants’ demographic section included in the survey and is described in a way that reveals patterns with the groups rather than individual descriptions. This information omits the biographic information of the participants as a means of protecting their anonymity.

The women in the qualitative component of the study ranged from twenty-nine to sixty-one years of age. Seven high school teachers were in their twenties and one teacher was in her thirties. Four assistant principals were in their thirties, and four principals were in their forties and fifties. Two assistant superintendents were in their fifties and the other two assistant superintendents were in their forties. Two superintendents were in their fifties and the other two superintendents were in their sixties. Of the twenty-four participants, twenty-three participants

were Caucasian Americans. One woman identified herself as a Native American.

Ten of the participants were single, and fourteen were married; four of the participants reported being divorced. Ten of the twenty-four (seven teachers, one assistant principal, and two principal) have children still living at home. Fourteen of the participants have children living outside their household.

All of the interviewees held at the very least a masters degree in education, psychology, or guidance counseling. Seven of the participants obtained a doctorate in adult education, psychology, educational leadership, or counseling education. Furthermore, a review of the data reveals that the participants chase diverse career paths prior to occupying administrative positions in education. However, the demographic characteristics, and the career path were all excluded from the research model as a means of protecting the participants' anonymity.

Consistent with the purpose of the study, all the participants in the interviews are employed in entry and top-level administrative positions in rural and urban public school settings located in central Pennsylvania. The eight participants in non- administrative positions are high school teachers who are aspiring to occupy administrative positions in public education. Furthermore, the titles of the participants at the time of the study include: Superintendents (4), Principals (4), Assistant superintendents (4), and Assistant principals (4).

Barriers and Facilitators to Women's Career Advancement in Rural School Settings

The barriers and facilitators to women's career advancement can be revealed through the personal interviews with the women. The interviews are designed so that they follow a quantitative component of the study. The quantitative component reveals that the main barriers given by women administrators and non-administrators in rural school settings are role conflict, lack of inspiration, lack of social mobility, and sex discrimination. This component also revealed

that the major facilitators that are found helpful to female administrators in rural school settings are family support, mentoring, networking, sponsorship, and certificates and degrees. These restraints and facilitators may be exposed in more depth by providing examples of how they affected the participants in their career advancement. The following presents the predominant themes that examine and explain in more depth the barriers and facilitators to women's career advancement from the perspectives of the participants in the study.

Role conflict. From the interviews, it was evident that most of the married participants experience role conflict. Role conflict was the main factor given by aspiring women for not moving up into higher positions. They found the contradictions in the discourses of partnering and mothering to be unworkable (Grogan, 1996). These discourses require investments of both time and energy and competing demands between the professional career roles and personal roles cannot be manipulated.

If I become a principal, for example, who is going to watch my kids? I am a single person. Who is going to teach my kids and do the household labor? I cannot work all day. Who is going to cook, clean, drive them to the things they want to do over the summer. I can do the principal thing, but I do not have the time. Unless you do not care about your kids too much, you will put them in a day care and you will not see them (Aspiring high school teacher).

According to Grogan (1996) most of the women moved back and forth between the professional and personal discourses. They were never able to abandon or balance completely the practices that constituted their roles as a partner, mother, and school administrator. From the interviews, issues that expressed conflicts felt by the participants included (1) personal and professional responsibilities placed upon them as mothers, wives, and school administrators (2)

fear of failing as wives and mothers.

One of the things that I think it is difficult as a female, I have other responsibilities. I am a mom, wife and other working parent too and it is very busy balancing the demands of a school administrator because of the hours that are required and they are not like set hours. You have to be in the school for the regular school day and then you come back at nights for meetings, concerts, and athletic events. There is a multitude of things that are going on evenings and weekends in addition to the regular school day (High School Principal). It is really difficult when you have a family. I have two teenage daughters. When I first became principal, one of them was twelve and the other was six years old, so trying to work lots of hours that the principal work and then get home and prepare meals, get everybody set for bed and do all your work and get to the evening meetings and events was very difficult (High school principal).

One of the high school principals recognized conflict and guilt in combining the roles of carer and school administrator. She talked of the balance she is trying to maintain. However, she is still struggling and feels overloaded with many personal and professional responsibilities.

As a woman administrator, I am still struggling between my personal and professional lives. Sometimes, I do all the stuff that I have to do at home but I have to go back to the school for the basketball game, for a music event or whatever to be here. Sometimes, I feel overwhelmed by guilt because I do not have enough time with my family. Although they don't come out and say that I have experienced that, it's hard sometimes, it is very hard and it is very overwhelming. I have tried to balance all of that but sometimes I go home and feel that my husband is upset because I do at home the things that I have to do at school. I am never home during the basketball season (High School Principal).

Being overloaded with personal and professional responsibilities, one of the aspiring high school teachers who was trying for her principalship found that realizing her career aspirations was possible only upon the fulfillment of her responsibilities as a mother.

In my rural community, being a teacher was a big deal, my children were young, and I was raising them. It wasn't until I got the opportunity and the scholarship to get my certificate that I thought I could possibly be a principal. That thought stuck in my mind as I fulfilled my role as a mother. My children grew and left. Now, I want to be a principal. I have time. Some administrators could be a mom and have children but it is too hard and the struggle is very complicated. If you want to be a principal, wait until your children grow up. Think about it later. Now I have time. It is a sense of purpose that I need (Aspiring high school teacher).

Another aspirant, however, believed that she could not wait until her children grew up.

If I wait until my children grow up, I do not think that they are going to hire older people. Age is a factor also. I think they prefer to hire younger people. I do not think that they are going to hire so many older administrators. In my area, for example, all the administrators are young. They hired two male assistant principals and both of them are in the thirties! (Aspiring high school teacher).

Conflict between work and family roles is still the major barrier given either by aspiring women or women in administrative positions, for not moving up in the working world, especially in rural school settings where women are still similarly in charge in the domestic aspect of life. This may be due to cultural expectations associated with the role of women and the feminine characteristics defined by the traditional standards of society. Managing these roles is still very stressful and challenging. The participants' solution was to delegate some of their responsibilities

to others. They distributed amongst their coworkers some of the administrative and evaluative responsibilities. As one of the participants admitted:

I can tell what I have learned in previous positions and in this position that you have really to collaborate and ensure that you can work with a group who are willing to work as a team and share administrative responsibilities and divide the many tasks that administrators are supposed to do (High school principal).

Lack of inspiration. From the interviews, it was evident that internal conflicts are not what that keep women from attaining their career goals, but instead societal and organizational constraints that provide women in rural school settings with defeated attitudes toward higher employment opportunities. For instance, most of these aspiring women agree that lack of aspiration may be a reflection of the reality of home and family responsibilities (Shakeshaft, 1989) mixed with the stress stemming from role conflict manifests in a form of depression which is what ultimately deters women from climbing. Although most of the aspiring women in interviewees believed that they could be successful administrators, the “difficulties of juggling the full share of family responsibility with administrative responsibilities may not seem to be worth it to many women” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 89).

I do aspire; I do not have a fear of failure in any administrative position in the school district. I think I can do a very good job, but I am a single mother. Who is going to take care of my kids? I cannot work for twelve months. I want to be with my kids over the summer. My family comes first. So, it is a hard for me to work that kind of job. I can do that kind of job, I am capable, and I have the brain power, but I do not want to leave my family. I don't want to be overloaded. I don't want to do that because of the hours involved (High school teacher).

Lowered inspiration goes back to the view that women, especially in rural communities, should be with the children and do the majority of child rearing because if you are working, go to school and become an administrator; the family does a lot of sacrificing. If it is working, it will be stressful and I don't think most women will do that (Superintendent).

Again inspiration is not the issue; it is the reality of the world that forces women to endure the full responsibility outside and inside the home, especially in rural settings, that keep women from acting upon their aspirations. One of the participants in the study hoped to become a principal. Once married with a child, she decided to leave the job and returned to the classroom as a teacher. In this example, she had the drive, but found it too stressful to manage the responsibilities placed on her as mother, a wife and an administrator without adequate support from society (Adler, Loney, & Packer, 1993).

I was the only education administrator on site. After three years, I found myself married with a child. While I love my present position, it did not pay well. Additionally, I worked holidays. I chose to put my family first and returned to the classroom as a special education teacher (Aspiring high school teacher).

An alternate viewpoint examines the scarcity of female role models in rural areas. Drawn from the interviews, some of the participants agree that scarcity of female role models highlights a significant drawback to women's upward mobility in the workplace. Aspiring men have plenty of examples of men as top-level administrators and can easily identify with them (Newman, 1993). Women, in rural school settings in particular, suffer as result of the absence of feminine figure heads:

I was the first women administrator when I became principal in this district. I have very

few women role models. I don't have somebody to look at as a school administrator, someone I want to be like; I really do not (High school principal).

In rural settings, the lack of female role models to follow may discourage other women to aspire to do that. So I think as more women come to the rural school settings, more women will aspire to get these positions to be administrators (Assistant principal).

More women holding administrative positions in rural school settings may encourage them to be good examples for other women trying to occupy these positions. One of the aspiring high school teachers stated that “The inspiration is not there, because it is not nurtured. I think seeing a female become a principal, may encourage aspiration that I could be a principal too!

Finally, lack of women’s desire for administration in rural school setting may be viewed as an outgrowth of lack of opportunity. Most of the participants state that there are few leadership positions in rural school settings. Because it is a male-dominated position, women have very limited opportunities to occupy these positions.

In large urban districts, you have these layers of administration but here you don't have so. In rural school settings, there are very few administrative positions. As a high school principal, I didn't have an assistant principal. As a superintendent, I did not have an assistant superintendent as well. Women in rural school settings have very limited opportunities to occupy these powerful positions in the rural communities (Superintendent).

Thus, women's lack of inspiration in rural school administration may be seen as an expected response to lack of opportunities. According to Dana and Bourisaw (2006) “Inspiration is not the issue; opportunity is” (p.108).

Lack of social mobility. In the early stages of their life, most of the driven married women support their husbands' careers. One of the interviewees admitted that "In the early stages of our life, I was supporting my husband's career. I have two kids. We need his income, and I used my certificate to have jobs in different areas but as a teacher" (Aspiring high school teacher).

One of the participants, for instance, expressed a concern that her husband's employment needs were being met first and then her own. She put her career on hold to accommodate her husband's success. But later, when her husband retires, she starts to think of her own employment needs. "The reason that I have to move frequently is that my husband was in a position that was very mobile. So, I followed his career until we got to {.....}.and then he retired, and now, he is following mine (High school principal).

Most of the aspiring women and the administrative women participants state that not only their husbands' career directed most of their life decisions, but also their commitment to their kids.

If you have a commitment to your family and you have kids in the middle or high school and they have an established network of friends, it will be hard to take the decision and move. Unlike other women who doesn't have this commitment. This might be a barrier for career advancement (Superintendent).

Location mobility is a critical issue. I am struggling with that right now. I drive 45 minutes to work every day so that my son can remain in his home school. Although very independent in some ways in other ways he needs more stability. In addition, my parents live close to my current home. But if I moved to my district where I work, I would have lost my home support system. So I have an opportunity that is very special, but in the

meantime, I have a son who wants to remain in his home school. In addition, my parents live close to my current home. If I moved to the other district where I work, my son would lose his established network of friends and I would have lost my support system (Aspiring assistant principal).

I like my work, I like my job. I like to do something that interests me, that challenges me, but I want the best thing for the family. We are working here and my kids are going to the school here and they have friends and then we leave. It is hard to make this choice (Aspiring High school teacher).

Gender discrimination. Rural school settings are still bureaucratic organizations which require the top leadership to be male-dominated, even though two-thirds of all teachers are female. The rural community does not accept women in top administrative positions. In the minds of most inhabitants, the image of a school administrator especially is rooted in stereotypes of age and gender. For example, the high school principal has to be tall, muscular, and a former athlete because the kids are very tough and big.

In my previous district, they have never selected a female for any top-level position. I believe it is just because it is a male-dominated position and I believe that the community's perceptions that females cannot do as good a job as males can do in that position. It is a very conservative area and although it has a women assistant principal, they never select a female as a high school principal (Aspiring high school teacher).

Although some women state that gender discrimination no longer exists (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000), from the interviews it was evident that the participants are still experiencing sexism and discriminatory treatment in rural school settings. One of the high school teachers

admitted that “Even if the world is moving very fast and women can do everything, in rural school settings, women still have this invisible glass ceiling”.

As a female, I do feel that I had a more difficult time obtaining an administrative position than a male would have. Women are not seen as strong disciplinarians and that is still seen as the bulk of assistant principals’ duties. Now that I have sat through the interviews on the other side, I have seen this perception, even if it is never directly stated (Assistant high school principal).

As a woman administrator in a rural school setting, I always feel that I have to prove my point by having background information. I have to give reasons. Men do not have to do that. If a man said “we are not going to do this today” then he does not have to give a reason why, while the woman administrator has to be able to cite a law. You have to be able to cite. You have to give reasons for what you are doing. I do not see that with my male counterparts (High school principal).

Particular choices are established socially and are part of the institutional order. Individuals make choices, but it is social patterns and large social factors of sex role socialization and stereotypes that shape the alternative and make the selection of men for educational administration in rural school settings preferable to women.

From the interviews, there is a strong concern shown by the aspiring participants that selection strategies in rural settings sometimes favor men over women.

When the assistant principal position was open, I applied but a male counterpart was selected over me. He was not selected because of his qualifications or the degrees he held; but because it is a male dominated position and he was supported by the school principal (High school principal).

I think that male applicants are looked at closer over female applicants. If you are in our county and in the smallest counties they never have female superintendents. I think selection strategies in rural settings favor men when it comes to superintendency (Assistant superintendent).

When they advertised in the previous administration, they wanted someone who is familiar with sports, and so my predecessor had been a basketball player in college and everyone knew him and I don't know many females who are familiar with sports (High school principal).

I think I would have to agree that selection strategies favor men over women in rural school setting. We try as much as we can to change that it is a man's world and the women are capable. The number of women admitted to programs in educational administration is increasing, but it will probably take more time before we see that change. I got four qualified, certified women in my building who should be Department chairs, and we have not broken the glass ceiling yet, all my department chairs have been men for a long time. Sometimes we feel that we can change, but it is still never changed (High school principal).

Women administrators who experience sexism and discriminatory treatment are often silent about it. Although almost all the women occupying entry and top-level administrative positions in the study met all the measures of success as administrators and were the first females in their rural school settings to keep moving in the administrative ladder, they still encountered challenges to their abilities which they attributed to being seen as women. For example, one indicator of discrimination in the superintendency encountered by one of the superintendents in the study included certain behaviors and tactics of the community members. As she said,

People say things to me and do things that I think they would never do if I were a man. I think that I have been treated differently. Sometimes they did not give me things to do because I am not a man with buildings and stuff like that and other times they wanted to see if they could push me to a specific decision. However, they thought as a female, my reaction would be emotional but it was not (Superintendent).

In an earlier position, I remember the superintendent telling me that one reason I didn't receive much of a raise that year was because I was a young female administrator and had a husband who was also working. Obviously, this was a totally illegal statement to make. However, I just dealt with it and moved to another position in a different district. In my current position as an assistant superintendent, I had a few issues when I first arrived with another person. We had a few encounters that were more about power and control on this person's part. I addressed it with him delicately because I think this was something that the person had been doing for quite a while to people especially females (Assistant superintendent).

In order to tackle these challenges to her ability as a female superintendent, the participant has learned never to respond in a manner characteristic of female behavior. She has learned to go through her work as a district leader following the male model. As she said, "I have learned never to react in a female way to things they [school board and community members] do and comments they make. I cannot explain how I change."

Another manifestation of discrimination according to the participants in this study came in the form of questions of competence. One of the participants explained: "I think that the biggest barrier related to the fact that it is a very rural school setting is that you are a woman who is going to be in a very powerful position. They always question can a woman really do that? Can

a woman really lead?” (High school principal).

Finally, although more women are becoming administrators, being a female is still an issue in interviewing, in being hired, and in working in rural school setting.

Family support system. There is a strong opinion expressed by the participants that women who have been successful not only in acquiring an administrative position, but also in succeeding in that position have had huge family support. Family support reinforces women’s aspirations and helps them to advance in their careers. Most of the participants mention that their move to their current positions was motivated by the caring help and support of their immediate and extended families.

“I have a huge family support. I have to rely not only on my immediate family support, but my extended family. My parents, my in-laws. They are the type of thing that I have to rely on for support” (Assistant superintendent).

“Family support is the key to occupying this administrative position more than school support. My husband has been really supportive and my family. I am surrounded with people who really support me and encouraged me to occupy this position” (High School Principal).

Community support. From the interviews, it was evident that participants in the rural school setting sometimes lack the community support needed to help them in their job advancement.

In most cases, women do not have support from the community and I found that to be true, I got support from the principal and the superintendent but once in the position, I felt that I was always a target in that community for criticism. Anything that was wrong, it was because I was a female. I was the first female high school principal they ever had in this district. It is very hard, especially in rural school setting. The community always

questions, can a woman do that? Can women really lead? I don't think that I got enough support from the rural community (High school principal).

Accordingly, there is a strong opinion expressed by the participants that one of the most important facilitators for women seeking to occupy an administrative position is to be familiar with the nature of the community. This is particularly needed in rural communities where the school is often the center of the community where most community events take place and where active parent involvement in the school has become a tradition for many families.

You have to understand the small town community, because if you don't know the community, you will not be able to know with whom you are dealing, you have to know their opinions of education, to know the religious norms of the schools, the rural concerts and the holiday times are very important (High school principal).

Familiarity with the community is very helpful. I have to understand the nature of it as they do things a little differently. I am involved in the community activities and committees and I am around. They know me, and the kids know me. They have different events in the community, I participate in them (Assistant superintendent).

The school is the center of the community. Growing up in a small town helped me to understand how small towns (rural communities) work and this helped me a lot to be the first female in the district to keep moving up in the administrative world. Because I come from a small town, I understand that I have to work with the community members as all of them are watching. If you're not willing to work with them, they will turn against the school and by working with them for the most part, parents support what we are planning to do the school setting. Understanding how the rural communities work helped me to keep my doors open. If the parents come in, the principal or the superintendent meet with

them. They do not have to schedule an appointment. In urban districts, you can just come in and if they are available, you will meet with them (Superintendent).

Mentoring. There is a strong opinion expressed by the participants that having an experienced career mentor capable of giving guidance is a major factor in their advancement. Most of them commented on people who had encouraged and supported them in their career advancement. Mentors are critically important to help them climb career ladders. Most of the participants in the study shared their views on their importance of mentoring.

My mentors help me through any problem, they listen to me. I always feel that I need them, especially in terms of legal situations, a sort of thing like that. I think that he will be able to back me up and help me. If I got in trouble, there is a person who will help me. My mentor is the superintendent, so he is the kind of person who knows what is going on (High school principal).

Another participant also commented on how her mentor encouraged and supported her. However, she advised any woman to be careful about who she will be paired with. Finding the right mentor who is engaged and interested in her career can help her to meet her goals. The woman should target the right person to be her mentor; a person who can increase her knowledge and leadership skills.

You have to be careful about who you will be matching up with. I found that my partner always supported me. If I had a question about something, I could call and ask him. His district is bigger than mine; he gives me something to look at. If I have a legal question, he can check and I can check and he would tell me: 'you need to look at this or that. I had a very good experience with my mentor (Superintendent).

While there is a consensus in the literature that career mentors are critically important to the

career advancement of both the men and women (Anderson, 2005; Bower, 2008; Ellen, 2010), there is less argument on the issue of whether women have more difficulty than men in establishing mentor networks. From the interviews, it was evident that the school systems in rural school settings do not provide women with enough mentors who can reinforce women's aspirations and create beneficial opportunities to develop their administrative skills.

It is a lack of mentoring. This is no process to encourage that. For example, as a woman, my sense is that beginning in this position, I have to create some kind of mentoring support and nurturing situations for young females, it is so needed (Aspiring high school teacher).

In the rural school district which I came from, there wasn't any kind of support ever to provide women with mentors. There should be some mentoring and support. I have been an administrator for six years, and we still do not have a specific process for those who are aspiring to occupy administrative positions (High school principal).

Networking. There is a strong concern expressed by the participants, especially those occupying top-level positions, that networking is an important factor in women's career advancement. It encourages them to help each other, be more powerful together than they could be separately. They believed that they could be of assistance to each other. Some of the participants especially those occupying top-level positions shared their views on the importance of both formal and informal networking.

Actually it is imperative to network and I participate in different professional formal networks. I am involved in the Pennsylvania Principal Association, and the NSSP. I think it is very important to stay connected to know what is going on nationally within the profession. I highly recommend that administrators attend the national conference to stay

connected and I also highly recommend informal networking, the female administrators meet monthly and just have dinner together. I think It was great just because everybody is in the same boat and we got not only great effective strategies for dealing with the position as a female, but you also get very great strategies on how to deal with personal pressures, especially because all of us are females (High school principal).

I would think networking would be extremely important in a rural setting because there may not be many other schools. It would be great to have a network of other people to bounce ideas off and get input from (High school principal).

While it is significant to maintain communications with one's peers, it is even more important to those who aspire to occupy administrative positions to network with those who are in leadership positions. By attending classes to be certified as an administrator, one of the participants who was the first female in the district to and finally became a superintendent they ever had, was able to network with other administrators and got their support to occupy the positions she sought in the district.

By attending classes you can network with others from different school districts and you can use those people as a support when you get into administrative position. You get different ideas from them because different schools are run differently. Now you have somebody explaining how it will run. So you can get ideas and somebody will tell you whether these ideas will work in the schools or not. You are to look for the pitfalls when you're trying to do things in the schools of others might have, and share documents and other sources. Hey, I work with this person and this person helped me to do this or that. Networking was very beneficial to me (Aspiring high school teacher).

Research documented that there are obvious differences between the 'old boys' network

and women's network. From the interviews, the participants agree that women need to network with both female and male networks.

You need to have balance because men and women think differently from one another. If you are in a female network you need to make a balance because men will see things that you have never thought of because we are made differently and we think differently. I firmly believe that you have to have a balance and you shouldn't be more involved in either side. But be equally involved (Aspiring high school teacher).

Sponsorship. The participants in the rural school setting expressed that an aspirant needs encouragement. Sponsors provide women with beneficial opportunities to be socialized regarding the position they seek. They always make sure that those they support their names among the candidates who have strengths if the opportunity was offered to that person. For instance, Sharon was working at a school when the assistant principal position was open. She applied and the principal and the superintendent were her sponsors. Having those two male sponsors when the position of principal came open is the reason that she got that position. It is essential for an aspirant to have an advocate who can act as a reference when a good opportunity arises.

Certification and degrees. The participants strongly expressed that certification and degrees are valuable and desirable. Most of the participants confirmed the importance of academic preparation especially in the increase of knowledge bases and skills. The demographic analysis of the participants in this study suggests that in Central Pennsylvania, 85 percent have a masters or a doctorate degree. It was evident from the interviews that continued education is vital to career development.

Education is really helpful, you cannot be an assistant principal, principal, without having

a certificate. In Maine, for example, you have to have an advanced degree beyond your bachelor's, but you do not have to have a master's. But you have to seek a master's within 5 years. Here in Pennsylvania, you have to have a master's degree before getting any administrative position. I recommend it because I believe that the knowledge you gain in a master's program or a doctorate is very important so that you understand current issues in education and speak confidently about education (High school principal)

As a public school administrator, there are state requirements. You cannot be certified as a principal without a certificate and a degree. So, in education, these are very critical. It is very helpful because they are directly related to the skills of doing the job (Assistant superintendent).

Being that education is so critical to career advancement, some of the participants in the rural school setting believe that the academic preparation programs should address gender issues. There is a silence regarding gender issues as a characteristic of administrative preparation programs (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000). The preparation programs often ignore women's issues and fail to help women in this male-dominated administrative world by eluding discussion about the role of gender in the school administration, especially in the rural school setting where educational administration is still a male-dominated field.

I think that the state has done a very good job in the Pennsylvania Induction Program, but they are very general courses for males and females. I really think there should be a course for females: Here is what you are going to face. Here is what you have to do first and what you need to save for later. I feel that there should be some special programs for preparing rural school administrators especially women, and how to be successful (Assistant principal).

It might be a good idea to have a course to understand the differences in the mentalities and the make-up of school boards; the differences in expectations between rural and urban school districts because the expectations are somehow the same, yet are somewhat different; how to navigate the politics that exist because they are different in the rural school setting than they are in urban or suburban school districts (Superintendent).

Barriers and Facilitators to Women's Advancement into School Administration in Urban School Settings

Role conflict. According to David Elkind (1995), the modern nuclear family is based on the idea of two parents, one working and one staying home, with dad providing the income and mom providing care for the emotional needs of family. Many fathers found that the breadwinner role for the family is so stressful that it led to the emergence of post-modern permeable family with two parents working. However, mothers are still the major caretakers of their children (Browder, 2001, pp. 249-251). Caring and concern is central to women's psychological development. Nel Noddings (1984) states that "caring involves stepping out of one's personal frame of reference into the others" (p. 24). Women have to remain in caring relationships. They have to be connected to the needs of their families and their children over long periods of time in ways that nurture their growth. This is why combining the roles of a mom, a wife, and a leader is the main barrier given by the participants in the study. As indicated earlier, it is a tremendous stress for any married women to be an administrator.

The role of the mother seems to be greater in our society. The mother has responsibilities more than the father. It is not only extra work to be an administrator, but managing these multiple roles is very stressful. You have to deal with aging parents, teenagers, and problems with teachers (High school principal).

It is a tremendous stress for younger married female administrator and this is why I have decided to leave my administrative positions: because I realized that it is difficult to spend more time away from my family including two small children. As an administrator, I am often at my school late or arrive before dawn and may not see my children awake during the day (High school teacher).

Having children is definitely one barrier. Although they can't be discriminated against, a school may be less likely to hire someone who may still want to have kids. Also, a woman may want to wait until after they have kids to take an administrative position, so they won't have to take so much time off and have someone fill their place. In addition, they may not want to lose their summers while their children are young. I am not ready to lose my summers with my kids until they are older. Unless I found an administrative job that had summers off, I may not want to move to administration yet (Aspiring high school teacher).

The participants believed that it is challenging to balance between a personal and professional life. As indicated earlier, the participants moved back and forth between the discourses of personal and professional lives never finding any time to evenly juggle these multiple roles. The family is always the first sacrifice as one of the participants said, "My family does matter. However, it is always them making the sacrifice and the balance is possible by including them in the school even if they aren't part of it". (Superintendent)

One of the principals, if she has evening events, she took her son and her husband with her to achieve this balance. Thus, they became part of the school life.

Role conflict is the most serious barrier given by both women seeking to occupy administrative positions and women who currently hold administrative positions. Most of the

participants find the challenge of mixing home and work life almost unbearable. You have to have a very strong support system, whether a spouse or a relative, to survive that kind of intense schedule.

Family support. The participants stated that aspirants often lack the support needed in the workplace to help them advance in their career advancement. One of the aspiring high school teachers admitted that “We don’t have a school support for people seeking to occupy administrative positions: you have to go out search by yourself.”

Women who have been successful not only in acquiring an administrative position, but also in succeeding in that position maintain that the support in their lives came mainly from their families (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006). From the interviews, it was evident that the participants’ move to their current positions was motivated by the huge support of their immediate and extended families. One of the participants was very fortunate to have her parents live close and help her with her son’s care when needed. As she said “I would not be able to have the job I have without their help and support. They have truly been wonderful” (Assistant superintendent).

I have huge support from my extended family. I had a goal to be a superintendent. But I have elderly parents. When I was seeking to occupy this job and taking classes, my siblings helped out taking care of my mother because I could not spend the time available to help them (Superintendent).

Some other participants, especially those who are occupying top-level administrative positions, state that their career advancement wasn’t just motivated by the support of their families, but that sometimes their husbands becomes their sponsors and advocates. They helped them in their search for administrative roles in education. One of the participants who became a

high school principal in their mid thirties and has an infant said, “I have a huge family support system. I am fortunate that my husband is with me often. He is my sponsor and advocate and helped me to get this position”.

Mentoring. From the interviews, it was evident that mentors are critical to the career advancement of the participants. Administrative positions, especially in urban school settings, have become highly competitive and aspirants are seeking an edge in the job market which mentoring provides. The participants in the study declared that their mentors provide guidance training, and one-on-one counseling that can be either formal or informal. Most of the participants in the study who hold entry and top-level administrative positions remember people who helped them in moving up in the administrative ladders. One of the assistant superintendents stated that, “My mentor allows me to understand what people in the administrative positions do and what I need to do to gain some leadership skills as well.”

I had a mentor for a while. It is a wonderful idea and it gave me somebody to talk to who had a lot of experience, who can help and guide my thinking in some way, give me some other perspectives to think about like making a better decision. Even after getting this administrative position, I still need him (High school principal).

Although urban school settings provide some mentoring opportunities, some of the participants state that lack of experienced mentors is still one of the barriers for to accessing higher education positions.

Lack of experienced mentors is one of the challenges for people aspiring into moving into school administration. I tried to find a mentor outside the district. It was a little difficult to find a mentor, or to interact with those in the leadership position. I think it is easier once you get the administrative position. Sometimes, it is difficult to find the right

mentors and you have to make some effort, especially if they are not offered in the school setting (Assistant superintendent).

While having a mentor is critical to the career advancement of women, it is important for each woman to look for the right mentors and see them as much as she can. One of the administrators said: “Look for the right mentors. Do not be afraid to get out there and learn (if learning is not offered in your district) in order to get a better understanding of what leadership means.”

(Assistant superintendent)

Networking. Above all else, the participants expressed that a woman aspirant needs the encouragement and support of networking. They stated that networking is a driving force that enables all the participants to support and guide each other. Most respondents commented on the value of networking.

Networking is extremely important in terms of support and understanding. It helps you to see the big pictures and the perspectives particularly with things that you have experienced and share information and facts that you might not be aware of so you can be connected in the loop with others (High school principal).

I have a wide range of contacts and I value them greatly. This is incredibly important for my job. It not only benefits me on a personal level by providing me enough contacts and friendship, it is critical to my professional position too (Assistant superintendent).

While it essential to network with one’s peers, it is even more important to those who aspire to occupy administrative positions to develop networks with those who are already in such positions. The idea is to create a professional network where aspiring women leaders can develop their administrative skills. As one of the participants revealed:

Whenever you’re trying to get into the leadership position, generally go to the other’s

conferences. Teachers do not go to the principals' conferences or to the assistant superintendents' meetings. You do not have to go to the teachers' conferences. It is a little hard that way to break from the colleagues that you have, in terms of teachers-to-teachers, if you are aspiring to move up in administration. You have to network and have some other interactions (Assistant superintendent).

Although most of the participants agree that formal networking organizations are an important factor in their career advancement, some of the participants (who are occupying administrative positions in urban settings) state that they do not have any formal experience with networking. They think of it more informally "I have more informal networks, nothing formalized. Time is always an issue" (High school principal), because of the personal and professional responsibilities placed on them.

Sponsorship. From the interviews, it was evident that an aspiring woman always needs the support of sponsors. The sponsors are those people who occupy a key leadership position in education and have major decision-making responsibilities that include employment and promotion of others. Recently, sponsorship became a critical factor in the career advancement in urban districts, where administrative positions have become highly competitive and more applicants are seeking an edge in the job market (Witmer, 2006). One of the participants stated, "You have the résumé and the certificates, but it is very important to have someone on the corner who supports you in your job search. My sponsor who was applying for a key administrative position had done a lot of that for me" (Assistant Superintendent).

However for some other women who seek to occupy administrative positions, acquiring sponsorship requires a lot of time "Sponsorship helps you a lot, but it needs time and time is a big issue for me and for most woman" (High School principal)

Certificates and degrees. The importance of the certificates and the degrees as critical facilitators to the career advancement of women was identified by most of the participants, especially those who occupy entry and top-level administrative positions in the urban school setting. It is important for the administrators to have this background knowledge in administration before beginning a position. It is a state requirement that no one can be certified as a school administrator without a degree. One of the high school principals confirmed that “Education always came first. The interviewers will have to look at your education first. They will not consider somebody without a doctorate, especially for top-level administrative positions” (High school principal). Another Participant indicated that “certificates and degrees help you understand the scope of the position and the responsibilities. Any women who seek to occupy administrative position should have this kind of formal training” (Assistant superintendent).

However, there is a concern expressed by some of the women that it is not necessary to have a certificate or a doctorate to be qualified to occupy an administrative position in education, especially if you have all the necessary training and experience. Two superintendents state that most of the classes are too theoretical. Sometimes there is an inchoate tension between rural school districts and the theories underlying administrative practice. They don’t give you any practical experience.

It consists of theoretical coursework which do not help aspiring administrators, most of whom are women, to understand what the administrators typically do, and how to go through work problems, especially legal problems. You do not know the job until you are in the job. The skills of leadership are fuzzy. They are not clear-cut (Superintendent).

One of the aspiring participants refers to the fact that while the requirements for certification and degrees used to be a barrier for women, the number of women in educational administration is increasing (Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993). However, these credentials could be a hindrance for having good candidates for the position as she said:

Even if you got the certificate, you still have to take the test, so it is a lot. You do not need it in order to be a good administrator, but we are a credential society. So, you will need the merits and the qualifications to get the job. I think that could be a hindrance for having a good candidate for the job because there might be someone who has the experience but does not have the right credentials. So, sometimes, it works against the qualified candidates. Not everyone has the money, time and support to go to school and complete the process (Aspiring high school teacher).

Finally, unlike rural school settings, the participants in the urban settings do not believe that the academic preparation programs should address gender issues. As one of the participants said:

Being a progressive, open minded community, I do not think that university preparation programs should help women. In particular, I don't think that there should be special training necessary just for women (Assistant superintendent).

Discussion

The data in this chapter paints a rich picture of the barriers of a female's career mobility in education. Women who aspire to senior administrative positions in education still face pitfalls. Barriers occur at the personal, interpersonal and organizational levels. Reflection on the sources of stress for many of the participants in this study revealed that an "incompatibility in the multiple-subject position they adopted indifferent discourses (Grogan, 1996, p.185). They felt

overloaded with the personal and the professional responsibilities placed on them as mothers, wives, and administrators. Managing their roles is very stressful and complicated. The participant's solution is to delegate some of their responsibilities.

From the Interviews, it was evident that barriers to becoming school administrators still exist more in the rural setting. They exist in the form of the culture and the social expectations regarding female responsibilities, the attitudes claiming that women lack competence in administrative positions. In a high school teacher's words: "In my previous district, they have never selected a female for any top level position... it is just a male dominated position and the community- perception is that females cannot do as good a job as males in that position". Gender stereotypes still exist and operate in various ways to limit mobility opportunities for women. The participants in the rural setting are still "struggling with the culture that believes that women are better suited for the classroom" (Batiste, 2009, p.1).

Although the participants discussed the critical role of mentorship and networking in their advancement, sometimes they have more difficulty than men in establishing mentor networks. The school system in the rural setting lacks structured mentorship programs. They don't provide women with enough mentors who can reinforce their aspirations and create beneficial opportunities to develop their administrative skills. In high school principal's words: "In the rural school district... there isn't any kind of support ever to provide women with mentors, there should be mentoring and support... we still do not have a perfect process". As women prepare themselves for administration, sharing experience and information, establishing small networks and having the appropriate credentials, they see opportunities start to grow.

Chapter Six

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and further research. Each question is discussed individually in terms of the overall implications of the study.

Summary of Major Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the obstacles and the facilitators that have affected females' career mobility in educational administration. The study explored women's perceptions of the individual, group, and organizational barriers and facilitators. The secondary purpose was to determine if there are any differences in the perceived obstacles and facilitators identified by women based on geographic setting.

The explanatory mixed-methods design was used in order to better address the purpose of the study and understand the research problem. Following the quantitative approach, the researcher gathered voices of women aspiring to upward mobility. The qualitative component of the study was designed to supplement the quantitative component. The qualitative data was used to explain and interpret the quantitative results. The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire administered to the census of women administrators and a sample of high school teachers (non-administrative positions) in public school districts in central Pennsylvania. The qualitative component of the study consisted of one-on-one interviews with a sample of women administrators occupying top-level positions and entry-level administrative positions and a sub-sample of those teachers surveyed. While the results of the quantitative analysis identified the barriers and the facilitators that have affected females' career advancement and the differences in how these played out for women in the rural versus the urban school settings, the qualitative

component painted a rich picture of how prominent each barrier is in hindering women from entering school administration at different levels.

Questions one and two dealt with identification of women's perceptions of the perceived barriers that have constrained them from acting upon their aspirations to school administration in rural and urban school settings. Regardless of the school setting, the descriptive distributions for the 18 items representing the barriers revealed competing demands between personal and professional roles, and culture and social expectations regarding female responsibilities as major stressors for women pursuing leadership roles. Women often struggle to balance personal and professional lives and time commitments. According to Hertneky (2010), in an environment of paradoxical choices women leaders are challenged to juggle professional responsibilities while trying to maintain a personal life. This challenge and struggle is in part the result of a gender norm and the social expectations, which value men at work and women at home (the caregiver). "The result is that women, much more than men, must figure out how to balance family responsibilities and make choices about what will be "given up" in order to pursue leadership positions" (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008, p. 2).

The results also showed that the participants in this study believed that most of the barriers to becoming school administrators still exist in the rural setting. They exist in the form of community expectations of the role of women and the feminine characteristics as defined by the traditional standards of the rural society. They also exist in the form of attitudes, which require the top leadership environment to be male-dominated. According to Sherman (2000), it would seem that these attitudes and the androcentricity of the school organization are amplified in the rural context. From the interviews, it was evident that these attitudes and the persistence of the

gender norms in the rural setting emphasize the marginalization of the women in school administration.

While women in the rural setting believed that discriminatory treatment affected the number of women in school administration, women in urban settings were inclined to agree that sexism is still a prevalent barrier to becoming a school administrator. From the interviews, it was evident that the participants in the rural setting still experience sexism and discriminating treatment. One of the aspiring high school teachers admitted that, “Even if the world is moving very fast and women can do everything, in rural school settings; women still have this invisible glass ceiling.” Discriminatory treatment still exist in the form of the attitudes which do not accept women in top administrative positions, which believed that women cannot do as good jobs as males can do in that position.

Regardless of the school setting, the quantitative analysis of the results indicated that women’s lack of success at all levels in moving into educational administration cannot be blamed on women’s lack of motivation or willingness to get the needed credentials or to engage job search efforts. From the interviews, it was evident that lack of motivation does not constrain women from acting upon their inspirations, but instead societal and organizational constraints that provide women in rural school settings with defeated attitudes toward higher employment opportunities. The participants at all levels are motivated, but it is the reality that forces women to endure the full responsibilities outside and inside the house, the scarcity of female role models, and the lack of leadership positions that constrain women’s mobility efforts. In rural settings, the participants in this study are motivated, but they are still struggling with the community that believes that women in education are best suited in the classroom (Batiste, 2009).

The descriptive analysis of the results indicated that while the respondents in the rural settings believed that limited relocation ability due to personal responsibilities hindered women's efforts to pursue, leadership, the respondents in entry-level positions in the urban setting were less supportive of the idea that the lack of social mobility is still a restraint to upward mobility. Most of the participants in the rural setting stated that not only their husbands' careers directed their relocation ability, but also their commitment to their kids.

Question three focused on examining whether differences in the perceived obstacles between rural and urban settings are statistically significant or not. It is clear from the analysis of the data that although the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results revealed differences in the perceived practices that hinder women's efforts to upward mobility between the rural and the urban settings, the one-way analysis of variable results indicated that those differences were not statistically significant.

Questions four and five examined women's perceptions of the facilitators to upward mobility/advancement. An examination of the distribution for the 12 survey questions representing the facilitators supported the overall conclusion that women at all levels agree on most of the included enablers: family support, mentoring, networking and sponsorship. Regardless of the school setting, women in the top level positions were less supportive of the idea that the work place should support women in their job search efforts.

There is a strong opinion expressed by the participants in the interviews that women who have been successful not only in acquiring an administration position but also in succeeding in that position, had family support, guidance, mentoring, and support networking. They stated that mentoring is a critical tool in their advancement. One of the urban assistant superintendents stated that, "my mentor allows me to understand what people in the administrative positions do

and what I need to do to gain some leadership skill as well". While having a mentor is a major factor in career advancement, it is important for each woman to choose the right mentor.

Having a supportive network system where women can see the big pictures, share information and facts is also one of the powerful strategies for developing administrative skills and building confidence. It encourages women to help each other, be more powerful together than they could be separately. It is a driving force that enables all the participants to support and guide each other. The participants supported the idea that while it is significant to maintain communications with one's peers, it is even more important to those who aspire to occupy administrative positions to network with those who are in leadership positions.

Finally, the importance of the certificates and the degrees as critical facilitators to the career advancement of women was identified by most of the participants. It helped most of the first-time leaders to understand the scope of the position, and the work responsibilities. While the participants in the rural settings believed that the academic preparation programs often ignore women's issues and fail to help women in this male-dominated administrative world by eluding discussion about the role of gender in the school administration, especially in the rural school setting where educational administration is still a male-dominated field (Skrla, Reyes & Scheurich, 2000), women in urban settings were less supportive of the idea of including the gender issues in the academic preparation programs.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the results of this study:

1. Geographic setting appeared to have an influence on the participants' perceptions of barriers to career advancement. The respondents in the rural districts agreed much more strongly with gender stereotyping, lack of social mobility and community support as

being role prejudice than did the respondents in the urban setting.

2. Women need to understand how gender beliefs shape perceptions of leadership effectiveness especially in rural settings. This encourages women to challenge gender norms. It also helps them to understand that the obstacles they are experiencing derived from gender norms rather than personal deficiency. From this perspective women need to act more strategically (Morgan, 1996).
3. Women should never allow their leadership abilities to be ignored. They should seek to prove themselves as administrators. According to Sherman (2008), “increased visibility in the board is recognized as a positive to work towards an administrative position” (p.141).
4. Time pressure and balancing between personal and professional lives are still major stressors for women.
5. Women lack structured mentoring opportunities in the school setting.
6. Community and board members in the rural setting must reject gender based behavior as women move up the educational hierarchy. According to Collay and Lamar (1995), "the person with the greatest potential to influence may be the last person invited to the table. The irony of the dilemma is that the true authority may lie with this invisible rule” (p. 162).

Recommendations for Practice

The first recommendation is to initiate a structured mentoring program for aspiring women and women of potential. The mentoring program should involve more men and more women in senior administrative positions supporting aspiring women and women of potential.

Secondly, initiate new university preparation programs in order to reflect the concerns of women. Feminist theories in administration and feminist perspectives of socialization should be

included in leadership preparation programs. Those responsible for the dominant discourse, board and community members, should distinguish the senior administrative positions especially, the superintendent's job, from its male image. According to Grogan (1996), "It is not enough for those in power to use gender inclusive language, while at the same time continuing to think of superintendents as men" (p. 194).

The third recommendation is to provide a practical support system for aspiring women. Supportive friends and families, for example, may be able to lessen the sources of stress for many women.

The fourth recommendation regarding improvement in future practices is to increase women's opportunities to see "the big picture" within the school district. It's important to prepare women for administrative roles. According to Sherman (2008), "This preparation would allow women interested in leadership to develop the confidence needed to apply for credible opportunities" (p. 142).

The final recommendation is to increase women's opportunities to network with each other. Ongoing discussions and sharing of information regarding women's successful leadership experiences form a foundation for leadership development.

Recommendations for further study

An extensive amount of research examines the perceived barriers identified by women in administration positions, but does not have a rural context. For these women, barriers continue and this work must continue too (Sherman, 2008, p. 142). The following recommendations for further study are made:

1. Further research is needed to explore the experiences of the women in the rural school settings.

2. Further research needs to be conducted to examine the working environments of the women as they continue to affect their upward mobility. If women are not supportive of their own gender, it will be difficult for others to see them as capable to serve administrative positions (Jones & Palmer, 2011).
3. An ethnographic longitudinal study should be conducted to examine how women's perceptions of barriers and facilitators to upward mobility/advancement may change over time.
4. Studying unsuccessful experiences of aspiring women and comparing that data with research done on successful experiences might reveal additional details that affect advancement in the educational hierarchy.
5. Further comparative research is needed to examine profiles of female principals and superintendents between rural and urban settings. This will provide inspiring women with the knowledge that women can use to do the best for their students.
6. Further comparative research is also needed to identify characteristics of leadership preparation programs, the kinds of practice, and the on-job training. This will shed some light on how to design programs to help inspiring women and first-time leaders.

Finally, the need to increase the awareness of the barriers which might contribute to the low incidence of women is vital in achieving gender equity in school administration.

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APPENDIX A - Questionnaire

Dear.....,

My name is Eman Ahmed, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Education, Educational Leadership Program at the Pennsylvania State University. I am currently collecting data for my dissertation.

The purpose of my research study is to investigate the perceptions of career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts.

You have been randomly selected to participate in the pilot study of my research from a list obtained from the Department of Education.

I am writing to ask you to look at the survey which is attached electronically to this email. Your reaction will provide me with information that will help make the form as easy for the participants as possible. Please comment on the following:

- 1) Record any comments, errors, and any other indicators of potential problems during completion of the survey (to be used to frame follow-up questions).
- 2) Overall, how easy or difficult was the form to complete?
- 3) Was there anything unclear or confusing about filling out the survey? If yes, please explain.
- 4) When this form arrived to you, how soon did you take to respond?
 - The same day
 - In 1-2 days
 - In a week
 - Two weeks or more
 - Not at all.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the PSU Institutional Review Board for human subject participation; an electronic copy of the approval is also attached to this email.

Please contact me at (814) 237-2191 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.

Your reaction to this survey is greatly appreciated. If possible, I would be grateful to hear from you within the next 10 days.

Thank you,

Eman Ahmed

Dear

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and your confidentiality is assured. You will not be identified with your responses to the questionnaire. The use of this data will be only limited to this study as authorized by the Pennsylvania State University. The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this research is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Eman Ahmed



Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Barriers and Facilitators to Career Advancement by Top-Level, Entry-Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study

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1. **Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women administrators occupying top-level positions (i.e. superintendents and high school principals) and those occupying entry-level positions (i.e. assistant superintendent & assistant principal) and those in non-administrative positions (i.e. teachers) in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer 38 questions on a survey and you may be later asked to participate in a one-on-one interview.
3. **Benefits:** This research might provide better understanding of what barriers to women's career advancement exist, how salient each barrier is for preventing women from entering school administration at different levels, and how these barriers differ based on demographic

location. Also, women's perceptions as school leaders of the barriers to upward mobility and the strategies used for overcoming these barriers have value and that knowledge should be disseminated to male leaders, other professional women, policy makers, and employers.

4. **Duration/Time:** It will take about 15 minutes to complete the survey.
5. **Statement of confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data via the internet by any third parties.
6. **Right to ask questions:** Please contact Eman Ahmed at (814) 237-2191 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.
7. **Voluntary participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

Please print this form for your records or future reference.

Section I: Opportunities and Challenges Related to Career Advancement Encountered by Administrative and Non-administrative Women in Public School Districts.

Instructions: Using the 1-5 scale below, please circle the number to the left of each question to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following opportunities and challenges facing women today as they plan their career advancement in their school settings.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

- 1 2 3 4 5 1. Women have limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills.
- 1 2 3 4 5 2. School systems should support women's aspirations to be administrators.
- 1 2 3 4 5 3. There are limited opportunities for women to be included in work social activities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 4. Women have fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems.
- 1 2 3 4 5 5. There should be training programs for women in educational leadership.
- 1 2 3 4 5 6. Women often feel isolated within the school setting.
- 1 2 3 4 5 7. Women do not aspire to occupy administrative positions.
- 1 2 3 4 5 8. The school system should help women find administrative positions and help them be successful.
- 1 2 3 4 5 9. Women have a fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions.

- 12345 10. Women should get support from their family members to advance in their professional careers.
- 1 2 3 4 5 11. School peers do not support woman to occupy administrative positions.
- 1 2 3 4 5 12. Women do not have support from the large community outside the school setting.
- 1 2 3 4 5 13. Women should seek the encouragement and support of sponsors.
- 1 2 3 4 5 14. Society forces women to endure the brunt of career and career responsibilities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 15. Women should join mentoring programs that involve male and female mentors.
- 1 2 3 4 5 16. Women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 17. Women struggle to balance personal responsibilities and professional life.
- 1 2 3 4 5 18. Women should communicate with male networks.
- 1 2 3 4 5 19. Women have limited opportunities for socialization into the aspiring administrative roles.
- 1 2 3 4 5 20. Women are overloaded with professional and personal commitments.
- 1 2 3 4 5 21. Women should network with people from different school districts.
- 1 2 3 4 5 22. There are cultural and social expectations regarding female responsibilities.
- 1 2 3 4 5 23. There are social attitudes that women lack competence in administrative positions.

1 2 3 4 5 24. Women should have experienced mentors who can create beneficial opportunities to develop their administrative skills.

1 2 3 4 5 25. Communities do not accept women in administrative positions in schools.

1 2 3 4 5 26. Women should create professional networks with each other.

1 2 3 4 5 27. Selection strategies for job advancement favor men over women.

1 2 3 4 5 28. Women should join mentoring programs that involve male mentors because they are more effective than mentoring program that involve female mentors.

1 2 3 4 5 29. Job advancement or promotional policies favor men over women.

1 2 3 4 5 30. Our society has misguided perceptions of women's roles.

1 2 3 4 5 31. Women should develop networks within the same school district.

APPENDIX B - DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Barriers in Rural School Districts (percentages)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills.	42.9	35.	7.1	14. 3	.0	30.8	23.1	.0	23.1	23. 1	20.0	10.0	10.0	30.0	30.0
Limited opportunities for women to be included in work social activities	26.2	57. 1	7.1	7.1	.0	15.4	23.1	15.4	23.1	23. 1	20.0	50.0	10.0	.0	20.0
Having fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems	19.0	54. 8	9.5	16. 7	.0	15.4	15.4	7.7	38.5	23. 1	40.0	20.0	10.0	20.0	10.0
Feeling isolated within the school setting.	19.0	52. 4	14.3	4.8	9.5	15.4	30.8	7.7	38.5	7.7	20.0	50.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

Table 1 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Do not aspire to occupy administrative positions	26.2	57.1	7.1	4.8	4.8	23.1	46.2	23.1	7.7	.0	20.0	60.0	10.0	10.0	.0
Fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions.	32.5	30.0	22.5	7.5	7.5	7.7	76.9	15.4	.0	.0	50.0	50.0	.0	.0	.0
School Peers do not support woman to occupy administrative positions.	15.0	60.0	12.5	10.0	2.5	15.4	38.5	7.7	15.4	23.1	20.0	10.0	20.0	30.0	20.0
Do not have support from the large community outside the school setting.	12.5	12.5	12.5	55.0	7.5	23.1	7.7	7.7	46.2	23.1	30.0	0.0	20.0	10.0	40.0

Table 1 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
The society forces women to endure the brunt of career and personal responsibilities.	20.0	37.5	17.5	15.0	10.0	.0	30.8	23.1	30.8	15.4	.0	30.0	50.0	.0	20.0
Limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities.	10.0%	40.0%	12.5%	25.0%	12.5%	.0	15.4	30.8	38.5	15.4%	.0	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Struggle to balance personal responsibilities and professional life.	.0	5.0	17.5	42.5	35.0	.0	7.7	15.4	23.1	53.8	.0	.0	20.0	40.0	40.0
Limited opportunities for socialization into the aspiring position	15.0	40.0	22.5	17.5	2.5	.0	61.5	15.4	23.1	.0	10.0	60.0	10.0	10.0	10.0

Table 1 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Overloaded with professional and personal commitments.	.0	10.0	12.5	47.5	30.0	.0	7.7	7.7	30.8	53.8	.0	.0	30.0	40.0	30.0
There are social attitudes that women lack competence in administrative positions.	12.5	42.5	15.0	20.	10.0	7.7	30.8	.0	30.8	30.8	.0	70.0	.0	10.0	20.0
Selection strategies for job advancement favor men over women	12.5	22.5	15.0	25.0	25.0	.0	15.4	23.1	38.5	23.1	.0	20.0	20.0	40.0	20.0
Job advancement or promotional policies favor men over women.	15.0	30.0	12.5	22.5	20.0	.0	38.5	30.8	30.8	.0	.0	40.0	20.0	30.0	10.0
Our society has misguided perceptions of women's roles.	7.5	17.5	30.0	25.0	20.0	.0	23.1	7.7	53.8	15.4	.0	50.0	10.0	20.0	20.0

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Barriers in Urban School Districts (percentages)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Limited opportunities to represent themselves and their leadership skills	38.3	46.7	10.0	5.0	.0	29.4	41.2	5.9	5.9	17.6	21.4	42.9	7.1	7.1	21.4
Limited opportunities for women to be included in work social activities.	30.0	46.7	18.3	5.0	.0	29.4	29.4	.0	23.5	17.6	7.1	50.0	7.1	14.3	21.4
Do not aspire to occupy administrative positions.	26.7	55.0	13.3	5.0	.0	50.0	31.3	12.5	6.3	.0	61.5	15.4	7.7	15.4	.0
Fewer people with whom to discuss and work through problems.	36.7	48.3	6.7	8.3	.0	35.3	29.4	.0	23.5	11.8	7.1	42.9	.0	28.6	21.4

Table 2 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Having a fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions.	15.0	43.3	18.3	23.3	.0	37.5	50.0	6.3	6.3	.0	15.4	53.8	.0	30.8	.0
School Peers do not support women to occupy administrative positions	21.7	60.0	16.7	1.7	.0	31.3	37.5	12.5	6.3	12.5	15.4	53.8	7.7	.0	23.1
Do not have support from the large school community	13.3	61.7	6.7	18.3	.0	17.6	29.4	5.9	17.6	29.4	21.4	35.7	7.1	21.4	14.3
The society forces women to endure the brunt of career and personal responsibilities.	8.3	36.7	26.7	23.3	5.0	5.9	23.5	17.6	47.1	5.9	7.1	50.0	7.1	21.4	14.3

Table 2 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities.	12.3	26.3	21.1	36.8	3.5	.0	29.4	23.5	23.5	23.5	.0	35.7	7.1	42.9	14.3
Struggle to balance personal responsibilities and professional life.	.0	14.0	14.0	42.1	29.8	5.9	11.8	23.5	17.6	41.2	7.1	7.1	14.3	21.4	50.0
Limited opportunities for Socialization into the aspiring administrative roles.	10.5	54.4	22.8	8.8	1.8	5.9	47.1	11.8	17.6	17.6	7.1	42.9	14.3	21.4	14.3
Overloaded with professional and personal commitments.	.0	1.8	21.1	57.9	19.3	11.8	11.8	35.3	17.6	23.5	7.1	7.1	14.3	35.7	35.7
There are cultural and social expectations regarding female responsibilities.	.0	.0	7.1	64.3	28.6	.0	5.9	5.9	47.1	41.2	.0	.0	14.3	50.0	35.7

Table 2 (Cont.)

Barrier Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
There are social attitudes that women lack competence in administrative positions.	7.1	41.1	16.1	30.4	5.4	5.9	52.9	11.8	17.6	11.8	.0	50.0	7.1	14.3	28.6
Selection strategies for job advancement favor men over women.	8.9	30.4	41.1	17.9	1.8	.0	52.9	11.8	17.6	17.6	7.1	35.7	14.3	14.3	28.6
Job advancement or promotional policies favor men over women.	16.1	33.9	30.4	19.6	.0	5.9	58.8	5.9	11.8	17.6	7.1	42.9	14.3	14.3	21.4
Our society has misguided perceptions of women's roles.	.0	23.2	17.9	46.4	12.5	5.9	29.4	35.3	5.9	23.5	.0	28.6	21.4	35.7	14.3

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators in Rural School Districts ((percentages)

Strategy Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
School systems should support women's aspirations to be administrators.	.0	.0	11.9	26.2	61.9	.0	.0	.0	46.2	53.8	.0	.0	.0	60.0	40.0
There should be training programs.	.0	.0	14.3	50.0	35.7	.0	.0	15.4	76.9	7.7	.0	10.0	20.0	50.0	20.0
The school system should help women find administrative positions and help them be successful.	.0	15.0	25.0	27.5	32.5	7.7	.0	7.7	76.9	7.7	.0	30.0	40.0	30.0	.0
Women should get support from their family members to advance in their	.0	2.5	10.0	60.0	27.5	.0	7.7	15.4	46.2	30.8	10.0	.0	20.0	50.0	20.0

Table 3 (Cont.)

Strategy Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Women should seek the encouragement and support of sponsors.	.0	7.5	35.0	40.	17.5	.0	.0	46.2	46.	7.7	10.0	.0	30.0	60.0	.0
Women should join mentoring that involve men and women mentors	2.5	0	17.5	55.	25.0	.0	7.7	7.7	61.	23.1	.0	.0	10.0	60.0	30.0
Women should communicate with male networks.	2.5	22.5	10.0	45.	20.0	.0	.0	7.7	69.	23.1	.0	.0	20.0	40.0	40.0
Women should network with people from different school districts.	.0	12.5	5.0	42.5	40.0	.0	.0	.0	61.	38.5	.0	20.0	.0	60.0	20.0
Women should have experienced mentors who can create beneficial opportunities to develop their skills.	.0	2.5	17.5	50.	30.0	.0	.0	7.7	46.	46.2	.0	.0	.0	80.0	20.0

Table 3 (Cont.)

Strategy Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Women should create professional networks with each other.	0	.0	15.0	55.0	30.0	.0	7.7	15.4	46.2	30.8	.0	.0	.0	100.0	.0
Women should join mentoring programs that involve male mentors because they are more effective than mentoring program involve female mentors.	32.5	45.0	17.5	5.0	.0	23.1	38.5	15.4	.0	23.1	.0	50.0	50.0	.0	.0
Women should develop networks within the same school district.	0	.0	25.0	55.0	20.0	.0	7.7	23.1	30.8	38.5	.0	.0	.0	90.0	.0

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Women's Perceptions of Work-Related Facilitators in Urban School Districts ((percentages)

Strategy Statement	Teacher					Asst Principal or Supt.					Principal or Supt.				
	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
School systems should support women's aspirations to be administrators	5.0	.0	6.7	35.0	53.3	5.9	.0	.0	35.3	58.8	.0	.0	.0	21.4	78.6
There should be training programs.	1.7	3.3	10.0	65.0	20.0	.0	.0	17.6	52.9	29.4	.0	7.1	28.6	42.9	21.4
The school system should help women find administrative positions and help them be successful.	3.3	8.3	35.0	30.0	23.3	6.3	37.5	25.0	31.3	.0	15.4	7.7	38.5	38.5	.0
Women should seek the encouragement and support of sponsors.	.0	8.3	35.0	45.0	11.7	.0	11.8	11.8	58.8	17.6	.0	.0	64.3	21.4	14.3

Table 4 (Cont.)

Strategy Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Women should seek the encouragement and support of sponsors.	.0	8.3	35.0	45.	11.7	.0	11.8	11.8	58.	17.6	.0	.0	64.3	21.4	14.3
Women should join mentoring programs.	.0	.0	12.3	66. 7	21.1	.0	.0	17.6	58. 8	29.5	.0	.0	7.1	50.0	42.9
Women should communicate with male networks.	.0	8.8	24.6	54. 4	12.3	.0	5.9	17.6	70. 6	5.9	.0	.0	21.4	64.3	14.3
Women should develop networks within the same school district.	.0	.0	16.1	62. 5	21.4	.0	.0	6.3	75. 0	18.8	.0	.0	7.7	76.9	15.4
Women should join mentoring programs that involve male mentors because they are more effective than mentoring program involve female mentors.	32.5	45. 0	17.5	5.0	.0	23.1	38. 5	15.4	.0	23.1	.0	50.0	50.0	.0	.0

Table 4 (Cont.)

Strategy Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA	SD	D	N	A	SA
Women should communicate with male networks.	.0	8.8	24.6	54.4	12.3	.0	5.9	17.6	70.6	5.9	.0	.0	21.4	64.3	14.3
Women should network with people from different school districts.	.0	3.5	8.8	59.6	28.1	.0	17.6	11.8	47.1	23.5	.0	.0	7.1	42.9	50.0

Appendix C: Administrators Interview Protocol (Rural School Districts)



Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Barriers and Facilitators to Career Advancement by Top-Level, Entry-Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study

Principal Investigator: Eman Ahmed – Graduate Student

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Advisor: Dr. Roger Shouse

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- 1- **Purpose of the study:** purpose of this study is to investigate the barriers and facilitators to career advancement among women administrators occupying top-level positions (i.e. superintendents and high school principals) and those occupying entry-level positions (i.e. assistant superintendent & assistant principal) and those in non-administrative positions (i.e. teachers) in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania.
- 2- **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer some questions during the interview. The interviews will be recorded. The recordings will be stored in a locked file.

Only the principal investigator will have access to the recordings which will be destroyed after three years.

- 3- **Benefits:** This research might provide better understanding of what barriers to women's career advancement exist, how salient each barrier is for preventing women from entering school administration at different levels, and how these barriers differ based on demographic location. Also, women's perceptions as school leaders of the barriers to upward mobility and the strategies used for overcoming these barriers have value and that knowledge should be disseminated to male leaders, other professional women, policy makers, and employers.
- 4- **Duration:** The interview will approximately take an hour.
- 5- **Statement of confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The survey does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared because your name is in no way linked to your responses.
- 6- **Right to ask questions:** Please contact Eman Ahmed at (814) 237-2191 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research.
- 7- **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Your participation in the interview implies your consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Topic: Barriers and Facilitators to Career Advancement by Top-Level, Entry- Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study.

Time of Interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Place of Interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

ID Code: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Purpose of the interview: The purpose of this interview is to investigate the perceptions to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Your participation in this study is of course voluntary. Your confidentiality is assured. The use of this data will be only limited to this study.

Questions:

- 1- Could you begin by telling me a little about your teaching experience and your administrative career and how did you get this position?
- 2- What is it like to be a woman administrator in a rural school setting?
- 3- One of the things that I would like you to think and write about as you are trying to move into this administrative position: Was it easy or hard? Were there any difficulties personally or professionally that are unique to the rural school setting e.g. role conflict, selection strategies, community and school support?
- 4- Provide example of one of the barriers which affected you and how?

- 5- How did you overcome this barrier?
- 6- Do you think that these barriers still exist and are there any other barriers that women today encounter that you did not?
- 7- What was your experience like as an administrator with family responsibilities? Describe the balance that you were trying to achieve.
- 8- What women administrators that you have supervised one day are feeling about role conflict and what they were trying to do to keep their life balanced?
- 9- My survey indicated that women in rural school setting do not have support from the community setting, that women have limited opportunities to represent their leadership skills, and that women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities. What do think about that? Can you provide me with some examples?
- 10- Can you comment on the importance of each one of the following facilitators to help you occupy this administrative position in a rural school setting?
 - Certification and degrees
 - Mentoring programs
 - Networking male vs. female
 - Role model male vs. female
 - Sponsorship

Appendix D: Administrators Interview Protocol (Urban School Districts)

Topic: Barriers and Facilitators to Career Advancement by Top-Level, Entry- Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study

Time of Interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Place of Interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

ID Code: _____

Position of Interviewee: _____

Purpose of the Interview: The purpose of this interview is to investigate the perceptions to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Your participation in this study is of course voluntary. Your confidentiality is assured. The use of this data will be only limited to this study.

Questions:

- 11- Could you begin by telling me a little about your teaching experience and your administrative career and how did you get this position?
- 12- What is like to be a woman administrator in an urban school setting?
- 13- One of the things that I would like you to think and write about as you are trying to move into this administrative position: Was it easy or hard? Were there any difficulties personally or professionally that are unique to the rural school setting e.g. role conflict, selection strategies, community and school support?
- 14- Provide example of one of the barriers which affected you and how?

15- How did you overcome this barrier?

16- Do you think that these barriers still exist and are there any other barriers that women today encounter that you did not?

17- What was your experience like as an administrator with family responsibilities? Describe the balance that you were trying to achieve.

18- What women administrators that you have supervised one day are feeling about role conflict and what they were trying to do to keep their life balanced?

19- My survey indicated that women in urban school have limited opportunities to represent their leadership skills, and that women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities. What do think about that? Can you provide me with some examples?

20- Can you comment on the importance of each one of the following facilitators to help you occupy this administrative position in a rural school setting?

- Certification and degrees
- Mentoring programs
- Networking male vs. female
- Role model male vs. female
- Sponsorship

Appendix E- Teachers' Interview Protocol (Rural School Districts)

Topic: Barriers and Facilitators to career advancement by Top-Level, Entry- Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study

Time of interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Place of interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

ID code: _____

Position of Interviewee: Teacher

Purpose of the interview: The purpose of this interview is to investigate the perceptions to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Your participation in this study is of course voluntary. Your confidentiality is assured. The use of this data will be only limited to this study.

Questions:

- 1- Have you ever given any consideration into moving into an administrative position?
- 2- Could you tell me a little about your teaching experience?
3. As you think of women that desire to move into administrative positions, do you see any barriers that they may face?
 - 3- Provide example of one of the barriers which affected you and how?
 - 4- My survey indicated that women in rural school setting do not have support from the community setting, that women have limited opportunities to represent their leadership

skills, and that women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities. What do think about that? Can you provide me with some examples?

5- Can you comment on the importance of each one of the following facilitators to help you occupy this administrative position in a rural school setting?

- Certification and degrees
- Mentoring programs
- Networking male vs. female
- Role model male vs. female
- Sponsorship

Appendix F: Teachers' Interview Protocol (Urban School Districts)

Topic: Barriers and Facilitators to career advancement by Top-Level, Entry- Level and Non-Administrative Women in Public School Districts: A Mixed Methods Study

Time of interview: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Place of interview: _____

Interviewer: _____

ID code: _____

Position of Interviewee: Teacher

Purpose of the Interview: The purpose of this interview is to investigate the perceptions to career advancement among women occupying top-level positions, those occupying entry-level positions and those in non-administrative positions in both rural and urban public school districts in central Pennsylvania. Your participation in this study is of course voluntary. Your confidentiality is assured. The use of this data will be only limited to this study.

Questions:

- 1- Have you ever given any consideration into moving into an administrative position?
- 2- Could you tell me a little about your teaching experience?
3. As you think of women that desire to move into administrative positions, do you see any barriers that they may face?
 - 3- Provide example of one of the barriers which affected you and how?
 - 4- My survey indicated that teachers in urban school setting do not have support from the community setting, that society forces women to endure the brunt of career and personal

lives, and that women have limited opportunities of location mobility due to personal responsibilities. What do think about that? Can you provide me with some examples?

- 5- Do you think that women do not aspire or have a fear of failing upon occupying administrative positions?
- 6- Can you comment on the importance of each one of the following facilitators to help you occupy this administrative position in a rural school setting?
 - Certification and degrees
 - Mentoring programs
 - Networking male vs. female
 - Role model male vs. female
 - Sponsorship

Vita

Eman Ahmed

Education:

Ph.D in Education, The Pennsylvania State University, 2011.

Graduate School Teaching Certificate, the Pennsylvania State University, February 2011.

Teaching with Technology Certificate, the Pennsylvania State University, March 2010.

M.A. in Education with High Distinction, Menoufia University, Egypt, 2005.

Two Years Diploma in Education, with high distinction, Menoufia University, Egypt, 2000-2002.

Honors Bachelor of Arts, with High Distinction, 1st class in English and Comparative Literature, College of Liberal Arts, Menoufia University, Egypt, 2000-2002.

Honors Bachelor of Education with High Distinction, 1st class in English, College of Education, Menoufia University, Egypt, 1997- 2000.

Employment Record:

Graduate Lecturer, the Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2008- present.

Graduate Lecturer, Life Long Learning Centre, the Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2011.

Lecturer in Education, Menoufia University, Egypt, 2002- 2006.

Teacher of English as a Second Language, Educational Language School, Egypt, 2000-2002.

Professional Activities:

Editorial Board: Higher Education in Review, College of Education, the Pennsylvania State University, 2011-present.

Reader: Critical Scholarship Program, Council of American Overseas Research Centers, Washington DC 2008-present.