A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE

SELECTION OF SCHOOL

SUPERINTENDENTS

By

DAVID KIRK PENNINGTON

Bachelor of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1977

Master of Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma
1981

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Thesis Approved:

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Thesis Advisor

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_____

Wayne B. Powell

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER ONE

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Independent School District No. 45 of Kay County Oklahoma does not

discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment on the

basis of race, color, sex, age, disability, or national origin.

This statement is found on the back page of an application for a school district in

North Central Oklahoma. Besides appearing on the application form, it also appears on

bulletin boards throughout the school district. This statement serves two purposes. First,

the statement brings the school district into compliance with federal law that prohibits

discrimination in employment practices. Second, the statement serves as a promise to all

applicants that they will be evaluated on their individual merits as an applicant and not on

their skin color, gender, race, age, disabilities, or national origin.

Individuals who are members of a minority group know that there is a difference

between the promise of equal treatment and the reality of equal treatment in the

workplace. The difference between the promise of equal treatment and the reality of

equal treatment is especially evident in senior management positions. As the decade of

the 1990's began, 95% of the senior management positions of Fortune 1500 companies

were held by men (Burbridge, 1994). The lack of women in top management positions is

called the glass ceiling. It was in a 1986 Wall Street Journal article that the term "glass

ceiling" gained notoriety. In the article, "glass ceiling" was used to describe the invisible

barriers that women confront as they approach the top of the corporate ladder. Since the

establishment of the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission by the Civil Rights Act of 1991,

the term "glass ceiling" has been used to describe the invisible barriers that have blocked

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the advancement of all minorities into decision-making positions (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

The existence of a glass ceiling is not limited to the corporate world. The thickest glass ceiling may exist in our nation's public schools where 73% of the classroom teachers are women and 96% of the superintendencies are held by men. The lack of women in the superintendency has caused the U.S. Census Bureau to label "the public school superintendency as the most male dominated of any of the executive positions" (Glass, 1993, p. 39).

It should come as no surprise that the glass ceiling that exists in public education is evident in Oklahoma school districts. At the beginning of this decade (90-91), there were eight women serving as superintendents of independent school districts in the state of Oklahoma. Seven years later, the number of women holding superintendencies increased from eight to 20. While 20 women superintendents is a 250% increase in the number of women serving as superintendents of independent school districts, it still represents less than 5% of Oklahoma's 433 independent school districts.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the existence of state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender, there exists a glass ceiling that prevents women from rising to the superintendency in the public schools (Glass, 1992). This anomaly is similar to those reported by Braddock (1980), McPartland and Braddock (1981), and Wells and Crain (1994) in their research of racial segregation in public education. The authors used Granovetter's notion of strong and weak ties to explain the progress of desegregation. The authors determined that traditional views of segregation were strengthened by strong

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ties while weak ties provided individuals with a bridge to new views and social ideas that led to integration. Strong ties are characterized by relationships with family and close friends. Weak ties are characterized by relationships with acquaintances or friends of friends. Through the lens of Perpetuation Theory, the perpetuation of traditional superintendent hiring practices would be explained through the existence of strong ties between school board members and male applicants and through the lack of weak ties between school board members and female applicants.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of school board members and the impact of these strong and weak ties on the selection of school superintendents. Specifically, this was accomplished by the following:

1. Collection of data documenting the history of the superintendency for each district under study and process and rationale of the each districts most recent search for a superintendent;

2. Analysis of the data against Granovetter's (1973) network and tie characteristics of time, intimacy, intensity, and reciprocity;

3. Reporting components of board member social networks or ties which are inconsistent with Granovetter's (1973) conceptual realities; and

4. Assessment of the usefulness of Perpetuation Theory as a lens for exploring these realities.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981). Perpetuation Theory was developed by Braddock (1980) and

McPartland and Braddock (1981) to explain the continued segregation of black Americans after the civil rights movement and after the implementation of school desegregation in the 1960's and 1970's. McPartland and Braddock (1981) discovered a relationship between the willingness of black Americans to live and work in desegregated settings, their age when they first experienced desegregation, and the length of the desegregation experience. From their research, McPartland and Braddock (1981) found that the segregation of black Americans perpetuated itself "across the stages of the life cycle and across institutions when individuals have not had sustained experiences in desegregated settings earlier in life" (p. 149). Because of the lack of "sustained experiences in desegregated settings" (p. 149), minority students were more likely to make choices perpetuating physical segregation. Braddock (1980) believed this occurred because in segregated settings minority students were never given an opportunity to test their racial beliefs. While sustained experiences in segregated settings early in life tended to perpetuate segregation, sustained experiences in desegregated settings led black high school students to choose to attend predominately white colleges.

Wells and Crain (1994) used the notion of network analysis to expand Braddock's Perpetuation Theory. To develop their notion of network analysis, Wells and Crain (1994) linked Perpetuation Theory with Granovetter's (1973, 1983, 1986) strong ties and weak ties. According to Granovetter (1973, 1983, 1986), a close relationship between individuals with similar thoughts and beliefs resulted in the development of strong ties. Typically, strong ties are characteristic of the relationships between family members and close friends. Granovetter (1973) described weak ties as a "less formal interpersonal network- that is, acquaintances or friends of friends" (p. 533). Granovetter

(1973) pointed out that weak ties were important because they linked individuals to "new socially distant ideas and are more likely to link members of different small groups" (p. 1376). Because weak ties traveled a greater social distance and reached a larger number of people, they played a significant role in networking by providing people with more opportunities (Granovetter, 1973).

Wells and Crain (1994) used network analysis to explain why black students who attended desegregated high schools were more likely to attend predominantly white colleges. Additionally, they asserted that segregation was perpetuated across generations because of "African Americans' lack of access to informal networks" (p. 534). Access to informal networks was crucial because informal networks provided "information about and entrance to desegregated institutions" (p. 534).

While Perpetuation Theory was specifically developed to explain the continued existence of racial segregation, this study shows that it could also be used to explain gender discrimination. The crux of Perpetuation Theory was that segregation continues to occur because minorities (women) do not have sustained access, at an early enough time, to an environment (district administration) that has been desegregated. Typically, Perpetuation Theory research was done from the perspective of the segregated minority. In this study, Perpetuation Theory was used as a lens to view the actions of local boards of education in the superintendent selection process.

Procedures

Tradition has progressed beyond qualitative vs. quantitative debates to a recognition that researchers must match research methods with research questions. The choice of qualitative methods is appropriate for some fundamental questions about

education (Marshall, 1985).

Researcher

I have been a superintendent in North Central Oklahoma for four years. Before becoming a superintendent, I worked in two other school districts, one in Northeast Kansas and the other in Eastern Oklahoma. My first experience in education was in Northeastern Kansas for seven years as a classroom teacher and coach. My second experience was in Eastern Oklahoma for six years as a classroom teacher/coach and for four years in administration positions, including assistant middle school principal, assistant high school principal, director of federal programs, and assistant superintendent.

My interest in the superintendent selection process began with my selection to the superintendency in the summer of 1995. The Oklahoma State Department of Education required all first year superintendents to attend a series of meetings during their first year of employment as a school superintendent. During my first year as a superintendent, there were 42 members of the class. Of that number, six were women. Of these six women, only one was the superintendent of a K-12 school district. Two of the women were interim superintendents, two were superintendents of dependent schools, and one was a superintendent of a regional vo-tech school. As we met throughout the year, I became aware that the women in our group were better educated, older, and had more administrative experience than many of the males in the group. The women also, as a group, had been trying longer to become superintendents.

Case Study Method

The explanatory case study method (Yin, 1984) was used to reconstruct the selection of a superintendent in four Midwestern school districts. The explanatory case

study method is generally used by researchers to answer the how and why questions. The objective of an explanatory case study is to present "competing explanations for the same set of events and to indicate how such explanations may apply to other situations" (Yin, 1984, p.16). The researcher in a case study is dependent on the wisdom and assistance of seasoned researchers. While there are a few simple guidelines there are no fixed procedures or rules that the researcher is required to endure (Merriam, 1988). The case study report provides a thick description of the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Site Selection

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in this study. In purposive sampling, the researcher decides who and what will fit the basic purpose of the study and which other options will be eliminated (Merriam, 1988). Individual participants in this study were selected on the basis of what they could contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study.

This study included four case studies. The sites consisted of four different school districts in a Midwestern state that had selected a new superintendent of schools for the 1997-98 or the 1998-99 school year. Sites were selected based on the gender of the school board president and the superintendent of schools. One school district had a female superintendent and a female board president, one school district had a female superintendent and a male board president, one school district had a male superintendent and a female board president, and one school district had a male superintendent and a male board president. Two board members from each site were selected to participate in the study. Board presidents at each site were interviewed. The other member of the

board of education to be interviewed was selected based on recommendations of the board president and the superintendent of schools.

Data Collection Needs

McCracken (1988) writes that "the long interview gives us the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9). The purpose of this study was to find out what effect board member social networks had on the selection of school superintendents. Since the effect could not be directly observed, the long interview method was the primary source of gathering data. The use of the long interview method allowed me to see and experience the superintendent selection process as they (board members) did themselves. During the interview process, I continually assessed and evaluated the data collected. This allowed me to redirect, to probe, and to review the line of inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). The Institutional Review Board approval form required for all studies involving human subjects is included as Appendix A.

An open-ended format was used to conduct the interviews. This format allowed for dialogue and interaction. Through the structure of a series of questions, the respondent was able to reconstruct the past and interpret the future (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through the interview process I was able to "understand and put into larger context the interpersonal, social, and cultural aspects of the environment" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 85). The interview protocol is included as Appendix B.

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by another individual to protect against my assumptions and biases. In addition to the audio recording, I made notes during the interviews. I also reviewed board policy manuals.

The primary instrument for data collection and analysis was me as the researcher. The reader is acquainted with the respondents' insights, assumptions, and beliefs through my interpretations and constructions of what occurred in the interview (Merriam, 1988).

Data Analysis

In a qualitative design, the researcher must analyze data throughout the data collection process. Continuous analyzing is necessary because it is through the analysis of data that a researcher discovers where next to look, who next to interview, or what next to ask (Merriam, 1988). Data were analyzed simultaneously throughout data collection.

The lens of Perpetuation Theory was used to view the data and to reveal influences on the superintendent selection process. Information was coded into conceptual categories. Questions developed through the conceptual categories guided further investigation. Findings from the investigations were compared to the original categories. Because of the constant comparison of data, two analytical categories were discovered. Categories were defined based on recurring regularities in the data. The two categories were board member social networks and the impact of board member networks.

Research Criteria

For a qualitative study to be considered trustworthy specific research criteria must be met. These criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified credibility as the relationship between the

constructed realities generated by the respondents and the interpretation and transmittance of those realities by the researcher. Erlandson et al. (1993) identified two steps necessary to establish the credibility of the research data. First, I must separate myself and my biases from the data. Second, I must attempt to accurately depict what the research subject had submitted.

Credibility was achieved by the use of member checks and peer debriefing. I conducted member checks with those people serving as data sources by summarizing the data and providing the opportunity for the respondent to challenge interpretations or modify factual mistakes. Respondents were allowed to test categories, interpretations and conclusions of the inquiry throughout and upon completion of the study. Peer debriefing allowed an outside professional to analyze the study and provide feedback. Peer debriefing allowed the outside professional to challenge findings and conclusions and to refine and redirect the process of the study as necessary (Erlandson et al., 1993). Dr. Adrienne Hyle, my dissertation advisor, served as this professional.

Transferability

The degree to which a study's findings can be applied in other situations or with other respondents is known as transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If there were similarities between the sending context and the receiving context, the study would be transferable. Transferability was facilitated by thick description and purposive sampling. The use of thick description allows other researchers to determine the relevance of certain observations for their contexts and situations. From these observations the researchers may form hypotheses to guide their line of inquiry (Erlandson et al., 1993). When using thick description, the goal of the author is to describe and report contextual

data with enough detail and accuracy to allow readers to recreate the scene in their minds. In order to provide thick description, I was sensitive to my surroundings, interactions, and reactions. I was also sensitive to my verbal and nonverbal communications. Because of the accuracy of the descriptions I have provided of the context of this study, the readers could put themselves in my place (Erlandson et al., 1993). Through the use of purposive sampling, I was able to select the sample to fit the purpose of the study. I chose individuals to participate in this study based on two criteria. The first criteria was the individual's ability to provide insights and understanding of the phenomenon under study. The second criteria was the individual's ability to provide typical and divergent data (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Dependability

The consistency of results was referred to as dependability. For a study to meet the dependability standard, the process used in the study must be reliable and trackable. The reliability and trackability of the process are verified by the audit trail. The audit trail provides a detailed record of the process of the study (Erlandson et al., 1993)

A reflexive journal, consisting of three sections, was used to communicate dependability. The three sections were a daily schedule, a methodological log, and a personal diary focusing on my reactions to the study. I kept a weekly journal describing the facts of the interviews and observations (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Confirmability

The last criteria necessary for a qualitative study to be considered trustworthy is confirmability. Erlandson et al. (1993) writes: "The naturalistic researcher does not attempt to ensure that observations are free from contamination by the researcher but

rather to trust in the confirmability of the data themselves" (p. 34). A study meets the test of confirmability to the degree which its results are the product of the focus inquiry not the biases of the researcher.

The audit trail was used to demonstrate confirmability. I have provided an audit trail of interview transcripts, tapes, notes, analysis, reflexive journal and other documents.

Significance

The findings of this study should be applicable to three arenas: theory, research and practice.

Theory

Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock (1981) asserted that minorities who were not exposed to an integrated setting early enough or for a long enough time period tended to remain segregated for the rest of their lives. The findings of this study should add to, confirm, or refute these theoretical or conceptual assertions when applied to a different minority group -- women in the superintendency.

Research

Little research on superintendent selection exists. This study will help educators, school boards, and others who see similar realities understand the influences at work during the selection of district superintendents. The research base will be broadened through this effort.

Practice

Understanding the influences which impede the genuine consideration and review of all candidates for superintendencies nationally, has the potential to bring about improvement of practice in public education. This study will help educators understand

the useful link between theory and the improvement of practice.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways social networks affected the selection of school superintendents. The lens of Perpetuation Theory was used for viewing and understanding the effect of social networks on superintendent selection. Qualitative methods allowed for a thick description of the realities of the effect of social networks on the selection of superintendents.

Reporting

Chapter Two reviews the literature. Chapter Three presents the data collected in the form of four case reports. Chapter Four provides an analysis and interpretation of the reports. Chapter Five includes the summary, implications, conclusions, and discussion.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Despite the existence of state and federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender, there exists a glass ceiling that prevents women from rising to the superintendency in the public schools of the United States (Glass, 1992). The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of board member social networks on the selection of school superintendents. To give the reader an understanding of the dynamics that exist in superintendent selection, this chapter provides a review of the literature in three areas. The first section reviews the literature related to the superintendency, including superintendent demographics, women superintendents, and school board selection of the superintendent. The second section reviews literature related to the law and gender discrimination, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, judicial interpretation of Title VII, Title VII and public schools, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and the Glass Ceiling Commission. The third section reviews the literature related to social networks, including networking.

The Superintendency

The history of the school superintendency is directly intertwined with the growth of American cities. When the first census was taken in 1790, only five American cities had populations of 8,000 or more. The schools were supervised by the entire community or by representative officers. Selectmen, wardens, and overseers were typical of the existing community officers given the task of supervising the schools. In the typical community school, supervision consisted of securing a building, providing fuel, and hiring a master (teacher); (Gilland, 1935).

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Between 1820 and 1850, two events occurred that would change the administration of schools in the United States. First, American cities experienced a tremendous growth in population. Americans living in cities with populations of more than 8,000 increased from 4.9% of the population in 1820 to 12% in 1850 (Gilland, 1935). Second, a state supported system of free public schools for all children was created. The creation of tax supported free public schools brought with it an increase in students and increased state oversight and control (Cubberley, 1922). The increase in student population and state oversight and control made it impossible for city officials, who had other responsibilities, to supervise the schools. Cities responded to the need for more supervision by appointing Boards of Education to oversee the public schools (Cubberley, 1922; Griffiths, 1966). The early boards were responsible for the entire school operation: the maintenance of school buildings and grounds; the examination and employment of teachers and janitors; the purchase of textbooks, supplies, and furniture; and the selection of the course of instruction. As the cities and the schools within them grew, Boards of Education became overwhelmed by the complex problems of school administration and supervision. The boards began to lobby the public for the authority to give the schools professional leadership and assistance (Gilland, 1935).

In 1847 the commissioner of the Baltimore Public Schools complained that the supervision of schools was taking more time away from their businesses than commissioners could spare. In his report, the commissioner argued that the founders of the school system never intended for commissioners to be responsible for such a large and complex system. The report then called for a "superintendent who could give all of his time to the duties of his office" Annual Report of Commissioners of Public Schools

study (as cited in Gilland, 1935, p. 9). The president of the Detroit Board of Education, in his 1860 annual school report, asked for the authority to appoint a superintendent because the schools "are too numerous, inspectors are not preforming their duties, and board members have business interests that require their constant attention" Annual Report of the Public Schools study (as cited in Gilland, 1935, p. 11). Three years later in 1863, and still without a superintendent, the board included this statement in its annual report: "It is absurd for the public to expect the members of the board to neglect private business interests to have time to devote to the management of the schools" Annual Report of the Public Schools study (as cited in Gilland, 1935, p. 27).

In its 1847 annual report, the Boston School Committee submitted a subcommittee report identifying 14 reasons why a superintendent should be hired. The feelings of this subcommittee were typical of other school committees and school boards before their appointment of a superintendent:

There is now no one whose duty it is to find the best and most economical plans for school houses, their ventilation and warming, and their apparatus, seats, desks, and other furniture.

There is no one to look out for the best teacher, when a vacancy occurs, or in preparation for a vacancy.

There is no one to find out what is the most successful teaching in all the schools, and to point it out for the benefit of all; or to aid, advise, or cooperate with any teacher who is pursuing, or who may wish to pursue, an improved but untried plan of instruction and discipline....

There is now no individual or body to exercise the complete supervision of

the schools which is needed, or to examine them as throughly as they require.

Annual Report School Committee study (as cited in Griffiths, 1966, p. 7-8)

Since the time of the initial cries of overwhelmed school board members, the superintendency has become an accepted part of the American educational system. The superintendency has been described as

A product of growth and out of necessity it was fashioned; it was not born. It was unraveled; it was not conceived. . . . As a model began to take shape in large cities, it was copied indiscriminately by smaller communities. By the turn of the twentieth century, the superintendency enjoyed almost universal acceptance. (Wilson, 1960 p. 27)

In the 162 years since the appointment of the first superintendent in Louisville Kentucky in 1837, the position has grown to more than 15,000 public school superintendents today. Not only has the number of superintendents changed since the inception of the position in 1837, but also, the role of the superintendent has changed. The first superintendents were responsible primarily for the school instructional program (Gilland, 1935). Superintendents were viewed by the public as the school district's master teacher and the leader of the teachers and the students in the district (Candoli, 1995). They did not do everything, however, school finance, business operations, hiring of teachers, and the other management functions of the school district were still under the control of the Board of Education (Griffiths, 1966).

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the role of the school superintendent began to change. As school boards developed more confidence in the position of the superintendency, they turned more of the administration of the school district over to the

superintendent (Griffiths, 1966). By the early twentieth century, Boards of Education had

been reduced in size and superintendents were being recognized as their school district's

chief executive officer and expert manager of the school system (Candoli, 1995;

Griffiths,1966). As the twenty-first century nears, the role of the superintendent is

changing again. Today, the superintendent must be a consensus builder, planner,

communicator, visionary, and competent manager (Candoli, 1995).

Public education has undergone many dramatic changes during the last 162 years.

The position of superintendent has grown in stature and power. One aspect of the

superintendency has not changed. The superintendency today, just like the

superintendency in 1837, is a position that is dominated by men.

Superintendent Demographics

With the exception of the 1940's because of WWII, the American Association of

School Administrators (AASA) has conducted a nation wide survey of superintendents

every ten years since 1922. The 1992 study consisted of a stratified random nationwide

survey of a sample of 2,536 superintendents. The 1,724 superintendents who responded

to the survey represented slightly more than 11% of the superintendents nationwide

(Glass, 1992).

Glass (1992) found that the typical school superintendent began his educational

career as a secondary (71%) social studies (19.1%) teacher. Social studies was followed

by science (11%), math (9.3%), and English (9.2%) as the beginning teaching fields for

superintendents. The typical superintendent spent five years or less as a classroom

teacher (46.5%), served as an athletic coach or athletic director (57%), and entered

administration before the age of thirty (55%); (Glass, 1992; Schuster & Foote, 1990).

Secondary principal was the beginning administrative position for most superintendents (41.7%), followed by assistant principal (30.3%). The typical career path for superintendents in 1992 was from secondary classroom teacher to secondary building principal to the central office staff to the superintendency (37.7%); (Glass, 1992). Education was the undergraduate major for most superintendents (25.3%) followed closely by the social sciences (22.6%). Education administration was the major for most of the superintendents who held a masters degree (59.2%) or a doctorate (88.9%). Since 1982, the percentage of superintendents holding doctoral degrees rose from 28% to 36 % (Glass, 1992).

One of the most striking demographics in the makeup of the school superintendency was the percentage of positions held by men. Approximately 96% of the superintendents in the United States were men (Glass, 1992). Despite the low numbers of women in the superintendency, women were an important part of the literature of the superintendency.

Women Superintendents

Glass (1992) documented many differences and some similarities between male and female superintendents. A higher percentage of female superintendents possessed a doctoral degree (41.1%), had been elementary school teachers (55%), had been elementary principals (34%), and had served in school districts as curriculum directors or supervisors of instruction (38%). The majority of female superintendents (39.4%) followed the same career path to the superintendency as males: teacher, principal, central office staff, superintendent. A significant number of female superintendents (19.4 %) began their careers as teachers and moved directly to the central office and then to the

superintendency (Glass, 1992).

Female superintendents served longer as classroom teachers with 46.1% having taught between six and ten years. Female superintendents were older when they received their first administrative position with 35% having been between the ages of 31-35. Only 13% of female superintendents had served school districts as coaches or athletic directors (Glass, 1992; Schuster & Foote, 1990).

While the differences in teaching experience, administrative experience, and career path are important, some would argue that the most important difference between male and female superintendents is in the number of superintendencies held by each. In 1909 soon after being named as the superintendent of the Chicago public schools, Ella Flagg Young predicted that "women are destined to rule the schools of every city" (Shakeshaft, 1989, p.18). Ninety years later, the reality of the superintendency is quite different. Women may rule the classroom, where 73% of all teachers are women, but the boardroom is ruled by men who hold 93.4% of the superintendencies in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992; Glass, 1992).

Blount (1998) traces women in the superintendency. From her research, we learn that between 1910 and 1950 women consistently held between 9% and 11% of all of the superintendent positions in the United States. This includes county superintendencies, state superintendencies, elementary (a school district without a high school) school district superintendencies, and independent (a school district with a high school) school district superintendencies. Between 1950 and 1970, the percentage of women holding superintendencies fell to 3%. From 1970 to 1990, the percentage of women holding superintendencies increased to between 3% and 5%.

Blount's (1998) study paints an even grimmer picture when the data for

independent school districts is examined by itself. In 1910, women held 6.9% of the

nation's independent school district superintendencies. By 1970, the percentage of

independent school district superintendencies held by women had fallen to .7%. This

dramatic drop occurred even though the number of independent school districts, and the

superintendents needed to lead them, doubled between 1910 and 1970. By 1990, the

percentage of independent school district superintendencies held by women had increased

to 3.9%.

Education, successful teaching, and administrative experience are important in the

preparation of school superintendents. The key to becoming a superintendent is not,

however, in education or experience. The key to the superintendency in any community

is held by a very small group of individuals: the board of education (Hoard & Ester, 1993;

Wildman, 1998; Zakariya; 1987; Matika, 1985).

School Board Selection of the Superintendent

"The selection of the school superintendent is the most important decision the

board. . . will make regarding the quality of education offered in a given community"

(Hoard & Ester, 1993, p. 84). This statement, written as an introduction to a study of

superintendent selection, is echoed throughout the superintendent selection literature.

The literature on superintendent selection falls into three categories. These

categories are: how school boards should conduct their superintendent search, what

characteristics school boards want in a superintendent, and what factors have the greatest

influence on the board decision to hire a superintendent.

How school districts should conduct their superintendent search makes up the

largest body of superintendent selection literature. Most of these articles are published in

the American School Board Journal, a publication of the National School Board

Association. Usually written by board members, search consultants, and sometimes

superintendents, articles report the methods used by school boards in their most recent

superintendent search. Typically, these articles give suggestions, based on experience,

on how to select a superintendent. The articles also discuss with whom the board should

work in the selection process. Should the board use search consultants or conduct their

own search? What things should the board consider during the search? What can a

school board expect from a search consultant? Wildman (1988) advises boards of

education to conduct their own search. He believes that by conducting their own search,

the board will save the taxpayers' money and foster teamwork among the members of the

board. Matika (1991) provides readers with 10 suggestions for boards to consider during

the superintendent search. He advises boards of education to establish qualifications,

work diligently, and refrain from criticizing the former superintendent. Zakariya (1987)

advises school boards on the use of search consultants. She tells school boards what

services they should expect for the fees paid and how to evaluate the size of a

consultant's network.

The second leading body of literature discusses the characteristics and skills that

school boards desire in superintendents. From this research, one learns that school boards

want a superintendent who is skilled in administration, school finance, and public

relations (Chand, 1987; Miklos, 1988). School boards also want superintendents to be

knowledgeable in curriculum, staffing, and school board operations (Powell, 1984;

Robertson, 1984). And school districts want their superintendent to have a good

personality, be of good character, be an educational leader, and have good physical and mental health (Haughland, 1987; Miklos, 1988).

The third body of literature deals with factors that influence a school board's decision to select a particular individual to be their superintendent. Anderson and Lavid (1985) conducted a study of 60 Missouri school districts that hired a new superintendent for the 1984-85 school year. They identified (1) the manner in which the candidate responded to interview questions, (2) the background check of the candidate's former positions, (3) the concern expressed for student academic achievement in the district, and (4) the self-confidence exhibited by the candidate during the interview as the four factors that played a very important role in the school board's final selection decision. In this same study, board members identified physical and mental health, grooming and personal manner of dress, grades in college courses, personal reference letters, and sense of humor as factors that were important in the school board's selection decision. Factors that the study identified as being unimportant were age, recognition and awards, martial status, and numbers and types of publications that a candidate had written (Anderson & Lavid, 1985).

Alkire (1984) conducted a four year study of small schools in the North Central Plains States with student enrollments of between 500 and 1,500 students. The study identified five steps that school districts went through in the superintendent selection process. First, school districts developed a "want list of desirable traits" (Alkire, 1984, p. 2). Second, school districts advertised the position. Third, school districts screened applications. Fourth, school districts conducted interviews. Fifth, school districts selected one candidate to hire. The average school district received 32 applications and

developed a checklist to screen applications. The characteristics deemed most important

by boards in the screening process were leadership ability, budgetary knowledge,

organizational ability, and communication skills. The typical board selected six

applicants to interview. The study did not report what influences the characteristics used

to screen applicants had on the final selection of a superintendent (Alkire, 1984).

When a board of education is conducting a search for a superintendent, it may

consider many factors. Some factors that a board may consider are a candidate's

education, experience, health, references, and educational leadership. One factor that the

board of education may not consider is a candidate's gender.

<div align="center">The Law and Gender Discrimination</div>

The section reviewed literature related to the law and gender discrimination. The

focus of the discussion was Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, judicial

interpretation of Title VII, Title VII and public schools, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and

the Glass Ceiling Act.

<u>Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964</u>

Thirty-five years ago, Congress passed, and President Johnson signed, the Civil

Rights Act of 1964. This act was the most "comprehensive attempt since the civil war to

guarantee enjoyment of certain rights and privileges without regard to color or national

origin" (Jacklin, 1981, p. 60). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifically prohibited

discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in education, public

accommodations, employment, and any program that received federal assistance. The

section of the legislation that drew the most opposition was Title VII. The purpose of

Title VII was to end discrimination in employment. In an attempt to kill Title VII, the

chairman of the House Rules Committee, Howard Smith (D VA), offered an amendment that added <u>sex</u> to the list of prohibited employment biases. Smith believed that his amendment would derail Title VII because of the deep divisions within the women's rights movement (Franke, 1995).

The addition of <u>sex</u> to the language of Title VII did not prevent its passage, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law. For the first time, women had a federal law to support their demands for equal treatment in the workplace. Title VII made it an unlawful employment practice for an employer -

> (1) to fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to his compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex or national origin: or
>
> (2) to limit, segregate, or classify his employees or applicants for employment in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of individual, race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. (Civil Rights Act, 1964, p. 535)

Besides the law, women had a government agency, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), created by Congress, to insure the enforcement of Title VII (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

In Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Congress established a three-step process to decide if employment discrimination had occurred in an employment decision. In the first step, a complainant had to prove that he or she was a member of a protected

minority and that the employer was seeking applications for a position for which the complainant was qualified. The complainant had to also prove that he or she had applied for the position, the employer had rejected the complainant despite the complainant's qualifications, and the employer had continued to seek applications from persons possessing the same qualifications of the complainant. After successfully completing step one, the complainant was said to have established a case of discrimination.

The second step required the employer to offer a legitimate nondiscriminatory reason for not hiring the complainant. The employer could do this by "proving that the employment decision was based on a legitimate consideration and not on an illegitimate one such as sex or race" (Reilly v Board of Education, Common School District 14, New Berlin, Wisconsin, 1978, p. 993).

The third step occurred if the employer showed that the employment decision was based on legitimate considerations. At that time, the plaintiff was then be given the opportunity to provide evidence that the legitimate consideration submitted by the employer was just a cover for discrimination.

In our system of government, Congress passes legislation. The interpretation and application of legislation is left to the courts.

Judicial Interpretation of Title VII

The meaning and the application of Title VII in the workplace have been determined by a series of court cases decided between 1971 and 1990. The most important of these court cases was Griggs v Duke Power Company (1971). In this case, "the Supreme Court held that Title VII forbids not only practices adopted with a discriminatory motive, but also practices which, though adopted without discriminatory

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intent, have a discriminatory effect on minorities and women" (Legislative History, Civil Rights Act of 1991, p. 582). With this decision, the Supreme Court established that the consequence of employment practices was just as important as the intent of employment practices. In <u>Albemarle Paper Company v Moody</u> (1975) and <u>Hazlewood School District v United States</u> (1977), the court built upon the Griggs decision and established a set of legal principles to determine if employment practices that discriminated against women and minorities were violations of Title VII. To make this determination, the court established a three-pronged test.

First, the complainant had to prove that an employer action excluded a significant number of qualified women and minority applicants. Second, the employer was required to prove that the action in question was a business necessity. To meet the standard of business necessity, the employer had to produce evidence of business necessity and persuade the court that the practices used were predictive of successful job performance. Third, the employer had to give the complainant the opportunity to show that other options were available to the employer that were not discriminatory and that would serve the employer's legitimate interests (Albermarle v. Moody, 1975; Hazlewood v. United States, 1977).

When enacted in 1964, Title VII only applied to the federal government, labor unions, and businesses that had more than 15 employees. In 1972, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1972 and added state and local governments to the list of employers covered by Title VII. For the first time, school district employment practices were subject to federal law.

<u>Title VII and Public Schools</u>

Equipped with Title VII guarantees of equal employment opportunities, elementary and secondary teachers began to challenge discriminatory school district practices. Many court cases challenged school district maternity leave policies (Thompson v. Board of Education, 1981; Byrd v. Unified School District, 1978; Todhunter v. Cullman County, 1987). Through the courts and with the passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, women won the right to use sick days for maternity leave, to work as long as they and their doctor believed was medically safe, and to remove pregnancy or potential pregnancy as a consideration for employment, promotion, or retention.

While women had great success in challenging school district policies on teacher pregnancy, they had not been as successful in cases challenging district hiring and promotion practices. Women had a difficult time proving that the nondiscriminatory reasons offered by school districts for employment decisions were a cover for discriminatory intent.

In <u>Coble v Hot Springs School District No 6</u> (1982), a federal court ruled that attendance at work and experience in organizing workshops was a sufficient legitimate consideration to hire a male over a female applicant for a director of counseling position. In <u>Danzl v N. St. Paul-Maplewood Oakdale Independent School District</u> (1983), a federal court found that a school district decision to hire a male applicant with less administrative experience than a female applicant for a building principal position met the legitimate consideration criteria. The school district argued that they had met the legitimate consideration criteria based on the decision to select the male candidate based

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on the check of the applicant's references. The court ruled in Parker v The Board of School Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis (1984) that the desire to hire a more experienced or better qualified applicant is a nondiscriminatory, legitimate, and common reason on which to base a hiring decision and it meets the legitimate consideration criteria. In Willis v Chapel School District (1990), it was decided that a school district's consideration of leadership, ability, and stability were legitimate considerations for employment decisions.

The first sex discrimination case in administrator selection to reach the federal courts was Reilly v Board of Education, Common School District 14, New Berlin, Wisconsin (1978). The New Berlin School District was seeking a district music coordinator for the 1972-73 school year. The district developed a job description and advertised the position. Reilly, who was an employee of the district, applied for the position. Reilly was certified in vocal and instrumental music, had experience as a supervisor of music, had a doctorate degree, and had served as a dean of women at a local college. The district interviewed four candidates from within the district, three men and Reilly. The district selected one of the men to serve as the district music coordinator. Reilly filed a compliant of sex discrimination and was given permission to sue by the EEOC in 1975. At the trial, the school district argued that its decision was based on a legitimate consideration: the length of service of the applicants in the school district. Since length of service in the school district was not on the job description or in board policy, the court rejected this claim and found in favor of Reilly. The court ordered the district to install Reilly as the district music coordinator and to pay her compensatory damages.

In Faber v Massillon Board of Education (1990), a school board tried to hide its preference for a male in an administrative position by changing the selection criteria. The Massillon administration handbook stated that ten years of teaching experience were required before an individual could be a principal. Just prior to the posting of a principal position, the handbook was changed to require only four years of teaching experience. The district then selected a male candidate with eight years of teaching experience. When the case reached the courts, the school district argued that the years of experience were a subjective criteria that the board could change anytime. The court ruled in favor of Faber and said that a school district could not use subjective criteria to mask discriminatory action.

After 25 years of progress in equal employment opportunity, women and minorities were dealt a severe blow by the Supreme Court with its decisions in Wards Cove v Antonio (1989), and Price Waterhouse v Hopkins (1989). Congress quickly responded to what it believed was an attack on equal employment opportunity with the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

The Civil Rights Act of 1991

In 1989, the Supreme Court significantly weakened Title VII protections for women and minorities with its decisions in the cases of Wards Cove v Antonio (1989), and Price Waterhouse v Hopkins (1989). In Wards Cove the Supreme Court shifted the burden to prove business necessity away from the employer to the complainant. To successfully defend against a discrimination claim, all an employer had to do was produce evidence of a business necessity. The complainant had the burden of persuading the court that the practices of the employer were discriminatory. In Price Waterhouse, the court

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ruled that when the "plaintiff proves that gender played a motivating part in an employment decision the defendant may avoid a finding of liability by proving by a preponderance of the evidence that it would have made the same decision even if it had not taken the plaintiff's gender into account" (Price Waterhouse v Hopkins, 1989, p. 1795). With the Price Waterhouse decision, the court allowed employers to discriminate against employees or job applicants as long as the discrimination did not affect the employment decision.

In response to what they believed was a weakening of Title VII, the United States Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1991 which redefined business necessity to conform with the court's ruling in Griggs and placed the burden of proving business necessity back in the hands of the employer. To restore employment protection that was eroded in Price Waterhouse, Congress passed legislation that allowed employers to be held liable for discriminatory practices even if they could prove that the practices did not affect the employment decision (Civil Rights Act of 1991).

While congress was hearing testimony on the effects of Griggs and Price Waterhouse on discrimination in the workplace, evidence was presented that revealed an absence of women and other minorities in upper level management positions.

The Glass Ceiling Commission

In addition to legislation strengthening Title VII, Congress enacted the Glass Ceiling Act. Section 203 of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 established the Glass Ceiling Commission to

> conduct a study and prepare recommendations concerning (1) eliminating artificial barriers to the advancement of women and minorities, and

(2) increasing the opportunities and development experiences of women

and minorities to foster the advancement of women and minorities to

management and decision-making positions in business. (P. 535)

In 1995, the Glass Ceiling Commission issued its final report: <u>A Solid Investment:</u>

<u>Making Full use of the Nation's Human Capital</u>. The report detailed twelve

recommendations designed to "shatter the glass ceiling once and for all" (p. 13).

The recommendations were divided into two categories: recommendations for

business and recommendations for government. The Glass Ceiling Commission's

recommendations for business were as follows:

1. Demonstrate CEO commitment.

2. Include diversity in all strategic business plans and hold line managers

    accountable for progress.

3. Use affirmative action as a tool.

4. Select, promote, and retain qualified individuals.

5. Prepare minorities and women for senior positions.

6. Educate the corporate ranks.

7. Initiate work/life and family-friendly policies.

8. Adopt high-performance workplace practices.

These recommendations focused on the development of a "true merit system that allows

individuals to rise to the top based on their own skill and talent" (p. 16).

A similar set of recommendations were made by The Glass Ceiling Commission

for government:

1. Lead by example.

2. Strengthen enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.

3. Improve data collection.

4. Increase disclosure of diversity data.

These recommendations supported the continuation of efforts by the government to make "equal employment opportunity a reality for qualified minorities and women" (p. 32).

Approaching the beginning of the twenty-first century, women were still waiting for the full implementation of the equal employment opportunities promised by Title VII and the Glass Ceiling Act. One activity that many women hoped would help them gain equal access to employment opportunities was greater use of social networks.

Social Networks

Birds of a feather flock together. This colloquialism was used in the southern part of the United States to describe the tendency of individuals of similar taste and interest to stay together. A sociologist described the same phenomenon by saying that "social groups are not random samples of people" (McPherson, Popielarz, & Drobnic, 1992, p. 153). Sociologists developed social network theory to describe the relationships of the individuals that made up the social groups that existed throughout society.

A social network may be defined as a "set of personal contacts through which the individual maintains his social identity and receives emotional support, mutual aid, service information, and new social contacts" (Walker, McBride, and Vachon, 1977, p. 35). Social network theory assumed that there were numerous actors in a social system that interacted with each other. These actors served as significant reference points in the decision-making of other system actors. Within the social system, there existed different levels of structure. Among these levels there was a lasting pattern of relations.

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Information and resources were transferred through channels that existed because of the relationship of the actors in the social system. The relationship of the linkages (ties) that existed between actors (a set of individuals) within a social system was the focus of social network theory (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

The relation-focused research of social network theory used ties between actors to explain how individuals functioned within the social system. Consequently, relational networks had an effect at the actor and/or system level that could not be predicted based on a examination of actor attributes alone (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social network theory was used to study the social groups that made up the religious, family, economic, political, and voluntary organizations that existed in society (Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; Davern, 1997; Yang, 1998; McPherson, Popielarz, & Drobnic, 1992). For the most part, the results of the findings were confined to the academic literature of sociologists. There was one area of social theory network research that crossed over into other academic disciplines and into the general public: the study of the effect of social networks on employment opportunities or networking.

Networking

Granovetter (1973) conducted a study of individuals employed in management, technical, or professional positions who had recently made a job change. The purpose of the study was to determine from whom the individuals received information about their new job. An assumption made before the study was that individuals were most likely to receive information about employment opportunities through their network of strong ties, the ties that exist between individuals with similar thoughts and beliefs, typically family members and close friends. Instead, the research found that information about

employment opportunities was generated through the job changer's weak ties, their less formal interpersonal network, "old college friend(s), former workmate(s), or employer(s) . . . someone they never saw in a network context" (p. 1371-1372). In some cases, the job changer received crucial job information "from individuals whose existence they had forgotten" (p. 1372).

The weak ties that exist in a social network are important in employment for two reasons. First, weak ties are important because "persons to whom we are weakly tied are likely to move in different circles from our own and will thus have access to information different from that which we receive" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1371). Second, weak ties are important "because employers at all levels of work prefer to recruit by word-of mouth, typically using recommendations of current employees" (Granvotter, 1986, p. 102). This process of using friends of friends or acquaintances for job information had been advocated by women and minorities as one method to break down employment opportunity barriers and to gain access to higher paying jobs (Braddock & McPartland, 1987; Boe, 1989; Sheldon, 1995; Wylie, 1996). The highest paying position in American schools today is the school superintendent position. It is also the most segregated (Glass, 1992). In an attempt to help break down the employment opportunity barriers that prevent women from advancing to the superintendency this study will research the effect of school board members' social networks on the superintendent selection process.

Summary

The superintendency is a position that grew out of necessity (Wilson, 1960). Today, 162 years since its inception the position is dominated by men in a field that is

dominated by women (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992 ; Glass, 1993). The segregation of men in the high paying school superintendency assignments and women in the lower paying classroom teaching assignments continues despite the passage federal legislation designed to end discrimination in the work place (Civil Rights Act of 1964; Civil Rights Act of 1972; Civil Rights Act of 1991). In an effort to explain the continuation of the phenomenon, this study examined the effect of social networks on the superintendent selection process. A social network is the "set of personal contacts through which the individual maintains his social identity and receives emotional support, mutual aid, service information, and new social contacts" (Walker, et al., 1977, p. 35). Research has demonstrated the value of the use of weak ties in gaining information about employment opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). This study used Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties to determine the effect of school board member social networks on the selection of school superintendents.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of board member social networks on the selection of school superintendents. An explanatory case study method of inquiry was used to research the problem (Yin, 1984). Four school districts were selected for study. Each site was presented as a case study in this chapter.

School districts were selected based on the following criteria: the year of the selection of the school district's superintendent, the gender of the superintendent selected, and the gender of the board president. For this study, the school districts chosen had employed a new superintendent for the 1997-98 or 1998-99 school year. Of the four school districts selected, one district had a female superintendent and a female board president, one had a male superintendent and a male board president, one had a male superintendent and a female board president, and one had a female superintendent and a male board president.

Case Study Procedures

Each case study consisted of interviewing the board president and one other member of the board of education who had participated in the selection of the superintendent. The member of the board other than the board president was selected to participate in the study based on the recommendation of the superintendent and/or the board president. In addition to conducting interviews, school district policy manuals were reviewed, and, when available, superintendent job descriptions and artifacts related to the superintendent selection process were reviewed.

Case Study Sites

Case studies were conducted in suburban and rural communities in the northeast and central sections of a Midwestern state. The schools selected for this study were the Blue Valley Independent School District, the Clear Valley Independent School District, the Deep Valley Independent School District, and the Southern Valley Independent School District. In this Midwestern state, independent school districts are those that educate students grades K-12 and are publicly funded. Fictitious names were assigned to each school district.

Respondents

The superintendent at each site was contacted by telephone to gain permission to use his or her school district for the purposes of this study. The board president of each site was contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the study. The superintendent and board president were both asked to recommend a board member from their district to serve as the second participant in the study. The second participant was then contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the study.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The names of the participants from Blue Valley begin with the letter B. The names of the participants from Clear Valley begin with the letter C. The names of the participants from Deep Valley begin with the letter D. The names of the participants from Southern Valley begin with the letter S.

Interviews

Interviewees were contacted by telephone to set up an interview at a place and time of their choice. Interviews were conducted in district administration offices, board member homes, and board member places of business. Interview questions centered

around board member backgrounds and the factors that influenced the boards selection of a superintendent. The interview protocol is attached in appendix B. Each participant was provided a copy of the transcription of the interview to review for accuracy. Each participant was asked to indicate if he or she wished to modify, delete, or add any information to his or her transcription. No changes were requested. Copies of all written correspondence with the participants were included in Appendix C. Following the second interview of each study, it was determined that no new categories were emerging and that a saturation of data had been achieved.

Document Review

Board policy, superintendent job descriptions, and position announcements were reviewed. The purpose of the review was to determine the consistency between written district criteria and actual superintendent selection.

Reporting

Data were presented for four case studies. Each case study was organized into four sections: district demographics, history of the superintendency, superintendent search, and superintendent selection.

Blue Valley Independent School District

The Blue Valley Independent School District selected a new superintendent for the 1997-98 school year. The selection of the new superintendent was the focus of this case study.

District Demographics

The Blue Valley school district was located in the Northeastern section of a Midwestern state, 35 miles from the downtown area of the state's second largest city.

The district served a population of approximately 8,300 with an enrollment of approximately 1,600 students. Four ethnic groups were represented in the community. Seventy-two percent of the community was Caucasian; 16% was Native American; 11% was black; and 1% was Hispanic. The average household income was approximately $17,000. Ten percent of the adults in the community had a college education; 19% had some college; 36% had a high school diploma; and 35% had completed less than 12 years of school. The Blue Valley Board of Education consisted of five members. In the summer of 1997, when it was conducting its superintendent search, the board consisted of four male members and one female member. All of the members had attended college. Four were college graduates, and three had earned masters degrees. The two members of the Blue Valley Board of Education who participated in this study were Barbara and Bob.

Barbara was the board president in the spring and summer of 1997 when the Blue Valley School District was searching for a new school superintendent. She and her husband were teachers who had retired from the Blue Valley schools with more than 20 years of service in the district. While employed by the school district, she had served as the president of the teachers' organization and as a member of the teachers' negotiations team. She held a Master of Education degree, was in her early 60's, and had two grown children who did not live in the school district. She was appointed to the school board in 1995 and was elected president in 1997. When not involved with school board duties, she traveled with her husband and helped him manage their small cattle operation.

Bob was a member of the board of education in the spring and summer of 1997 when the Blue Valley school district was searching for a new school superintendent. He was an instructor at a private college in the state's second largest city. He held a Bachelor

of Science degree and had taught in a high school in the central section of the state. He had lived in Blue Valley for only two years before serving on the board of education. He moved his family to Blue Valley because of its location at a half way point between the university where he taught and another city where his wife had received a postdoctoral (PH.D. Chemistry) assignment. He was in his early 40's, was married, and had two children who attended school in the Blue Valley district. He was appointed to the board in 1997 and left the board in 1998 when he moved to another section of the community.

History of the Superintendency

Between 1914 and 1997, nine men served as superintendent of the Blue Valley School District. From 1919-1992 the school district had a remarkable record for stability in the superintendent position. During this 73-year time span, five men served as superintendent of the Blue Valley School District. The shortest tenure of a superintendent during this time span was nine years. The longest tenure was 21 years.

Since 1992, the district has employed three superintendents. The first of these three individuals was superintendent of the Blue Valley schools for two years, 1992-1994. This man had been with the district as the high school principal for ten years. In 1994 he left the state and accepted a principal's position in a neighboring state. The second of these individuals was employed as superintendent from August of 1994 to April of 1997. Before his employment by the Blue Valley Schools, he had been serving as a superintendent in another school district in the state. He retired after two and a half years and accepted a central office position in a neighboring state. The third superintendent, whose selection was the subject of this study, was employed by the district on July 1, 1997. This superintendent was the first female to serve as superintendent in the Blue

Valley School District. Before her employment by the Blue Valley School District, she

was employed as a superintendent by another district within the state.

<u>Superintendent Search</u>

The search for a new superintendent for the Blue Valley Public Schools began in

the spring of 1997 when the current superintendent retired and accepted a position in a

neighboring state. His resignation ended months of strife between the superintendent and

a segment of the school board. The board immediately advertised and began taking

applications for the position. During the interview process, a split developed on the board

between members who wanted to stop the process and hire a search consultant and

members who wanted to continue with the process that was in place. The split mirrored

the individual board member's support of the previous superintendent. Members who

supported hiring a search consultant had experienced serious disagreements with the

previous superintendent. Members who opposed the use of a search consultant had been

supportive of the former superintendent. Eventually, those members who opposed the

use of a search consultant resigned their board positions. The remaining board members

quickly appointed individuals to fill the vacant positions and voted to employ a consultant

to help with the search for a new superintendent. The board chose to use the

superintendent search consulting service of the state school board association.

The search consultant began the process by meeting with the board of education,

teachers, and community groups to develop a superintendent profile (Barbara). The

consultant wrote and placed advertisements in the state's largest newspapers, state school

board journal, and state administrator organization newsletter. The consultant developed

a questionnaire that was submitted to each individual who requested an application.

"Everything went to her" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 2). Applicants submitted completed applications and questionnaires to the search consultant. The consultant reviewed applications, checked references, "many who she knew personally" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 2). The consultant then identified the individuals who she believed best met the district's needs.

With the application process completed, the search consultant met with the board of education to discuss each applicant. At the meeting, the consultant and the board discussed the individuals who the consultant believed would best meet the needs of the Blue Valley School District. The board was then given the opportunity to review all the applications and add to or subtract from the list of applicants that the consultant felt best met the district's needs. The board reviewed the applications but chose not to make any changes to the consultant's list. The consultant frequently advised the board, "I don't think this one (applicant) meets your needs" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 7). The list submitted by the consultant contained six names. The board scheduled interviews with the six individuals.

Superintendent Selection

The board began the interview process by looking for some specific characteristics in each of the applicants. The board was searching for a superintendent who would "improve the educational level" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 7), "would work (with the board) in a consensus fashion" (Bob, 12-19-98, 3), would bring some "fresh blood, a new way of looking at things" and would form a "partnership between the board and the superintendent" (Bob, 12-19-98, 3-4).

When the interview process began, the board focused on three candidates. The

first candidate, who Bob described as "a great talker, extremely smooth, gave a great presentation, who really slayed [sic] a couple of people on the board" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4), was eliminated after a board member, "who knew some people in the area" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4), made inquiries with contacts he had in the community where the applicant was employed. From these contacts, it was determined that this candidate would "act like a king" (Bob 12-19-98, 4) and would not involve the board in the decision-making process (Bob). That left the board with two candidates from whom to choose. The two candidates were a female who was a superintendent in a small school district in the central part of the state and "had been given a very good recommendation by the head hunter (search consultant)" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4) and a male who was a high school principal in the largest school district in the north central section of the state. The board then had a "real debate" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 3) on the merits of these two candidates.

Between the initial interviews and the final selection, Barbara checked references on both candidates. In addition to the references supplied by the applicants, Barbara also consulted educators who she knew had worked in school districts with the applicants. These educators with whom Barbara consulted were individuals she had taught with in Blue Valley and other districts individuals met through her work with the state chapter of the National Education Organization, met through her participation in the state librarians association, and met through her sponsorship of the Blue Valley Middle School academic team. She reported that these other educators provided a "sense of security, and made you feel a little better (about impressions of the candidates) than if you had an outside person that seemed to agree with the others" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 3). Barbara finally settled on the female candidate as her choice for the superintendency for three reasons.

First, the district where the candidate was employed as superintendent had experienced an increase in test scores on state mandated tests. Second, the district where the candidate was employed had passed its first bond issue in several years. Third, the candidate had come up through the ranks. She had taught at different grade levels and served as a principal and as a coach (Barbara).

Bob did not check any references or make any additional searches into the candidates' backgrounds. Bob felt that because of his inexperience, he did not "know who's on a school board anywhere within the state" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4). For Bob, the five strongest influences on his decision to support the female candidate for the Blue Valley superintendency were: first, the candidate's experience as a school superintendent; second, the candidate's performance at the interview; third, the dramatic improvement of test scores in the district where the candidate was employed as superintendent; fourth, the passage of a bond issue in the district where the candidate served as superintendent; and fifth, the recommendation of the search consultant.

Other factors that Bob identified as influencing the board's decision to hire the female candidate were educational level and gender. Educational level was important because the candidate's possession of a doctorate demonstrated her commitment to academics. Some of the board members believed that the selection of a female signaled "a break with the past," and that the "district was headed in a new direction" (Bob, 12-19-98, 5). Some members also believed that a female would bring a different management style to the school district.

The superintendency was not the first administrative position to be held by a female in the Blue Valley School District or in the Blue Valley community. For a number

of years, women had served the district as elementary principals. In the community, women held administrative positions in the local banks, the Chamber of Commerce, and the local churches (Barbara).

<u>Summary</u>

In 1997, the Blue Valley School District broke more than seventy years of tradition and selected a female to serve as the superintendent of schools. The selection was made after a search which was led by a superintendent search consultant. The consultant advertised the position; developed a profile by consulating the board, teachers, students, and the community; and collected and screened applications. The consultant then presented all applications to the board for review. With the applications, the consultant also submitted a list of the six individuals she believed would best meet the school district's needs. The board accepted her recommendations and interviewed the six candidates. Three candidates were eliminated during the interview process. A fourth candidate was eliminated through a board member's contacts in the community where the candidate was employed. This narrowed the list of candidates to two, one male and one female.

The male candidate was the principal of a high school with a strong academic record. He was on the list of candidates recommended by the search consultant, and he interviewed well. What the male candidate did not have was central office experience (Bob).

As a superintendent of a small school district, the female candidate had been successful in raising test scores and passing bond issues. She was on the list of candidates recommended by the search consultant; interviewed well; had a doctorate; and

had experience as a teacher, principal, and coach.

The board selected the female candidate. Several factors influenced their decision. One factor was the female candidate's success as a superintendent in raising test scores and passing bond issues. Her gender was also a factor in her selection. Information received by the board president through her contacts with teachers in other school districts based on her experience as a former educator also influenced the board decision.

Clear Valley Independent School District

The Clear Valley Independent School District selected a new superintendent for the 1998-99 school year. The selection of the new superintendent was the focus of this case study.

District Demographics

The Clear Valley School District was located in the Northeastern section of a Midwestern state 45 miles from the downtown area of the state's largest city. The district served a population of approximately 5,100 with an enrollment of 1,028 students. Three ethnic groups were represented in the community. Sixty-five percent of the population was Caucasian; 35% was Native American; and 1% was Hispanic. The average household income was approximately $20,000. Eight percent of the adults in the community had a college education; 21% had some college; 40% had a high school diploma; and 32% had completed less than 12 years of school. The Clear Valley Board of Education consisted of five members. In the spring of 1998, when it was conducting its superintendent search, the board consisted of five male members. None of the members had college degrees. The two members who participated in this study were

Clark and Chris.

Clark was the board president in the spring of 1998 when the Clear Valley School

District was searching for a new school superintendent. He had lived in the community

for almost 30 years, had attended college but not received a degree, and was the pastor of

one of the local churches. He was in his early 60's. He and his wife, who stayed home

with the children, raised their children in the community and all of their children attended

and graduated from the Clear Valley schools. Clark was elected to the board in 1982

after being urged to run for a position on the board of education by his congregation and

other individuals in the community.

Chris had just been elected to the board in February, having defeated an

incumbent, when the Clear Valley board was ready to begin the superintendent selection

process. The selection of the superintendent was not an issue in his campaign. His first

board meeting was a special meeting to review applications and select the individuals the

board would interview for the superintendent position. He was in his mid-30's, had lived

in Clear Valley for six years, had attended college but not received a degree, and operated

a small business in the community with his wife. He and his wife had four children who

attended Clear Valley schools.

History of the Superintendency

Between 1914 and 1998, 20 men served as superintendent of the Clear Valley

Public Schools. During this 84-year time span, only six men served as superintendent for

more than five years. The longest tenure for a superintendent was nine years.

In the 1990's, five men served as superintendent of the Clear Valley Public

Schools. The decade began with the individual who had served the longest as the Clear

Valley superintendent. He retired at the end of the 1990 school year. The second

superintendent was employed by the district for two years, from 1990-92. Before coming

to Clear Valley, he was employed as the director of transportation and maintenance for

one of the state's largest school districts. He left Clear Valley to become the

superintendent of a larger district in the state. The third superintendent was employed for

two years too, from 1992-94. He also had been employed as the director of transportation

and maintenance for a large school district. He left Clear Valley to become the

superintendent in a larger school district in the state. The fourth superintendent was

employed for four years, from 1994-98. Before becoming the superintendent of the Clear

Valley Public Schools, he had served as a superintendent of another school district in the

state. He left the Clear Valley superintendency to retire. The fifth superintendent, and

the subject of this study, became superintendent on July 1, 1998. Before his employment

as the Clear Valley superintendent, he was employed as a high school principal for a

school district in the state.

Superintendent Search

The search for a superintendent for the Clear Valley Public Schools began with

the announcement of the current superintendent's decision to retire at the end of the 1997-

98 school year. The board asked the retiring superintendent to "help us locate a

replacement" (Clark, 1-2-99, 2) and gave him the responsibility of placing ads in state

newspapers, newsletters of the State School Board Association, and newsletters of

administrator's organizations. The board also asked the retiring superintendent to contact

individuals he felt would be good for the Clear Valley Public School District and urge

them to apply. All questions regarding the superintendency in Clear Valley were directed

to the retiring superintendent. The board did not develop a superintendent profile or review the superintendent job description. By February 1998, the district had received more than 40 applications. The retiring superintendent reviewed the applications and developed a list of the individuals he felt were the best candidates for the Clear Valley district. The retiring superintendent was given this responsibility because the board believed that he knew "what it took to be superintendent in Clear Valley" (Clark, 1-2-99, 3).

Also, in February of 1998, the community was in the process of electing a new school board member. One week after the election, Chris attended his first school board meeting, a special meeting called for the purpose of selecting which applicants to interview for the superintendent position. The board had purposely delayed acting on the applications it had received pending the outcome of the board election. Prior to the special meeting, each board member was provided a copy of all of the applications plus a list of the six applicants that the retiring superintendent had recommended. The board conducted their review of applications without any discussion of the qualifications or characteristics that the new superintendent should possess (Chris).

During the special meeting, they reduced the applicant pool to seven individuals. Of these seven individuals, six were from the list of candidates submitted by the retiring superintendent. The seventh was an applicant that Chris brought to the attention of the other board members. Chris had received a copy of the applications and the list of the superintendent's recommendations the day after his election. During the special meeting, Chris identified two individuals not on the superintendent's list that he wanted to interview. One of these individuals was a superintendent in a smaller school district. The

board agreed to add him to the list. The second candidate, a female, was not added to the list because "nobody else seemed interested in her" (Chris, 1-18-99, 5). Chris asked the board to add these candidates to the list because both were experienced superintendents (Chris). The board conducted its review of applicants without the establishment of a set of qualifications or characteristics.

Superintendent Selection

While there was no formal set of qualifications or characteristics to guide the selection process, Clark and Chris did have specific attributes of a superintendent that they were looking for. Clark wanted someone who knew "how to get along with people" (Clark, 1-4-99, 3). Chris began the process looking for a candidate who "had previous experience as a superintendent and understands how to run schools" (Chris, 1-18-99, 3).

After the initial interviews, the board narrowed the field down to three individuals. Two of these individuals were currently serving in state school districts as superintendents. The other candidate was a high school principal. Of the two candidates with superintendent experience, one was the candidate that Chris had asked to add to the interview list. The three individuals were invited back for a second interview, at which time they met with the building principals. After meeting with the building principals, the applicants interviewed a second time with the board. The board met after the second round of interviews to begin the final selection process.

Between the second round of interviews and the final selection, board members made checks into the candidates' backgrounds. The board used references that were provided in the candidates resumes. Additionally, Clark gathered information from bankers, landlords, clergymen, and businessmen in the communities where the

candidates' previously and currently resided. Clark felt that the individuals he talked to provided a "true picture" (Clark, 1-2-99, 4) of what an applicant was like.

When the board began the final selection process, it quickly eliminated the individual Chris had suggested to the board. They eliminated this candidate because of a report from a board member who made calls to the candidate's school district where "people had not said good things" (Chris, 1-18-99, 4). Clark also reported to the board that after spending a day driving the candidate and his wife around the community, he "did not feel comfortable around the candidate's wife" (Chris, 1-18-99, 4).

Two candidates remained in contention, both from the list submitted by the retiring superintendent. The consensus from the board was that either individual would do a good job as the Clear Valley superintendent. The board decided to offer the position to the individual who had no experience as a superintendent. The primary reason for their selection was a feeling that the candidate with previous superintendent experience expressed too much concern about the sports program. The candidate had children who participated in athletics, and Clark was concerned that this would create a situation where teachers and members of the community might feel that favoritism was being shown to a particular sport or program. The final candidate was brought back for a third interview and offered the position of superintendent of the Clear Valley Public Schools.

Summary

The superintendent search for the Clear Valley School District was conducted by the retiring superintendent of schools. The superintendent was responsible for the development and placement of vacancy announcements. He contacted prospective applicants, screened applications, and submitted a list of applicants for the board to

interview. Without a review of the job description or the establishment of criteria for the superintendent selection, the board began the interview process. The board interviewed seven candidates for the position. Three candidates were brought back for a second interview. After completing the second round of interviews, the board narrowed its focus to two.

The board selected the candidate who was currently employed as a high school principal to be the new superintendent. Two factors influenced their decision. First, the successful candidate was someone the board felt would not alienate any segment of the community. Second, the successful candidate was on the list of candidates submitted by the superintendent.

Deep Valley Independent School District

The Deep Valley Independent School District selected a new superintendent for the 1998-99 school year. The selection of the new superintendent was the focus of this case study.

District Demographics

The Deep Valley school district was located in the central section of a Midwestern state 20 miles from the downtown area of the state's largest city. The district served a population of approximately 3,700 with an enrollment of approximately 1,200 students. Four ethnic groups were represented in the community. Ninety-seven percent of the community was Caucasian; 1% was black; 1% was Hispanic; and 1% was Asian. The average household income was approximately $45,000. Forty percent of the adults in the community had a college education; 29% had some college; 23% had a high school diploma; and 8% had completed less than 12 years of school. The Deep Valley Board of

Education consisted of five members. In the spring of 1998, when it was conducting its superintendent search, the board consisted of five male members. All of the members had college degrees. The two members of the Deep Valley board who participated in this study were Dan and Dennis.

Dan was president of the Deep Valley board when they were selecting a superintendent for the 1998-99 school year. He had lived in the community for seven years and served as a member of the Deep Valley school board for five years. He was in his late 30's, had a degree in business, and owned his own gas and oil exploration company. He was married with four children, three of whom attended the Deep Valley schools. His wife was a stay at home mom who had a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology.

Dennis had been a member of the Deep Valley board of education for the past nine years. He was in his late 30's and had an MBA. He was a house-husband for his four children and wife, who was a physician. All of the children attended or were graduates of Deep Valley schools.

History of the Superintendency

The Deep Valley Independent School District was formed in 1945 when four elementary school districts consolidated to form the Deep Valley Independent School District. From 1945 through 1997, eleven men had been employed as superintendent of the Deep Valley schools. The longest tenure for a superintendent of the Deep Valley schools was 12 years; the shortest tenure was one year. The average tenure of a superintendent had been four years. From 1990 through 1998, four individuals have served as the superintendent of the Deep Valley Schools. The first of these four superintendents left the district in 1994, after nine years of employment, to become the

superintendent of a larger school district. His replacement had been employed as a superintendent in a district of similar size in another section of the state. The second superintendent was employed as superintendent for three years, from 1994 to 1997, and resigned his position at the conclusion of the 1996-97 school year. His replacement had been employed as superintendent in a district of similar size in another section of the state. The third superintendent was employed as superintendent for one year (1997-98) and left Deep Valley to take an administrative position in a two-year college in the state. His replacement, and the subject of this study, was the first female to be employed as the superintendent of the Deep Valley schools. Before becoming the Deep Valley superintendent, she served as the assistant superintendent of a large school district in another section of the state.

Superintendent Search

In the spring of 1998, the Deep Valley Independent School district found itself faced with the prospect of conducting its third superintendent search in four years. Of the five members on the board, four had participated in a superintendent search the year before. The board decided to have Dennis serve as the contact for prospective superintendents. The board gave Dennis this responsibility because he had the longest tenure on the board and he worked out of his home which made him the most accessible member to candidates during working hours. The board then placed advertisements in the state's two major newspapers and in major newspapers in surrounding states. Because a majority of the board had been through the superintendent search process the previous year, a consensus quickly developed on the qualities the board wanted the next superintendent to possess: experience, leadership, the ability to get along with people, and

the ability to articulate a vision.

The board received approximately 50 applications for the position. Dan and Dennis served as a two-man screening committee and reduced the number to eight. The board then met and selected five candidates that they wished to interview. After the initial interviews, the board reduced the list to three candidates who were brought back for a second interview. Each of the three candidates interviewed with a parent committee, a teacher committee, the building principals, and the board. Each committee was asked to complete an evaluation form and list what the committee believed to be each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. The committees were also asked to rank the candidates. When the second round of interviews was completed, the list of candidates was narrowed to two.

Superintendent Selection

Of the final two candidates, one was a female who was currently an assistant superintendent in one of the state's larger school districts and who had been a high school principal in the state's second largest school district. The other candidate was a retired military officer who had no previous experience in education administration. Each board member was assigned references from both candidates' resumes.

Dennis and Dan called references that were listed on the candidates' resumes and also made contacts with individuals who were not listed as references. Because Dennis knew a retired naval officer in the community and through contacts Dennis had with other military personnel, the board was able to contact officers and enlisted personnel who had served with the male candidate when he was in the military. From these military contacts, Dennis felt like he received "very honest opinions" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 6).

Dan was able to make contact with several individuals who were not listed as references on the female candidate's resume as well. One of the individuals was Dan's neighbor who had worked with the female candidate when she was employed by the second largest school district in the state. Dan also had contacts with individuals who worked in the central office of the second largest school district in the state, and he knew individuals who lived in the district where the female candidate was employed as an assistant superintendent. The Deep Valley Independent School district had a large number of patrons who graduated from the high school where the female candidate had served as high school principal. Dennis used contacts developed through these former graduates to contact teachers who taught while the female candidate was the high school principal. These individuals, who were not on the resume, were contacted to "confirm the resume as much as anything else. Can this person do what they say they can do? Do they have the experience? How do they deal with people? Are they truly the leader they have represented themselves to be" (Dan, 1-12-99, 4). By checking references and contacting individuals not on the reference list, the board determined that it had two quality candidates. The candidates were brought back for a third interview where they were asked "very pointed questions" (Dan, 1-12-99, 5). The primary focus of these questions was the candidates' vision for the Deep Valley School District and how the candidate would work with the board, community, teachers, staff, building principals, and central office staff to implement their vision.

After the third round of interviews, it was time for the board to make a decision. After a great deal of discussion, the board decided to employ the female candidate as the next superintendent of the Deep Valley Schools. The primary reason for their decision

was the female candidate's proven record as a school administrator at the building and central office level.

The superintendent search process that the Deep Valley school board used was strongly influenced by the previous two searches it had conducted, however, there were some significant differences. In all three of its most recent searches, the board used committees to evaluate candidates. In the most recent search, however, committees were not involved until the board had narrowed the search to three applicants, the board required the committees to list specific strengths and weaknesses for each candidate, and the board required the committees to rank the candidates. In the 1994 and the 1997 searches, the board "made a conscious effort to make sure that at least one, if not two, of the top five candidates were women" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 8). Dennis describes the board past experiences with women candidates as a "catch 22". "You want to hire the best, hire someone with experience but how do you get experience? I think the reason we have not hired women in the past is that we would have to take the leap of faith" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 8). The board was reluctant to take this leap in past superintendent searches even with female were serving on the board of education (Dennis). Because of the school board's consideration of women in the past, the board, in the most recent search was able to focus on the qualifications of the candidates and select the "best qualified candidate based on her experience" (Dan, 1-12-99, 6). During discussions among members of the board of education the consensus was that the "people who make up the district, the people you are actually talking to are the yuppies, the urban professionals... at this point and time they are ready for a competent person. That's what they deal with anyway" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 8)

Summary

The search for a superintendent of the Deep Valley Public Schools was conducted

by the board of education with input from the community, teachers, and school

administrators. Applications were screened by a two member committee of board

members using criteria established by the board of education. Five candidates were

selected by the board for initial interviews. Three of the five candidates were brought

back for a second round of interviews with a parent committee, a teacher committee, the

district administrators, and the board of education. After the second round of interviews,

the board focused on two candidates. One candidate was a retired military officer and a

female assistant superintendent in a school district within the state. The board selected

the female candidate. Two factors led to their decision. First was the female candidate's

proven record as a school administrator. Second was the report from contacts made with

teachers, patrons, and administrators who had worked with the female candidate in past

and present administrative positions. These contacts were used by the screening

committee to confirm the candidate's resume and the conclusions drawn by the board

during the interview process.

Southern Valley Independent School District

The Southern Valley Independent School District selected a new superintendent

for the 1997-98 school year. The selection of the new superintendent was the focus of

this case study.

District Demographics

The Southern Valley school district was one square mile in a suburban city

located in the central section of a Midwestern state, ten miles from the downtown area of

the state's largest city. The majority of the residents of the city legally resided within the boundaries of a neighboring school district. Because of the small size of the school district, 50% or more of the students were transfers. The largest property owners in the school district were a private church-affiliated university and two churches. The district served a population of approximately 4,393 with an enrollment of approximately 948 students. Five ethnic groups were represented in the community. Ninety two percent of the community was Caucasian; 2% was black; 3% was Hispanic; 1% was Asian; and 3% was Native American. The average household income was approximately $21,000. Sixteen percent of the adults in the community had a college education; 41% had some college; 19% had a high school diploma; and 24% had completed less than 12 years of school. A member of the board of education described Southern valley as a "very close community. I know my neighbors. I not only know them, I know their names" (Sue, 1-13-99, 2). The Southern Valley Board of Education consisted of five members. In the spring of 1997, when it was conducting its superintendent search, the board consisted of four male members and one female member who served as board president. All of the members had college degrees. The two members of the Southern Valley board who participated in this study were Sue and Sam.

Sue, in her late 30's, came to the community in the 1970's to attend the church-affiliated university in Southern Valley. Sue graduated with a degree in education, married, and taught school in a neighboring state before returning to Southern Valley. She was appointed to the board of education in 1989. She was the board president during the 1996-97 school year when the board was conducting its search for a new superintendent. Her husband was a college professor, and they had two children who

attended Southern Valley schools. She was a stay-at-home mom who drove a school bus for a neighboring school district.

Sam had been a member of the Southern Valley board of education for the past 15 years. He was appointed to fill an unexpired term in 1984 and had since been re-elected three times without opposition. He was in his late 40's and was the business administrator for a large church in Southern Valley. He and his wife, who stayed home with the children, had two children who attended Southern Valley schools. He was a graduate of Southern Valley high school and the church-affiliated private university.

History of the Superintendency

Since its formation as a school district in 1927, Southern Valley experienced very little turnover in the superintendency. Between 1927 and 1997, six men served as superintendent of the Southern Valley Independent School District. The first two Southern Valley superintendents served just two years each. The first superintendent served from 1927-29. The second superintendent served from 1929-31. From 1931-1997, 4 men were in the position of superintendent. The shortest tenure during this 66-year time period was 15 years. In November of 1996, after 17 years of employment, the sixth superintendent announced his retirement. After the retirement announcement, the board appointed a committee (consisting of Sue, Sam, and the retiring superintendent) to conduct the search for the next superintendent.

Superintendent Search

Applications were placed in the state's largest two newspapers, the state school board newsletter, and the newsletter for the state's administrator organization. The committee then met to established a set of qualifications that the committee felt were

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necessary for the next superintendent to posses. The qualifications became a checklist which assigned values for each qualification. The committee used the checklist to screen applications. The items that carried the most weight on the checklist were administrative experience, the ability to be a leader in the Southern Valley community, education, and expertise in school finance.

When the application deadline passed, the committee reviewed all applications and contacted references. The committee then narrowed the field of approximately 40 applicants to six. The field of six was selected by the committee and "if one person felt strongly that one candidate should go on to the next step, than that person went on" (Sue, 1-13-99, 3). In this way, the field was reduced to five candidates. The committee then began to contact the applicants and establish interview times. During this phase of the search, two of the candidates withdrew their applications which left the board with three candidates to interview, one female and two males.

The committee selected a Saturday for all candidates to come to Southern Valley to be interviewed. Each candidate interviewed with the board and the building principals. The retiring superintendent was present during the interviews but did not ask questions. Each candidate's interview with the board lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. Each candidate was asked a standard list of questions that were based on the established criteria. After an interview with the board, each candidate spent 30 to 45 minutes with the district's four building principals. When the interview process concluded, the board and the building principals met to discuss each candidate, "to hear what the principals had to say, to brainstorm" (Sue, 1-13-99, 4), and to review responses to interview questions. The discussion between the board and principals was "significant to the

process" (Sam, 1-13-99,4).

<u>Superintendent Selection</u>

To give members the opportunity to contact references and to "collect their thoughts" (Sam, 1-13-99, 5), the board waited four days to schedule their next meeting. The meeting was conducted without the retiring superintendent or the building principals. Before the meeting, one of the candidates withdrew from consideration leaving the board with two candidates: a female with a doctorate degree and ten years of experience as a central office administrator in a large school district and a male, middle-school principal from a neighboring school district. The male candidate did not have a doctorate but was enrolled in a doctoral program.

When the meeting convened, Sue and Sam allowed the other board members to express their thoughts before sharing their own personal opinions. The board was unanimous in its support for the male candidate. The male candidate was selected despite his lack of central office experience, the lack of a doctorate degree, and the lack of support from the retiring superintendent.

There were four factors that influenced the board to select the male candidate. First was the information provided by the "reference checks" (Sue, 1-13-99, 5). Second were his answers to "interview questions" (Sam, 1-13-99, 5). Third were the opinions of the building principals (Sue). Fourth was the candidate's perceived ability to function "within this community" (Sam, 1-13-99, 6). Community was such a strong factor, that during the selection process one board member remarked that "we might make an error financially, but we can't make an error in character in this community" (Sue, 1-13-1999, 5). The board was convinced of the male candidate's ability to function in the community

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because he had grown up in Southern Valley. While the candidate did not live in the Southern Valley school district, he was active in the community and in the church. The male candidate was known well enough in the community that during the search phase of the selection process, members of the school board were approached by Southern Valley teachers, church members, and community members who expressed their support for his candidacy. Because of his presence in the community, all five members knew the male candidate on a personal and social basis. Sam (1999) described the selection of the superintendents as a

> birthing process and when we first started there was a lot of anxiety . We knew
>
> the choice would be significant. We knew that we wanted to focus on
>
> strengthening the curriculum. I think we all said, "OK, now who can we work
>
> with?" We felt like we had an established team and we didn't want to bring in the
>
> wrong administrator. (Sam, 1-13-1999, 6)

The strong desire of the board to hire a superintendent that the board could work with and the fear of bringing in the wrong administrator led the board to turn to someone familiar to them and the community.

Summary

The board appointed a three member committee to conduct the search for the next Southern Valley superintendent: the superintendent of schools and two members of the board of education. The committee checked references and screened applications using a checklist based on criteria established by the committee. The committee identified five applicants for the board to interview. Eventually, three applicants were interviewed for the position. The three candidates interviewed with the board and the

building principals. Two candidates were brought back for second interviews: a female assistant superintendent in a large metropolitan school district and a middle school assistant principal in a large metropolitan school district. The board selected the male candidate. While there were several factors that lead the Southern Valley board to make their selection, the primary factor was the male candidate's connection to the school district through church and community activities.

Cross-Site Summary

Similarities and differences emerged when comparing the data collected from the four case studies. All sites were chosen because of the gender of their board president and superintendent of schools.

Table 1 summarized the demographics of each school district site. Similarities between the sites included the facts that all four school districts were predominately Caucasian and that as the educational level of adults in the district increased, so did the average household income. The major difference in the school districts was that the adult population in the suburban schools had more education than the adult population in the rural schools. Another difference was that the rural schools, even though their school enrollment was close to that of the suburban schools, served a significantly larger population than the suburban schools.

Table 1

Site Demographics

	Blue Valley	Clear Valley	Deep Valley	Southern Valley
District Population	8,300	5,100	3,700	4,393
City Type	Rural	Rural	Suburban	Suburban
Percent Minority Population				
Caucasian	72	65	97	92
Black	11	0	1	2
Native American	16	35	0	3
Asian	0	0	1	1
Hispanic	1	1	1	3
Average Household Income	$17,000	$20,000	$45,000	$21,000
Percent Education Level of Adults				
College	10	8	40	16
Some College	19	21	29	41
High School Diploma	36	40	23	19
Less than 12 years	35	32	8	24
Gender of Board President	Female	Male	Male	Female
Gender of Superintendent	Female	Male	Female	Male

Table 2 summarized participants' backgrounds. Similarities that emerged from Table 2 data included the facts that all 8 board members were married and had attended at least some college. It was also interesting to note that 7 of the 8 participants' children were attending school in the district during the superintendent search. In contrast to those similarities, it was interesting to notice that the years of experience as a board member ranged from 0 to 15 years. Also, the two school districts whose participants had

combined years of experience of less than 15 years selected a female superintendent.

Table 2

Participants' Backgrounds

Participants	Martial Status	Educational Level	Years of Experience as a Board member	Children still in attendance in public school
Blue Valley Barbara Bob	M M	M.S. M.S.	2 0	No Yes
Clear Valley Clark Chris	M M	Some College Some College	15 0	Yes Yes
Deep Valley Dan Dennis	M M	B.S. M.S.	5 9	Yes Yes
Southern Valley Sam Sue	M M	B.S. B.S.	15 10	Yes Yes

Table 3 summarized the history of the superintendency. The history of the

superintendency of the school districts participating in this study was consistent with the

information in the literature on the superintendency. In these four districts, as was the

national trend, the superintendent position had been dominated by men. Of the 49

individuals who had served as superintendents in these four districts, only two had been

women, both hired since 1997. The superintendency in these four districts also reflected

the national trend in more recent years of fewer years of tenure in the superintendent

position. Since 1990 the average tenure of a superintendent in these four school districts

had been a little over two years.

Table 3

History of the Superintendency

	Blue Valley	Clear Valley	Deep Valley	Southern Valley
Number of Superintendents	12	20	11	6
Number of years as a school district	84	84	53	71
Number of superintendents since1990	4	5	4	2
Number of male superintendents	11	20	11	6
Number of Female superintendents	1	0	1	0
Longest tenure of a superintendent	21	9	12	17
Shortest tenure of a superintendent	2	1	1	2
Average tenure of a superintendent	7	4.2	4	10.1

Table 4 summarized the superintendent selection process. Each school board developed its own process for the selection of its superintendent. One similarity was that the two districts which allowed the retiring superintendent to have a role in the process both selected male superintendents.

Table 4

Superintendent Selection Process

Establish Search criteria:	Blue Valley	Clear Valley	Deep Valley	Southern Valley
Board Committee			X	X
Consultant				
Superintendent		X		X
Recruit/Screen Applicants:	Blue Valley	Clear Valley	Deep Valley	Southern Valley
Board Committee			X	X
Consultant	X			
Superintendent		X		X
Interview Candidates:	Blue Valley	Clear Valley	Deep Valley	Southern Valley
Board	X	X	X	X
Parent Committee			X	
Teacher Committee			X	
Building Principals			X	X
Superintendent				X

Table 5 summarized the superintendent selection rationale. Each school district

selected its superintendent for different reasons. Each school board used different

methods to determine whether or not candidates possessed the qualities and experiences

claimed on their resumes and in the interview process. All four of the districts were

influenced by information provided by individuals who were not listed by the candidates

as references. The two school districts that hired female superintendents deliberately and diligently provided a rational for their decision. The rational was provided to reduce what Festinger (1962) described as dissonance to consonance, dissonance being defined as a feeling caused by making a decision against the social norm and consonance being defined as a consistency with the social norm.

Table 5

Superintendent Selection Rationale

	BlueValley	ClearValley	DeepValley	SouthernValley
Possession of Doctorate	X		X	
Experience in Education Superintendent Assistant Superintendent High School Principal Middle School Principal Elementary Principal Teacher Coach	 X X X		X X 	
Response to Interview Questions	X			X
Evaluation by Building Principals			X	X
Evaluation by Parent Committee			X	
Evaluation by Teacher Committee			X	
Proven Record of Improving Test Scores Passing Bond Issues Managing School Finances	X X X			
Ability to Articulate a Vision			X	
Recommendation by Superintendent		X		

Personal Characteristics Leadership Ability to Get Along With People Fit with Community Ability to Function in Community Character		X	X	X X
Information Provided By References on Candidate's Resume	X			X
Information Provided By Individuals Not on Candidate's Resume Teachers Administrators Board Members Community Members	X		X X X	X
Gender	X			

Summary

The similarities and differences between the Blue Valley, Clear Valley, Deep Valley, and Southern Valley school districts were discussed. Site demographics, participants' backgrounds, history of the superintendency, superintendent selection, and superintendent selection rationale were discussed.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Blue Valley, Clear Valley, Deep Valley, and Southern Valley school districts selected new school superintendents for the 1997-98 or the 1998-99 school year. A case study including the district demographics, history of the superintendency, superintendent search, and superintendent selection was conducted for each school district. The four case studies were compared and contrasted. The similarities and differences of the site demographics, participants' backgrounds, history of the superintendency, superintendent

selection, and superintendent selection rationale were discussed. In Chapter IV each case

study is analyzed both individually and collectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In this chapter, the data were analyzed individually and collectively through the

lens of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981; Wells &

Crain, 1994; Granovetter, 1973, 1983, 1986). During analysis of the data, two

perspectives were considered: 1) board member social networks and 2) the impact of

board member social networks on the selection of a superintendent.

Social Networks

A social network is the "set of personal contacts through which an individual

maintains his social identity and receives emotional support, mutual aid, service

information, and new social contacts" (Walker, et al. 1977, p. 35). Research reveals that

social networks are used to describe the relationships of the linkages (ties) that exist

between the numerous actors and structures that exist in a social system (Knoke &

Kuklinski, 1982; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Within social networks there exist two

types of linkages, strong ties and weak ties (Homans, 1950; Granovetter, 1973).

Strong Ties

Strong ties exist between individuals with similar thoughts and beliefs, typically

family members and close friends. A strong tie is created because "the more frequently

persons interact with one another, the stronger their sentiments of friendship for one

another are apt to be" (Homans, 1950, p. 133).

Weak Ties

Weak ties exist throughout an individual's less formal interpersonal networks. A

weak tie is described as the linkage between an individual and an acquaintance or friends

of friends. Weak ties are important because they provide one with access to different information. Weak ties also provide a bridge to new, socially different ideas (Granovetter, 1973).

Tie Components

The strength of a tie is dependent on the combination of four components: "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). In his research, Granovetter (1973) did not define the four components or assign them any specific value in measuring tie strength. He did note that these four components were "somewhat independent of each other, though . . . highly intracorrelated" (p. 1361). For the purposes of this study, the following components will be used to evaluate tie strength.

Time. Tie strength was measured by the combination of the history of network members and their commitment to the continuation of the relationship. Networks in which members had a shared history and a commitment to the continuation of the relationship were characterized by strong ties. Relationships that lacked a shared history and a commitment to the continuation of the relationship were characterized by weak ties (Baker, 1994).

Emotional Intensity. Tie strength was measured by the amount of emotional interaction and emotional intensity between network members. Networks where members shared a high level of emotional interaction and intensity were characterized by strong ties. Networks where members had little interaction and intensity were characterized by weak ties (Baker, 1994).

Intimacy. Tie strength was measured by the amount of common knowledge that

network members shared. Networks where members, had the same backgrounds, traveled in the same social circles, and held the same organizational positions were characterized by strong ties. Networks where members had different backgrounds, traveled in different social circles, and held different positions in the organizational system were characterized by weak ties (Baker, 1994).

Reciprocal Services. Tie strength was measured by the mutual rewards (tangible or non-tangible) members received through network interaction. Networks where the interaction was rewarding to members were characterized by strong ties. Networks where the interaction between members was not rewarding to members were characterized by weak ties (Forsyth & Hoy, 1978).

After studying Granovetter's notion of tie components, Fischer, Jackson, Stueve, Gerson, and Jones (1977) and Lindzey and Byrne (1968) proposed different methods of evaluating tie strength. For the purposes of this study, in addition to Granovetter's four tie components, the following factors were also used to evaluate tie strength.

Demographic Factors. Demographic factors describe the environment of the network. Studies have demonstrated that work experience, educational preparation, and gender can affect the strength of ties. The more demographic factors shared, the stronger the tie. The fewer demographic factors shared, the weaker the tie (Lindzey & Byrne, 1968).

Contextual Factors. The strength of a tie can be measured by the type of relationship that exists between the individuals in a network. Relationships of commitment are long-lasting, intimate, and based on family. Relationships of convenience are brief, less intimate, and based on workplaces and neighborhoods.

(Fischer et al., 1977). Relationships of commitment and convenience were consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties and Baker's (1994) analysis of tie components with one exception: Granovetter's (1973) tie component of time. Fischer et al. (1977) determined that frequency of contact was not necessarily an indicator of tie strength.

Social networks available to boards of education included board networks and individual member networks. Board networks referred to networks that board members belonged to by virtue of their position on the board of education (i.e. relationships with the superintendent, other administrators, teachers, students, etc.). Individual member networks referred to the social networks of individual board members (i.e. business associates, church members, friends, family, etc.).

<div align="center">Blue Valley</div>

When conducting the search for a superintendent of schools, the Blue Valley Board of Education used board networks (the social networks available to board members by virtue of their position on the board of education) and individual member networks (individual member's social networks) to establish search criteria, to screen candidates, and to make the superintendent selection. The selection of a superintendent was influenced by four social networks. Two of the networks were board networks and two were individual member networks.

<u>Board Networks</u>

Two board networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Blue Valley School District. The first was the network of the board members and the superintendent. The second was the network of the board members and the search

consultant.

Board Members and Superintendent. The Blue Valley Board of Education that conducted the superintendent search in 1997 was formed as a result of controversies that resulted in the resignation of a superintendent and three board members. As a result of these experiences, the new board developed some strong opinions about what it wanted in the next superintendent. Bob, a member of the school board, reported that a consensus developed among the members of the board of education. They wanted the next superintendent to work with and include the board in all decisions. The board also wanted to bring in some "fresh blood, a new way of looking at things" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4).

The data concerning the network consisting of the board of education and the superintendent supported the absence of tie components. The absence of tie components in the network between the board and the superintendent is very unusual considering that, typically, a strong tie exists between the board of education and the superintendent. A board and a superintendent spend much time together. They have regular meetings at least once a month, attend school functions together, and go to conferences and workshops together. The board and the superintendent usually share their strong personal feelings with each other and discuss personal and private information. The board expects the superintendent to keep them abreast of events at school, and the superintendent relies on the board to help him or her keep track of the pulse of the community. It is possible that these ties may weaken if barriers develop between the superintendent and the board. In the Blue Valley School District the ties were not weak; they did not exist. There was no tie between the Blue Valley Board of Education and the superintendent because there was no shared history, there was no commitment to the future, there was no intimacy, and

there were no mutual rewards. The only emotional intensity was on the part of board members who strongly disliked the way the superintendent performed his duties.

Board Members and Search Consultant. A second social network that influenced the selection of the superintendent was the network consisting of the Board of Education and the search consultant. The search consultant was hired by the board to conduct the search for the superintendent. Barbara and Bob reported that the search consultant worked with the community, teachers, building principals, and the board of education to develop a superintendent profile. The search consultant worked with the applicants. "Everything was sent to her. She supposedly checked references. Many of the people (references) she knew personally" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 2). Barbara and Bob reported that the search consultant reviewed all applications with the board of education. During the review, the consultant frequently told the board, "I don't think this one (applicant) meets your needs" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 7). After the list of applicants was narrowed to six, the board interviewed the remaining applicants. Interviews were conducted without the search consultant present. The board eventually selected one of the six individuals identified by the search consultant. The individual who was selected, the only female among the six names submitted to the board, "had been given a very good recommendation by the head hunter (search consultant)" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4).

The social network that existed between the board of education and the search consultant was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of three tie components between the board and the search consultant: time, intimacy, and reciprocal services. The board and the consultant spent much time together discussing search criteria, reviewing applications, and selecting

applicants to interview. The search consultant shared her knowledge about applicants with the board. The board and the search consultant had a mutually satisfying relationship. The consultant conducted the superintendent search for the board and the board paid her for her services. If forced to consider the tie components by themselves, one would conclude that the search consultant and the board had a strong tie. However, the strength of a tie is not dependent on the individual strength of the tie components. Instead, it is dependent on the combination of the components. Despite appearances, two important items were missing from the relationship that are necessary for a strong tie to exist. First, the relationship did not have a shared history. Second, there was no commitment to the continuation of the relationship. The relationship began when the board voted to employ the consultant; it ended when the board selected its superintendent.

The weak tie between the board and the search consultant provided a link between the board and the search consultant's social networks and allowed for the development of weak ties between the board and the search consultant's social networks. Weak ties were important because they provided links to people of different groups. The search consultant served as a link between the board of education and the community, teachers, principals, applicants, and applicants' references.

Individual Member Networks

Two individual member networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Blue Valley School District. The first was an unnamed board member's social network. The second was Barbara's social network.

Unnamed Member's Social Networks. An unnamed member's social network was used during the screening process to eliminate a candidate. The unnamed member

"knew some people who lived down in that area" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4) where the applicant was currently employed. "We (the board) went outside the official network and just asked somebody who ran the grocery store down there to tell us about him (applicant)" (Bob, 12-19-98, 8). The board then determined that the applicant, in the performance of his duties as superintendent, acted like a "king" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4). The candidate was eliminated from consideration even though "three members really liked him, he was extremely smooth, gave a great presentation" (Bob, 12-19-98, 4).

The social network that existed between the unnamed board member and the grocery store owner was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of convenience. The interaction in the network was short lived without any evidence of a commitment to continue the relationship, no evidence of intensity or intimacy, and no evidence that the grocery store owner found the exchange rewarding.

Barbara's Social Networks. Barbara used social networks developed during her teaching career to check into the background of candidates. Barbara used the networks to gather information about candidates from current and former teachers in school districts where the candidates had been employed. The information provided by the networks gave Barbara a "sense of security" (Barbara, 12-10-98, 4) about the candidates.

The social networks that existed between Barbara and the former teachers were consistent Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of convenience. Barbara used her relationships with teachers to gain information about applicants. The relationships were brief and there was no intimacy. They were workplace relationships which Barbara

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developed while she was a classroom teacher.

Impact of Social Networks

The Blue Valley Board of Education began the superintendent search process without the existence of the traditional strong tie between the board and a male superintendent. Of the five board members, two had been against the superintendent in an almost year long battle over school issues. A third member was on the board for less than a month when the superintendent resigned. The fourth and fifth members of the board were appointed after the resignation of the superintendent and the two board members who supported his policies. The primary reason for the superintendent's resignation was the third member's decision to join with the two members who opposed the superintendent's policies. Before their appointment to the board, both of the new members had been part of a faction of the community that opposed the policies of the superintendent. Only one of the five members of the Blue Valley Board of Education had served on the board with a previous superintendent. With an absence of superintendent ties to guide its search, the Blue Valley Board of Education developed its own model to guide its superintendent search. The board focused its search on candidates who were student focused, would work cooperatively with the board in the decision-making process, and would bring a different management style to the district.

The strong ties developed by the board with the search consultant enabled the board to evaluate candidates on their credentials and interview skills. An unnamed board member's weak ties eliminated a candidate from consideration. Barbara's weak ties with teachers in the applicants' districts confirmed for her and the board the qualities of the candidates. After evaluating the credentials and conducting the interviews, the board

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evaluated the candidates on the criteria it had established for the superintendency. When the process was completed, the board selected the candidate with a record of increased test scores, successful passage of bond issues, and establishment of a cooperative work environment with the board of education. The individual selected was the only female applicant interviewed by the board.

<u>Summary</u>

The Blue Valley Board of Education used board networks and individual member networks in the superintendent selection process. Because there was no tie between the board and the superintendent, the board was influenced by the individuals with whom they had ties. Table 6 summarized the ties found in the Blue Valley Board of Education's social networks.

Table 6

Existence of Strong and Weak Ties in the Social Networks of the Blue Valley Board of Education and Its Individual Member's Social Networks

<u>Board Networks</u>	<u>Strong Ties</u>	<u>Weak Ties</u>	<u>No Ties</u>
Board Members and Superintendent			X
Board Members and Search Consultant		X	
<u>Individual Member Networks</u>			
Unnamed Member's Social Networks		X	
Barbara's Social Networks		X	

In Blue Valley, there were no ties between the superintendent and the board of education. Because there were no ties, the board used weak ties with a search consultant

to develop search criteria and to screen applicants. The unnamed board member and Barbara used weak ties to gather information about applicants.

Clear Valley

When conducting the search for a superintendent of schools, the Clear Valley Board of Education used board networks (the social networks available to board members by virtue of their position on the board of education) and individual member networks (individual member's social networks) to establish search criteria, to screen candidates, and to make the superintendent selection. The selection of a superintendent was influenced by four social networks. Two of the networks were board networks and two were individual member networks.

Board Networks

Two board networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Clear Valley School District. The first was the network of the board members and the superintendent. The second was the network of the board members and the building principals.

Board Members and Superintendent. During the 84 years that the Clear Valley Public School District was in operation, strong ties developed between the boards of education and their superintendents. When the superintendent announced his retirement effective the end of the 1997-98 school year, the board of education used the same search procedures that had been in effect for at least the past 15 years. The board asked the retiring superintendent to "help us locate a replacement" (Clark, 1-2-99, 2).

The retiring superintendent served as the search consultant for the board. He recruited applicants, conducted background checks, screened applications, discussed

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applications with the board, and trimmed the list of 40 applications to six. After the board had been given the opportunity to review all applications, the decision was made to interview seven of the 40 applicants. The seven applicants consisted of the six individuals recommended by the superintendent and one applicant who Chris, the newest member of the board, asked the board to add to the list.

The decision by the Clear Valley Board of Education to have the superintendent conduct the search for his replacement supports Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties. The data supported the existence of three tie components in the network of the board members and the superintendent: time, intimacy, and reciprocal services. The board and the superintendent shared a history; were committed to the continuation of the relationship; shared common knowledge in regards to school personnel, finances, and other educational issues; and had a relationship that was mutually rewarding. Demographic factors also contributed to the strength of the tie between the board and the superintendent. The superintendent and all five members of the board were white males. The relationship was so strong that the board asked the superintendent to help them find his replacement.

Board Members and Building Principals. The second social network used by the Clear Valley Board of Education in its search for a superintendent was the network between members of the board and building principals. The board had candidates meet with the building principals during their second interview. Neither Chris nor Clark reported that the meeting between candidates and the building principals affected the selection of the superintendent.

The social network that existed between the board of education and the building

principals was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of convenience. The relationship was brief and based on the workplace. The board needed someone to show the candidates the district facilities, so they directed the building principals to perform the task.

Individual Member Networks

Two individual member networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Clear Valley School District. The first was an unnamed board member's social network. The second was Clark's social network.

Unnamed Member's Social Networks. An unnamed member's social network was used during the screening process to eliminate a candidate. The unnamed member knew individuals who lived in the community where an applicant was the superintendent. The unnamed member reported to the board that "people had not said good things" (Chris, 1-18-99, 4). The applicant was the same individual that Chris asked the board to consider.

The social network that existed between the unnamed board member and the individuals in the community where the applicant was employed were consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of a relationship of convenience (Fischer et al., 1977). The unnamed board member's relationships with the people he knew in the candidates' previous communities were not intimate or based on family. Once he gathered the information he needed, further contact was not made. There was no evidence that the informants received any reward through their contact.

Clark's Social Networks. Clark, the board president, used social networks developed through his work as a minister, to get a "true picture" (Clark, 1-2-99, 4) of what the applicants were like. His social networks were divided into two sets: those consisting of Clark and ministers and those consisting of Clark and other community members. Clark used contacts with ministers in communities where the applicants were currently or had previously been employed. Through the minister contacts, Clark was able to communicate with bankers, landlords, clergymen, and businessmen who knew the applicants.

The social network that existed between Clark and the ministers was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of two tie components in Clark's networks with the ministers: time and reciprocal services. The relationship between Clark and the ministers existed before the board began its search for a superintendent, and Clark gave and received mutual support from the group. However, the network tie was weak because the data showed no evidence of emotional intensity or intimacy.

The social networks that existed between Clark and community members in the applicants' current or former places of employment were consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of a relationship of convenience (Fischer et al., 1977) between Clark and the community members who provided personal information about the applicants.

Impact of Social Networks

The Clear Valley Board of Education began its search for a school superintendent with a history of strong ties between the board of education and the superintendent. For

as long as anyone could remember, the board had given superintendents who were ending their employment with the district the task of finding their own replacement. By giving the superintendent this responsibility, the board virtually insured that its superintendents would all continue to posses the same strengths and weaknesses. This practice also insured that the next superintendent of Clear Valley would be a white male. Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) supported the notion that only through the development of weak ties could racial or gender integration occur. For weak ties to develop, minority applicants would have to develop a relationship with the Clear Valley Board of Education. As long as superintendents controlled the recruitment and screening of applicants, weak ties between the board and minority applicants could not develop. Applicants had an opportunity to establish a weak tie with building principals when they met during the second round of interviews. The board chose not to solicit any information about the applicants from the principals. While board member weak ties did not play a role in the recruitment or screening of applicants, they did play a role in the final selection of a superintendent. An unnamed board member used information he received through weak ties to eliminate the applicant that Chris had added to the final list. Carl used weak ties to check the backgrounds of applicants. From these checks, Carl received information that was supportive of the final two candidates for the Clear Valley superintendent position.

Summary

The Clear Valley Board of Education used board networks and individual member networks in the superintendent selection process. The superintendent selection process was dominated by the strong tie that existed between the Clear Valley Board of Education

and the retiring superintendent. Because of the strong tie, the board gave the

responsibility of conducting a superintendent search to the retiring superintendent. The

board relied on the superintendent to recruit candidates and screen applications. The

board interviewed all six of the applicants recommended by the retiring superintendent.

After the six interviews, one candidate was hired as the new superintendent of the Clear

Valley Schools. Table 7 summarized the ties found in the Clear Valley Board of

Education's social networks.

Table 7

Existence of Strong and Weak Ties in the Social Networks of the Clear Valley Board of

Education and Its Individual Member's Social Networks

Board Networks	Strong Ties	Weak Ties	No Ties
Board Members and Superintendent	X		
Board Members and Building Principals		X	
Individual Member Networks			
Unnamed Board Member's Social Networks		X	
Clark's Social Networks		X	

The only strong tie that existed in the social networks of the Clear Valley Board of

Education existed between the board and the superintendent. Weak ties existed between

the board and the building principals. Weak ties also dominated the networks of the

individual board members.

Deep Valley

When conducting the search for a superintendent of schools, the Deep Valley

Board of Education used board networks (the social networks available to board members

by virtue of their position on the board of education) and individual member networks

(individual members' social networks) to screen candidates and to make the

superintendent selection. The selection of a superintendent was influenced by five social

networks. Three of the networks were board networks and two were individual member

networks.

Board Networks

Three board networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Deep

Valley School District. The first was the network of the board members and the

superintendent. The second was the network of the board members and teachers,

parents, and administrators. The third was the network of the board members and

community members.

Board Members and Superintendent. When the Deep Valley Board of Education

began its search for a school superintendent in the spring of 1998, it was the second such

search conducted in the district in less than a year. In the spring of 1997, the board had

conducted a search to replace a superintendent who had been employed by the district for

three years but who "was just not a fit with Deep Valley" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 6). The

superintendent hired in the spring of 1997 resigned in the spring of 1998. Dan, the board

president, reported that the board, faced with the prospect of hiring its third

superintendent in a three-year period, was determined to "get it right this time" (Dan, 1-

12-99, 3). The board quickly developed a consensus of "what we did not want and a

majority consensus of what we wanted" (Dan, 1-12-99, 3). The board wanted a superintendent who would "connect with teachers and community, get along with principals, and be a leader" (Dan, 1-12-99, 6).

When the Deep Valley Board of Education began their superintendent search, there were no ties between them and the previous superintendent. The data showed that none of the tie components were present in their relationship. The board had only worked with the previous superintendent for six months when he announced that he would not be returning for a second year. Knowing that the superintendent would not be returning prevented the development of any level of commitment, emotional intensity, intimacy, or reciprocal services between the board and the superintendent.

Because of demographic factors and the presence of all four tie components in the relationship between most boards and their superintendent, most networks between a board and their superintendent are characterized by strong ties. Superintendents and boards discuss and take action on items that are emotionally intense. The board and the superintendent share a common knowledge about the school district and its teachers, students, and administrators. Relationships between the board and the superintendent are mutually satisfying based on the personal nature of some of their exchanges. None of this was the case with the Deep Valley Board and its superintendent.

Board Members and Teachers, Parents, and Administrators. The teachers in the district, parents of students who attended Deep Valley schools, and the administrators of each building were three separate groups that the board wanted to included in the superintendent selection process. A representative number from each group was asked to interview the applicants that the board brought back for a second interview. The board

required each group to list the applicants' strengths and weaknesses and rank order the applicants. Dan and Dennis both reported that the board informed each group that while their input was appreciated, the final decision belonged to the board.

The social network that existed between the board of education and each group was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of convenience. The relationships were brief, not very intimate, and based on the workplace rather than on family.

Board Members and Community. The third social network that influenced the selection of the superintendent was the network consisting of the board of education and community members. After the second set of interviews, the list of applicants was narrowed to two and the board assigned each member a list of references, which were supplied by the candidates, to contact. Besides contacting references provided by the applicants, board members also contacted community members in the two candidates' current and former districts. One candidate had a military background. The board talked to a former naval officer who lived in the community and asked him to use his military contacts to check the candidate's credentials. The Deep Valley community contained a large number of graduates from a high school in the neighboring metropolitan area. One candidate for the superintendent position had been the principal of that high school. The board used contacts with community members who were graduates of the metropolitan high school to contact teachers, former teachers, students, and parents who had worked with the applicant during her tenure as the high school principal.

The social network that existed between the board of education and the

community was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data

supported the existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of

convenience. The board wanted information from individuals who had worked for or

with the applicants at their current and past places of employment. The relationships had

no commitment or intimacy and were based on neighborhoods rather than family.

Individual Member Networks

Two individual member networks influenced the selection of the superintendent

for the Deep Valley School District. The first was Dennis' social network. The second

was Dan's social network.

Dennis' Social Networks. Dennis used contacts he developed during his military

career to check the credentials of a candidate who was a retired army officer. The social

network that existed between Dennis and his military contacts was consistent with

Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of one tie

component: time. The contacts Dennis made were with an individual he had known

during his service in the military. As a former military officer, Dennis shared a common

history with the individual. Because only one tie component was present in the social

network, the tie was considered weak.

Dan's Social Networks. Dan used contacts in the metropolitan school district

where a candidate had been employed as a high school principal, contacts in the

community where the candidate was serving as assistant superintendent, and contacts

with his neighbor who had worked with the candidate during her tenure as a high school

principal. The social network that existed between Dan and his network contacts was

consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the

existence of what Fischer et al. (1977) described as a relationship of convenience. Dan used people with whom he had weak ties to gather additional information about the female applicant.

Impact of Social Networks

The Deep Valley Board of Education began the superintendent search process without the existence of the traditional strong tie between the board and a male superintendent. The previous two superintendents selected by the board had not been the right choice for the Deep Valley district. In the spring of 1998, while searching for a superintendent, the board had specific criteria in mind. They conducted the search for and made the selection of a new superintendent based on the criteria. Through the screening and initial interview process, the board narrowed a list of over 50 applicants to three. After they reduced the applicants to three, the board included groups representing teachers, parents, and administrators in the interview process. In the previous searches, the teachers, parents, and administrators were used earlier in the selection process. After the three candidates were interviewed, one applicant was deleted. Of the two remaining applicants, one was a male who was a retired military officer. The other was a female who was an assistant superintendent in a school district within the state. The board selected the female applicant to be the next superintendent of the Deep Valley Public Schools. The board based their decision on the female's experience as an assistant superintendent and as the principal of a tough school. The female candidate was also helped by the fact that in this search and in the two previous searches for a superintendent, the board "made a conscious effort to include at least one, if not two, females in the candidates" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 8) interviewed by the board. Both Dennis

and Dan reported that the fact that the board had previously interviewed or considered a female for the Deep Valley superintendency made it easier to "take that leap of faith" (Dennis, 1-12-99, 8) and hire a female applicant. The networks of the board members and the community and individual board member networks were important in the selection process. From these networks, the board learned that the final two candidates were well-qualified individuals who would do a good job for the Deep Valley Public Schools. The networks of the board and teachers, parents, and administrators had no effect on the selection of a superintendent. The board gathered information from these networks but did not use it in the selection process.

Summary

The Deep Valley Board of Education used board networks and individual member networks in the superintendent selection process. Because there was no tie between the board and the superintendent, the board was influenced by the individuals with whom they had weak ties. The board used weak ties to gather information about applicants. Dan and Dennis used weak ties to make contacts with individuals in the military and school districts where the final two applicants had been employed. The board, because of its decision to include female applicants in previous superintendent searches, was able to evaluate the female candidate on her qualifications not her gender. Table 8 summarized the strong and weak ties found in the Deep Valley Board of Education's social networks.

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Table 8

Existence of Strong and Weak Ties in the Social Networks of the Deep Valley Board of

Education and Its Individual Member's Social Networks.

Board Networks	Strong Ties	Weak Ties	No Ties
Board Members and Superintendent			X
Board Members and Teachers, Parents, and Administrators		X	
Board Members and Community		X	
Individual Member Networks			
Dennis' Social Networks		X	
Dan's Social Networks		X	

In DeepValley, the board of education did not use any strong ties in the

superintendent selection process. All of the network ties were weak with the exception of

the tie between the board and the superintendent which was not present. Because there

was no tie between the board and the superintendent, the board was forced to use weak

ties to gather information.

Southern Valley

When conducting the search for a superintendent of schools, the Southern Valley

Board of Education used board networks (the social networks available to board members

by virtue of their position on the board of education) and individual member networks

(individual member's social networks) to establish search criteria, to screen candidates,

and to make the superintendent selection. The selection of a superintendent was

influenced by five social networks. Three of the networks were board networks and two

were individual member networks.

Board Networks

Three board networks influenced the selection of the superintendent for the Southern Valley School District. The first was the network of the board members and the superintendent. The second was the network of the board members and the building principals. The third was the network of the board members and teachers, parents, and community members.

Board Members and Superintendent. In the fall of 1996, the Southern Valley Board of Education began its search for a school superintendent. It was the first superintendent search conducted by the board in seventeen years. No member of the Southern Valley Board of Education had ever participated in a superintendent search. Board members contacted school boards in the area and solicited advice on how to conduct a search. They began their search in March of 1997.

The board established the search criteria and formed a three-member committee, consisting of two board members and the retiring superintendent, to conduct the initial screening of candidates. The board identified four primary criteria for the Southern Valley superintendency: experience in school finance, possession of a Doctorate degree, central office experience, and the ability to lead in the Southern Valley community.

The committee received applications and screened them based on the board-established criteria. Sam and Sue both reported that during the screening process the committee checked applicants' references. Both Sam and Sue believed that some contacts were made with individuals who were not listed as references, but neither could recall a specific instance. If calls were made to individuals not listed as references, they

did not have an impact on the screening or selection process.

The committee eventually reduced the number of applicants to five. At the time the committee began scheduling interviews, two applicants dropped out, leaving the board with three candidates to interview. The board established a two-stage interview process. Applicants interviewed with the board for approximately one hour, (with the retiring superintendent present), then took a forty-five minute tour of the facilities with the building principals and district directors. During the interviews the board asked all candidates the same predetermined questions. The same board member asked each question.

The social network that existed between the board of education and the superintendent was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties. The data supported the existence of all four tie components between the board and superintendent: time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services. The strength of the relationship was based on a 17 year record of the superintendent and the board working together to provide the best education possible for the students in Southern Valley. The nature of the relationship between a superintendent and his or her board of education requires them to spend time together. Boards and superintendent share their strong personal feelings with each other and discuss personal and private information. Boards expect superintendents to keep them abreast of events at school, and superintendents rely on boards to help them keep track of the pulse of the community. Sam and Sue (board president) both described the superintendent as someone who cared deeply about the Southern Valley School District. Because the board thought so much of the superintendent, the board gave him an important role in selecting his successor.

Board Members and Principals. The board of education included building principals in its superintendent selection process. The principals met with the applicants for 45 minutes. During the 45 minutes, the applicants were given a tour of the facilities and asked questions by the principals. After all the interviews and tours were completed, the principals met with the board and discussed the applicants' qualifications. Sam and Sue both described the discussions as "significant to the selection process" (Sam, 1-13-99, 4). Both reported that the principals played a significant role in pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants.

The social network that existed between the board of education and the principals was consistent with Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of one tie component between the board and the principals: time. The board and the principals were committed to the continuation of their relationship. Because they did not have a shared history, their ties were weak. The board valued the opinions of the principals and wanted to be sure that the new superintendent could work with the principals, so the board asked the principals to interview the final three applicants. The principals were unanimous in their support for one of the applicants. The applicant they supported was a life-long resident of Southern Valley. With their decision to include principals in the selection process, the board received important information from the individuals who would work very closely with the new superintendent in implementing the district's programs.

Board Members and Teachers, Parents, and Community. During the search for a superintendent, members of the board were approached by teachers, parents, and members of the community who expressed their opinions about the individuals who had

applied for the superintendent position. The social network that existed between the

board of education and teachers, parents, and community members was consistent with

Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of two tie

components between the board and teachers, parents, and community members: time and

reciprocal services. The ties between the board and the teachers, parents, and community

members were weak because only two tie components were present in the relationship.

The weak ties were important, however, because it was because of the weak ties that the

teachers, parents, and community members felt they could approach the school board

with their opinions. In every instance, the support was for the applicant who lived in

Southern Valley.

Individual Member Networks

Two individual member networks influenced the selection of the superintendent

for the Southern Valley School district. The first was individual board members and the

applicant who lived in the community. The second was three board members and the

applicant who attended the same church.

Individual Board Members and the Applicant Who Lived in the Community.

Southern Valley was a unique community. It was a suburban city in the state's largest

metropolitan area. The Southern Valley School District was smaller than the city of

Southern Valley. Inside the boundaries of the school district was a large church-

supported university and two large churches, the largest of which was the same

denomination as the university. Many residents of the city and the school district were

graduates of the university and attended the church that was affiliated with the university.

Because of the relationship between the community, the university, and the church, "you

have a very close community. I know my neighbors. I not only know them, I know their names" (Sue, 1-13-99, 2). One applicant for the Southern Valley superintendency was a member of the community. The applicant grew up in the community, attended the church supported university, attended the largest church in the community, and lived in the community at the time he applied for the position.

The social network that existed between individual members of the board of education and the applicant who lived in the community was characteristic of Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties. The data supported the existence of two tie components in the network of the individual members of the board of education and the community: time and intimacy. The applicant had a history of involvement in Southern Valley that existed long before he became an applicant for the superintendency, so he and the board of education had a relationship that existed independently of their membership on the board of education. The applicant was a life-long resident of Southern Valley. He has grown up in the community, attended college in the community, and as an adult was raising his family in the community. The applicant and the board members knew the same people and they traveled in the same social circles.

If tie components were considered by themselves, the data would indicate a weak tie between the applicant and members of the board of education because there was no evidence of emotional interaction or reciprocal services between the board and the applicant. However, when demographic factors were added, the tie became strong. The applicant was a white male, a demographic trait he shared with four other members of the board. In addition to gender, the applicant shared one other demographic trait with all five members of the board, they all had college degrees.

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Three Board Members and Applicant Who Attended the Same Church. An unnamed board member, Sam, and Sue attended church with one of the applicants for the Southern Valley superintendency. The applicant was a life-long active member of the church. He and the board members who attended the church shared a strong set of personal beliefs, and attended worship services, Bible studies and special programs together for several years.

The social network that existed between the three board members and the applicant who attended the same church was characteristic of Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong ties. The data supported the existence of all four tie components in the network of the unnamed board member, Sam, Sue and the applicant: time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal services. Church members meet together at least once a week, share with each other a strong set of personal beliefs, share their deepest fears and greatest joys, and work together to meet the needs of other members of the congregation.

Impact of Social Networks

The Southern Valley Board of Education began the superintendent search process searching for a candidate who had experience in school finance, a Doctoral degree, central office experience, and the ability to lead in the Southern Valley community. After the board completed its first round of interviews, it was left with two candidates: a female with a Doctoral degree and ten years of experience as the assistant superintendent in a large suburban school district and a male, middle school principal in a large suburban school district who was enrolled in a Doctoral program.

The board selected the male, middle school principal. They made the selection because of the ties that the male candidate had in the community. The male candidate

lived in the community, attended church in the community, was supported by teachers and principals in the schools, and was supported by other members of the community. The board believed the male candidate could help solve some of the district's public relations problems. The male candidate was not the choice of the retiring superintendent. In the case of Southern Valley, a combination of strong and weak ties influenced the board in selecting the male candidate.

Summary

Church and community activities were the centers of life in Southern Valley, with influences so strong that the Southern Valley Board of Education ignored the wishes of a popular retiring superintendent and selected a middle school principal with no central office experience as his replacement. The board chose the male even though the other finalist had a Doctoral degree and experience as an assistant superintendent in a large metropolitan school district. The board made their decision based on the character of the chosen candidate which they knew about because of strong ties they had with the candidate. The middle school principal was well known and respected by the members of the board of education and the community. Sam and Sue both reported that they felt the district could survive mistakes in professional competence but they could not survive a mistake in character. Table 9 summarized the existence of strong and weak ties in the Southern Valley Board of Education's social networks.

Table 9

Existence of Strong and Weak Ties in the Social Networks of the Southern Valley Board
of Education and Its Individual Member's Social Networks

Board Networks	Strong Ties	Weak Ties	No Ties
Board Members and Superintendent	X		
Board Members and Principals		X	
Board Members and Teachers, Parents, and Community		X	
Individual Member Networks			
Individual Board Members and Applicant Who Lived in Community	X		
Three Board Members and Applicant Who Attended Same Church	X		

There were five sets of ties in the Southern Valley social network, two sets of
strong ties and three sets of weak ties. Of the four districts in this study, Southern Valley
was the only district with three sets of strong ties. The other three boards reported less.

Collective Analysis

The social networks of board members and the impact of those social networks on
the selection of the superintendent of schools were analyzed.

Social Networks

When conducting the search for a superintendent of schools, the boards of
education that participated in this study used board networks (the social networks
available to board members by virtue of their position on the board of education) and

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individual member networks (individual member's social networks) to establish search criteria, to screen candidates, and to make the superintendent selection.

Board Networks. Board networks played a significant role in the development of search criteria, the screening of candidates, and the selection of the superintendent in all four school districts. The board networks consisted of strong and weak ties between the board members and their superintendents, search consultants, teachers, principals, parents, administrators, and community. Boards used both strong and weak network ties to gather information and make decisions. In two of the networks where ties were strong, a contractual agreement was part of the relationship. In Clear Valley and Southern Valley, the contractual relationship was between the board and the superintendent. In Blue Valley, the contractual agreement was between the board and a search consultant. In three of the case studies, school districts asked groups other than the board of education to interact with the applicants. In Clear Valley, the principals provided tours of the district facilities for the applicants. In Deep Valley, teachers parents, and administrators were asked to interview candidates and submit an evaluation to the board. In Southern Valley, principals interviewed applicants and met with the board to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.

Individual Member Networks. In all four boards of education, the social networks that individual board members belonged to played an important role in the selection of a school superintendent. Board members primarily used their individual networks to access informants who were not listed on applicants' resumes.

Board members used individual networks to contact teacher, administrators, military personnel, and individuals who lived in the applicants' communities. The

purpose of the contacts was to determine if the candidate was as good as the resume indicated (Carl, Dan, Dennis).

Impact of Social Networks

The strength of the tie between the exiting superintendent and the boards of education played a significant role in the selection of superintendents in the four school districts. Ties were nonexistent between the Blue Valley Board of Education and the Deep Valley Board of Education and their superintendents. Because of the lack of ties, the Blue Valley and Deep Valley Boards of Education looked for candidates who would bring a different style and competence to their school districts. Strong ties existed between the Clear Valley Board of Education and Southern Valley Board of Education and their superintendents. They began their searches looking for applicants who possessed the same kinds of professional competence as their current superintendents. In Southern Valley, two other sets of strong ties that influenced the selection of the superintendent, the strong ties between individuals of the same community and the strong ties of individuals who shared the same religious beliefs.

Weak ties played positive and negative roles in the four school districts. In Blue Valley and Clear Valley, weak ties were used to eliminate applicants who had made it through the first round of interviews. In Blue Valley and Deep Valley, weak ties played a positive role in the decision to employ a female superintendent. Through the use of weak ties, board members were provided information that gave assurance of the professional competence of the female applicants. In Southern Valley, the principals, parents, teachers, and members of the community used their weak ties with the board to convey their support for the male applicant.

Summary

Board networks and individual member networks played a crucial role in the superintendent selection process in the Blue Valley, Clear Valley, Deep Valley, and Southern Valley school districts. Strong and weak ties played important roles in the development of search criteria, the screening of applicants, and in the final selection of a superintendent.

The two districts with strong ties between the board and the superintendent selected a male to be the next superintendent. The two districts with no ties between the board and the superintendent selected a female superintendent. In both of the districts where a female was chosen, the board wanted a change in direction for the school district. After discussions with teachers, board members, and administrators who had worked with the female applicants, the boards concluded that the female applicants could bring about the necessary changes.

Summary

Board networks and individual member networks were examined to determine their effect on the superintendent selection process. In each case study, social networks affected the selection of the superintendent. Consistent with the principals of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980 & McPartland & Braddock, 1981), network analysis (Wells & Crain, 1994), and tie strength (Granovetter, 1973); in those school districts where strong ties existed between the board and their superintendent, a male applicant was selected to be the next superintendent of schools. In those school districts where a strong tie did not exist, weak ties were used by boards of education to determine that female applicants possessed the level of professional competence necessary to be the

district's next superintendent. The summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this study were presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,

IMPLICATIONS, AND COMMENTARY

This chapter includes a summary, conclusions, recommendations and

implications, and commentary gleaned from the data compiled and analyzed in this study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the social networks of school board

members and the effects of those networks on the selection of the superintendent of

schools. The purpose was accomplished by

- Data collected from four school districts that were selected for the study

  based on the gender of the superintendent and the gender of the president

  of the board of education;

- Data presented (individually and collectively) in three categories: the

  history of the superintendency, the superintendent search, and the

  superintendent selection; and

- Data analyzed individually by site then collectively from the perspective of

  Braddock (1980) and McPartland and Braddock's (1981) Perpetuation

  Theory.

Data Needs

Data from school districts that selected a superintendent of schools for the 1997-

98 or the 1998-99 school years and the effect of board members' social networks on the

selection of a superintendent were needed.

Data Sources

Data were collected from four school districts. School districts were selected based on the following criteria: the year of the selection of the school district's superintendent, the gender of the superintendent selected, and the gender of the board president. Of the four school districts selected, one district had a female superintendent and a female board president, one had a male superintendent and a male board president, one had a male superintendent and a female board president, and one had a female superintendent and a male board president. The school districts ranged in size from 948 to 1,600 students.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two sources: the long interview method and document analysis. Two participants were interviewed from each site. A review was conducted of the policy manual for each school district.

Data Presentation

Before collecting data, a literature review was completed. Data was continuously cast against the literature. Data were then sorted into three categories: history of the superintendency, superintendent search, and superintendent selection.

History of the superintendency. In the school districts that participated in this study, the superintendency had been dominated by men. Only two women had ever been superintendents in the school districts that participated in this study. Both women had been employed since 1990. The national trend in recent years of fewer years of tenure in the superintendency was reflected in this study. Since 1990, the average tenure of a superintendent in these four school districts had been a little over two years

Superintendent Search. Each school board developed its own method to conduct the superintendent search. In each case, the superintendent search went through a three step process: the establishment of search criteria, the recruitment and screening of applicants, and the interviewing of candidates. In Blue Valley, a search consultant was employed to establish the search criteria and to recruit and screen applicants. Clear Valley delegated the responsibility for the development of search criteria and the recruitment and screening of applicants to the exiting superintendent. Deep Valley appointed a board committee of two members to establish the search criteria and recruit and screen applicants. Southern Valley appointed a three member committee of two board members and the exiting superintendent to establish the search criteria and to recruit and screen applicants. All four school districts used the entire board to interview candidates. The Blue Valley and Clear Valley boards conducted the interviews without participation from any other group. Deep Valley and Southern Valley involved building principals in the interview process. Deep Valley also allowed committees of parents and teachers to interview candidates.

Superintendent Selection. There were several factors that influenced a school board's selection of a superintendent. In Blue Valley and Deep Valley, the possession of a doctorate and the educational experiences of the candidates were important factors in the board's decision to select a female candidate as their next superintendent. In Blue Valley, the candidates' response to interview questions, information provided by references, and the candidates proven record of improving test scores, passing bond issues, and managing school finance were also important factors in the selection decision. In Clear Valley, two important factors in the selection of the superintendent were the

recommendation of the exiting superintendent and the candidate's ability to fit into the community. For the Deep Valley board, it was the female candidate's ability to articulate a vision, combined with her leadership skills and the evaluations of principals, parents, and teachers that influenced their decision. In Southern Valley, the selection was influenced by the candidate's response to interview questions, the evaluations of building principals, and the board's belief that the candidate could function in the community and was a person of character. In Blue Valley, Clear Valley, and Deep Valley, information that was obtained from individuals who applicants had not listed as references influenced the selection of the superintendent.

Analysis

Data were analyzed through the lens of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and Granovetter's (1973) strong and weak ties to reveal influences on the superintendent selection process.

Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties were useful in the initial analysis of board member social networks and their effect on superintendent selection. By using these theories, it was easy to conceptualize the big picture of board member networks. However, the research did not provide enough information because Granovetter (1973) identified the four tie components but did not provide a definition or a method of measuring them. In his 1973 study, Groanovetter told his readers that he was leaving the definition and measurement of tie strength to further research.

Other researchers followed Granovetter and provided definitions and measures of tie component strength. Baker (1994) and Forsyth and Hoy's (1978) definitions and

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measurements of tie component strength were very helpful in providing a clearer picture of what constitutes a strong or a weak tie. Also useful in providing a clearer explanation of tie strength were the notions of demographic factors (Linzey & Byrne, 1968) and contextual factors (Fischer et al., 1977). The contextual factor's notion of a relationship of convenience was especially beneficial in providing a method to explain the weak ties of individual board members.

Findings

Given all the data, the following findings emerged:

- Board members used strong and weak ties to discover information not provided by candidates' applications and to confirm conclusions drawn during the interview process. Through board members' contacts with family members and close friends, as well as with acquaintances or friends of friends, they were able to gather trustworthy information about candidates who were applying for the superintendent position in their district. Boards place a great deal of value in the opinions of teacher, administrators, and community members who live and/or work in the district where the applicant is currently or previously employed.

- The strength of the tie between the exiting superintendent and the board of education was a factor in the selection of the next superintendent. In the two schools where the tie between the superintendent and the board was strong, the superintendent was asked to help develop search criteria and screen applicants.

- Whether a school board uses strong or weak ties in the superintendent

selection process is dependent on whether the board desires what Carlson (1961) described as an inside or outside secession to the superintendency. School boards that desire a change in the administrative culture of the district use weak ties to develop new sources of information which leads to outsider secession. School boards that want to maintain the administrative culture of the district use strong ties and current sources of information which leads to insider secession.

- The existence of a strong tie between a candidate for the superintendency and members of the board of education weakens the ties between the board and the exiting superintendent. In Southern Valley, an applicant's strong ties with members of the board led to his selection as superintendent even though he was not the choice of the exiting superintendent.

- Female candidates have a better chance of obtaining the superintendency in those school districts that establish a search criteria and that stay with the established criteria. In the Blue Valley and Deep Valley school districts, the board of education determined the characteristics and traits it wanted the next superintendent to possess. The characteristics and traits were determined before the application process began and were used throughout the interview and selection process.

- Female candidates have a better chance of obtaining the superintendency in districts where there is unrest and/or dissatisfaction with the former superintendent. The same would apply to other minorities in situations that are unclean or unclear.

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- A board decision to purposely include minority applicants in the pool of candidates participating in the interview process impacts subsequent hiring decisions. The fact that the Deep Valley board included female applicants in its two previous superintendent searches made it easier in the next search for the board to focus on candidates' qualifications, not their gender.

- Boards strive for low conflict during the superintendent selection process. If one board member expresses an opinion about a candidate, another board member will not object unless that board member is leaving the board.

- Board use of weak ties is harmful to applicants' chances of gaining employment. This finding conflicts with Granovetter's (1973) notion that weak ties help an applicant gain employment. The data from the Blue Valley and Clear Valley case studies showed that board members used information gathered through weak ties to eliminate applicants from consideration.

- Strong ties between the board and the superintendent favor the traditional applicants and the continuation of the existing superintendency. In the two school districts where the board and the superintendent had strong ties, the a male superintendents was hired. Conversely, the two school districts that had no ties between the board and the superintendent hired female superintendents.

Conclusions

As a result of the research, several conclusions about boards of education and the selection of school superintendents have been drawn. First, boards of education spend many hours in the process of selecting a superintendent. They work closely with each other to determine which candidate will be the best individual to serve as their superintendent.

Second, boards of education see female superintendents as agents of change and/or as healers, thus limiting women superintendents to school districts that are experiencing controversy or crisis. Districts that are experiencing controversy or crises typically have a weak tie or no tie between the board and the exiting superintendent.

Third, board members believe that the information that is gathered through their social networks or the social networks of other board members in the communities and school districts where candidates are currently or were previously employed, provide a truer picture and a more reliable indicator of the character, abilities, and professional competence of a candidate than references provided by the candidate. The school boards considered the social references and professional references provided by the candidate to be untrustworthy.

Fourth, society is many years away from seeing any large cracks in the glass ceiling. Male applicants for superintendent positions have a built-in advantage over female applicants because of the historical dominance of the superintendency by men, the strong ties that exist between superintendents and boards of education, and the fact that more men than women submit applications for superintendent vacancies.

Fifth, strong ties between school boards and superintendents support the status

quo of the continued segregation of the superintendency by race and gender. The findings of this study are supported by Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981).

Sixth, boards of education should establish guidelines to govern the use of members' weak ties to eliminate candidates. The current practice of allowing one negative report to eliminate a candidate from contention is unfair to the applicant and to the board. Boards should consider requiring three negative reports before eliminating an applicant form consideration.

<div align="center">Recommendations and Implications</div>

The findings of this study yielded significant results in the areas of theory, research, and practice. To be significant, research must (1) add to or clarify existing theory, (2) add to the knowledge base, and (3) impact practice (Hoy & Miskel, 1991).

<u>Theory</u>

Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) was used to examine the effect of board member social networks on the selection of school superintendents. The examination was conducted by using Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties to analyze the strength of board members' collective and individual social networks. This research demonstrated that the network that consisted of the board of education and the superintendent perpetuated itself over time unless an event occurred to weaken the tie between the board and the superintendent. The research added to the knowledge base of theory by showing the usefulness of Perpetuation Theory (Braddock, 1980; McPartland & Braddock, 1981) and strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) to analyze gender discrimination.

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However, there are limitations in the utilization of Granovetter's (1973) notion of strong and weak ties to analyze the strength of social networks. The limitations exist in the current definitions and measurements of tie components. Currently, researchers must develop their own definitions and measurements of tie components or choose from a myriad of definitions and measurements provided by other researchers. Typically, the available definitions are based on tacit knowledge, conjecture, and personal assessment. Social network theory would benefit from the development of universally accepted definitions and measurements of tie components.

There are two research studies that need to be undertaken. One is a study that examines the effect that social networks consisting of female superintendents and boards of education has on the selection of a replacement for a female superintendent. The other is a study of the effect of board and superintendent tie strength on superintendent tenure.

Research

The findings of this study added to the knowledge base by documenting the effect of board member social networks on the selection of superintendents. This study can be used by aspiring superintendents to give them insight into the board perspective of superintendent selection and by boards of education to develop their superintendent selection process. No research was found in the literature that indicated that this kind of study had been attempted before.

Future research might examine the effects of board member social networks on the selection of building administrators and teachers. It would be useful for school boards and applicants alike to know how strong and weak ties affect the selection of building administrators and teachers.

Research should also be undertaken to determine the effect of the educational attainment of board members' wives on superintendent selection. In this study the three male members of boards of education that decided to employ a female superintendent had wives with terminal degrees. One wife was an M.D., another wife had a Ph.D. in chemistry, and the third wife had an Ph.D. in educational psychology.

Practice

In an effort to increase the number of women who are serving as superintendents in school districts across our nation, women have been encouraged to develop ties to the professional networks of superintendents. Previous research has demonstrated the importance of network ties in receiving information about job openings (Granovetter, 1973).

This study showed how a school board's practice of purposely interviewing female candidates allowed them to progress to the point that the board was able to focus on the professional competence of candidates and candidates' compatibly with the board and its goals and not focus on gender. State and national school board associations typically offer boards of education advice on school district employment practices. The advice usually focuses on the development and use of nondiscriminatory application forms and interview questions. The implication of this study is that state and national school board associations should begin to encourage member school boards to purposely include minority superintendent applicants in the interview process. If a school board includes minorities in the interview process, the consideration of minority candidates moves from a novel experience to a part of board practice.

Commentary

This study began as an attempt to explain the continued existence of the glass ceiling in the school superintendency. The beginning assumption was that men, because of their dominance in high visibility positions in school districts as coaches and secondary administrators, developed strong ties with members of boards of education. It was also assumed that women, because they primarily worked in low visibility positions in school districts as teachers and female principals were not able to develop strong ties with members of boards of education. It was assumed that a study of board member social networks would reveal that the relationships between board members and male coaches and secondary principals influenced the selection of school superintendents. This research did not support that assumption.

What the research did demonstrate was that relationships between the exiting superintendent and the board played a critical role in determining what qualities and characteristics the board desired in the next superintendent. In this study the absence of ties between the board and the exiting superintendent created a climate favorable to female applicants. It is safe to assume that the same would be true for other minority candidates as well.

Board member social networks affected the superintendent selection process, especially when it was time for the board to make its final decision. In this study, board members believed the information they received through their social networks was a more reliable indicator of future performance than the candidate's references. This study also demonstrated the importance of superintendents and aspiring superintendents to maintains good working relationships with teachers and the community.

While working on this project, I could not help but wonder why my board of education selected me to be their superintendent of schools. Before this study began, I believed their decision was based on my experiences as an assistant superintendent. I was fortunate enough to work for superintendents who gave me responsibility in the areas of school finance, curriculum, testing, and bond issues. I believed that the board based their decisions on my experience and my responses to their interview questions. Since completing this study, I now assume that their decision was based on a discussion with a classroom teacher or community member who had a network connection with either a member of the board of education or a member of the community where I was working. As superintendent, I have tried to maintain good relationships with teachers and members of the community. Now that I know that future employment opportunities may be tied to these relationships, I plan to increase my efforts in this area.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

DATE: 11-30-98
IRB #: ED-99-058

Proposal Title: A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE ELECTION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Principal Investigator(s): Adrienne Hyle, David Pennington

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

===

Signature:
_____

Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance
cc: David Pennington

Date: November 30, 1998

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

(After introducing myself and explaining the informed consent, I will engage in conversation around the following grand tour questions.)

Background

    1. Please tell me about yourself - as an individual and as a board member

    2. Please tell me about this district.

    3. Please describe the latest search for a district superintendent. How did this district conduct the superintendent search?

    4. May I have a copy of district personnel policies, policies governing personnel recruitment, the superintendent position announcement, and the superintendent job description?

    5. Do you have any other documents that might explain the superintendent selection process for this district?

Perpetuation Theory

    6. From whom did you get advice?

    7. Whom did you contact during the search process? (Friends, former board members, former superintendents, references.)

    8. Why did you contact these individuals?

    9. Who or what had the greatest influences on your final selection?

APPENDIX C

WRITTEN CORRESPONDENCE WITH PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT FORM FOR A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

General Information

You have been asked by a doctoral student of Oklahoma State University working on a research project (dissertation) to be interviewed about the superintendent selection process and how it is effected by board members' social networks.

The interview and observation serve two purposes: (1) information collected in the interview and observation will be used by the doctoral student to create a scholarly paper (dissertation) about the impact of social networks and teacher beliefs on educational change, and (2) information collected by the doctoral student may be used in scholarly publications of the student and/or the project director (dissertation advisor).

The interview should last from one to one and one-half hours. The questions asked will be developed by the doctoral student. All participants will be asked the same general questions. The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed by the doctoral student for analysis. The project director (dissertation advisor) may review these transcripts. Observations will last approximately one hour. Notes will be taken by the doctoral student. The project director may also review these notes. All tapes, transcripts, and notes are treated as confidential materials and will be kept under lock and key for a 5 year period and then destroyed. During this 5 year period, only the project director (dissertation advisor) and doctoral student will have access to these tape recordings and transcripts.

The doctoral student will assign pseudonyms for each participant of the study. These pseudonyms will be used in all discussions and in all written materials dealing with interviews and observations. Lastly, no interview will be accepted or used by the doctoral student unless the consent form has been signed. The form will be filed and retained for at least 2 years by the project director (dissertation advisor).

Subject Understanding

I understand that participation in this interview and observation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director (dissertation advisor).

I understand that the interview and observation will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the interview and observation will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

I understand the interview and observation will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact the project director, Dr. Adrienne Hyle, Ph.D., Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078; Telephone (405)744-7244, should I wish further information about the research. I also may contact Gay Clarkson IRB, Executive Secretary, 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 74078; Telephone (405) 744-3706.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(A.M./P.M.)

SIGNED: _____
                (Signature of Subject)

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it and provided the subject with a copy of this form.

DATE: _____ TIME: _____(A.M./P.M.)

SIGNED: _____
                (Signature of Doctoral Student)

FILED:
        INITIALS OF INSTRUCTOR _____ DATE:_____

March 24, 1999

Board President
Post Office Box 1134
Blue Valley, OK 74010-1134

Dear Ms. President:

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about the superintendent selection process in the Blue Valley school district

I have included a copy of the transcript of our conversation. If you will notice, at this time I have not changed any of the names to pseudonyms. Pseudonyms will be assigned when I begin reporting the data in the dissertation. Please look over this transcript for accuracy (except for typos and punctuation). If there is anything you would like to add or change, give me a call and we can either talk over the phone or meet again. Sometimes it is difficult to tell exactly what is on the tape.

Again, thank you very much for your participation in this research project.

Sincerely,

David Pennington

P.S. If you would prefer to use e-mail, my address is penningd@blackwell.k12.ok.us

VITA

David Kirk Pennington

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A STUDY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE SELECTION OF
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, on Feburary 5, 1955, the son of
Neal and Betty Pennington.

Education: Recieved Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Oklahoma
State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1977; recieved Master of
Science degree in Educational Administration from Oklahoma State
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 1981. Completed the
requirments for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational
Administration at Oklahoma State University in July, 1999.

Experience: Classroom teacher and coach, Lansing Public Schools, Lansing,
Kansas 1977-1980; graduate teaching assistant Department of Curruculum
and Instruction, Oklahoma State University 1980-1981; classroom teacher
and head boys' basketball coach, Lansing High School, Lansing, Kansas,
1981-1984; classroom teacher, head boys' basketball coach, Bristow High
School, Bristow, Oklahoma, 1984-1991; assistant principal, athletic
director, Bristow Public Schools, 1991-1993; assistant superintendent of
schools, Bristow Public Schools, Bristow, Oklahoma, 1993-1995;
superintendent of schools, Blackwell Public Schools, Blackwell,
Oklahoma, 1995-present.

Professional Memberships: Cooperative Council of Oklahoma School
Administration, Oklahoma Association of School Administrators,
American Association of School Administrators.