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**NARRATIVE NON-FICTION STORIES OF MEXICAN AMERICAN FEMALE
PRINCIPALS OF PREDOMINATELY HISPANIC ELEMENTARY PUBLIC
CAMPUSES IN TEXAS**

by

Betsy Janet Mijares, B.A., M.Ed.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY
(May 2017)

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by

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ABSTRACT

In Texas, there is an increase of the Hispanic population and not a significant increase in Hispanic administrators. Women remain underrepresented in the principalship with even less representation of Hispanics. With an increasing number of Hispanic students, it is vital to ensure there is a representation to be an advocate for these children. Hopefully, this information will provide connection, relativity, and give a sense of hope to aspiring female minority principals and the Hispanic community. The purpose of this narrative non-fiction study was to enable four Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to reveal their stories of their career paths, barriers experiences throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. Data collection included three levels of semi-structured interviews. Themes from the four narrative stories were examined, and an analysis of narratives was completed to draw conclusions pertaining to the career paths of Mexican-American female elementary principals. Their stories provide a voice to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principalship or other administrative roles. This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas.

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Most of all, I would like to thank both the Mijares and Dominguez families.

Thank you for understanding and supporting me throughout this process, as I have been absent these past three years. Love all of you. Gracias por todo.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all the Latinas in education who strive to make a difference in children's lives. I especially dedicate this to the wonderful women who participated in this study. All of you truly want what is best for children and encourage all students to succeed in life.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my Burley family for all of their support and encouragement. I am truly blessed to have such a great staff. Along with my school family, I would like to thank Team Lufkin ISD. Several principals, directors, and administrators supported me with prayers and encouraging words. I am forever grateful.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Research of Latinas in educational administration continues to be limited or of little focus (Méndez-Morse, 2000; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). The visibility and presence of an ethnically or racially diverse principal is essential and encouraging for our growing minority student population in public schools in the United States (Magdaleno, 2006). The number of diverse teachers and principals has not increased at a fast rate to match the influx of Hispanic students (Arounsack, 2014; Falk, 2011).

Background of the Problem

With the increase of the Hispanic population in Texas, there needs to be an increase of Hispanic female administrators for a matching representation for cultural connectivity and mentorship. A report from the Pew Research Center stated, “The Hispanic population reached a new high of 55.4 million in 2014 (17.4% of the total U.S. population), an increase of 1.2 million (2.1% from the year before)” (Krogstad & Lopez, 2015, p. 1).

There is a slow but continuous growth of the Hispanic population in the United States (Portes, 2009). In 2011-2012, according to the Texas Education Agency, Texas

student enrollment was 4,998,579. The breakdown of ethnicity percentage was 50% Hispanic, 30% White, 13% African American, and 7% includes American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Other or Pacific Islander, and 2 or more races. In comparison of 2015-2016, according to the Texas Education Agency (2015), the Texas student enrollment was 5,299,728. The breakdown of ethnicity was 52% Hispanic (2,767,747), 29% White (1,513,027), and 13% African American (668,338), and 6% includes American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, Other or Pacific Islander, and 2 or more races (350,616). The data of student enrollment reflect a 2% increase in Hispanic student enrollment from 2011-2012 to 2015-2016. Furthermore, gender and ethnicity disparity is continuous among school administrators in public schools. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), Mexicans made up over 64% of all Hispanics in the United States, which represented the fastest growing Hispanic student population. Specifically, the Mexican population has grown from 30.8 million in 2010 to 33.6 million in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

The U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics reported that during 2011-2012, there were approximately 89,810 acting principals in K-12 public schools in the United States. Among these principals, 80% were White, 10% were Black or African American, 7% were Hispanic, and 3% were another race or ethnicity (U.S. Department of Education & NCES, 2011-2012). There continues to be a racial and ethnic disparity between educational leaders and a diverse representation of the student population (Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012). Hernandez and Murakami (2016) emphasized “ . . . the demographic representation among teachers has not seemed to

follow. For example, only 15 percent of public school teachers and six percent of public school principals are Latinos as opposed to 82 percent of White teachers nationwide” (p. 1). William and Loeb (2012) observed in their research that the number of Hispanic students and other minority students are steadily increasing in enrollment, but the number of diversity within teachers and administrators is not increasing rapidly to match influx of the minority group of students.

According to Evans (2007), Texas has rapidly changed in demographics, which will ultimately affect the societal and cultural influences of schools. Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2008) explain that leaders need to represent their student population to be role models, motivators, and be able to relate to students’ individual culture. Additionally, Palacio (2013) revealed that Hispanic female principals continue to be underrepresented. Hispanic female principals’ experiences can inspire and pave the way for aspiring principals with similar experiences. There is a lack of representation in relation to Hispanic students (Sanchez, et al, 2008). Hispanic leaders can provide strong role models, identity development, and a sense of motivation for future aspirations (Méndez-Morse, 2004).

According to Ramsey (2015), the demographics of 2010 – 2015 in Texas, nearly two-thirds of principals are White, a little more than one-fifth of principals were Hispanic/Latino, and over one-tenth were black/African American. Texas is slowly moving in the increasing in the number and percentage of female principals. The number of male principals tended to decline from academic year 2010-12 onward. The statistics do not provide a breakdown of Hispanic females or males in Texas (Ramsay, 2015).

Unfortunately, this data were not disaggregated by gender and race, so it is difficult to know the precise number of Hispanic females who are principals in public schools nationally. National data sets rarely describe the number of Hispanic female principals or teachers; the only information available is either race or gender (Sanchez et al., 2008).

From the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic within the U.S. Department of Education (2015), Figure 1 reflects that there continues to be a Hispanic student-teacher gap in Texas along with other states. If there is a limited amount of Hispanic teachers, there is an assumption the amount of Latina principals is even more limited (Boser, 2014).

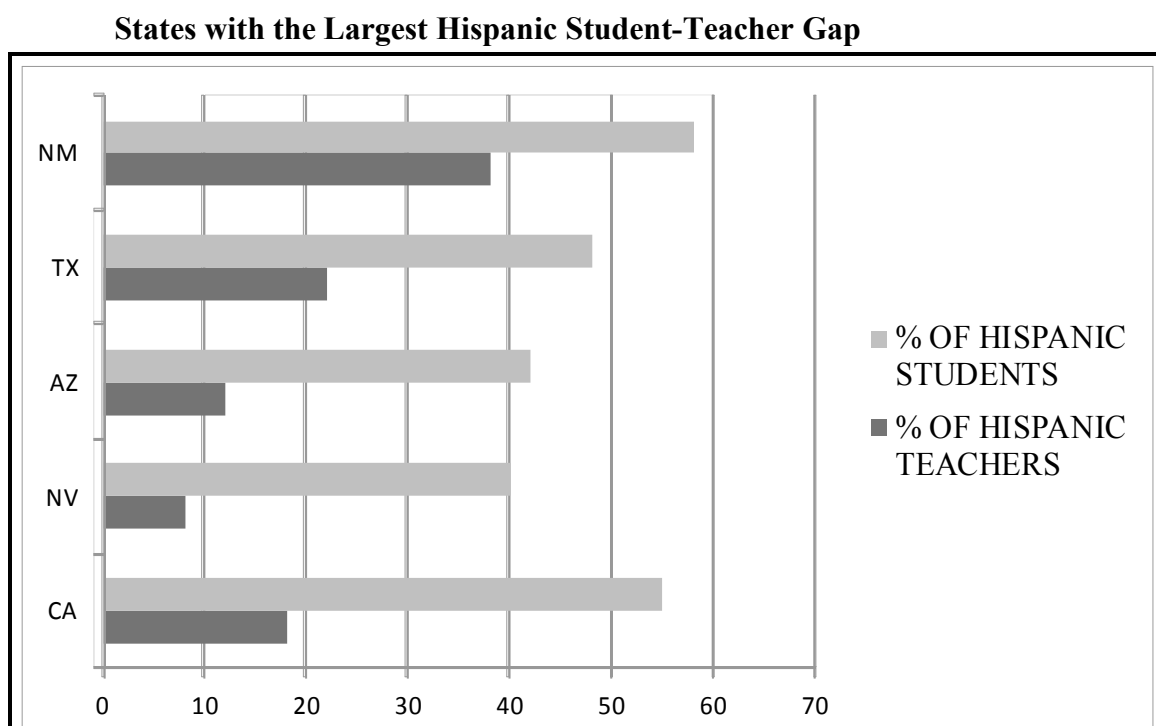


Figure 1. Hispanic Teacher Recruitment: Increasing the Number of Hispanic Teachers: 2015. Adapted from U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://sites.ed.gov/hispanic-initiative/files/2015/04/FINAL_Hispanic-Teacher-Recruitment-Factsheet_04272015.pdf

The report from the U.S. Department of Education (2015) supported that there “. . . continues to be fundamental challenges that aspiring Latino teachers encounter” (p. 1). Figure 1 demonstrates the five states with the largest Hispanic student-teacher gap. According to Figure 1, there is a major gap in Texas of the Hispanic student-teacher gap ratio.

According to Madsen (2012), students and staff need gender diversity in leadership positions in order to have positive transformational experience, instead of under a gender-homogenous leadership. “Women constitute approximately 75% of the teaching force, the pool from which superintendents begin their career journey, but they are disproportionately underrepresented in the top positions in schools” (Klein, 2007, p. 104). There is minimal research about Latina/o school leadership in general and less research is known about Latina principals (Hernandez, Murakami, & Cerecer, 2014). The possible cause or barriers for the underrepresentation of Latina administrators are one of the central purposes for researching the topic (William & Loeb, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

According to the 2012-2013 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) report on public school principals in the United States, there were 89,530 serving principals. Out of this total, there are 71,920 White, 9,070 African American/Black, 6,070 Hispanic, and 2,470 other ethnicities. The results show that 80% of principal in the United States are White and 7% are Latino/a. There is no separation of gender provided for Latinas (Bitterman, Goldring, & Gray, 2013).

The problem of this study centers on the lack of Hispanic female principals and an understanding of what factors preclude leading to the principalship. The thoughts and perceptions of Mexican-American female principals serving in elementary public schools in Texas were examined. The problem with a lack of representation of Mexican-American females holding administrative positions was explored through their experiences related to their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their careers, factors contributing to their successes, and their influence of being a Mexican-American principal at predominately Hispanic campuses. The pathway to leadership is not an easy task for Latinas, as they face discrimination, stereotypes, and cultural expectations (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2016). There is a lack of support systems and mentors for Latinas to relate to and have a cultural connection (Méndez-Morse, 2000).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative non-fiction study was to enable Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to share their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. Their stories provided a voice to hope to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principals or other administrative roles. These stories of these women perceptions of their career path identified their decision on pursuing the principalship and any hindrances endured in the process. These Mexican-American women also identified their Hispanic culture and family expectations as an influence of their career path.

This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. An additional purpose of this study focused on the investigation of what influenced these Mexican-American females and their perceptions of their experiences to become principals. By identifying internal and external challenges, and experiences, there could be revelations on how to overcome obstacles and advance career responsibilities. Historically, little is known of the individual lives of Hispanic women who occupy the position of principal. This study provided the opportunity for them to share their voices and their stories to assist others in gaining similar success.

The information from this study of Mexican-American female principals can provide information and inspire aspiring Hispanic school leaders. The presentation of stories from Hispanic female administrators can be empowering, educational, beneficial, and therapeutic to others who may seek a principalship but have not had the opportunity to have someone to relate to their own culture or ethnicity. This inquiry focused on the family or work barriers, mentorship, and the path tied to their culture. There continues to be a lack of research of female administrators and in examining the influence of women in leadership positions (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). As a result, there are even fewer studies and research pertaining to Hispanic women (Wrushen & Sherman, 2008).

According to Shakeshaft et al., (2007), there needs to be more research about women in leadership positions, how they attain their positions, and how they became successful, to inspire other women into educational leadership roles. Through the collection of personal narrative responses, the researcher revealed personal and

professional experiences on how these women developed to their leadership positions as principals. The qualitative study of narrative non-fiction allowed the researcher to capture the voices and experiences of these women in an effort to examine what factors preclude leading to the principalship for Mexican-American elementary principals in Texas.

Research Questions of the Study

The following five research questions were central to the study and guided the interview process and the data gathered from Mexican-American female principals:

1. What are the Mexican-American females' perceptions on how they became a principal at a predominantly Hispanic campus?
2. What are the Mexican-American females' roles as a principal and factors that contribute to success?
3. What are of the influences on Mexican-American female principals to become school principals?
4. What are the Mexican-American females' perceptions of their career path and how it might differ from that of non-Hispanic females?
5. What are the barriers encountered throughout their career paths from a Mexican-American female perspective?

Significance of the Research

The significance of this study was to further develop the Hispanic female perspective of their experiences of becoming an elementary principal at a predominately Hispanic campus. The research questions provided the opportunity to add to the existing

literature and make a contribution in the field of educational leaders, women leaders, minority, and specifically Hispanic principals or aspiring leaders. This study contributed to hearing the unique individual stories of Mexican-American female principals. Hopefully, this study provided Mexican-American female principals' perspectives and may assist to in motivating other Hispanic females to pursue an administrative role in education.

The study also provided awareness for aspiring principals and researchers of the importance of hiring Mexican-American female principals and underlying themes from the research based on their common experiences. Latina women's voices are silent when it comes to describing career paths, professional development, and leadership styles (Trujillo-Ball, 2003).

The study established awareness of the disparities between the numbers of women in the teaching field compared to the total number of women in administration in public education. There is less research about Hispanic women leaders, and research primarily focused on male leaders (Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). There is a need for more research on successful Latina principals in the state of Texas.

There continues to be racial and gender discrepancy in the public educational system between students, teachers, and administrators (Apple, 2013). Table 1 shows that most principals were White, and the second and third largest groups were Hispanic and African American principals. There is some growth in minority educational leaders in Texas, but it is still does not match the state's student demographics.

Table 1

Employed Principal Demographics 2011-2015. Texas Education Agency PEIMS Data

Year	Female			Male			Black / African American			White			Hispanic / Latino			Asian			American Indian / Alaska Native			Pacific Islander			Two or More Ethnicities	
	Total	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	n=	%	
2014-2015	8,126	5,079	62.5	3,047	37.5	977	12.02	5,114	62.93	1,871	23.02	40	0.49	31	0.38	24	0.03	69	0.85							
2013-2014	8,005	4,967	62.0	3,038	38.0	947	11.83	5,067	63.30	1,828	22.84	46	0.57	32	0.40	3	0.04	82	1.02							
2012-2013	7,914	4,848	61.3	3,066	38.7	903	11.41	5,099	64.43	1,739	21.97	44	0.56	31	0.39	3	0.04	95	1.20							
2011-2012	7,880	4,820	61.2	3,060	38.8	872	11.07	5,112	64.87	1,732	21.98	41	0.52	34	0.43	1	0.01	88	1.12							
2010-2011	7,887	4,752	60.3	3,135	39.7	854	10.83	5,137	65.13	1,721	21.82	44	0.56	40	0.51	1	0.01	90	1.14							

Adapted from http://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Educator_Data/Educator_Reports_and_Data

According to Hein (2003), it is imperative to have schools that have leaders who are culturally, linguistically, and socially adept to raise achievement of Latina/o students. The number of female Hispanic principals is not aligned with the pace of increase of the Hispanic population (Ramsey, 2015). Ramsey's (2015) statistics of Employed Principal Demographics from 2011 – 2015 showed that most principals were female and second largest group were Hispanic principals. The data in Table 1 does not disaggregate male or female within the ethnicity groups, it shows the increase by .18% from 2013-2014 to 2014-2015 of Hispanic principals.

This study focused specifically on Mexican-American female elementary principals of predominately Hispanic campuses in Texas. The term "Hispanic" encompasses persons of Spanish-speaking descent and Latino/Latina was commonly used to identify persons of Latin American origins (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012). These ethnic groups provide various cultural and historical experiences in the United States. This study provided an understanding of current issues in school administration in Texas and the limited number of Mexican female administrators as compared to Hispanic student population. In addition, research about the experiences of Hispanic women as leaders is limited (Méndez-Morse, 2000). Hispanic female principals face barriers from barriers of being a minority and of gender equity issues (Carter, Mwaura, Ram, Trehan, & Jones, 2015).

Assumptions

The researcher assumed that the participants would answer all questions honestly without preconceived intention to alter the results of the investigation. The assumption

existed that the interpretation of the data collected effectively reflected the context and relationship investigated in the study. The third assumption was that the respondents would be honest and open with their responses. The researcher also assumed that all participants were Mexican-American and would be able to speak Spanish as well as the researcher or better. One assumption was that the mothers of all of the participants would be their greatest mentor and influence of their success. Another assumption was the researcher remained unbiased throughout the process. Finally, it is assumed the study findings accurately reflected the participants' responses and findings would allow a better understanding of the career path of Hispanic female principals.

Limitations

One of the limitations of the study was that results were not generalizable to other women of color and/or to Hispanic males within the principalship. The study was limited to examining the perceptions of Mexican-American female elementary principals in various Texas school districts. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to other parts of the country or other Hispanics in educational leadership.

The findings of the study represented four Mexican-American female principals from different regions of Texas. Their experiences may differ from one another depending on the region of Texas. There may also be a time limitation; all three tiers of interviews of four participants were completed a shortened time span.

The study provided questions that probe the experiences and personal reflections of their professional lives, and the participants may not have felt as comfortable about being truthful in the process. The experiences of these principals may vary from other

females of other ethnic backgrounds and from those with fewer Hispanic students.

Furthermore, the experiences of these principals may vary from those districts outside of Texas.

The researcher was a Mexican-American female principal and could unintentionally or unconsciously may have imparted biases and interpretations based on personal experiences. The intention was to seek the purest information of the participants in an objective manner.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to four Mexican-American female principals serving only in the state of Texas and from elementary campuses of predominately Hispanic student populations. The participants were all elementary principals and limited to K-5 public campuses. All participants met the criteria of having at least one parent of Mexican ethnicity and who identified themselves as Mexican-America to be included in the sample. Also, participants must have had experience as a principal and currently in a principal position. Another delimitation was this study did not survey any male administrators, since the study considered only the experiences of Mexican-American female principals. The study focused on the overall perception of Mexican-American female principals based on the limited research available and the focus of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined to provide details of recurring vocabulary usages discussed throughout this paper. Conceptual definitions are provided.

Barriers. The term barriers is a “ . . . as a factor, event or phenomenon that prevents or controls access to individuals from making progress” (Ismail & Ibrahim, 2008, p. 54).

Elementary principal. Elementary principal the campus head of an elementary school including kindergarten to fifth grade who is responsible for appraising, leading, and managing teachers, and staff, enforcing policies, school finances, and a safe school environment (O’Rourke, Provenzano, Bellamy, & Ballek, 2007).

Hispanic. Hispanic is used to describe Americans of Spanish origin or from Spanish-speaking countries or descent is unique to the United States and the meaning continues to evolve (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012).

Latino/a. Latino/Latina refers to Spanish speaking individuals or used to refer to a person of Hispanic ancestry who lives in the United States (Taylor et al., 2012). The word Latino/a and Hispanic was used interchangeably throughout the study.

Mexican-American. Mexican-American refers to American citizens who were born in the United States, are from Mexican descent, or self-identify as a Mexican American (Jiménez, 2008).

Organization of the Study

The research study was divided into chapters according to content and purpose of each section. In Chapter I, the researcher introduced the overview purpose of the study,

background about the problem, research questions, assumptions, limitations, definition of terms, and significance of the study. Chapter II contains the literature review of women and Latina principals and theoretical framework for the study presented. Chapter III describes the qualitative narrative non-fiction story methodology of interviewing the participants of the study that revealed challenges, barriers, and experiences as a Mexican-American elementary principal in Texas. Chapter IV presents the background of the researcher followed by four chapters of narrative participant stories. Chapters V through XII include the narrative stories of all four participants.

The four participant narrative chapters, V through VIII, are followed by the narrative analysis in Chapter IX, connecting the experiences detailed by these Mexican-American female principals in Texas to each other. Chapter X, the final chapter, presents a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research. Chapter X reflects the formal research and the participant stories that further illuminated the experiences and career path leading to their principalship as Mexican-American females.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative non-fiction study was to provide an opportunity for Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to share their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. Their story provided a voice to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principal or other administrative roles. This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. In this chapter, the following topics are discussed: intersectionality theory; women in leadership, minorities in leadership; influences of the Hispanic culture; underrepresentation of Hispanic females in educational leadership; role models and mentors for women and students; and the importance of cultural connectivity.

Intersectionality Theory

Mexican-American female principals face not only social justice issues with ethnicity and race, but there is an ongoing battle with gender equality. Collins (2000) described several components of intersectionality as the:

The very notion of the intersections of race, class, and gender as an area worthy of study emerged from the recognition of practitioners of each distinctive theoretical tradition that inequality could not be explained, let alone challenged, via a race-only, or gender-only framework. No one had all of the answers and no one was going to get all of the answers without attention to two things. First, the notion of interlocking oppressions refers to the macro-level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is a model describing the social structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of intersectionality describes micro-level processes— namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of intersectionality. Together they shape oppression. (p. 82)

Intersectionality developed through feminist scholars and has provided understanding of the social and economic conditions of female minorities (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Each lived experiences of oppression are inherently linked and experienced simultaneously. Collins (2000) suggested that the intersectionality theory is advancement in feminist scholarship that has moved to multiple forms of inequality of females. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) emphasized that minority women face duality and double marginalization because of gender and ethnicity, as related to intersectionality.

Weber (2010) made the point of alluding to three domains of intersectional research: ideological, political, and economic. He also determined that one of the major advances were the link domination and privilege and the experience of both subjective and social identity. Intersectionality provides guidance of the stereotypes established by

race, ethnicity, class, and gender, which leads to oppression of a particular group. For Latina women, there continues to be a sense of oppression in the workplace with gender and ethnic identity, cultural barriers, and stereotypes (Reynoso, 2004).

Ramsay (2014) stated that, “. . . historical origins of this methodological paradigm lie in the experiences of women of color in the 1970s in the United States and subsequently of transnational feminists and white feminist allies” (p. 456). There are various forms of oppression that women are faced with throughout their lives. This could include race, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity. Along with intersectionality, Latinas have a struggle with separation of ethnic identity and their gender. Identity markers are vital in figuring out their principles and place in society (Jaramillo, 2010). “In fact, intersectionality goes further to recognize that for many women of color, their feminist efforts are simultaneously embedded and woven into their efforts against racism, classism, and other threats to their access to equal opportunities and social justice” (Samuels & Ross- Sheriff, 2008, p. 5). The past shows that women have not always been accepted into the “old boys club” in terms of administrative leadership (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). Because of their gender, women have traditionally been treated differently (Kabeer, 2005).

Women were said to exhibit emotionalism, passivity, timidity, deference, and self-abasement, and those traits were not needed in a leadership role (Smith, 2008). The more masculine traits of dominance, achievement, autonomy, and aggression were preferred in leadership roles (Campbell & Lacost, 2010; Samuels & Ross- Sheriff, 2008). Women were also seen as incompetent in many areas, which created a barrier for women

serving in educational leadership roles. For the few women that did earn a leadership position, they had to perform at higher skill levels than men that held similar positions (Campbell & Lacost, 2010). “While minorities and women have made strides in the last 30 years, and employers increasingly recognize the value of workforce diversity, the executive suite is still overwhelmingly a white man’s world” (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995, p.6). Quilantán and Menchaca-Ochoa (2004) emphasized that Latinas are twice a minority of being female and for their ethnic and cultural values.

Women in Leadership

Women continue to be underrepresented in administrative research (Shakeshaft, et al, 2007). Women have historically been the major contributors to the educational system in the teaching ranks, but the representation in leadership position is still underrepresented (Carter, 2011). The rate of female elementary principals has increased to 59%, but the female teaching force was of 84% (Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, Roth, Manning, Wang, & Zhang, 2012). In 2007, only 16% of elementary teachers were male, and 41% were elementary principals (Aud et al., 2012). Women face many barriers and obstacles to obtain the principalship (Kochan, Spencer, & Mathews, 2014). Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, and Ballenger (2007) indicated that although some barriers are gone compared to the 1980s, some are still evident in the 21st century such as:

- Family and home responsibilities affecting career opportunities;
- Sex-role stereotyping;
- Gender;
- Discrimination;

- Lack of curriculum and materials in administrative preparation programs for women and students of color;
- Gender discrimination in hiring;
- Unequal salaries; and
- Women principals are exposed to hostile workplaces that prevent participation and leadership. (p. 114)

Loder (2005) alluded to the fact that very few women enter the principalship during their 20's and 30's. Women who have entered into school administrative positions have been traditionally unmarried, without children, or with grown children (Lawson, 2008). In more recent years, however, younger women have entered leadership positions making the issue of work-life balance a more salient concern (Lawson, 2008). Women tend to be hired and promoted into leadership positions at later ages with more experience than men (Roser, Brown, & Kelsey, 2009). As a result, women tend to be better instructional leaders as principals, since they have more time in the classroom (Marczynski & Gates, 2013)

Family responsibilities.

The female administrative shortage could be from barriers within the educational system or the job itself. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 52% of United States public school principals were female (Bitterman, Goldring, & Gray, 2013). Tallerico (2000) suggested that wide obstacles, including social norms, biases, and concerns over women's commitment to their families, have led to an under-use of

women candidates. Sultana (2012) mentioned the importance of work and family to a working mother's life.

Bain and Cummins (2000) confirm that a woman wanting to advance in their career suffers marital strain. Men had difficulty appreciating their wives' demanding careers leading to insecurities, which raised tensions between partners. Female administrators struggled to give their partners attention, because they were exhausted from meeting high demands at work and tending to children (Thomson, 2011). Women continued to pay the price for the sacrifices they must make for their careers, families, or combination of both (Marshall, 2009). A study by González and Ortiz's (2009) reported from her research that a Latina administrator mentioned how being divorced for 20 years made it easier to advance into leadership, since it provided her freedom to focus on her career.

Society expects mothers should be with their children and that spending quality time is a prerequisite to good family dynamics (Guendouzi, 2006). A barrier, with a foundation in gender expectations and socialization, preventing women from advancing their careers is often caused by the personal and professional sacrifices women administrators have to make (Bird & Rhoton, 2011). Rhode (2016) stated,

For most female administrators, the path to advancement begins with a tenured position. And the timeline for tenure, the first seven years of an academic appointment, usually coincides with women's peak childbearing years. Women's professional and biological clocks are ticking on the same schedule, and women

who sacrifice academic concerns for family interests often take themselves out of the leadership pool. (p. 96)

Johns (2013) highlighted how women repressed because of flexible work arrangements in their main role of caregiving. He also mentioned how the role as a caregiver extends to aging parents and family members. “As a consequence, women frequently have to take time out from their career to fulfill the caregiver role” (Johns, 2013, p. 5). This leads to women missing promotional opportunities and prevents them from earning power with their male counterparts (Paxton & Hughes, 2016). Some researchers concluded that raising a family, in some way, hurt women’s career advancement because of the sacrifices they made with their time and career goals (Nobbe & Manning, 1997; Warner & Defleur, 1993).

The barriers preventing women to advance their careers in education often focus on educational backgrounds, employment history, relocation, and marital status, but rarely include the analysis of raising children and having a family (McGee, 2010). Career and family is a difficult task to balance for working women especially with small children. Tatman, Hovestadt, Yelsma, Fenell, and Canfield (2006) commented that even though both women and men experience increased levels of stress and conflict from balancing work and family responsibilities, it is women who experience a more significant level of conflict between work and family roles. Women tend to suffer from the guilt-complex of not spending enough time with their children (Buddhapriya, 2009).

Women leaders consistently report significantly higher job/family role conflict, which has been accompanied by higher mental and physiological strains than male

leaders. There is a tendency for to deal with great irritation, anxiety, and depression (Haines, Marchand, Rousseau, & Demers, 2008). Lawson (2008) claimed that research indicated that female administrators experience burnout and stress due to a women's tendency to deny their own needs while seeking the satisfaction of others. Johns (2013) stated, "Women often lack self-confidence and self-belief, which leads to less risk taking and more cautious career choices. On average women lag three years in assuming management positions as compared to men who have higher career expectations and increased confidence" (p. 6).

Goh, Ilies, and Wilson (2015) confirmed that women are perceived unable to be promoted, when there is a family may interfere with work demands. It is assumed because of gender roles that all women have family and not able to balance work and personal life. Ellemers (2014) identifies work-life balance as a factor that prevents women from being promoted. Researchers also claimed that there was a correlation to having a family resulting in limiting career success and advancement (Marshall, 2009; McGee, 2010; Warner & Defleur, 1993). Eagly and Carli (2007) postulated that women who are mothers have a difficult time making the decision on what is best for their children or themselves and limiting their advancement in their career. Many women do not even consider relocating for a position, thus limiting them as well (Woodd, 2013). Traditional conceptions of gender roles suggest that women are supposed to fulfill family responsibilities, and men are expected to fulfill and focus on the work role (Judge & Livingston, 2008).

Networking.

Based on Lenz's (2013) experiences of working with leaders, he suggests reasons for networking: find leaders, find allies, to raise money, and to acquire expertise and ideas. According to Wang (2009), networking develops a set of contacts in an organization that has mutual purpose in gaining benefits to assist with career advancement. Networking can assist women to have a better access to higher-level positions with people who influence the organization and reduce biases to gain access to job opportunities (Wang, 2009; Shortland, 2011). Knouse & Webb (2001) expressed the significance of networking to obtain information, insight, and guidance throughout an organization. According to their study, women and minorities still have not developed these networks as compared to their Anglo male counterparts (Knouse & Webb, 2011). Coleman (2010) confirmed that,

Networks at work are often identified with "old boys" networks', which can be formal, informal or personal, but always linked with male privilege. To some extent women-only networks in the working environment have been set up to counter the perceived advantages that men are thought to derive from networking. (p. 771)

Misner (2012) discussed informal network as a type of socializing and relationship development outside of work hours or required meetings. Some of the informal types of networking may include lunches, dinners, golf games, school functions, and a cocktail hour (Louis, 2012). Informal network could also include social networks, email, and other forms of electronic communications, which has increased as a form of

communication (Leonardi, 2013). Female administrators' careers are affected by the lack of their participation in professional organizations because of the amount of travel and extra responsibilities (Hoobler, 2011).

Forret and Dougherty (2004) noted that "Networking should have a direct relationship to valuable career outcomes, such as enhanced promotions and compensation, given that engaging in networking behavior is one means individuals can use to help develop their social capital" (p. 421). Networking provides guidance to overcome road to higher positions and is more essential for women (Schipani, Dworkin, Kwolek-Folland, & Maurer, 2009).

Leadership styles.

Fleck (2008) emphasized that good management skills and an understanding of the school and community were what principals were expected to possess in the past. Today, principals are expected to be experts in all aspects of administration, leadership, and education (Fleck, 2008). The workload increase is attributed to mounting expectations for principals to complete paperwork, manage school budget, deal with personnel issues, and serve as the official liaison between the school and the community it serves (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Along with this, there are differences between the leadership styles of men and women. Gender bias exists because traits are associated with masculine traits of assertiveness and dominance (Rice & Barth, 2016).

Rhode (2016) suggested that "Most of the traits that people attribute to leaders are those traditionally viewed as masculine: dominance, authority, and assertiveness. These do not seem attractive in women" (p. 10). Women are believed to be compassionate,

nice, and exemplify kindness (Eagly & Carli, 2007). McGrath (1992) indicated women who were successful demonstrated high levels of skill in the following areas:

communication, problem solving, organizational savvy, team building; instruction, and, curriculum. On the other hand, many women who succeed mirror their male colleagues by dressing in suits, becoming more aggressive, speaking in lower tones, and sometimes even outdoing their male counterparts in profanity (Barsh & Lee, 2012). Reed (2012) argued that women who are considered effective leaders are perceived to behave more like male leaders. Johns (2013) noted:

For example, women's typical communication style is warmer, less directed, and more mitigated than men's. This style of communication can lower perceptions about women's abilities. However, if a woman exhibits too much assertiveness, which is contradictory to the stereotype, her influence and likability may be lowered. (Johns, 2013, p. 6)

Iversen and Rosenbluth (2010) mentioned that female supervisors also are disliked more than male supervisors for giving negative feedback and labeled bitch, ice queen, and iron maiden.

Lee, Smith, and Cioci (1993) incorporated three major gender differences, which included:

1. Women principals act in a democratic style while men act in an autocratic style;
2. Women tend to provide evidence of a more personalized leadership style while men are more structural; and

3. Women are more focused on the schools' core technologies rather than school management than men are. (p. 156)

As cited in Rhode (2016), women in leadership roles are most likely subject to double standards. "In the words of in the Catalyst research report, this competence-likeability trade-off means that women are 'damned if they do and doomed if they don't meet gender-stereotypic expectations'" (Rhode, 2016, p. 11). Women tend to be more transformational-type leaders, which encourages mentorship and autocratic approaches. As a result, their leadership style develops trust, cooperation and effectiveness (Rhode, 2016). Eagly and Carli (2007) noted that female leaders tend to be more participatory, democratic, and interpersonally sensitive than male leaders and taken individual situations into account.

The career path to leadership requires women to experience challenges associated with child care needs, racism, sexism, and discrimination (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Montas-Hunter (2012) emphasized the importance of women being resilient to balance maintaining a home, thrive as wives and, or mothers, work, and take on committee responsibilities in order to succeed in leadership positions. Rhode (2016) emphasized that, "As to leadership effectiveness, most research reveals no significant gender differences. Success in leadership generally requires a combination of traditionally masculine and feminine traits, including vision, ethics, interpersonal skills, technical competence, and personal capabilities such as self-awareness and self-control" (p. 47).

Minority Women in Leadership

Women may forego continuing their degree because of the demands of having a family (McKay, 2001). Lack of time and energy were also main determinants of the decision not to add graduate work to their already overwhelming schedules (Marshall, 2009). Minorities are also less likely to earn a bachelor's degree. Hispanics on average had the lowest college graduation rates among Whites and Blacks from 1980 to 2012 (Synder & Dillow, 2013). Synder and Dillow (2013) also revealed that in 2011 Hispanics earned the least Bachelor's degree in education among Whites, Black, and Hispanics. Krogstad (2016) of the Pew Research Center confirms five facts about Latinos and education:

- Over the past decade, the Hispanic high school dropout rate has dropped dramatically;
- Hispanics still lag other groups in obtaining a four-year degree. As of 2014, among Hispanics ages 25 to 29, just 15% of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree or higher. By comparison, among the same age group, about 41% of whites have a bachelor's degree or higher (as do 22% of blacks and 63% of Asians). This gap is due in part to the fact that Hispanics are less likely than some other groups to enroll in a four-year college, attend an academically selective college and enroll full-time;
- Another reason why Hispanics lag in bachelor's degrees is that nearly half who go to college attend a public two-year school, or community college, the highest share of any race or ethnicity;

- Hispanics are significantly less likely than other groups to have student debt. (p. 1-4)

Bordas (2012) emphasized the importance of minorities carrying a number of core cultural dynamics such as, “their history as colonized people is a common denominator in engendering leadership that is people-centered, community focused, and advocacy oriented. All three cultures center on a collective or group covenant” (p. xi). Turner (2002) reiterated the fact there is a lack of literature because of few women of color in educational leadership positions. Broome and Krawiec (2007) insinuated that women of color are likely to encounter doubts concerning their competence and credentials. There is a sense of isolation for women of color through the lack of access to mentorship, networking, or administrative encouragement to enter the administrative field (Magdaleno, 2004).

It is also assumed women of color are to be beneficiaries of affirmative action and often report marginalization, tokenism, and reservations about their own abilities (Duncan, 2002). Browne (2000) explained that the main reasons minority women struggle in the workplace is because of gender specific jobs and raising children. Not only do minority women face a number of challenges of being in hierarchies dominated by White men, but also the dominance of White women (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Valian (1999) mentioned women of color often lack the executive presence. If there is a man seated at the head of a table for a meeting, it is assumed that they are the leader. Eagly and Chin (2010) emphasized:

Despite the growing diversity among leaders, the still present underrepresentation of women and of racial and ethnic minorities in leadership roles demands an explanation. Could this underrepresentation represent the lack of qualifications of members of these groups? Or could it represent discriminatory barriers whereby White men have preferential access to leadership roles compared with equally qualified women and racial/ethnic minorities. (p. 216).

Maes (2010) added that Latinas are also in low socioeconomic status group, as well. Latinas and African-American women are at the greatest risk of poverty and lowest wages and the provider of their families (Browne, 2000). Santamaría and Jean-Marie (2014) stated that,

Educational leaders who are women and members of historically underserved groups in the U.S. (e.g., American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Black or African American) tend to manifest cross-cultural leadership practices through different filters of experience than their mainstream and dominant-culture peers. One explanation for this is their ability to take positive attributes of their cross-cultural differences and combine them with empirically effective leadership practices (e.g., transformational leadership), which for them has resulted in different and often positive outcomes. (p. 334)

In order to move forward, Santamaría and Jean-Marie (2014) suggested that there is a need for active recruitment, training, and development of women of color to serve in administrative roles in education. They also confirmed in their study that leadership

behaviors from different dominant cultural values result in innovation and improvement of schools.

Latinas would benefit greatly from mentorship, but unfortunately, Latina campus-level administrators frequently feel isolated because of the lack of female colleagues or Latinas to serve as a mentor (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Myung, Loeb, and Horng (2011) mentioned that those that do mentor others is called sponsored mobility. In turn, the negative outcome is that, “these sponsors are White and male, leaving non-Whites and women with the challenge of developing network ties across ethnic and gender lines” (p. 698).

Influences of the Hispanic Culture

There are influences and barriers that Latinas may face within the Hispanic culture, when seeking a leadership positions. Some of those barriers or influences may include gender role, ethnic identity and acculturation, stereotypes and discrimination, and family factors (Gomez et al, 2001).

Gender role.

Jones and McEwen (2000) made the point that Latinas face constant scrutiny of gender role and ethnic identity, especially with career advancement. According to Gushue and Whitson (2006), “gender role attitudes refer to beliefs and expectations about what is appropriate for males and females in terms of behavior and, in this case, career choice goal” (p. 380). Méndez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jiménez, and Hernandez (2015) highlighted that “contrary to stereotypes of Latinas as male dominated and mainly family and home-focused women, Latinas serve in educational leadership roles in positions

ranging from the local campus level to national levels. Moreover, such leadership is not a recent phenomenon” (p. 172).

Stevens (1973) introduced the concept of *marianismo* in academic literature in which illustrated a gender role phenomenon that greatly influence Latinas. There is a contemporary influence in the Latina culture and the concept of *marianismo*, which is based on how to be a woman (Rodriguez, Castillo, & Gandara, 2013). Some Latinas have reported of their own parents desire for them to work instead of going to school. If they did proceed to attend college, they were required to continue to live at home (Arredondo, 2002). The concept of *marianismo* is reframed through the 10 commandments (Gil & Vazquez, 1996, p. 6):

1. Do not forget a woman’s place;
2. Do not forsake tradition;
3. Do not be single, self-supporting, or independent-minded;
4. Do not put your needs first;
5. Do not forget that sex is for making babies, not for pleasure;
6. Do not wish for more in life than being a housewife;
7. Do not be unhappy with your man, no matter what he does to you;
8. Do not ask for help;
9. Do not discuss personal problems outside the home; and
10. Do not change.

As Arrendondo (2002) noted, “It can be argued that many women, not just Latinas, have been socialized according to this belief system. However, *marianismo* is still considered a Latino cultural value” [that impacts this socialization] (p. 314).

Stevens (1973) added that it is important to recognize that *marianismo* is not a consequence of *machismo*, but the two concepts complement each other. The symbolic relationship represents dominant masculinity and moral femininity. Hussain, Leija, Lewis, and Sanchez (2015), maintained that there continues to be a differentiation of men having the duty to protect and exert dominance and oppression on women; while *marianismo* establishes submission to men and selfless devotion to family to emulate the Virgin Mary.

González-Figueroa and Young (2005) stated that Latina women continue to feel marginalized professionally and socially. In addition, ethnic and gender identity are an important piece of understanding the professional lives of Latina women. To paraphrase Jaramillo (2010), gender identity may vary from individualistic and collectivistic. Some indicators may be the role of a mother and/or feminist consciousness. Feminist consciousness is multifaceted within fate, perception, and the activist element. Hispanic families emphasize traditional gender roles for girls to assist their parents at home. Boys are not expected to do household chores and are permitted more time away from home (Love & Buriel, 2007).

Ethnic identity and acculturation.

Latina women school principals have insulated themselves by adaption or accepting various forms of “identities to conform to expectations and to play the games

of race and gender successfully” (Trujillo-Ball, 2003, p. 192). In comparison to gender identity, there is variation of the individualistic identity of ethnic identity. Phinney and Ong (2007) highlighted that ethnicity cannot be chose by an individual, but it is assigned at birth based on ethnic background. The process of forming one’s ethnic identity can also be constructed over time, in which the individual feels a sense of belonging.

Phinney and Ong (2007) continued making the point that ethnic identity could change overtime depending on an individual’s perspective and life experiences. Gushue and Whitson (2006) concluded that ethnic identity and gender role attitudes are crucial in the role of career development of minority females. As a result of the constant struggle of ethnic identity and gender role, Latina’s continue to struggle with identification (Vasquez, 2010). Texas has the largest Hispanic population, and many Latinos identify themselves as racially White (Tafoya, 2005).

In Texas nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of native-born Latinos of Mexican descent say they are White, compared to less than half (45 percent) of those who live outside of Texas. One can suppose that the unique and complex history of race relations in Texas is a major influence. (Tafoya, 2005, p. 65)

Factors that influence the lack of representation in how Latina’s identify themselves is because of the result of the following: “. . . cultural and background variables, socioeconomic status, academic and acculturative stress, family support, campus climate, and cultural congruity, and mentorship” (Castellanos & Jones, 2003, p. 4). Martin, Shalowitz, Mijanovich, Clark-Kauffman, Perez, and Berry (2007) highlighted that the acculturation process includes, “changes in language use, cognitive style, personality,

identity, attitude, and stress level” (p. 1290). Holvino (2008) mentioned the difference between Latino/a culture and Anglo-American with *Seven Cultural Scripts* as follows:

1. *Familismo* — the importance of close, protective and extended family relations versus the Anglo importance of the individual and the nuclear family;
2. *Machismo y Marianismo* — gender relations where males dominate, being responsible for protecting and providing for the family while the women nurture, serve and sacrifice for their families (following the model of the Virgin Mary) versus Anglo gender relations where gender equality is stressed though not necessarily observed;
3. *Personalismo* — forging meaningful, personal and trusting relations versus Anglo relations based on instrumental and economic gains;
4. *Simpatía* — promoting pleasant relations and positive situations, and avoiding conflict and disharmony versus the Anglo belief that conflict is necessary and inevitable and “you can’t please everybody all the time;”
5. *Collectivism* — emphasis on the needs of the group before the individual versus the Anglo emphasis on individual needs and capabilities;
6. *Present time orientation* — because the future is uncertain and not under one’s control versus an Anglo future time orientation that involves visioning and goal setting; and
7. *Respeto and high power distance* — high regard granted to persons because of their formal authority, age or social power versus an Anglo equality ethos where challenge to authority is encouraged. (p. 14)

The term ethnic identity has also been in connection with acculturation and assimilation. Latinas constantly struggle with the guilt of acculturation and ethnic identification (Montoya, 1994). Acculturation is a social process that changes in cultural patterns after exposure to other cultural backgrounds (González-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001). Gil and Vazquez (1996) defined acculturation as adjusting and blending of two cultures. Acculturation can be a stressful process of personal conflicts within their native and adapted cultures for Latinas (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). There continues to be the pressure to be dedicated to traditional values while adapting to a more dominant culture. Latinas in the United States may face the challenge of exploring their gender identity in mainstream American culture that contradicts with traditional cultural values (Hussain et al., 2015). As a result, Latinas may seek refuge in the traditional values of *marianismo* and family loyalty as a coping mechanism from fear of dominant culture (Gil & Vazquez, 1996).

Araujo and Quiro (2014) shared that “. . . Latinas from varying racial backgrounds have to negotiate messages of antiblackness and preference for whiteness they receive at home in order to develop a racial identity” (p. 210). This study emphasized how these women felt a connection to their ethnic identity because of the evolution internally along with the influence at home by their mother, father, or grandparents (Araujo & Quiro, 2014). Jaramillo (2010) stated that, “Latinas may struggle with gendered roles and cultural barriers that limit their political involvement. An individualistic, gendered role for Latinas may be intensified by cultural expectations of traditional roles for women in the home . . .” (p. 198).

Stereotypes and discrimination.

Latinas endure racial and stereotypical expectations, ethnicity and cultural values along with the challenge of being a woman (Yosso, 2006). There is a need to deconstruct any negative stereotypes of Latina principals by highlighting their leadership attributes and their strategies utilized to promote their career paths. Tafoyo (2005) suggested that more than half of Hispanics continue to report discrimination in schools and in the workplace. This discrimination is believed to be a major problem preventing Hispanics from obtaining leadership positions in America (Fraga & Garcia, 2010). Latina women undergo or experience the double minority status of being a female and a minority (Arredondo & Castellanos, 2003). Gonzalez, Blanton, and Williams defined double minority as “two devalued identities interact to influence the individual in a way that is great than the sum of the independent effect of those identities” (p. 659).

There is a portrayal of Latinas as being dominated by a man – a father, a husband, or male siblings (Méndez-Morse, 2000). Méndez-Morse (2000) continued to elaborate that Latinas have the expectation to be a wife, mother, and maintain the home. Hispanic women are expected to remain docile and passive (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). Latinas are considered an underrepresented minority group and are likely to “encounter racism, stereotyping, lack of mentoring, tokenism, uneven promotion, and inequitable salaries” in higher education” (Nuñez & Murakami-Ramalho, 2012, p. 4). In Nuñez and Murakami-Ramalho (2012) researcher noted that Hispanic female faculty experienced being told that they are articulate and that they speak English well; and that they have been mistaken for service workers or something other than as professors.

Arredondo (2002) emphasized that there are few modern Latinas who have paved the way for others to follow in their social and political spaces. These Latinas did not come “. . . from power and money, but all brought a richness of idealism, selflessness, dignity, and identity politics to their work” (p. 315).

Family factors and dynamics.

The perception from management could be the lack of commitment or unwillingness to work extra time to advance their careers, which affects their salary. Once their children are grown, many women hoped to obtain terminal degrees, advance their careers, and earn more money being able to shift their focus from raising children to their professional responsibilities (Costello, 2012; Marshall, 2009). There is a conflict of roles between a role of a women and the balance of work responsibilities. Some of the common barriers for Latinas include the balance of family, religion, community, and careers. Along with these barriers, the family dynamic of being submissive along with embracing leadership outside of the home is a constant struggle (Hernandez, Murakami, & Cerecer, 2014). Family and the Hispanic culture has been found to be a positive influence for Hispanic women’s educational and career goals (Méndez-Morse, 2000)

Castellanos and Jones (2003) discussed how Latinas/os consider family as an important resource and for various types of support. Latinas continue to feel a sense of guilt when not meeting the expectations of a mother, wife, and caregiver (Murakami-Ramalho, 2009). Hispanic women receive most of their support from family and spouses, which contributes to educational and career achievements (Méndez-Morse, 2004).

Méndez-Morse (2004) highlighted the fact that family members served as role models and mentors throughout their lives. The influence of mothers and other family members are significant in the educational and career pursuits of Hispanic women (Updegraff, McHale, Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, Perez-Brena, Wheeler, & De Jesús, 2014). Flores and Obasi (2005) revealed that 78% of students identified role models who were family members; the most common role model was their mothers.

Underrepresentation of Hispanic Females in Educational Leadership

A diversity of school leaders is crucial, since it provides role models for minority students (Sanchez., Thornton, & Usinger, 2009). In 2011, Texas Education Agency reported that there were 50.8 Hispanic students, 24.4% Hispanic teachers, and 20.8% Hispanic principals in Texas schools. Rhode (2016) emphasized that,

Women's unequal representation in leadership positions poses multiple concerns. For individual women, the barriers to their advancement compromise fundamental principles of equal opportunity and social justice. These barriers impose organizational costs as well. Women are now a majority of the most well-educated Americans, and a growing share of the talent available for leadership. (p. 3)

Because of underrepresentation of Hispanic females in educational leadership, there is a lack of role models and mentors for Latinas and students, and thus a lack of cultural connectivity (González-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Hernandez & Lopez, 2004). Adams and Hambright (2004) study showed that there were changes that needed to occur to encourage and retain women as principals and educational leaders. The main reasons

were to resolve salary issues, minimizing reservations and clarification about administrative roles, and mentors and more shadowing of principals.

Role Models and Mentors for Hispanic Women and Students

Ehrich (1994) noted that some of the barriers for women in the development of mentor relationship included: lack of access to network, sex role stereotyping, sexism, tokenism, and socialization practices. She continues to reveal that women lack access to mentor relationships, and male administrators tend to assist other males in becoming administrators.

Goodman, Fields, and Blum, (2003) discussed that there are systemic barriers and opportunities in organizations that prevent the advancement of female administrators within organizations. The most positive mentoring experiences come from other women that can relate to the constant balance of life (Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). Females need to see other effective and successful females in administrative positions to feel a sense of attainment (Nelson & Burke, 2000). Ehrich (1994) explained that, "Mentoring is an important process as it provides many opportunities for protégés to acquire not only professional skills but also many other skills central to the particular profession, whether it be management, educational administration or other professions" (p. 4). Jeruchim and Shapiro (1992) indicated that White males have continued to dominate the administrative field, and women are delayed in opportunities to become administrators because of lack of female role models/mentors, perceived lack of power, and reluctant of men mentoring a female protégé. Peters (2010) generalized that educational administration has

traditionally been male-dominated, and men tend to mentor other males that remind them of themselves.

Méndez-Morse, et al. (2015) suggested that “For those aspiring to the administrative ranks, there is a prevailing lack of Latina educational leader role models or mentors, and therefore limited guidance and networking opportunities” (p. 173). Young female teachers need to see females in leadership positions, especially a positive aspect of Latina/o school principals that are effective role models for minority students (Magdaleno, 2004). The perspective encourages other females to delve into leadership positions. The White House Project (2009) showcased that, “The presence—or absence—of female academic leaders can have far-reaching influences not only on the institutions themselves, but . . . on the scope of research and knowledge that affects us all” (p. 16). Young females should have female role models in mentors throughout their education, and the idea of leadership should be apparent to them. Women are not only in competition with each other but must face ongoing judgment of society (Méndez-Morse, et al., 2015; Turner, 2002).

Méndez-Morse (2004) found that the Latina women reported to have some professional mentors and referred to their mothers as their first mentors. It was also noted, “The women constructed a mentor from the resources they had available” (in Méndez-Morse et al., 2015, p. 174). According to Cammarota (2004), “Gender oppression may impede more significant academic success among Latinas. Thus, the real challenge facing Latinas’ academic success lies in managing the contradiction between gender advancement through educational attainment and the preservation of gendered

cultural norms” (p. 55). Many researchers have asserted the benefits minority students derive from having principals who are of similar backgrounds or role models (Méndez-Morse, 2004; Sanchez & et al., 2008). In regards to students, the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) reported that

Young Latinos are satisfied with their lives, optimistic about their futures and place a high value on education, hard work, and career success. Yet, they are much more likely than other Americans youths to drop out of school and to become teenage parents. They are more likely than white and Asian youths to live in poverty. And they have high levels of exposure to gangs. (para. 4)

Hispanic female administrators have the opportunity to influence leadership and be an advocate for students (Méndez-Morse, 2004; Turner, 2002). Sanchez et al. (2008) emphasized the importance that all of the efforts toward promoting diversity within public education leadership should be aimed at improving academic achievement and success for all students. Some students may benefit when minority principals prove that all ethnicities are capable of leadership (Sanchez et al., 2008). Feuerstein (2000) delved into the influence that Hispanic female administrators can make on educational policy and can inspire students, parents, community, and teachers.

Weiher (2000) concluded that minority students perform better in schools that have more minority teachers. Sanchez et al. (2009) affirmed that minority principals are needed to reflect the minority student population in the United States, since they could influence their levels of comfort, motivation, and achievement in a positive manner. Weiher (2000) believed that increased minority representation among teachers and

administrators is strongly associated with less discrimination, more favorable policies, and improved minority student performance. There continues to be research that asserts benefits of having minority principals who are of similar background or role models for minority students (Sanchez et al., 2008).

The impact of gender inequality affects students' perspective of their own gender (Legewie & DiPrete, 2012). Socialization process can severely affect the ideas students' have about themselves, including who they are, what they are capable of, and what they can become (Orenstein, 2000). Cammarota (2004) stated that, "Gender oppression may impede more significant academic success among Latinas. Thus, the real challenge facing Latinas' academic success lies in managing the contradiction between gender advancement through educational attainment and the preservation of gendered cultural norms" (p. 55). Hispanic girls will be more apt to take challenges and seek opportunities, if their Hispanic culture is valued and leadership is encouraged (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

Cammarota (2004) emphasized that Latino/as still struggle academically more than those of other ethnic groups, but Latinas have increased high school and college graduations rates within the last 20 years. "The key lever that alters perceptions of schooling is how society and its schools proffer differential treatment to Latinos and Latinas. The intersection of race and gender in the social construction of Latina/o youth fosters different responses and resistances" (Cammarota, 2004, p. 54).

Latinas frequently spoke about unfair treatment, which had the potential to discourage them from attending school. The testimonies of many Latinas show

evidence of the consistent patterns of unfair treatment, deliberate negligence, and low expectations in El Centro schools. Because racist and sexist stereotypes often influence their relationships with teachers and school staff, Latinas feel significant pressure to drop out. (Camarota, 2004, pp. 61-62)

The educational setting serves as one of the locations of gender socialization and needs to be examined (Stromquist, 2008). Students are socialized in ways that reinforce patriarchy and gender inequality in these settings, and it is important for students to view both genders in the role of leadership in equitable circumstances (Eagly & Carli, 2007). González-Figueroa and Young (2005) determined that Latina women expressed a preference of a mentor of similar ethnicity. This continues to prove the importance of cultural and ethnic connectivity for Hispanic women (De Gaetano, 2007). The study also showed that “some of the women did not have mentors and still attained a professional role. Among the women who did report mentoring, the type of mentoring was not related to career per se. This only emphasizes the strength and resiliency of this population” (González-Figueroa & Young, 2005, p. 223).

Sanchez et al. (2008) affirmed that it was necessary to make all efforts toward promoting diversity within public education leadership and should be aimed at improving academic achievement and success for all students. In order to improve their academic experiences, it is vital for Latina/o students to have a Latina/o leader who has an understanding of their ethnic identity to incorporate into their leadership practices (Hernandez, Murakami, & Cerecer, 2014).

Importance of Cultural Connectivity

Méndez-Morse et al. (2015) recognized that Latina women can influence the culture of a school and connect with Hispanic parents and students. They also stated, “Latina leaders use their experience and language skills to link with students, family, parents, and other community members. Still another unique characteristic of some Latina school leaders is their political acumen in relation to citizenship status issues” (p. 174). Latino/a principals are also able to communicate with parents and students. Principals are able to be inclusive of Latina/o students and parents whose dominant language is Spanish by fostering and strengthening bilingual classrooms (Weisman, 1997).

The hiring of a minority leader with high ability can apply different tools and skills to lessen conflict, overcome communication barriers, and gain mutual respect developed in diverse groups (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Hernandez, Murakami, and Cerecer (2014) uncovered in their study of a Latina principal leading for social justice that “Sanchez’s ability to see herself in the eyes of her students reinforces the type of relationship that she established with her students” (p. 569). They continue by mentioning the importance of a principal-student relationship with Latina/o principals embodies a deeper cultural meaning and understanding. Eagly and Chin (2010) posited the idea that leaders who are of a minority group have more of the multicultural competence that can ease challenges of managing diversity. Dee (2004) stressed the importance of hiring minority teachers by finding that students paired with same-race teachers in first through third grade demonstrated greater gains in math and science.

Falk (2011) concluded that Hispanic principals would better understand the students' culture and assist with parents with language barriers. Hispanic principals can also assist and support students whose parents may not be familiar with the educational system (Sanchez et al., 2008; 2009).

Summary

Beginning with an introduction, the literature in Chapter II recounts the theoretical framework of intersectionality theory along with the literature review of women and Latina principals for the study presented. The literature review identified the underrepresentation of administrative research of women. The emphasis of obstacles and barriers that may hinder women in obtaining an educational leadership position was addressed. Some of the barriers identified under women in leadership were family responsibilities, networking, and leadership styles. The literature reviewed discussing minority women in leadership and the lack of minorities pursuing higher education. Minority women also lack mentors and female colleagues (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2011). Latina principals are also faced with barriers or influences of their Hispanic culture such as gender role, ethnic identity and acculturation, stereotypes and discrimination, and family factors and dynamics (Gomez et al, 2001). As a result, there continues to be an underrepresentation of Hispanic females in educational leadership that mirrors our Hispanic population (Hernandez & Lopez, 2004).

There is a constant need for a representation of Hispanic women to be role models and mentors for other women and students (Shapiro, 1992). The importance of cultural

connectivity is vital to assist with communication barriers and cultural understanding of Hispanic students and parents.

Overall, the researcher reviewed the literature on intersectionality theory; women in leadership, minorities in leadership; influences of the Hispanic culture; underrepresentation of Hispanic females in educational leadership; role models and mentors for women and students; and the importance of cultural connectivity. Chapter III describes the qualitative narrative non-fiction story methodology of interviewing the participants of the study that revealed challenges, barriers, and experiences as a Mexican-American elementary principal in Texas.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative non-fiction study was to enable Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to reveal their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. This study was based on narrative non-fiction as a means to use critical qualitative research to examine questions and narrate the life experiences of Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. Their stories provided a voice to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principals or other administrative roles.

This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican American female elementary principals in Texas. Four principals were invited by the researcher to participate in the interviews. Prior to the interviews, contact was made to establish the beginnings of an informal relationship that fosters positive interaction. It is vital for each principal to view the process as an enlightening experience. For the Mexican-American female principals, this study provides an opportunity to share their stories, barriers, and influences of being an elementary principal at a predominately

Hispanic campus. Marshall (2000) encouraged researchers to “encounter the possibilities of leadership values, perspectives, goals, and behaviors from women’s experience” (p. 702).

Research Questions

The following five research questions were central to the study and guided the interview process and the data gathered from Mexican-American female principals. The research study focused on the following five questions:

1. What are the Mexican-American females’ perception on how they became a principal at a predominantly Hispanic campus?
2. What are the Mexican-American females’ role as a principal and factors that contribute to success?
3. What are influences of Mexican-American female principals to become school principals?
4. What are the Mexican-American females’ perception of their career path and how it might differ from that of non-Hispanic females?
5. What are barriers encountered throughout their career path from a Mexican-American female perspective?

This research is significant because of the limited amount of research on the experiences of Mexican-American female principals (Méndez-Morse, et al., 2015). This study explored, captured, and documented the voices of Mexican-American female elementary principals and the detailed experiences on their quest to become school

leaders. This study provides insight into the lives and experiences of Mexican-American female elementary principals and how they achieved their goal of becoming a principal.

The intent of implementing a narrative non-fiction research as the form of methodology in this study was an attempt to examine these women's lives to find common themes and experiences in leadership. Czarniawska-Joerges (2004) stated that, "People tell stories to entertain, to teach and to learn, to ask for interpretation and to give one" (p. 16). This qualitative method best aligns with the research questions and the ability to capture the participants' deeper perspective and feelings pertaining to their experiences to the principalship.

Research Design of Narrative Non-Fiction

Narrative inquiry provided the opportunity to gather the participants' perception of their lived experiences and career paths. The inquiry process was an opportunity for these individuals to reflect and provide meaning of their experiences (Patton, 2002). This qualitative study used narrative inquiry to collect data from semi-structured interviews that were conducted with Hispanic female elementary principals.. Narrative inquiry seeks to describe meaning of experiences of its subjects as the participants construct their life stories. It is also closely related to life history, an interdisciplinary method that views lives holistically and draws from traditions in literary theory, oral history, drama, psychology, folklore, and film philosophy (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Connelly and Clandinin (2000) stated, "Narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformation of an inquiry that it does a sense of problem definition and solution" (p. 124).

Patton (2002) emphasized how narrative inquiry provides opportunities to learn about subjects in an in-depth qualitative interviewing approach. Keegan (2009) acknowledges qualitative research as a way to explore questions such as “. . . what, why, and how, rather than how many or how much; it is primarily concerned with meaning rather than measuring. Understanding why individuals and groups think and behave as they do lies at the heart of qualitative research” (p. 11).

Qualitative research is used to discover a phenomenon and/or answer the question of why (Keegan, 2009). “Narrative stories tell of individual experiences, and they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves” (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). Narrative method allows the researcher to listen to the voices Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. Stories to live by are embodied, moral, emotional, relational, temporal, and intellectual and are vital to adding meaning to this study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999).

Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) referred to narrative research as a “holistic-content is a narrative approach for understanding the meaning of an individual’s stories” (p. 330). Research questions were aligned with the narrative nonfiction design to add detail to the participants’ perspective and experiences. This provided an opportunity for the researcher to better understand career paths of Mexican-American female principals in Texas.

Narrative personal stories are tended to “reveal cultural and social patterns through lens of individual experiences” (Patton, 2002, p. 115). As a result, narrative inquiry provided an opportunity for participants to share their stories as a process or

evaluation. Narrative non-fiction can be used in combination with other methods, depending on the data needed to fulfill the research (Creswell, 2013).

Participants

Being a qualitative research study, a purposive sampling of Mexican-American female principals of predominantly Hispanic elementary schools was employed. When reviewing a specific group for this study, it was vital to implement a purposeful sampling to provide “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). For the purpose of this study, Mexican-American female principals in Texas at the elementary campus level were critical participants to provide rich data from their perspectives and experiences. Mexican are people who self-identified as Hispanics of Mexican origin by either being a Mexican immigrant or trace their family ancestry to Mexico (Massey & Pren, 2012). Mexican-Americans are people who have at least one parent of Mexican descent and live in America (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014). All participants in the investigation were required to meet the following criteria in order to be considered as candidates:

- All participants met the criteria of having at least one parent of Mexican descent and/or who identified themselves as Mexican-America to be included in the sample;
- All participants were currently a principal at a predominately Hispanic campus, which was 50% or above are Hispanic students;
- All participants had at least a year of administrative experience;
- All participants were principals of a K-5 public school in Texas.

In order to achieve the sample size, the researcher used professional network connections of females identified as Mexican-American principals from various regions in Texas. Keegan (2009) stated that qualitative research “. . . usually involves small samples of people, who may be representative of the population as a whole or who may represent a small subsection of the general population . . .” (p. 12).

The researcher selected participants for this study through known contacts and professional acquaintances in education (See Appendix A). Once participants were narrowed down by the criteria, each participant was contacted by email to explain the study and the purpose of the study. The researcher studied the campuses demographic population, especially the Hispanic student population. Every participant were principals of an elementary campuses that were 50% or above Hispanic student population. The participants received a letter that described the research proposal and requested their consent to participate in the study, while at the same time ensuring confidentiality (see Appendixes A and B for example of communication and participant’s permission).

If they were interested, each participant completed an informed consent form, providing confirmation of their willingness to participate in the study prior to the beginning of the first interview. Each principal was invited to participate in the study via email with information about the researcher, purpose of the study, and required qualifications of the participants. A follow-up emailed was placed to set up an appointment for the first interview and provided a more detailed description of the study and answer any questions the participant might had before the interview process.

Setting

Riessman (1993) emphasized the importance of continuity in a narrative non-fiction qualitative study. Riessman (1993) also determined that individual's stories may be altered depending on the setting and that we as humans are not static. The researcher provided an opportunity for the participants to choose the time and location of all interviews based on their convenience. It was vital that each of these candidates felt comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions on each of the interview questions. Three participants chose to meet at their prospective schools, which were predominantly Hispanic elementary public schools from different regions of Texas. One participant chose to meet at a coffee shop. The researcher accommodated for the convenience of all participants.

Role of Researcher

The role of the researcher was to be a listener as a Mexican-American female elementary principal of a predominately Hispanic campus. The researcher is the key instrument in this study by “. . . examining documents, observing behavior, and interviewing participants. They must use an instrument, but it is one designed by the researcher using open-ended questions. They do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45).

The study provided the opportunity for the researcher to reflect on her own biases and experiences through the principalship career path, as related to the participants. The researcher defined herself in Chapter IV in order to provide the audience a better understanding of the contextual, personal experiences to the principalship, and biases

from which the researcher narrated the participants. The use of self-concept as a narrative non-fiction design was to the Mexican-American female elementary principals in this study. The researcher had the desire of hearing and documenting personal stories and memories, in the form of narratives from four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas.

The researcher acknowledges her own biasness as a Mexican-American female elementary principal, as result of her career path to the principalship. As discussed in Neuman (2009), the role of the researcher consists of fully preparing for the interview, conducting the interview and recording them, transcribing recorded interviews, and sending notes of appreciation to the informants. The researcher should be aware of his or her role in the study and be objective throughout the process.

The researcher typically “. . . collects data from multiple sources and makes choices about how to present the participant’s story. Taking these intimate pieces of life, the researcher constructs a manuscript for an academic audience” (Hallett, 2013, p. 1). Hallett (2013) expressed the importance of establishing trustworthiness in order to receive useful information in the research. Once this is established, the participant will be more open and honest about their lives. According to Hallett (2013), “researchers have found themselves being a storyteller, biographer, financial resource, mentor, advocate, and lover” (p. 2).

In establishing a rapport with the subject, the researcher must also be prepared in collecting data or vital information may be lost. “The interaction between researcher and research participants is informal, rather like normal conversation; it is fluid, open-ended,

dynamic and (to a degree) spontaneous and creative” (Keegan, 2009, p. 13). According to Polkinghorne (1995), “The researcher is not simply producing a description of action but is writing history” (p. 19). The researcher also hones in on the confidentiality of a study, since the stories are personal interviews of these women lives.

Data Collection

Data collection began after the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Using networking such as Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA), webpages that listed administrators of elementary campuses with Hispanic surnames, and other forms of contacts, the researcher used electronic email communications to contact possible participants. After emailing 26 principals, the researcher was able to identify four principals that were willing to participate in this study.

The process of narrative research moves the experiences captured in the interview transcripts, field notes, and other data to mutually constructing the narrative (Neuman, 2009). In narrative non-fiction research, the primary method of data collection are the interviews and responses from the participants. Suárez-Ortega (2013) stated that the “data gathering techniques make possible descriptions and characterizations that are true to reality as possible” (p. 197).

Creswell (2013) emphasized the importance of the researcher to consider the multiple phases in collecting data beyond conducting interviews. Creswell (2013) further emphasized the process of data collection activities: location site/individual, gaining access and making rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording

information, resolving field issues, and storing data (p. 146). The researcher followed the suggestions from Creswell (2013) in this study.

Face-to-face interviews provided insight from participants and focusing on what factors preclude leading to the principalship. The face-to-face experience allowed a more reflective experience in obtaining data from the participants individually.

In face-to-face interviews people are present not only as conversing minds, but as flesh and blood creatures that may laugh, cry, smile, tremble, and otherwise give away much information in terms of gestures, body language, and facial expressions. Interviewers thus have the richest source of knowledge available here, but the challenge concerns how to use it productively. (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 28)

Using purposive sampling, each of the participants selected were interviewed through face-to-face. The researcher accommodated and established a relationship with the women being interviewed. Along with establishing a relationship, Neuman (2009) highlighted the importance of life history, life story, or a biographical interview as a type of field interviewing. The data gathering consists of interviewing and documentary material about an individual's life.

After IRB approval was attained, data collection began with each participant by setting interview times and locations through email. In addition, all participants received information and purpose of the study (see Appendix A) prior to being presented with the informed consent form (See Appendix B). The four participants were interviewed three times with each interview lasting between 45 minutes to 90 minutes. During the

interviews, a digital recording device with audio was used to maintain a record of the interactions between the researcher and the participants. Participants were assured that their responses would remain totally confidential and their participation in the study was strictly voluntary, as mentioned in the informational letter (See Appendix A).

Participants were provided the opportunity to create pseudonyms to protect their identities, as well as their district, schools, and other names mentioned in the interviews (see Appendix A). All participants selected a pseudonym of their choice to ensure participant confidentiality. The participants then signed a consent form to participate in the study. Participants were free to terminate the interview and to be removed from the study at any time (see Appendix B).

The researcher interviewed each participant using a face-to-face format and by phone. In this study a set of 16 or more open-ended questions were asked of each participant (see Appendix C). The interview for each participant was a three-level process. The first level began with an introduction between the participant and the researcher. The researcher explained her role, importance of the study, and summary of her background. Through the process of open-ended, semi-structured interviews were used. In level one of the interviews, the researcher attempted to create a trusting relationship with each participant, on a personal level, through casual conversation, to create a comfortable trusting setting. Level two interviews began with a review of the member check provided by email prior to the level two interviews. Based on the analysis of the data collected in the level one, questions derived for further investigation or clarification. Questions were then formulated on analysis of interview responses from

level two. Level three interviews began with a review of the member check provided by email between level two and three interviews. The responses were transcribed verbatim through submission to an online transcription and each participant was emailed a complete transcript of their interview for review and clarification were developed.

The questions were used to further investigate or clarify any information for the researcher. “It could be argued that the semi-structured interview is the most important way of conducting a research interview because of its flexibility balanced by structure, and the quality of the data so obtained” (Gillham, 2005, p. 70). Interview questions are an important method of gathering data, since it allows researchers to explore various topics and discover participant’s experiences and values. The questions being used in the semi-structured interviews for this study were both specific and flexible for participants to feel comfortable sharing their stories and experiences to the principalship. Information from the recording device was uploaded to researcher’s computer and submitted to an online transcription company for complete transcription after each interview.

All participants were emailed a copy of the transcript for review to ensure accuracy. All recordings and field notes were maintained in a password-protected document or locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. The researcher was the only person who had access to this data, and it will be maintained for three years.

Data Analysis

Data and content analysis provided a research design method that allowed for in-depth connections with of the life of Mexican-American female principals in Texas. The interview questions were designed to collect specific data because the amount of

information gathered on the experiences of Mexican-American female principals in Texas. After each round of data collection, the data were analyzed continuously, as each narrative was constructed until the completion of the study. After all the interview responses were transcribed through an online transcription service, all interviews were placed into one collective Microsoft Word document. Qualitative data were analyzed using open-coding methods to create themes that were used to complement the quantitative data to illuminate findings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In qualitative data, the process of coding of data can be done using qualitative computer programs to identify themes within the research (Roberts, 2002). Textual data was reviewed repeatedly by the researcher and coding categories before inputting the comprehensive Word document of transcriptions into NVivo 11. As an essential analytical tool, transcriptions were entered into the computer-based qualitative data analysis software NVivo 11. Creswell (2013) described NVivo 11:

NVivo 11 combines the feature of the popular software program . . . analyzes, manage, shape, and analyze qualitative data. Its streamlined look makes it easy to use. It provides security by storing the database and files together in a single file, it enables a researcher to use multiple languages . . . and it enables the research to easily manipulate the data and conduct searches. Further, it can display graphically the codes and categories. (p. 204)

The process was equivalent to open coding (Creswell, 2013). The data analysis for this study was conducted through an open coding system to search for themes within the response from each participant. Open coding is defined as, “the analytical processes

through which concepts are defined in the properties and dimensions are discovered in the data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). Through these thematic themes within responses, the researcher continued to employ the open coding of the transcripts to gather additional information within the responses of the participants. Transcription of the data was downloaded with NVivo 11 codes, which named the exact words used by participants along with the researcher’s field notes and transcription from listening through the interviews (Creswell, 2013).

The second stage of coding with data already entered into NVivo 11 was positioned into nodes or thematic categories within the software. The data created categories based on the collected data around core themes or themes in their narrative statements in an interview (Creswell, 2013). Through this process, “the researcher begins with opening coding, coding the data for its major categories of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). The researcher then analyzed all of the interviews by examining emerging themes as researcher read through the transcripts of the interviews and listens to the recordings of the participants, the researcher identified themes within the responses of the participants. Themes then emerged that provided “broad units of information that consists of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). The themes were developed from the participants’ experiences in their journeys to the principalship. After describing the data into codes and themes, stories were revealed through the sets of experiences. Each participant’s individual story was unique and analyzed individually to ensure quality and authenticity. The researcher then interpreted the larger meaning of the story and presented narration focusing on process, theories, and

unique and general features of the life (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used the form and process of coding to “. . . aggregate the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184).

Selective coding was completing based on the open coding of the data (Cho & Lee, 2014). The main themes and subthemes are placed to illustrate commonalities in the narrative analysis. Through the course of coding all the data gathered from the participants, eight main themes emerged as common themes.

Provisions for Trustworthiness

In this study, the researcher provided a cohesive interpretation of the responses obtained from the interactions with the participants. As a result, the researcher was aware of all the ethical issues (Creswell, 2013). The transcriptions were submitted through a transcription website and reviewed to ensure accuracy of the interview tapes, using participants’ actual words. This is one aspect of increasing trustworthiness. The researcher shared transcriptions of recorded interviews with the participants to verify the accuracy of the transcription. The participants were asked to review and make any suggestions for edits of the transcriptions for clarity or accuracy. Changes or discrepancies were made after participants reviewed transcription after each interview.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the report or study was presented with fidelity and validity. Creswell (2013) emphasized that a key theme in narrative research is to negotiate the meaning of the stories to add validation of participant’s story. The process allowed opportunity for important occurrences of their lived experience to

emerge. One of the most effective measures of trustworthiness lies within the fact that the researcher was also a Mexican-American female. Laible (2000) supported the fact that our epistemologies are biased, and that we mostly view the world through our own lens. For the purpose of this study, the researcher's lens was essentially the same lens of the participants. It was imperative that the reader understood the researcher as an instrument of the researcher, considering her experience in public education and her experience as a Mexican-American female administrator.

Summary

Chapter III presented a discussion of the research design and method and qualitative research techniques used in the study. A review of literature provided support that qualitative study of narrative non-fiction story method was the best method to bring voice to the participants. Provisions were taken to ensure trustworthiness of the narrative, and the ethical considerations of the participants were observed. There were four participants who are Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. The data collection was complete through three stage interviews with a semi-structured format. Data analysis was open-coded with examination for themes and personal experiences of their leading to their leadership as a principal. Each participant's narrative created a chapter, which provides background information of each principal. The main elements of the methodology included the introduction, methodology, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher.

Chapter IV presents the background of the researcher followed by four chapters of narrative participant stories. The data analysis for this study was conducted through an

open-coding system through analysis of narrative to search for themes within the responses from each participant. The narrative analysis of the non-fiction stories examined each participant's story for emerging themes. Chapters V-XII included the narratives of all four participants. The four participant narrative Chapters V-VIII are followed by the narrative analysis in Chapter IX, connecting the experiences detailed by these Mexican-American female principals in Texas to each other. Chapter IX presents the narrative analysis of the participants' stories. Chapter X contains the final chapter including a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

The Researcher

I was probably destined to follow the common statistic of failing in today's society. I have essentially become an educated individual that continues to grow intellectually. In addition, I have also become a scholar-practitioner leader that has influenced my identity. The identity of a scholar-practitioner is not fully developed, because there is a constant learning.

“The sculptor does not just place a preconceived image and sculpt it on the face of the marble, but sits with the marble long enough to know intimately its texture, form, and shape. With precision, skill, artistry and intuition, the sculptor honors the marble's innate qualities and allows the image to emerge and come to life from stone” (Snowber, 2005, p. 346).

Snowber's quote is comparable to the development of me as a scholar-practitioner. The continuous shape will develop and form, but it will not be predetermined.

As the researcher of this project, it is imperative for the reader to understand my background and experiences based on my eleven years in public education. The role of the researcher is vital in qualitative research. In order to be influential of the role as a researcher, one must truly understand and be able to relate to the participants. Being a

Mexican-American female principal with three years of experience allows opportunity to identify the differences and similarities of my career path to the principalship. This chapter provides emphasis on my journey, as a researcher, revelation of my personal background, professional experiences and career path, and perspectives and biases as a researcher.

Personal Background

My parents are from Zacatecas, Mexico, and moved to Lufkin, Texas, in 1981. They wanted the American dream and opportunity for their future children. In Mexico, students must pay for their own supplies and books. My parent's family could not afford all the necessities to attend school. My parents were poor during their childhood years which prepared them to be independent. My father had to work at a young age to financially support his brothers and sister. With everything they endured, they did not want us to suffer and tried their best to spoil us. My parents have been able to provide for our family because of their drive and willingness to learn. They were limited; however, because of a lack of an education. Although they did not go to college, both of my parents are extremely intelligent.

During my childhood, I would have been classified as lower-middle class. We had all the essentials, and our parents were able to buy us nice clothes. My parents consistently worked overtime and on weekends as laborers and still do to this day. This hindered their opportunity to obtain a college degree. We were their priority in life. They wanted to ensure a quality education for all of us. Our parents instilled the importance of education and how to represent our culture in a positive manner. They want us to be

proud of who we are and define all odds regardless of the obstacles. My family faced financial hardships and difficult times, but they made sure we were loved.

My childhood was spent growing up in Lufkin, Texas, located in deep East Texas in Angelina County. I identify with being Mexican-American and speak both English and Spanish. I also have the ability to read, write, and speak both languages. There is always room for improvement for my Spanish, as English was a priority in my family. My parents wanted me to be educated and their priority for my education was to be proficient in English. People view me as the translator for all Hispanics. I have assisted other Hispanics in several occasions such as restaurants, stores, and community events. Being bilingual only provides me with privileges not limitations. I embrace the fact of being bilingual and see it beneficial to assist other Hispanics. Being Hispanic does have limitations and privileges. I have had situations of being discriminated against in today's society. My appearance has a preconceived notion that I do not speak English, have several children, on government assistance, and uneducated. This is from certain experiences throughout my life including from my own ethnicity. I wanted to prove everyone wrong about the stereotypes placed upon us and represent Hispanics in a positive manner. Although we spoke Spanish at home, my parents wanted me to be exposed to more English. As a result, my parents had me tested for the advanced programs throughout my schooling. My family spoke only Spanish, until I attended school. My parents learned English from work and by me reading to them at a young age. I enjoyed reading, and my parents knew the importance of speaking English. They did not want language to be a barrier for me. I remember my mom buying me a set of Disney

books, and I read to her every night. As I grew older, there was a point that my parents could no longer assist me with my school work. I became more responsible and independent of my own educational progress. My parents would ensure homework and chores were completed daily.

I attended a private Catholic school from Kindergarten through 3rd grade and began attending public school in 4th grade, where I was exposed to other ethnicities and differences. This is where I learned to appreciate differences but always felt like an outcast in school. It was rare to see other Hispanic students in my classroom. I finally became more exposed to other Hispanics students from 7th grade – 12th grade, since all students from Lufkin ISD were on the same campus.. I remember coming home to my parents expressing my excitement meeting other Hispanic students. I told my mom, “There are other students who talk like me.” The excitement took a negative turn because of the struggle of fitting into a particular group. I was viewed as Mexican to Anglo and African American students and White to the Hispanic students. I have been discriminated and called names, especially by other Hispanic students. I became confused and wanted clarity for myself. During my childhood, I was called a “coconut.” I felt like an outcast with Hispanics, when I was younger. Some girls would try to fight me or call me names throughout my high school years. I was in advanced courses and actively involved in organizations and clubs. I would look around and reflect, “Where are the other Hispanic students?” I became inspired to be active in my school and participate in clubs and organizations because of the lack of participation of Hispanic students. Other Hispanics would say that I was trying to be “white.” I would always reply with, “What

are you doing with your life?” in Spanish. Most of the time, there was nothing else to say. Although I acted tough, these events and comments truly bothered me and made me feel uncomfortable. My mom encouraged me to continue to work hard and ignore the comments. I was trying to be a positive representation for Hispanics, especially other girls. I was hoping my involvement would encourage others; instead, it backfired. I decided to rise above that and continue my schooling and continued to struggle with my own identity.

Educational and Career Path

My senior year in high school was a pivotal year and making life changing decisions. My parents encouraged me to go to college, but they could not provide any guidance or information for me. On top of that, there was also the financial strain of paying for college. I remember thinking that college may not be an option. As a result, I become more independent than ever before. I was completely lost, which encouraged me to ask questions. Luckily, I had an amazing counselor who assisted me with college applications. After graduating Lufkin High School in 2001, I decided to pursue my undergraduate degree at Sam Houston State University. My major was in criminal justice and I minored in English and Spanish.

My dream was to become a lawyer and practice criminal law, since I was eleven years old. I was involved in various organizations such as Student Government, Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Fraternity and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Through these organizations, I was able to know my professors, deans, and the President of the university on a personal level. I had the opportunity to study

abroad in Puebla, Mexico, and attended a conference in Lithuania. Both experiences were life changing plus I had never been on a plane prior to this. In December 2004, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts at Sam Houston State University. I decided to register for two post-graduate classes in criminal justice after graduating to continue my dream. I still had the idea of wanting to attend law school.

Due to the lack of finances, I had to make a difficult decision to place my dream of becoming a lawyer on hold. I came back home to Lufkin to find a job. I still wanted to pursue a career in criminal justice. A family friend that worked for Lufkin Independent School District mentioned several teaching openings at Lufkin Middle School. I was hesitant about teaching due to the lack of experience and certification. I realized my 5th grade teacher was now the principal at Lufkin Middle School at the time. After interviewing for a language arts position, I was hired in 2005 to teach 8th grade. I realized quickly that God had a different plan for me, and it was here that I discovered my passion for teaching. In order to obtain my certification, I had to continue courses through the Post Baccalaureate Initial Certification Program at Stephen F. Austin State University. At Lufkin Middle school, I became involved in campus activities and taking on leadership roles. My students were my motivation, because they depended on me. I realized being a teacher entailed being a counselor, mother, and mentor to students.

After receiving my certification in teaching, I decided to pursue my Master's in Secondary Education; I wanted to learn more about my field to become a better teacher. I continued to be involved at the campus and district level. My principal and the deputy superintendent have been great mentors in my educational career. They both were tough

but honest with me about the benefits and struggles of being a female leader. Eventually, I earned my Master's and principal certification in 2009. From this, I developed an interest in becoming a campus administrator. I had the opportunity to work as a summer school assistant principal, which enabled me to see a glimpse of the role of a principal.

Mexican-American Principal

I applied for several assistant principal positions in and out of the district to get experience under my belt. As I interviewed, I already had the sense that some campuses were seeking a male principal or someone with experience. After teaching for seven years at Lufkin Middle School, there was an opening for a bilingual assistant principal at Burley Primary. Burley Primary has students from kindergarten to second grade and is the only primary in Lufkin ISD to have bilingual programs. I was nervous about applying for the position, since it was posted in January 2012. I feared leaving my students and questioned my own ability to be an administrator. In addition to seeking a new role for myself, I was six months pregnant with my son. The interview was intense and long with several teachers and the administrative team present. Soon after the interview, I received the exciting news about joining the Burley campus as their new assistant principal. I learned endless amount of information being an assistant principal and adjusting to the age group from middle school. I knew there was a need to hire a Hispanic administrator for this campus after learning the various programs.

Although most of our staff is Hispanic, there was still some hesitation from Hispanic parents to become more involved at our campus. I did not notice the influence of having a Hispanic administrator at the campus until my second year. Hispanic parents

wanted to speak to me about school issues or even just to counsel with them. I wanted to assist our parents in understanding our programs and ways they could be involved with their child's education. There were also misconceptions and/or lack of understanding of our bilingual programs. I wanted parents to be more informed about the various programs in order to ensure student success. I soon developed a good relationship with parents and staff.

After two and half years of continuous learning at the primary level, I was blessed with the opportunity of becoming the principal at Burley Primary. I do believe being Mexican-American has played a factor in the hiring process. I became interested in becoming a principal at Burley Primary to be more involved with the decision made about our bilingual programs. Being Mexican-American and understanding the concept of learning another language provided me with a more credible background and influence the programs.

With our Hispanic community being the majority now, I have a privilege in communicating with more people. As a principal, I am able to communicate effectively with parents. Parents have a sense of comfort with me being Hispanic. Burley Primary has 66% percent Hispanic population. More than half of the parents are non-English speakers. This percentage affirms the need to have a bilingual staff. Parents feel welcomed and comfortable to come to the campus. They are involved and ask questions about their child's education and progress. As a Mexican-American principal, I have a sense of responsibility to all students, especially our Hispanic population. Students see someone who looks and speaks like them. I was unable to experience that as a child. I

have had great mentors in my life, but none of them looked like me. I feel privileged being a Mexican-American female principal. I represent the majority of my campus demographics, and it has allowed me to encourage more Hispanic community involvement. I also have been successful and consider myself an example of overcoming barriers. Hispanic students have someone to relate to at the campus. They know that someone who is similar to them can be successful.

There are certain limitations of being a female. Throughout my life, I noticed that men were always in authority. There are more females in education than males, yet males continue to be the administrators. It was rare to see women in authority or leadership positions in education. I always felt that women could do the same as men. As a woman, I feel obligated to encourage other females to grow and prosper as leaders.

I believe there is still a lack of representation of Hispanic female principals. Although I am realizing, it depends on the region of Texas. My assumption for this reason is based on my own experiences. I believe it deals with three factors: family, mentorship, and fear. In our culture, we do not leave our families. Especially for Hispanic females, we tend to not leave home, until we are married. If we do leave the nest, we do not move too far away. I enjoy having my family close and want my son to grow up around both sides of our families. Another factor is the lack of mentorship. There may be great mentors, but no one that Hispanic females can truly relate to. Someone who understands the culture, language, struggles, etc. I have encountered great female mentors throughout my career path but none are Hispanic. This matters to me and possibly other Hispanic aspiring administrators, since the representations prove that these

positions are attainable. The last factor based on my assumption is fear. In education, females have to prove to themselves and others that they can do the same job as men. There is another stressor of being Hispanic and being female in an Anglo male dominated position.

There is a constant struggle of identity, which effects confidence. I have noticed some amazing Hispanic female teachers in our district. Yet, they do not see themselves as being a principal or fear the unknown. Some have the leadership qualities and capabilities of fulfilling the position, but they do not believe in themselves. We are hard on ourselves as women but also as Hispanic women. We are exposed to various forms of machismo and told we cannot. We are also pressured and influence by our own stereotypes.

I sometimes create my own stress because of my work ethic. Being my own toughest critic and a perfectionist, it is difficult to face upset and rejection. I have always considered myself athletic, open-minded, and tenacious. I had responsibilities other children my age did not have to accomplish at home because of three younger siblings. My younger siblings viewed me as a mother and encourager. Being independent and a constant learner developed my tenacity and work ethic. I do not accept failure by any means. Because of my qualities, I have become an effective leader so quickly and consider my qualities a privilege compared to others. My competitive spirit and drive provide me with opportunities of success.

I consider myself a lifelong learner and want to continue to learn ways to improve the campus and district. I was encouraged by a friend and my husband to apply

for the doctoral program. I was actually accepted into the program prior to the principal position. Pursuing my doctorate is a connection to my childhood of being a positive representation for Hispanics. I want to continue to be a representation not only for women for the Hispanic community.

Summary

This chapter situated the researcher in the study as an instrument of the research in addition to exposing researcher biases to the study. As narrator, the researcher expounded on personal background, educational field and career path, and personal biases aligned with the study. The researcher's experience in education, her doctoral studies and researcher, and her experience as a Mexican-American female in educational administration strengthen the role as the instrument of the research. The purpose of the following chapters was to enable Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to share their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. Following the stories will be a narrative analysis, summary and conclusions from the study, implications, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

Valeria Santiago

Introduction

The first participant is Valeria Santiago, a principal of an elementary school in a rural school district in a southwestern region of Texas. The city has a population of approximately of 1,400. The student population is about 60% Hispanic at her campus. The campus has about 40 staff members and 285 students. Esperanza Elementary is located near the secondary campus and administrative office.

The receptionist was extremely sweet and knew Valeria Santiago would be expecting me. I arrived about an hour early, Mrs. Santiago was willing to go ahead and meet with me. She welcomed me with a smile, and we met in her office. Prior to the interview, she showed me a short video completed as an assignment for her principalship class. The video was an autoethnography regarding her personal background, struggles, and reasoning for becoming an educator. This truly gave me personal insight about her personal background.

Personal Background

We quickly led into our first discussion regarding Mrs. Santiago's personal background. She is a happily married thirty-six year old that was born in the

southwestern region of Texas. She was born and raised in the same area and is still part of the community. Her mother's family is from Mexico, which is her connection to the Hispanic heritage. In 1959, her grandfather decided to leave his home in Mexico to come to Texas and bring his family for a better life. Her grandfather took a risk and decided to go to the unknown place and southwestern Texas. Her mother was the first child born in the United States from her family. Her mother grew up in the area at where Spanish was the primary language. Her families were punished for speaking Spanish in school. Her oldest aunt told Mrs. Santiago stories of being punished and slapped on the hands for speaking Spanish in class. In turn, her family learned the English language. Mrs. Santiago has one 33-year-old sister who is also married and lives around the same area. They have had a very close relationship and spend time traveling together.

Mrs. Santiago wants to continue her grandfather's legacy as being a leader of their community. Her mother's side of the family all graduated from high school. She reminisces about the evidence of eight senior graduation portraits of her grandfather's living room. Her mother met her father John who was also from the same high school. Mrs. Santiago's father is of Czech-German descent with blue eyes and light complexion. He was your typical white country boy. The relationship created some tension between both grandparents. Even with this tension, they were married and Valeria was born. Mrs. Santiago stated,

I grew up with the best of both worlds. Physically, I most resemble my mother and her family. I look very much like one of my aunts. While I do not have my

father's clear blue eyes or light skin, I still feel connected to him. He has given me many things, including his early graying hair and strong work ethic.

Mrs. Santiago is currently married to Jose Santiago but has been divorced previously. She does not have any biological children at this time, and she is a stepmother to three children who are from ages 17 to 24. Her husband is Mexican, which has provided her the opportunity to improve her Spanish. She was not exposed to much Spanish as a child and being married to Jose has assisted her with her second language.

Educational Field

Mrs. Santiago did not attend college originally to become an educator. She wanted to be a county extension agent. Her studies varied from child development, nutrition, fashion, consumers, and other areas. She stated, "I never wanted to be a classroom teacher and never took any classes in education as a college student." After graduation, she began working officially with a company she interned with. The company was called the STAR program, which involved family counseling or short-term crisis counseling. She mentioned, "I worked with them and all of a sudden, because I could speak a little bit of Spanish that I had learned in high school and taught myself via my enjoyment of Mexican music."

Since Mrs. Santiago knew a minimal amount of Spanish, she was considered a bilingual counselor. She began working with families, which motivated her to teach herself Spanish, as result of immersion. She had used Spanish in this profession, and it was something she had struggled with in the past. This struggle allowed her to build

confidence in her second language, as she knew it was necessary to communicate with Hispanic families.

Mrs. Santiago worked as a bilingual counselor for a year and a half. In order to further develop her Spanish, she began working as an adult ESL teacher in the evenings. She worked at a public school building and had already established a relationship with the school. The adult students in her class were Hispanic. She told them, “Okay now, you bear with my Spanish, and I’ll help you with your English.” With this experience, she was able to establish good relationships with the adults and gain experience in teaching. She mentioned to her contact that worked at the campus that she had thought about teaching kids. The same day her contact walked her to her superintendent and principal to introduce Mrs. Santiago. She told them that she would be interested in being a bilingual teacher. Since a bilingual teacher was a high need in the area, they wanted to interview her immediately. They explained the alternative certification program and the process of becoming a certified teacher. She became a bilingual teacher for Pre-K students. She stated, “I wasn’t confident in my own ability in Spanish. I just felt like I was not going to provide what I really need to, but I felt like I had a start.”

Mrs. Santiago gave credit to her alternative certification program, which assisted her through the process and provided guidance for teaching. She cried for the first two weeks and learned to accept the challenge. She ultimately loved her job and working with four year olds. The students hardly spoke English, and some had never been away from their parents. She continued to face her constant challenge of not knowing enough Spanish. As a result, she did not pass the TOPT test until the third attempt. This was

difficult for her to accept, since she did not want to fail. It was unexpected, because she considered herself a good student. Mrs. Santiago's mother did not speak Spanish to her, and her grandmother spoke only Spanish. She studied for the test by visiting her cousin in Monterrey to develop her use of Spanish. Mrs. Santiago reflected on the past and how her Spanish usage was improving. She taught Pre-K for five years, and she was ready for a new challenge.

She made the decision to apply for graduate school to seek her Master's in Educational Leadership. This decision was made during a difficult time in her first marriage, which eventually led to divorce. Mrs. Santiago knew she had to do this for herself and decided to research information regarding graduate school. She received a sign by reviewing a website mentioning an educational leadership program and the director's last name was her mother's maiden name. She explained, "I need to call this man. Oh my God, it's a sign. I sign up. I pay my fee and next thing you know, I'm enrolled in my grad school classes." She had to attend classes and developed a great relationship with her cohort. "Through the first year, I got divorced, met my new husband, changed grade levels, all of those things and started teaching first grade, which is tough. I had a tough team," she emphasized. She continued teaching in her hometown for seven more years.

Principalship.

Mrs. Santiago received her Master's degree and decided to pursue a career in administration. She interviewed for several principal positions but nothing felt right for her. She finally applied near her hometown. A committee of two women and five men

interviewed her. She felt that her interview went well and liked the team. When she finally heard back, they wanted to hire her for a teacher and technology director for the district. She accepted the position, since it was a vertical move. She began teaching a high school technology class part-time, and the rest of the day would be technology assistance. The job entailed ordering technology supplies to conducting trainings about technology. The district decided to hire a male principal instead of Mrs. Santiago. By mid-semester, the principal was not doing well, and the district decided he was not a good fit. She explained the principal turnover was high at Esperanza Elementary, her current campus. The new principal needed assistance, and the superintendent asked Mrs. Santiago to assist him in the process. She slowly began meeting with teachers and conducting meetings for the campus. The superintendent then gave her the opportunity to make campus decisions in February of that year.

Although it was not officially announced until April or May, everyone knew Mrs. Santiago would be the next principal. She mentioned how the situation was uncomfortable, but it allowed her to build a rapport with the staff. She has been the principal of Esperanza Elementary for about two years and has already established an effective staff. She stated, "If you do a job you love, you never have to work a day in your life. That is how I feel right now, even though I am a workaholic. I always work, but it does not feel like I am working." Mrs. Santiago has also received her superintendent certification in the process of the change. She has gained some confidence in her second year and eliminating hesitations of her decisions. She still

reflects back at the interview experience of a committee of all White people and still wonders why they did not hire her from the beginning.

Mrs. Santiago mentioned how all administrators work well together and support each other. Another principal on a campus in her district went through a similar situation when replacing another principal not doing well. He is a secondary principal and came into leadership the same time as Mrs. Santiago. She elaborated by stating,

It is three women and two men, but the relationship that we have, we are such a strong admin team. Those are my brothers and sister. I call them my work husbands. We really work well together that I think that has also helped our district tremendously.

She spoke highly about her team and how they assist each other constantly. Mrs. Santiago would seek advice from them and vice versa. She believes she is a supportive district and has a great relationship with her superintendent.

Mexican-American Principal

With the population of Esperanza Elementary, it is beneficial to have a Mexican-American principal. Mrs. Santiago discussed the connection, language, and mentoring for her students and parents. She is able to have courageous and honest conversations with her staff and parents. She emphasizes the importance of having courageous conversations and to better understand various cultures with her staff. For her students, Mrs. Santiago enjoys being a role model for them. She mentioned,

I like to be a role model for them. I got a cute Christmas card today from a little Hispanic girl that said, 'You're the best principal I have ever known.' I feel like that is huge that I could be an influence and inspiration to them.

One of the disadvantages of being a Mexican-American principal in her community is the culture of the community. Mrs. Santiago mentioned that she might not be accepted as a district leader. Her concern is that her own ethnicity may prohibit her advancement. Mrs. Santiago's drive and ambition is to make a difference. She feels that a principal can make a bigger impact as a whole rather than just a classroom. Being a principal allows her to make decisions for the betterment of her students.

We discussed on the lack of representation of Hispanic female principals. Her assumption is that Hispanic females are not pursuing a higher-level degree in education. Since Hispanic teachers are such a high need because of being bilingual, they tend to miss opportunities for administrative positions. If Mrs. Santiago had not moved to her current district, she still would have been a bilingual teacher in her previous district. Bilingual teachers were hard to find, and they did not want to lose her. When discussing the importance of a Hispanic principal presence, she stated,

However, I can see that there's a need for it, because that's what our schools are, that's what our schools are full of, is Hispanic students, and so, why not have leader that can relate at that level that's just as qualified as anybody else.

Mrs. Santiago has broken a barrier in her district by becoming the first Hispanic female administrator. It is an achievement she is proud to have accomplished.

When asked about the underrepresentation of Hispanic female administrators, she responded to the fact that Hispanic teachers do not pursue a higher level degree and are content with being a teacher. She also mentioned the lack availability. Mrs. Santiago continued to explain that the background could assist leaders to relate to the Hispanic population. She also explained in the Hispanic culture women do not want to be far from their families. Family is important, and professional life becomes second. She has the influence of two cultures growing up.

Balance of Identity

Esperanza Elementary is a campus of predominately Hispanic students, but the community has influential White families. Mrs. Santiago's superintendent graduated from the area and her roots were embedded in the community. Her superintendent has to be political in pleasing this community, even when it came to hiring Mrs. Santiago. She gave an example by stating,

One think that I noticed with the secondary principal, when he joined the district, picture all over the newspaper, article about all his accomplishments. When I joined the district, I haven't seen anything yet. There is no big front page. He got that. He is white so that's fine, because I know that the superintendent has to.

She discussed the political ramification associated with being a Hispanic principal in the community. Although she has the support of her superintendent, Mrs. Santiago is aware of the political game to satisfy the community. Being biracial and appearing more Hispanic than White has provided advantages and disadvantages in many ways. Mrs. Santiago is able to relate to the community and other administrator. She questions if they

can relate to her. Mrs. Santiago has the ability to relate to the White and Hispanic community because of her upbringing. Her father being Czech-German and her mother being Mexican-American has provided her experiences and background to make connections. During her childhood, Mrs. Santiago struggled with her own identity. Now, she views it beneficial in her life and profession. She is able to translate in Spanish during parent meetings and establish a rapport with the Hispanic parents. She considers herself a chameleon and adapting to the cultures and people around her.

Mentorship, Success, and Barriers

Mrs. Santiago's parents did not attend college or told her she had to go to college. She attributes her success to her own personal drive. Her family has influenced her to work hard and to value education. Although she did not originally pursue education, she wanted to make a difference in her class. Now, she is making a difference at a campus level. She eventually wants to make a difference at the district level. She clarified, "I don't want to say that my family didn't influence me, but really it's a personal drive, that's internal drive." Her sister attended college to earn an associate degree and enjoys her job. She was the first person to graduate from a university on her mother's side of the family. On her father's side, she has a cousin who completed college. Mrs. Santiago has been used to working hard and excelling in professional and individual growth.

One of Mrs. Santiago's mentors was her principal from the previous district. She allowed her to learn new task beyond her job description. She described her principal as supportive and positive. Her mentor also was influential during Mrs. Santiago's time during graduate school. Another mentor for Mrs. Santiago is her current superintendent.

She connected with her during the interview process and continues to stay in direct communication with her superintendent. They are actually friends and have a great rapport with one another. This provided her a great connection with central office in completing her superintendency. “She’s been an influence for me as well. I knew that if I was going to do my superintendent certification, I wanted to work with someone that I liked and I had access to,” explained Mrs. Santiago.

Another mentor mentioned was her professor, Dr. Mendez. He was a great supporter of hers during her graduate and superintendency program. All of Mrs. Santiago’s mentors have been supportive and encouraging throughout her career. She has been thankful for them but still has a void, regarding the lack of a Hispanic female mentor. She elaborated by stating,

I’ve lacked a Hispanic female to look up to, to guide me, to tell me, to show me.

I found other people to fill that role but that would be a dream come true, if I had someone to say, ‘Hey Valeria, this is what you do. This is how you do it. Just like

I call my *tía* (aunt) when I need something, that’s what I need’.

Mrs. Santiago has constantly tried to find a Hispanic mentor to relate to by joining other administrative organizations. The opportunity provides her with networking opportunities to meet other administrators.

We also discussed discrimination or if she ever felt discriminated against. Mrs. Santiago clarified that she is not the type of person that says, “Oh, they’re not treating me the same. You can feel it sometimes or you just know.” One example she described had to deal with being more involved in the community by joining the Rotary Club. She had

mentioned to one of the members about joining. One of the male assistant principals mentioned that he wanted to join as well and was given an application to join right away. Mrs. Santiago said told him that he was still waiting on the application from the Rotary Club. She told her colleague, “Yeah. I don’t think I’m what they’re looking for.” He replied by saying, “You surprise me by saying that, Valeria.” When he attended the Rotary Club meeting, he went to Mrs. Santiago the next day. He said, “You were right, Valeria. It was all elderly white males at this meeting.” She has been fascinated with the difference of treatment of males versus females. For example, Mrs. Santiago has discovered that males tend not to be questioned, when they say something. She has also noticed that she has to explain more or is questioned. There is a sense of general acceptance of white males.

Time and balance has been another obstacle for Mrs. Santiago. Being a principal requires a lot of time and responsibility. She feels her commitment of time to her family is a constant struggle. She wants to be able to give 100% to her career and her family. As a result, this sometimes becomes an uneven balance for her. Mrs. Santiago considers herself a workaholic and tries to balance home and work. Her husband supports her profession and assists her in separating work from home.

Difference of Non-Hispanic Female Principals

I posed the question about the differences between career paths of non-Hispanic principals versus Hispanic principals. Mrs. Santiago was hesitant about this question. In her previous district, she felt stagnant in her position as a bilingual teacher. She had applied at various places for an administrative position. She felt her last name influenced

her opportunities to excel. She stated, “. . . if my last name was different maybe my name would get on the stack at other places. I do not know, that’s hard. I don’t like to think that but that’s the reality.” Mrs. Santiago was aware of difference and recognizes them when they occurred. She believed that career paths are easier for non-Hispanic female principals. They may not get questioned as much and were respected more than Hispanic principals. She continued with, “I feel I’ve had to prove myself more than somebody else probably did.”

There is also an assumption that non-Hispanic female principals are more willing to move compared to Hispanic female principals. Mrs. Santiago is tied to her family and the limitation of jobs is near the geographic area of her family. There is also more pressure of Hispanic women to have children. In the past, Mrs. Santiago has had the pressure from her family and friends to start having children. She assumed that many non-Hispanic females may not have as much pressure into starting a family as the Hispanic culture.

Personal Thoughts

As a third year administrator, Mrs. Santiago has developed a qualified staff and provided the positive view for being a role model for Hispanic students. Mrs. Santiago discussed the importance of young girls viewing her as a role model. She said,

I see the little girls, and they are smiling at me and they come in. I feel like a role model even though I do not feel like I’m doing anything extra. I just feel like they see a person in a leadership role. I’ve called in several girls before, Hispanic girls. I’m like, ‘you can do it.’ Trying to motivate them to perform academically.

When asked about words of encouragement for aspiring female principals, Mrs. Santiago had great words of wisdom by stating,

Don't give up. Keep going. Keep looking, keep asking questions, and keep learning. Don't be afraid to try, put yourself out there, for sure. It begins with being a leader in your classroom.

She emphasized that Hispanic administrators are needed and our voices are vital. Prior to the second interview, Mrs. Santiago's grandfather had passed away. She made a connection about her family and words from her grandmother. She elaborated about their experiences,

I feel like we are really important, and we have to be the voice, we have to be the example. Sorry, I'm thinking about, my aunt was telling me at the funeral, about my grandma. My aunt works at the courthouse. She's the county judge's secretary and has been there for over twenty-five years, and she started half a day in high school and just stayed there. She remembers telling my grandma that she was afraid. Her grandma responded, 'no you just go there and people are going to come to you for help, and they're not going to know how to speak English. They're not going to know what to do, and you just help them because those people are me. You're needed to be there for the people who need you.'

Mrs. Santiago explained that none of us go around thinking about being viewed as a role model on a daily basis. She said we do not realize what we say or do can influence someone.

Summary and Reflection

Being biracial, Mrs. Santiago brings in another perception of her career path and experiences. She jokes by stating, “I can be as White as you, or as Mexican as you.” She is able to understand various perceptions based on her upbringing. Her upbringing does assist her at Esperanza Elementary. She is able to connect with her community while being a leader of a predominantly Hispanic campus. Mrs. Santiago is passionate and exhumes a personal drive to succeed. She has a strong connection and relationship with her family.

CHAPTER VI

Emilia Aguirre

Introduction

Emilia Aguirre is a principal of an elementary school in southeastern central Texas and considered a large metropolitan area. The city has a population of approximately of 82,000 people. The student population of Ian Elementary is about 70% Hispanic. I arrived about 30 minutes early before the schedule time. Ian Elementary is a beautiful campus and has representations of every continent throughout the school. As I entered, I immediately had to check in with my identification with the receptionist. She was friendly and told me she would notify Mrs. Emilia Aguirre of my arrival.

There was a seating area for visitors to wait. Mrs. Aguirre greeted me with a handshake and asked if I would like to go on a quick walkthrough with her. Of course, I said yes wanting to explore the campus more. We went to observe a teacher, and Mrs. Aguirre made quick notes on her laptop. Afterwards, she gave me a tour of the campus. She was proud of her campus and her teachers. We met back in Mrs. Aguirre's office to begin our interview process.

Personal Background and Family Influence

Mrs. Aguirre is 42 years old woman. She was born in a city at the southern border of Texas. Mrs. Aguirre's family set the example for her to attend college. Her grandfather dropped out of high school and joined the service. When he got out of the service, he completed his high school degree. Eventually, her grandfather received a Master's degree, which was not common at the time. Her grandfather was a professional musician and taught math. He valued education and getting a college degree was vital. When Mrs. Aguirre's parents got married, her father promised her grandfather that Mrs. Aguirre's mother would complete college. Later, Mrs. Aguirre moved to San Marcos for her parents to finish their degree. Upon graduation, her family moved back to Del Rio for family support. She also noted that she understood Spanish, but her family encouraged her to learn English. The reason being was that her father, aunts, and uncles faced corporal punishment in school, if they spoke Spanish. Her mom became an accountant and then a finance director for the city. Her father was an educator and a coach. Her dad would tell Mrs. Aguirre that she was going to be a doctor. She was interested in becoming a teacher, but her father wanted her to do something more. Her father and his sister were the only ones who completed college on her father's side of the family.

Her mother was the only one who completed college from her side of the family. Mrs. Aguirre reflected on the fact that her grandfather always encouraged her mother to grow academically and never knew why he only had conversations with her. She wished that she would have asked him before he passed, "Why her?" Her mother was the only

one out of the six children that was encouraged and had a different expectation. As the oldest of three, Mrs. Aguirre knew college was nonnegotiable. She has a younger brother and sister, who are both in education.

Mrs. Aguirre considered herself very driven and a perfectionist. She stated, “I’m kind of a take charge person, just like that’s my nature. It didn’t take very long till I was in charge of everything.” She also views this as a fault, since she creates her own stress. Being a perfectionist held her back and caused her to be afraid to do things. She wants to be the best on whatever she is doing to avoid failure. She graduated 5th out of about 500 students and received a scholarship to go to a university. Originally, she chose a pre-med major but completely disliked the field. She ended up pursuing elementary education, which provided her with opportunities to work with students.

Her second year in college, Mrs. Aguirre did fall in love. Mrs. Aguirre had her life planned out, as her father warned her about falling in love. She got pregnant and married her boyfriend. Her dad was upset at her decisions but supported her nonetheless. She dropped out of college and went through a difficult time. She stated, “I thought I was a failure. I let my family down. I lost my scholarship. Everything that I worked for is now gone.” Her parents questioned her plan for her family and convinced her to move back home. She had a great support system to assist her with her baby to avoid commuting for school. Mrs. Aguirre then returned to school and changed her major to education.

She had another daughter after six years of having her first child and was married for nine years. The week of their ninth anniversary was unforgettable. Her husband

wanted a divorce on that day, which was a complete shock. She had been miserable in her marriage but sacrificed her happiness for her children. The decision was best for Mrs. Aguirre, but her priority was her daughters. Fortunately, she found happiness with her current husband, who she knew from high school. He was also divorced and had full custody of his son. His son calls Mrs. Aguirre, mom, and she has been blessed with two more daughters and a son. She is reflective almost to the point of her own detriment. “I’m a perfectionist. I really am very hard on myself on everything,” she affirms. She includes the role of being a mom, wife, and principal under her own criticism. The overwhelming roles and responsibilities cause her stress and anxiety. Her husband has assisted her with the understanding that not everything will be perfect, and it is not her fault. She stated, “I still feel like I have to prove myself. I don’t know who I’m proving myself too. Myself?” This has been a constant question in her life and wanting to be the best mother, principal, and wife.

The pressures of being the “perfect wife” developed from her Hispanic culture. Mrs. Aguirre has been influenced by her Hispanic culture and upbringing. Her grandfather is the one that has served first at her family gatherings. The men are priority in the family to be served first. She explained, “You serve them, you take care of them that is my role as a wife.” Her mother exemplified this role daily throughout her childhood. Mrs. Aguirre views her mother as a role model. Her mother was able to balance work, motherhood, and being a wife. Her father was raised in a household where his clothes were prepared and laid out for him daily. Mrs. Aguirre’s husband is white and loves to cook. This was something she had to adjust to in terms of cultural differences.

She spoke about her husband being accustomed to do things on his own. There continues to be an identity crisis of not knowing how she is supposed to be around others. The balance is difficult.

Educational Journey and Mentors

Mrs. Aguirre had the opportunity to student teach for 2nd and 5th grade, where her grandfather taught which was located across from his house. She attended 1st grade at the campus, which used to be a high school. The campus was special to her. The campus was a Title 1 school, all Hispanic, and about 99% economically disadvantaged. She mentioned that Garza ISD probably has the most Child Protective Services cases in Texas. One of the 5th grade teachers retired, and Mrs. Aguirre became a teacher at the campus for seven years. She attended a job fair in her current district and had the opportunity to interview with various principals. She remembers distinctly the lay out of the job fair and the process. She realized several applicants were in lines behind the more affluent campuses in the district. At the job fair, Mrs. Aguirre noticed there was not a line under the Ian Elementary sign. After speaking to the principal, Ms. Ashby, she confirmed to Mrs. Aguirre that she had a job. She felt the connection with Ms. Ashby and was offered the job of 3rd grade bilingual. She taught 3rd grade at Ian Elementary for three years. Ms. Ashby was African American woman and taught in the district for 45 years. She opened the Ian Elementary and was an icon in the community. Ms. Aguirre considered Ms. Ashby as one of her mentors. They worked well together and respected one another. She also learned a lot from the Professional Development Specialist, Mrs. Mason. Ms. Mason assisted her in growing as a leader and viewing the whole picture of

campus decisions and the reasoning. She was able to assist teachers with instruction and had more influence on curriculum decisions for her campus.

Ms. Ashby chose Mrs. Aguirre to be one out of the six teachers to attend training for the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) model with the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. She had the opportunity to learn about the program, which in turned changed the campus culture for the better. As a result, the campus became more reflective in developing professional learning communities. The opportunity occurred for either a mentor or master teacher. A mentor teacher still had classroom duties but mentored a group of teachers. A master teacher provided the opportunity similar to an instructional coach but no longer a classroom teacher. Mrs. Aguirre hesitated on this decision, since she was not ready to leave the classroom. She was confident in her ability of teaching, but she did not want to be an administrator. She stated, “I never wanted to be an administrator. Never was going to be. That was for people who were crazy.” Her principal, Ms. Ashby, questioned on why she had not applied for the master teacher position.

The day of the deadline, she told Mrs. Aguirre to apply for the master teacher position. This was the first time Mrs. Aguirre realized that she might qualify for the opportunity. Mrs. Aguirre had connections in Del Rio and her lateral move would be because of her family background and being well-known in the community. In this district, she had to do this on her own. It was not who she knew but how she performed. She was interviewed by Texas TAP committee which consisted of about six people. The interview lasted fifteen minutes. Mrs. Aguirre knew that they had their mindset on

someone else, since the interview was so short. There were about 30 people from the district recommended and only nine people were selected. She was chosen to be the master teacher at her campus for four years. Through the process, she presented at national conferences. She was offered a job to work for TAP her third year of being a master teacher. She denied the offer, since she did not want to travel. She wanted her family to be a priority and wanted to be near her family. Mrs. Aguirre's husband works in the medical field and has a busy schedule. She was basically a single parent, and it would have been difficult for time sake.

The master teacher experience provided a broader perspective of campus and district decisions. When Mrs. Aguirre was a teacher, she did not understand why Ms. Ashby would not address some issues. She stated, "I had good work ethic, so I always did what I was supposed to do and I just did not understand. Why didn't say anything?" She was able to see the bigger picture and reasoning of why decisions were made. After seeing how effective she was as a master teacher, Ms. Ashby saw potential in Mrs. Aguirre. Ms. Ashby encouraged her to apply for the assistant principal position with her. Ms. Ashby asked her, "What do you want to do?" Mrs. Aguirre responded, "I want to be the principal at Ian Elementary." Her last year as a master teacher, she discovered that her superintendent wanted to meet with all master teachers. Dr. Riley, the superintendent, asked her about curriculum and her thoughts on the district. He would visit the campuses and was very visible. She saw him as passionate, inspiring, and truly cared about children. Two weeks after Mrs. Aguirre had the conversation with Dr. Riley. Dr. Riley told her, "You are just a firecracker. I told others that you were going to be a

principal in our district.” Ms. Ashby told her that she was going to be able to hire an assistant principal. Mrs. Aguirre became the assistant principal of Ian Elementary for two years. Ms. Ashby felt comfortable enough to retire and have Mrs. Aguirre take over Ian Elementary. She gave her the highest recommendation to be named the next principal. When Ms. Ashby decided to retire, Mrs. Aguirre became the principal. Mrs. Aguirre has been fortunate to have people who have encouraged her to advance in leadership positions. Ms. Ashby mentored Mrs. Aguirre and encouraged her to have the confidence to be a leader for the campus.

Principalship and Developing Relationships

Mrs. Aguirre has been a principal for three years and has served in various capacities at Ian Elementary. She stated, “It’s a good think because my heart is here, and I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else because these kids are everything to me. I also feel like I was chosen to be here. I am going to be honest; I had to work really hard.” Mrs. Aguirre expressed the importance of her relationship with the parents at Ian Elementary. “I take that relationship with them very seriously, because a lot of our parents aren’t educated. They really trust us to do what is best for their kids. I do not take that responsibility lightly.” She instills this importance with her teachers about not betraying their trust. Her tenure at Ian Elementary has given her the opportunity to grow with these students and families. Mrs. Aguirre has made name for herself because of her work ethic. She has no family there or previous connections. Any advancement made in her district were a result of the work accomplished at her campus.

Mexican-American Female Principal

According to Mrs. Aguirre, Ian Elementary needed a Hispanic principal or at least an assistant principal. With a 70% Hispanic student population, a Spanish speaking administrator was necessary to make a difference. Hispanic parents became more confident and comfortable coming to the campus, instead of having someone else translate their conversation. Mrs. Aguirre noted her Spanish has improved with practice, especially with her academic Spanish. There have been opportunities where parents have assisted Mrs. Aguirre with her Spanish. She has seen more Hispanic parents becoming more involved and has developed trust with the school community. Parents call Mrs. Aguirre by her first name, since she has developed a positive working relationship with them. Mrs. Aguirre wants them to feel safe and supportive at all times. She not only sees herself as Hispanic but as a minority. She stated, "They're all parents. We are all here to ensure that all of our students are getting the highest quality education. I feel like I treat all parents the same." With the diversity of her campus, she ensures all cultural are celebrated through cultural awareness and conversations. Students experience various activities to delve into other cultures.

Mrs. Aguirre feels there is a diverse representation of administrators in her district. There is a high Hispanic population in her district, and there is an awareness of the importance of hiring a diverse staff. Mrs. Aguirre believes the lack of representation of Hispanic female principals depends on the area. The representation is more in south Texas than in her current area.

One of her frustrations is the fact that Hispanic people do not advocate for themselves. Mrs. Aguirre's hometown community was active in League of United Latin American Citizens. Hispanics were involved and had a voice within the community. In her current district, Hispanics are not as involved. There is a strong African American community that advocate for themselves. Her assumption of reason for the lack of involvement has to do with the type of population. Many Hispanics may not necessarily be from the area and may not have a sense of ownership. They lack a united front and advocating for the Hispanic community, even though the population is increasing. She stated, "I need you [parents] to feel confident and not be intimidated to go into these schools. I want to empower parents, I do but I feel that our Hispanic parents here are intimidated." She expounds on the notion of their fear of being deported. Parents were hesitant to come, since they may have to provide some form of identification.

With Ian Elementary's population, Mrs. Aguirre made an exception of having some form of identification, even if it is from Mexico. One of the benefits of her being a Mexican-American principal is that she has developed relationships with the parents. She can communicate with them and motivate them to participate in their child's education without fear. Her parents have even asked for guidance on filling out immigrations letters, how to get government assistance, and translating letters for them.

Success and Barriers

Mrs. Aguirre's contribution to success has to deal with her inner drive. She is her own worst critic and does not give herself enough credit. There continues to be an inner

struggle with questioning her confidence, but she is very capable of being an outstanding leader.

She stated,

Whenever I do something, I really do give 150% all the time. I have a very strong work ethic, which I saw from my parents, of course, they instilled that in us. I think once I became a mom, I needed to be an example for my daughters. It doesn't matter what mistakes we make, you can still be successful. Getting educated is, again, not a choice. You will go to college. You need to be able to take care of yourself. I think as a woman in general. As a Hispanic woman, I do not want you to have to rely on a man to take care of you.

The idea of race and diversity was a center of the discussion with Mrs. Aguirre. When Ms. Ashby decided to retire, the staff provided input on their next principal. They wanted a principal that was a person of color. She began to question, "Is race really that big of an issue? Shouldn't it be the right person to do the job? It should be." Mrs. Aguirre came from a community that was majority Hispanic, and she did not notice the difference of various races until her current position. Ian Elementary majority of the student population used to be African American and later grew to be more Hispanic. She explained,

I feel that sometimes there are people still around assuming Ian is a black school. You know Ian is a school that loves and accept all children. We're here to teacher children, not favor black or favor Hispanic. When I think I see racial issues come up, that hurts me. I think it should not matter what race our students are. We

have to work with all of them, and it doesn't matter that I'm Hispanic. I'm going to treat everyone the same.

The notion of race for the next principal was offensive to Mrs. Aguirre. She felt the quality and experience of the person should matter most. She continued, “. . . Here, I feel like there's a lot of reverse discrimination on where you are. Being Hispanic, I did not feel until I moved here is that you're kind of in between. Really, you're not white, but the black people think you're white. Then, being married to a white person . . .” Mrs. Aguirre expressed her disappointment with the issue on where she fits in her community and in society.

We discussed the career path differences between non-Hispanic female principals and Hispanic female principals. Mrs. Aguirre thought it depends on the location and superintendent. In Del Rio, majority of the principals were Hispanic. Her superintendent, Dr. Riley, wanted to hire diverse principals that represented the student population. Prior to Mrs. Aguirre coming to the district, there were more white females in the primary and elementary principal setting. In secondary, it was more white males as principals. She believes her district is intentional about hiring diverse group of principals.

Personal Thoughts

Mrs. Aguirre discussed a conversation she had with her father about working in central office. Her dad stated, “No *mija* (daughter) don't go, because when people go to central office they get stupid. They used to be good teachers. They used to be good principals. Then, they go over there, and they get stupid.” She agreed with her father

that some educators lose sight, when they are in higher positions. She remembers what it was like to be a teacher and being the voice for teachers with district mandates. Her father still encourages her to pursue her doctorate, since she did not become a medical doctor.

Summary and Reflection

Mrs. Aguirre considers herself her own worst enemy. She sells herself short and questions if her ability. She stated, “I own everything that happens in this building. It doesn’t matter that I didn’t directly do it. I am responsible for everything. When benchmark data is not good, that’s my fault.” Along with owning the success or failures as principal, she mentors teachers on her campus. Mrs. Aguirre encourages other Hispanic females to pursue some form of administration. She sees the potential and leadership qualities of some of her Hispanic teachers and still sees the hesitation on their faces. In turn, we discussed her words of encouragement for aspiring Hispanic female principals. She exclaims,

Don’t lose sight of who you are, because it’s easier to be what somebody else wants you to be so that you and get the job or so that you can fit in. You’re kind of selling your soul, when you do that. Be proud of who you are, don’t lose sight of who you are, and stay who you are. I am me, you’re going to hire me for who I am, spicy and all. Don’t change me. That is what makes you special and that’s what is going to help you be successful. That’s just an added pressure if you’re trying to be successful, while trying to be somebody that you’re not. If you can’t be true to yourself you’re never going to be successful.

The emphasis of being true to yourself and finding the balancing is an ongoing discussion with Mrs. Aguirre. She reiterates the importance of truly working hard and having passion in your work. Mrs. Aguirre ends with her statement, “I think that is what I’m trying to instill in every one of the students that comes into this building. You’ve got to work hard. That is not going to be easy, but it’s worth the work. You can do it.”

CHAPTER VII

Patricia Maldonado

Introduction

Patricia Maldonado is a principal of an elementary school in a rural school district in a southeastern region of Texas. The city has a population of approximately of 13,500. The student population is about 85% Hispanic and is an improvement required campus. The campus has about 60 staff members and 500 students. Upon entering Carter Elementary, I found it to be secure but welcoming. All visitors had to check in with proof of identification. The receptionist greeted me and told me Ms. Maldonado would be on her way after school announcements. As I was waiting, I heard loud music, and students coming into the building.

After a few moments, Ms. Maldonado came out to greet me with a smile, and we shook hands. She welcomed me into her office and asked me if I needed anything. Ms. Maldonado was full of energy and had a welcoming demeanor. Later, I found out that she plays music in the gym to energize students every morning.

Personal Background

Our first topic of discussion was about Ms. Maldonado's personal background. She is 40 years old from a single-parent home, as she lost her father at a young age. She

is from Houston but was raised in the southern region of Texas. Ms. Maldonado was the only child and was raised solely by her mother. She spoke mostly English growing up, but Spanish was spoken in the home. Ms. Maldonado does not have any children or married at this time. She stated, "I think I have dedicated most all my life to my career."

Ms. Maldonado's mother had various jobs growing up and decided to pursue a teaching profession at the age of 40. Her mother became a teacher later in life to the point that they graduated a year apart from one another. Her mother taught first and third grade and is now retired. She was raised to be a strong woman but always had the fear of failure. Ms. Maldonado has a large family and is the oldest of 27 cousins. As a result, they call her for advice, and she has developed into being a role model for her family. She explains that it does not have to do with her being a principal but more of her being a positive person to provide honest advice.

Her drive comes from wanting to be a role model for her family and for her students. Ms. Maldonado stated, "My grandfather was not educated. He came from Cruillas, Tamaulipas and was a worker for the King Ranch. Although he only made it to ninth grade, he was big with his children and then his grandchildren, and to him teaching was the job." She continued by explaining how he would say, "You should be a teacher. You should teach others. You should be an example." He was a worker, because he was like "one of the old Mexican cowboys." Her grandfather instilled to them on making a difference to teacher others. He valued education and respected the teaching profession.

Educational Field

Ms. Maldonado has been in education for almost 20 years. She was able to start teaching 3rd and 4th grade, when she was 20 years old. She went through a dual credit program, which allowed her to take college courses while in high school. Ms. Maldonado taught 3rd and 4th grade for five years. Ms. Maldonado received her Master's at Texas A&M in Kingsville. She then became a curriculum consultant for four years and then she became an assistant principal at the junior high level. She has also received her superintendent certification. She has begun her third year as a principal at Carter Elementary.

Principalship.

Ms. Maldonado first became interested in the principalship, when she was encouraged by her principal at the time to attend an aspiring principal conference. She discovered the power of networking and meeting several people in the administrative field. She began to realize there were not many Hispanic principals at the conference. She stated, "I could make a bigger impact as principal with kids, so I decided to pursue that and decided to look for schools that were in great need. Some people look for the opposite." She also mentioned that she was interested in the legal aspects of administration and meeting people. Ms. Maldonado stated, ". . . I've always been a people person, and I also have a clear direction. I tell people the exact truth." One of her principals told her she would be a great principal, which motivated her to pursue a degree in educational leadership. She felt that everything fell into place for her career path after receiving her Master's degree. Ms. Maldonado explained, "At the time, I did not think to

go out and find a principal job. A curriculum consultant came open. I thought, ‘Oh, that’d be good.’” She enjoyed the opportunity and later became an assistant principal. The career path continued to fall into place for her.

Ms. Maldonado applied at Langston Elementary at a nearby district, since there were no principal positions at Garza ISD. She said most of the students in the district were “ranch students,” which was about 60% White and 40% Hispanic. Students that were considered “ranch students” came from parents who did financially well as landowners. At the time, Langston Elementary was having staff issues, and the superintendent was fired. As a result, the board presented Ms. Maldonado with another opportunity of becoming interim superintendent in the first year of being a principal. She believed she was in a good position in the district, but she did not want the role of superintendent at the time. She stated, “With the superintendency, the life of a superintendent is two and a half to three years. I want to do that maybe at the end of my career.” Ms. Maldonado believes that she still has a long way to go before officially pursuing the superintendency.

Mexican-American female principal.

Ms. Maldonado wanted to be at a campus that had high need issues. She decided to come back to Garza Independent School District and work at Carter Elementary, which had issues with discipline, gangs, drugs, and academics. Her determination and perseverance encouraged her to come back to the small community and work with children.

Ms. Maldonado has been a principal at Carter Elementary for about 3 years.

When asked about her being chosen for this campus, she explained how being Mexican-American influenced the decision: “This campus, like I said, it’s changed so much within the past years, but I don’t think they’ve never had a Hispanic principal at this level. I think it did have an influence.” She continued to discuss that her superintendent at the time was a “short, little female firecracker” who also had an influence on Ms. Maldonado becoming the principal at Carter Elementary. Ms. Maldonado was primarily recruited to become principal of Carter Elementary, and she believed it was because of her background, age, and culture. The superintendent believed that Ms. Maldonado could rebuild the staff at Carter as well as release ineffective teachers.

Fourteen staff members were released her first year as principal. She felt it necessary to start on a clean slate and build the school culture. Although it has been a working progress, Carter Elementary has shown improvement. She explained that Carter was such “ . . . a volatile place here that the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and other assistant principals from around had to come manage discipline here.” Another selling point for her decision was that Carter did not have stable leadership, and almost every principal had been removed from the position. She wanted to be able to provide the campus stability and rebuild the campus culture.

Ms. Maldonado expounded on the benefits of being a Mexican-American female principal of predominately Hispanic campus. She has the ability to relate to the parents and communicate with them in their first language. She clarified:

Buy-in from the parents is a benefit. Especially, I think, Hispanic women, because they come in here, and I tell them my story. I tell them, ‘your kid has all this and they can do better,’ because most of our parents are not educated and they never felt like they could. That’s the only reason. They never felt like it was an opportunity for them. I think that’s helpful.

When asked about other administrators in her district, she explained that majority of the principals were Hispanic or two or more races. She stated, “I think probably because of the demographics in this area. It has increased probably in the last five years.” Ms. Maldonado believed that there was an increase of Hispanic administrators in her area but not on a national level. She surmised the idea from experiences in organizations and networking.

Building Relationships and Leadership

Ms. Maldonado gives credit to the progress at Carter Elementary to building relationships, connecting, and establishing positive school culture. She feels that it is important to build a relationship with your staff and with your students. Her goal was also for her staff to have an awareness of their students’ stories to change their culture of thinking. She has told her staff that, “We can’t do anything about the kids that are homeless or the parents being on drugs. It’s a lot, so our kids need a lot of love.”

Ms. Maldonado spoke about having discussion with students, especially young girls about their future. She tells them about her retiring one day, and how she needs somebody to eventually be the principal at Carter Elementary. The students light up at

the thought of becoming a principal, as they see Ms. Maldonado. The students can relate to her, as she appears to be like them.

Her routine every morning is to arrive on campus at 6:30 a.m. to drink her coffee, and then enter the gym about 7:30 a.m. with the students. She plays music in the gym, and students run up to her to greet her. She stated, “My thing is that is my payment. That is my payment. Like I said, that’s the thing that . . . and it’s not easy. It’s a hard job to change that thinking.” Ms. Maldonado decided not to hire an assistant principal her first year to establish the right culture on her campus. This gave her the opportunity to build her staff and build morale. This became a daunting task but had the assistance of the school counselor to build the foundation and change the perception for all stakeholders.

Ms. Maldonado makes frequent home visits to involve all parents. She discussed one scenario of a girl who needed medical attention for her eye. The young girl lived in a drug house with her mom. Her mom would not take her to receive medical treatment. Ms. Maldonado had already called CPS prior to the home visit. Her assistant principal asked her, “Oh my God. You’re not scared.” She responded, “They’re not going to kill me. I know they might be in a lot of issues, but still, they still have some kind of respect because you’re an educator.” Ultimately, the school assisted with providing the young girl by assisting with medical treatment for the infection in her eye. The scenario demonstrates the passion Ms. Maldonado has for her students and going beyond to ensure student health does not impede their learning.

Ms. Maldonado emphasized the support she has of the community. She has been a stable representation of leadership in the Hispanic and school community. Ms. Maldonado has continued to develop a rapport with her stakeholders and has complete support on her decisions.

Barriers and Perception

Although Ms. Maldonado has built positive relationships with parents and the community, she still faces some challenges as a Mexican-American female principal. She described a situation where a Hispanic father challenged her. Ms. Maldonado had to be professional and explained expectations of how to speak to someone, including his own wife. She noticed the wife was submissive, and he probably expected the same from Ms. Maldonado. He was surprised on how Ms. Maldonado corrected him. She continued by mentioning the difference of some Hispanic women. “Most women, and not everywhere, because we have some super strong women, but most of the women in this area are very submissive because they’re not educated,” She emphasized.

She also expounded on the notion of perception. “I think sometimes as females you have to prove yourself and a Hispanic female you have to prove yourself,” she stated. One of the disadvantages of being Hispanic female is the perception of being able to handle a large campus with males. Some may assume that a Hispanic female will not be able to run a campus with discipline issues.

Another situation she recalled was about her experience going to the teacher credit union with an older female employee. Ms. Maldonado had explained that she was interested in opening an account, and she was an assistant principal in the district at the

time. The employee responded, “You’re a custodian?” Ms. Maldonado explained again that she was an assistant principal. Again, the employee responded, “You’re a custodian.” This affirmed the perception and stereotype of a Hispanic female. Ms. Maldonado focused on the importance of perception and professionalism. She continued by explaining how she dresses in suits to important meetings. “You have to go the extra mile because of presence,” she emphasized. She expressed that as a Hispanic principal, you have to prove yourself to your staff, community, and supervisors constantly.

When asked about her opinion about the lack of representation of Hispanic principals, she stated, “I think there is in Texas for the demographics we have. I think within the past five years in south Texas, there are more Hispanic principals.” She feels there is a lack of representation of female Hispanic principals, because they tend to hold back from becoming administrators. Ms. Maldonado elucidates that there are Hispanic teachers, but it seems the culture tends to hold us back. She explained this by stating, “I think it is probably culture. You are going to be somebody’s boss. It should be a man, or they think they can’t.” She spoke about one of her teachers being an aspiring leader, and a strong Hispanic female at her campus. Ms. Maldonado said the teacher was smart and has the capability of becoming an administrator. The teacher’s reaction was that she cannot do the job. Ms. Maldonado believes it was the mindset of the culture. This example supported her idea on the culture being a barrier for Hispanic women. There was a sense of fear of the unknown and submission.

Although she may deal with teachers lacking the confidence, Ms. Maldonado believes in “growing people out.” From her own experience, she could relate to others

holding her back. One of her previous principals told her she was not ready to become a school leader. This made her question herself and her abilities to become a principal. After gaining four years of experience, Ms. Maldonado knew she was ready to make a vertical move. Later, she discovered her principal did not want to lose her because of how effective she was with parents and students. Having Ms. Maldonado as an assistant principal, made the job easier for her principal.

One of the barriers Ms. Maldonado faced was dealing with finances. She dealt with worrying about receiving scholarships or applying for loans for school. She stated, “Oh my gosh. Am I going to be able to pay back? How am I going to be able to pay them back?” Finance was a concern for her throughout the process of her career to receive her degrees and certifications.

She also mentioned, although she had mentors to develop her expertise, she still lacked a mentor to assist her throughout her principalship. She explained this barrier further by stating,

A lot of times you're thrown in the principalship and there is no mentor. You have colleagues within your district, but a lot of times your colleagues are like, 'Eh, I don't want to help, and, she's brand new. What if she does better than me? How will people perceive that?'

We discussed that other administrators may see a new principal as a threat or competition. Unfortunately, they may not assist new principals because of the fear of them being better than they are. Ms. Maldonado felt she had to learn details on her own and thrown into the position without enough support or guidance.

Ms. Maldonado also mentioned her youth as a barrier in her career path. She was fortunate to begin her educational career early, as a result of dual credit in high school. Garza ISD had asked her to return to become a principal at Carter Elementary. She did not understand the reasoning of why she did not have this type of opportunity prior to other experiences. Ms. Maldonado asked the superintendent the reasoning after applying three times and being invested in the community. This was at the time that Ms. Maldonado was an interim superintendent at another district. The superintendent responded with this,

Well, I didn't hire you because I did not know you. I just didn't think you could handle it. I knew you were the assistant principal. They said you were strong, but I didn't see you that way. I saw you more like a kid or a daughter.

Ms. Maldonado later discovered from other committee members that majority wanted her to come prior to being called back by Garza ISD. She also further noted that,

It was an Anglo female who was here and left, but it was . . . I don't know.

Maybe it's possible that superintendents want to hire somebody like them. It's possible. I think I had to leave the district to become a principal, or if I had stayed here . . . I probably still would've been an assistant principal.

She had to prove herself to others by leaving and getting the experience needed to return to Garza ISD. They began seeing the improvement and results at Carter Elementary. She returned to Garza ISD for several reasons such as the students, community, and the incentive pay to return. She laughed at this portion of the

conversation. Then, this introduced another issue of equal pay between males and females.

The pay was low as an assistant principal in Garza ISD. She was able to receive a pay increase leaving Garza ISD as an assistant principal. Garza ISD did not have a set pay scale and salary was based on negotiation. In comparison to the other primary and elementary principals, there was a male principal receiving \$100, 000 at a primary campus. She questioned the occurrence. Does he have more experience? She determined simply, because he was a male. She elaborated on how negotiation was beneficial for newer people in the district, but it was a detriment to those who have been in the district for a long time. New administrators could be receiving a higher salary than those who have been in the district. Garza ISD has gone through several superintendents, and Ms. Maldonado explained how this could be a challenge. She has to prove herself repeatedly to a new superintendent and mentioned that there have been three superintendents within the last five years.

Difference from Non-Hispanic Female Principals

I presented the question about the difference between career paths of non-Hispanic principals versus Hispanic principals. She noticed White women were not questioned on decisions nor had any pushback. White women were just accepted. In turn, Ms. Maldonado had to present evidence and details on certain decision. Her ideas were questioned and not as easily accepted as White women. She said,

I don't know what else to attribute to it. You could say attribute to background, success, or achievement, but it wasn't it. What was it? I think that's what it is. I think as a Hispanic female, you have to show more evidence."

She discussed about her best friends being Anglo, and how she noticed the difference between the treatment and career paths. She related the difference of cultures. One example she mentioned was that,

I did not want to be in the district just because I had so much family in the district. I think it is a cultural think. I think it is easier for non-Hispanic females because of perception. For some reason, there are viewed as stronger personalities. They are viewed as black and white. Many of the Hispanic females are viewed as submissive or maybe passive, whereas Anglo women are viewed as being strong and sticking to their decisions. Hispanic females sometimes are not viewed like that.

She continues by emphasizing that Hispanic women can be viewed as being easily persuaded and may not stand up for what they believe. Ms. Maldonado mentioned a conversation with her assistant principal. He mentioned that people seem to underestimate her just because she is friendly and her appearance. Her response to him was, "I am friendly because the way I think people should be, but when it comes down to it, I'm going to make the best decision for kids. Period. I'm not going to apologize for it."

Mentorship and Success

When we discussed her mentors, she referred to a principal at Garza ISD. Her name was Barbara Jones. Mrs. Jones told her she was looking for an assistant principal who knew and understood the students' backgrounds. The candidates interviewed by Mrs. Jones lacked this skill for her campus to be successful. Ms. Maldonado mentioned that Garza was a prison town. In turn, some families move to the area to be closer to family in prison. Mrs. Jones mentioned to Ms. Maldonado that she needed someone who could discuss these types of issues with students. Ms. Maldonado felt that Mrs. Jones had an awareness of the culture of the community and the campus. She needed someone who could respond to comments such as, "Well how would you know? You were raised in a ranch in this elite place and you don't know where I'm coming from." Ms. Maldonado responded to her, "I could do that."

Her mentor was a White female who Ms. Maldonado felt was familiar with the Hispanic culture because of her environment. She mentioned that Mrs. Jones was raised around the Hispanic culture, because majority of her caretakers were Hispanic. She was primarily raised at a well-known ranch. Ms. Maldonado also discussed another mentor named Linda Allen. She stated,

She was really one of the first Hispanic principals down here. It was very difficult for her to gain a principalship because mostly, not so much now, but a long time ago even within 20 years it was mostly men, and mostly they're Anglo men and some Hispanic men, but it was rarely women. Things are changing, but nationally they're not really. I went to the National Principal's Conference.

There were three Hispanic principals in the whole conference, and they were from Texas.

She explained the three principals were women.

Ms. Maldonado mentioned her involvement in the Elementary Principal's Association provided her networking opportunities. She was interested in becoming state secretary for the organization. She thought her chances of receiving the position were slim, since she was going against other candidates in larger districts. Now, she is the state secretary for about 6,000 principals. With her involvement in the organization, she has met several people wanting her to come to their districts. She rejected the idea of moving to another district because of her connection and efforts with Carter Elementary. Ms. Maldonado wants Carter Elementary to be stable before even considering leaving the campus for another opportunity.

Ms. Maldonado also enjoys growing her staff based on the discussion. She mentioned leaders on her campus that she has closely worked with to become future administrators. She has given great advice to teachers and even her administrative team on future aspirations. It was apparent that she not only built relationships with the students but with her staff, as well. She is straight-forwarded and seemed honest about her experiences and her career path as an educator.

Obstacles Today

Within the past three years, Ms. Maldonado has overcome several obstacles. She still feels that her students need her, and she was not to continue the improvement on her campus. Her aspiration is to become an assistant superintendent. With each aspiration,

she has to prove herself repeatedly. She is confident in her progress and believes she has the ability to rebuild the community.

The current obstacles at her campus are accountability and student achievement. Her campus was labeled as an improvement required campus, since they did not meet accountability standards. Her campus has to show improvement by the end of the year. She stressed by stating, “I feel like we need to do it not only for this school but for the kids. We also have some outside forces with achievement, because we have a charter school nearby.” She mentioned that the nearby charter school receives about 100 of the district’s top students, and they eventually come back to high school. She has determined it creates a greater gap of student achievement at her campus.

Personal Thoughts

Ms. Maldonado’s advice and words of encouragement for aspiring Hispanic female principals is to not give up and not being afraid to ask hard questions. She elaborated by saying

I think culturally it is better to remain quiet or pretend you do not see something.

If you apply for a position and you are not hired, why not call and ask why. What could I have done better or what do you think prevented me from getting the job?

Straightforward, just like that.

She also gave the advice of being strong and not being afraid to move away from family.

As a Mexican-American principal, Ms. Maldonado has parents and students that can see themselves through her, as she understands their perspective. She is a role model for students that anything is possible. Her closing remarks were,

I feel very blessed, because I feel like I have been able to fall in the right places. I believe that everybody is meant to be where they are . . . whether you fight it or whether you're not.

Summary and Reflection

Ms. Maldonado spoke at length about perception and assumptions about her. As a Hispanic female, Ms. Maldonado has to constantly prove herself and show others her effectiveness at the campus level. Her assistant principal is a tall African American male, and people often assume he is the principal. This was an example of how perception is vital in the principalship. She feels comfortable in her current position because of the continuous support of the community and staff. She values her community and students at Carter Elementary and genuinely wants them to succeed. She has developed networking at the state level and plans on becoming an assistant superintendent after Carter Elementary shows great improvement. She seems honest, energetic, and passionate about her students. Her energy is contagious and exudes confidence.

CHAPTER VIII

Veronica De la Paz

Introduction

Veronica De la Paz is a principal of an elementary school in an inner suburb in northeastern region of Texas. The city has a population of approximately of 200,000. The student population is about 74% Hispanic. The campus of Progressive Elementary has about 60 staff members and 580 students. Mrs. Veronica De la Paz decided for us to meet at a local coffee shop during Christmas break. I was appreciative of her making this accommodation, since we both know time off is valuable. I arrived at the coffee shop before her and waited patiently for her arrival. When she arrived, she greeted me with a smile and a handshake. She was full of energy and enthusiasm. We both ordered a drink and immediately began our conversation.

Educational and Personal Background

Veronica De la Paz was born in Colima, Mexico and moved to Chihuahua, the northern part of Mexico. Mrs. De la Paz obtained an educational degree in pre-kindergarten in Mexico. Unfortunately, her degree did not transfer in the United States. She had to start from over on her courses for her bachelor's. Mrs. De la Paz had enough English for basic communication. At 23 years old, she moved to El Paso from Mexico.

She attended classes to learn English for a year and a half and worked at a community college and then at a university in El Paso. While working at both institutions, she completed her basics college course work and trying to discover her career path in education. She worked in the academic counseling department to assist students with their course work decisions and career choices. She referred to life getting in the way, as she became a single mom. She could not quit her job to become a student teacher, so she decided to go into computer information systems. Mrs. De la Paz noticed several of the students coming back to get their alternative certification. She had always been interested in technology and computers. Although she enjoyed technology, she missed the interaction with people. She'd rather interact with people instead of being at a desk or in front of the computer. She was recruited by Neotel, telecommunications company, near Ventura ISD. Unfortunately, the company started going downhill, and Mrs. De la Paz was laid off after six months.

The layoff provided for the opportunity for her to pursue education. She contacted the bilingual office in Ventura ISD, since the district recruited from El Paso. She remembered this connection from working at the previous institution. In 2001, there were several bilingual programs at several campuses. She was hired within two days of her initial contact and began working with her completed certification.

Mrs. De la Paz began teaching 4th grade bilingual students and then 3rd bilingual student. She also had the experience of teaching 5th grade during summer school. In her third year of teaching, she received a scholarship for her Master's in bilingual education. The coursework and experiences through the program changed her perspective about

bilingual programs in Texas. This encouraged her to be an administrator to make the change needed for Hispanic students. She realized her Master's degree was not enough for her to become an administrator. She had to go back to school for her principal certification. She had 11 years of teaching experience at Ventura ISD.

Family Influence

Mrs. De la Paz was raised by her mother, since her parents were separated. Her father had two families. Her family lived in Juarez, Mexico, and his other wife and family lived in El Paso. Her mother did not have to work, because her father would provide the monetary support for the family. She grew up in a safe but poor neighborhood. "All the families in my block helped each other. They were mom and dad to the all the children in the neighborhood. It was a very protective shelter, I want to say. I didn't know I was underprivileged," she described. She was unaware of the disadvantages of not having their father around.

Her mom encouraged her at all times and had high expectations for her children. Mrs. De la Paz referred to her mom as someone who encouraged and cared for her. Growing up in Mexico, families were responsible for providing uniforms, lunch, and school supplies. She elaborated about the experience, "I remember my mom would not give me money to buy lunch or whatever. She would give me *bolillo con mantequilla* (bread with butter). That's was our lunch." As a stay at home mother, she was able to cook, clean, and provide assistance with their homework. She explains, ". . . I'm very lucky that she provided that. My dad was not around. He would only show up maybe

twice, three times a week for about an hour.” Her family lived in working houses and were unsure if they would afford rent.

Her father was from Veracruz, Mexico, and dedicated himself to the produce business. He moved to La Pisca, California then to El Paso to start his own business. The jobs were brutal with early hours and extensive labor. Her father could barely write his name, but he was great with numbers. He could do figures instantly in his mind. Although her parents were poor, she did not consider them uneducated. Her father made was enough for basic living expenses. She stated, “They’re smart, so they just didn’t have the opportunity. That’s it. To me, being poor doesn’t mean you’re going to be low class. Because you can have a lot of money and be low class too.” Her father was always working hard and looking for opportunities. She mentioned her father being *machista* (male chauvinist) and have contradictory conversations with her. One moment he would encourage her to go to school and other times he would discourage her. Her father’s brother was the same way. He would discourage his own daughters from furthering their education. However, when she graduated from college, he was proud of her.

Mrs. De la Paz wanted stability in her life, and she knew education would provide it. She emphasized, “I don’t want to struggle. I want to be able to pay my mortgage.” Her mother would tell them about her not able to provide an inheritance for them to inherit education. Mrs. De la Paz realized financial assistance and loans were available in the United States. While attending college, her family assisted her by taking care of her daughter. Transportation was an issue, since she did not have a reliable car at

the time. Her husband also supported her to continue working towards her Master's degree. She described him as an angel.

Mrs. De la Paz was interested in education, since she was in 6th grade. She admired teachers, when she was in Mexico. Her experience at the educational institutes encouraged the interest. As far as schooling, her mother completed elementary, and her father finished up to 2nd grade. Her parents are truly proud of her successes. She encourages other family members to pursue completing a degree. Mrs. De la Paz has three sisters, and had a brother. Her brother had an engineering degree in Mexico, but he worked only for a few years. Then, he moved to the United States and had to start his education over again. He was frustrated about starting over, so he did not pursue engineering the U.S.

In 2013, her brother passed away when he was 48 of cancer. Mrs. De la Paz had a daughter of her own who passed away at the age of 14 in an accident. She stated, "Accidents are tough, but really working in the school has been my priority." She was a single mom and lost her daughter after moving to El Paso. She has nieces and nephews, but of course it is not the same. Her husband, sister-in-law, and nephews from her husband's side live in Ventura. From her side, her mother and sisters live in El Paso.

Mexican-American Female Principal

When recruiting from El Paso, people do not want to leave. They want to stay with family, and people are surprised she left. Mrs. De la Pa mentioned the majority of people in El Paso are bilingual. Ventura ISD offers a monetary incentive of \$4,000 to encourage bilingual applicants, since there is a high necessity for Hispanic speaking

teachers. Although she may miss El Paso, she has a lot more opportunities to grow in Ventura. After her third year of teaching, she began to realize that bilingual programs were not implemented effectively. She knew she wanted to do something else. She realized Hispanic students were being ignored and not receiving the assistance needed. One of the experiences dealt with a student from El Salvador, who spoke no English. She expressed her concern to the administrator at the time. He had told her, “You know what . . . don’t worry about her.” Mrs. De la Paz also noticed the lack of support for bilingual teachers and the way Hispanic parents were treated. Bilingual teachers were not receiving the resources necessary to teach Spanish. She told administration,

So what was going to happen when I get students, newcomers that need more support in Spanish? What am I going to do? As far as I know, Texas Education Agency expects me to have bilingual resources. If I don’t have them, and they come to audit . . . I will send them to you.

Within a week, her campus provided the resources needed for her to teach.

The goal of the bilingual program was constantly changing, and Ventura ISD did not know what to do with bilingual programs or students. Students were unable to show growth or progress academically. Students were unable to find the transfer or connection in language between Spanish to English. The students’ struggle became apparent, when it came time for students to take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Unfortunately, the campus is under improvement required which means the campus did not meet state requirements on Texas state assessments. She did mention that Ventura ISD was slowly aligning the programs. The district was mandating the goals of

the bilingual programs. Before the alignment, campuses were allowed to choose the goal and focus of their bilingual programs.

Hispanic parents were treated unfairly, and they are already hesitant about visiting schools. She elaborated, “I didn’t like the way the office greeted our parents. They were very rude. To me, when the principal had the opportunity to hire someone bilingual, she didn’t.” There was a lack of assistance in the front office, as she reiterated the importance of Hispanic parents being greeted properly. She emphasized that “They are our customers, and they can go anywhere in Ventura ISD. They can go to any other school they want. They call it a chosen school, so they can really . . .”

After teaching for 11 years, Mrs. De la Paz was an assistant principal for four years. At the age of 51, she became the principal of Progressive Elementary in Ventura Independent School District. Her main goal was to support all students and teachers. Through her experiences, she knew changes needed in order to be successful. She wanted to create a positive approach within the community and make a difference. She elaborated,

I think the main thing is I can relate to them, the culture, and the language. *Por ejemplo, en El Salvador hay otras comidas que se llaman pupusas* (For example, in El Salvador, there are other foods such as pupusas.) When you talk to them, you relate to them about that. They learn about other Hispanic cultures.

Her faculty has given her positive feedback and has made positive connections with the campus community. She approaches her staff with a team mentality and takes their input into consideration. She stated, “I think that’s the main thing that I had that

background in bilingual education. Me being Hispanic, and speaking the language.

Also, that I really truly feel the need to help or change things.”

Mentorship, Success, and Barriers

Although Mrs. De la Paz had family support, she did not have a stable mentor in her life. The motivation for her success were her parents. She saw her parents struggle throughout their lives. She continues to provide financial assistance for her mother and assists with medical bills. She realized the roadblocks her family still endures, especially when applying for government assistance. Her mother obtained her residency in 2001. Mrs. De la Paz wanted her to be supported and live in a better area near her. She continues to be the mentor for her sisters, as she continues to be successful in her career. Her sisters seek advice from her about careers and their lives.

One of the obstacles she faced was being immersed in English to complete her degree. She forced herself to accept the challenge to receive her educational degree in the United States. Mrs. De la Paz was able to obtain valuable knowledge through her Master’s program. She received her Master’s degree around 35 years old of age. She then applied for assistant principal positions for three years, until she became an assistant principal. The process was difficult. She explained the reasoning behind her being chosen for the principalship,

The principal left and is now the bilingual director of programs. They wanted to make sure that I continued and understood the needs. Not just because I’m Hispanic, I speak Spanish. Some people think that’s why we get these jobs. It’s not true.

She was at another campus as an assistant principal before becoming principal of Progressive Elementary. The campus had 95% Hispanic students and four sections of bilingual and two dual classrooms. She expounded on the difficulty of becoming an assistant principal. She stated,

It was more like who you knew. They started hiring people that were more connected with HR. I couldn't do that. They have friends. I have a friend who was a principal, and she was hired because of a friend. Things like that. Until finally it happened, I found out that three principals were fighting for me. I thought that was nice. One of the things they liked is how I talk about my parents. If we don't support them, treat them like real people, how do we expect them to come.

The interview process was daunting. She was interviewed by nine people on a committee, which led her to be an assistant principal. The principal that hired her fought for her in terms of the percentage of Hispanic students and how Mrs. De la Paz would be a great fit with the faculty and students. She also demonstrated the knowledge base of bilingual programs to provide consistency at the campus level. According to her, there is a need for more Hispanic principals, especially in Ventura ISD. She was encouraged to assist her community. Ventura has a 50% Hispanic population. Her previous principal motivated her to seek the principalship, while she was teaching. She also noticed the assistant principal was driven. Mrs. De la Paz learned skills of what not to do, when she became an administrator. She noticed some administrators had no people skills or did not provide opportunity for teachers to have input. Although she had the support of her

family, Mrs. De la Paz did not have a consistent mentor in educational leadership. She learned through observations and had administrators offer assistance. Many times they were too busy to take the time for a true mentorship. One of her principals gave her advice on decision making and told her, “Veronica, one of the things I really learned is that you don’t have to make a decision right away. You can always wait. There are very few things you have to come up with the answer right away.” This piece of advice was embedded in her mind and applied in her principalship.

Another obstacle that she endured as an assistant principal was assisting with combining two campuses. One campus was demolished, and she had to assist with the reconfiguration. Mrs. De la Paz considered this experience a learning curve. She was unsure who her teachers or her students were at the time and had to learn about the nuances of running a campus quickly. Luckily, there were two principals and two assistant principals at the campus to ensure faculty and students adjusted to the change. Although this was a difficult experience, she learned about working as a team and now to develop a new campus.

Personal Thoughts

Mrs. De la Paz believes Ventura ISD is growing and embracing diversity. There is a growing diverse population of faculty and administrators. She still believed that the perception of Hispanics being hired was because of the ability to be bilingual. For her, there is a deeper understanding of culture and connection. There needs to be more Hispanics hired in the district and campus offices. With the high population of Hispanics, the need is there. Mrs. De la Paz highlighted the importance of being on a

campus of majority Hispanic student. She would be concerned, if she did not work with any Hispanic students. She has noticed that more Hispanic teachers wanted to become administrators in Ventura ISD, as she has two teachers wanting to pursue administration. She discussed the diversity of Hispanics is also not known. Some of her students' parents are from Columbia or Venezuela and are educated. They are doctors or lawyers, and their children came from private schools in their native country.

Although there are more Hispanic principals in Ventura ISD, she believes there is still a lack of representation in Texas. We discussed the reasoning behind the lack of representation. She stated,

I believe it needs to start from the colleges. I don't think they were really promoting bilingual education. I think they started doing that a few. It needs to start there, because society is going that way. There's a need for them but the colleges were not preparing as many, recruiting more Hispanics. Also, there's really a paradigm shift within school districts, that slowly but surely coming to the conclusion for the need of more Hispanic administrators. How can you relate with the kids, when you have someone who looks so different from the kiddos? No, it's never going to happen.

We also discussed Hispanic females and the culture. Mrs. De la Paz has noticed several do not want to leave their families. They have the responsibilities to be a caregiver to everyone and their families not wanting them to leave. She knows from her own personal experience. She remembered, "My family didn't want me to leave. They were very unhappy." She said her ex-husband wanted her to sell her car, when it became difficult.

She knew there would be sacrifices, but she had more opportunities to find a job near Ventura.

There is a difference between non-Hispanic females in relation to the principalship. Mrs. De la Paz has seen a disconnect in her experience. She elaborated by stating, “Not all of them. There’s some that really want to help and really want to understand the culture and the backgrounds of our students, but there still is a big disconnect.” She continued by discussing the true understanding of students’ home life. There are administrators that assume parents do not want to assist their child with their homework. In reality, there may be a family of five sharing two bedrooms, and the parents have no foundation on how to assist their children with homework. She related to this scenario,

My bedroom for many years was the living room. It was a sofa, where I slept.

My brother slept on the other one in the living room. We only had one bedroom that was for my mom and another bed for my sisters.

She believed there is a lack of true understanding of what students endure on a daily basis. Non-Hispanic administrators assumed children have space and support at home. The assumption also applied to discipline. Mrs. De la Paz believed students misbehave for other underlying reasons, unless there are students with constant discipline issues. “You have to start with that to understand why they’re behaving like that. Maybe they are seeing their parents,” she stated.

She also missed some job opportunities that were given to non-Hispanic females. She was passed over several times and was told she was not the right fit for a particular

campus. She felt that Hispanic administrators are seen as, “Well, you’re Hispanic, but you’re going to be in a school where there’s more Hispanics.” Mrs. De la Paz viewed this as unfair, which she was not given certain opportunities.

We also discussed if she had ever felt discriminated against because of her ethnicity. Mrs. De la Paz assured that not directly but through actions. She provided an example by stating,

I guess they would try to avoid me, not sit next to me. I still see that in some of our meetings with administrators. It’s funny, because when I stand with my former principal, she’s White, and there’s a lot of white principals sitting with her too. I am the only Hispanic one. I get along fine with all of them. I see some of that. We also do it. I saw many tables with all Hispanic administrators. Why are we doing this?

She continued by explaining that the politics had an influence, too. There were cliques between administrators, and she did not want to be associated with it. She further shared that there is a need to break from the separation and be more unified. Although she has never been disrespected about being Hispanic, she is aware of her accent. She joked, “I have an accent. I don’t care. We all have an accent. You go to New York. See what they think about you. We all have an accent.” She even referred to the accents within the various Latin languages.

Mrs. De la Paz considers herself competitive and plans to be a principal for several years. She wants to continue to grow and learn as an administrator to better assist her staff and students. One of the obstacles she still faces today is male teachers not

taking her seriously. She mentioned a teacher that needed to improve and has given her a difficult time. She stated, “He’s Hispanic from Mexico. It’s a macho thing, machismo.” With this teacher, she had to find a way to approach him and be more direct. She has noticed the same with parents, as well. She stated, “It’s very few, not many. What I learned, once you treat them like normal people. I don’t care about the color of your skin. Look, I’m calling you because your child misbehaved, and we need to fix it. I’m trying to help you.” She gives parents the assurance that it is a team effort to assist the child.

Summary and Reflection

Although Mrs. De la Paz has undergone several obstacles and barriers in her life, she continues to be optimistic. She had some words of encouragement for aspiring Hispanic female principals by stating,

Treat people like human beings. There are some principals that I see that portray themselves like ‘I’m the principal.’ You cannot be like that. If you want people to accept you, respect you, and help you, you have to show them your human side. Treat them like real people. Just be nice to them and stay positive.

She continues by encouraging a support system and networking. Although she still struggles with this, she continues to ask questions. Mrs. De la Paz also encourages aspiring leaders to be visible and active at their campuses. She has had teachers become leaders on campus and assist her throughout the school year. The support system is needed in the principalship. She acknowledges that the principalship is not easy, and you are constantly learning.

CHAPTER IX

Narrative Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative non-fiction study was to enable Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to share their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. The participant stories provided a voice of hope to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principals or other administrative roles. This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. An additional purpose of this study focused on the investigation of what influenced these Mexican-American females and their perceptions of their experiences to become principals.

Narrative Analysis

This chapter presented a narrative analysis across the non-fiction stories of Mexican-American female principals that participated in the study, examining themes and patterns in the stories. The findings presented in this chapter were organized as they aligned with the research questions that guided the study. The main themes are as

discussed in this sequence according to frequency: students, parents, family, bilingual and bicultural, Anglo principals, mentorship, and work ethic.

Finally, a summary of the narrative analysis concluded the chapter. Also, this section and for the purpose of this study the terms participants and principals was used interchangeably. The use of Ms. and Mrs. Followed by a surname will be employed throughout the study since in an educational setting; this is formal practice of respect. Procedures for data collection were then delineated. Subsequently, data analysis and corresponding coding were also outlined.

Advocates for Students

All principals were advocates for their students and passionate about their overall well-being and successes. Their campuses were predominately Hispanic and had connections with their students. Mrs. Aguirre, in her interview, stated that, “We’re all here to ensure that all of our students are getting the highest quality education.” When discussing her role as a principal, she mentioned, “I think that’s where I need to be. That’s where I belong. I don’t want to work for parents. I want to work for kids. My parents, I take that relationship with them very seriously because a lot of our parents aren’t educated. They really trust us to do what is best for their kids, and that’s a responsibility I do not take lightly.”

Ms. Maldonado established a culture for her staff to have an awareness of students’ home lives. She has made frequent home visits to instill the importance of knowing your students. She commented about the importance of establishing positive student relationships, “You could be the smartest person and you could be teaching, and

if the kids don't have a relationship or they don't believe in you or that you believe in them, at the end of the day, they're not going to produce.”

Mrs. Santiago discussed the importance of having a leader who can relate to their culture and looks like the students. Mrs. Santiago stated about obtaining more Hispanic principals, “But I can see that there's a real need for it, because that's what our schools are, that's what our schools are full of, is Hispanic students and so, why not have leaders that can relate at that level that's just as qualified as anybody else.”

Mrs. De la Paz was able to provide support for students and parent by making decisions about bilingual programs. As a second language learner herself, she was able to learn benefits and disadvantages made by her district. She struggled with accepting certain decisions, which motivated her to pursue her principalship. Mrs. De la Paz stated, “I think by my third year teaching, that's when I realized that I wanted to be something else. I saw the need really. Mainly bilingual programs not being done right. Students being ignored, being put in a corner.” She felt the district was unsure on how to teach second language learners, and she made it a priority to ensure change.

Parents and Community Relationships

All participants highlighted the positive impact they had on parents and becoming more involved within their school community. Mrs. Aguirre explained that,

I think the fact that I can speak to them in Spanish and that they can come in and say what they need to say and they're not having to trust somebody to translate for them because you really don't know what they're saying. I think that really is

very beneficial to our school community. I see more Hispanic parents being involved.

She also focused on the importance of parents' trust in the school. In the Hispanic culture, parents seek advice and trusts educators with academic decisions for their children. Mrs. Aguirre also mentioned the importance of parent voice. She stated,

I feel like being here and I've seen that develop more in these last couple of years is that yes, I'm here of these kids, I really am but I want to give our parents a voice. They don't know who to go and talk to when they need something. They come in here, I help them fill out forms, and sometimes I don't have time to do it. I am busy, but I always stop.

Mrs. Santiago has the ability as a Mexican-American to have difficult conversations with parents and community members. She stated, "Also, I think it's an awareness that I have that I keep bringing up in the conversation that probably make some people uncomfortable but it doesn't make me uncomfortable . . ." She continued with the discussion that being a minority female also brings an awareness and credibility into her conversations.

Mrs. De la Paz wanted to ensure parents were treated fairly in all aspects. She noticed in her district the office personnel were not bilingual and could not assist parents effectively. She also noticed Hispanic parent were not treated with fairness and at times personnel were rude. She wanted to become a principal to change the treatment of Hispanic parents and explained, "I just saw the need in the district, and I knew it was growing. I felt the need to get on that, because I want to help our community. Ventura

ISD right now is 50% Hispanic, half of our population.” She wants to assist the Hispanic community beginning at the campus level.

One of the benefits Ms. Maldonado discussed was getting parents’ feedback and opinions. She stated,

I think the parents, buy-in from the parents. Especially, I think, Hispanic women, because they come in here and I tell them my story. I tell them, ‘Your kid has all this and they can do better,’ because most of our parents are not educated and they never felt like they could. That’s the only reason. They never felt like it was an opportunity for them. I think that’s helpful.

She expounded that parents are more comfortable, because she shares her experiences and her story.

All principals mentioned building student and parent relationships, as a way to build a positive school culture. They all believed their success with school culture was because of their traits to be bilingual, Hispanic, and in some cases female.

Personal Family Influences

In addition to students and parents, personal family was important to all of the participants. Family was mentioned in 64% of the participants’ responses and was a contribution of support, success, and Hispanic value. Mrs. Santiago discussed her family influencing the importance of education and hard work. We discussed Hispanic females not pursuing educational leadership. She stated, “Maybe they are happy in the classroom. Maybe the value family and cannot separate. Family is important, so they focus on their own family. They may put their own professional life on the back burner.” She

continues describing the hardship of time on a family, “It is a big commitment. It’s a lot of responsibly. I work all the time. I think my husband really helps me and supports me. He helps me separate it and turn off work sometimes.” Family support was constant in the conversations with the participants. Mrs. De la Paz stated, “When I was in El Paso finishing up my bachelor’s, my family helped me. They were taking care of my daughter at nights and weekends, when I had to go to class.”

There was also the pressure of being a role model for your children. Mrs. Aguirre stated,

I think once I became a mom I needed to be an example for my daughters. It doesn’t matter what mistakes we make; you can still be successful. Getting educated is, again, not a choice. You will go to college. You need to be able to take care of yourself. I think as a woman in general, and as a Hispanic woman, I don’t want you to have to rely on a man to take care of you.

Ms. Maldonado attested to the fact of family encouraging education. She stated,

I pursued education because of my grandfather. He was not educated. He came from Cruillas, Tamaulipas. He worked at the ranch. Although he only made it to ninth grade, he was big with his children and then his grandchildren. To him teaching was the job. He would say, ‘You should be a teacher. You should teach others. You should be an example.’ He instilled that a lot within the teaching profession. I guess that's where I’m coming from with that.

Being Bilingual

All the participants were bilingual, which has been a benefit for their campuses.

English is the first language for three of the participants. Mrs. Aguirre mentioned,

I didn't really speak Spanish because my dad, when they went to school, he and my aunts and uncles, they didn't know English and that time you couldn't speak Spanish at school. They would hit them. He swore, 'Okay, my kids are going to speak English.' My grandparents spoke English and my great grandparents only spoke Spanish so I heard a lot of Spanish and I understood it, but it was very limited what I could speak.

Mrs. Santiago understood the language and was hired as a bilingual counselor in her previous district, because she knew a little Spanish. She had to work hard to learn and develop her second language and had the assistance of her family members and husband for her to pass her bilingual certification exam. She stated, "I love it. My Spanish has improved tremendously being married to him because like I said before, I didn't really know a lot of Spanish. I wasn't exposed to that as a kid unfortunately." Ms. Maldonado made the joke about Spanish being the language of discipline and shared, "I spoke mostly English. Spanish was spoken at home. Usually, if somebody was getting after you, it was in Spanish." Mrs. Aguirre also struggled with Spanish and continues to learn. She explains, "My Spanish isn't too fantastic, but I'm a good teacher." Just speaking the Spanish every day, it really helped. Even now, because I never took Spanish, I don't know how to write in Spanish. Academic Spanish, everything that I've learned, I've learned since I've been here."

For one participant, English was her second language. Mrs. De la Paz was born in Mexico, and Spanish was her first language. She received a degree in Mexico, but unfortunately, coursework did not transfer. She made the effort to learn English to continue her schooling. Mrs. De la Paz stated, “I just went into the basics, and everything in English, and that's how I forced myself to . . . I'm going to do it.” She was the only participant that used more Spanish throughout the interview.

Culture and Bicultural

Culture was a constant theme mentioned as an area of importance by all participants. Either they mentioned the influences of their Hispanic culture or understanding cultures in the capacity of leadership. Mrs. Aguirre spoke about her influence of the Hispanic culture at home. She explained about her mother,

She was a role model to me because she still came home and was a mom and took care of my dad. He didn't always make it easy for her because he did make her feel guilty and again you see that growing up and he probably regrets being a jerk sometimes. He grew up in a household where my grandmother laid out the clothes for them. She was a servant for lack of a better term. She served her husband and her kids. Knowing that that is in me, that is my culture, that's what I saw growing up so to me being a good wife and being a good mother is that.

Mrs. Aguirre continued to describe the pressures of being a Hispanic wife, but also she mentioned the expectation were different from her husband's. Her husband was White, and he was willing to assist in any way. She had to get accustomed to the cultural

difference but still had the pressure of being like her mother. She also discussed the importance of understanding other cultures as well at the school setting. She concluded,

Then working here, that was different too, because there were a lot of black people. I had not worked around a lot of black people before, so I had to learn their culture as well. I think just diversity in general is a great thing, and I think being Hispanic benefits our campus in that I want to ensure that we are celebrating everyone's culture. We have Cinco de Mayo presentations here, and we have a big old Black History program here. Everyone's story matters. Everyone's culture is important.

Ms. Maldonado spoke about her culture being an influence for her campus. When she discussed her previous principal, she stated, "I think she thought maybe because of my age, culture and, background that I could bring this staff back together." Ms. Maldonado could relate to the culture of the community and campus.

Mrs. Santiago spoke about the struggle of acceptance in culture. Being biracial has provided her with opportunities to be aware of two cultures throughout her childhood. She stated,

With a Hispanic mother and Anglo father, I had features and appearances of a Hispanic child, but my last name was Nerren, and for a long time I thought that meant I was white. Going to a private Catholic school, race was not even discussed. There were really only white students in my extremely small classes. In a way, I'm glad that I received such a nurturing start in school, but at the same time I'm frustrated that they didn't prepare me for the reality of the real world. I

was never made to feel like I was a part of a different culture, and I guess that also means I was never taught the value of my culture.

In her interview, we discussed the struggle of acceptance and who she really was growing up. She noticed the difference of approaches when her last name became a Hispanic surname after getting married. Her father was of Czech-German descent and her last name sounded Anglo. She also discussed her current last name may hinder her opportunity or encourage being hired in education. She then continued by stated,

I sometimes joke that I'm very versatile. I can be as white as you, or as Mexican as you. Growing up as a bicultural, biracial kid, without knowing I was different than anyone else is a victory that I owe to my parents, grandparents, and elementary school teachers, but in a way it is also a curse that they instilled within me.

Mrs. De la Paz discussed the importance of being able to understand the culture of her students and parents. She also emphasized the variety of cultures of being Hispanic. There are other Hispanics besides Mexicans. She stated, "I think that is a main thing that I can relate to them, the culture, learning another language."

Differences Compared to Anglo principals

All participants discussed the differences of experiences of Anglo principals compared to Hispanics. Ms. Maldonado stated,

I think it's a cultural thing. I think it's easier for non-Hispanic females because, again, because of perception. For some reason, they're viewed as stronger personalities. They're viewed as black and white. A lot of the Hispanic females

are viewed as submissive or maybe passive, whereas Anglo women are viewed as being strong and sticking to their decisions. Hispanic females sometimes aren't viewed like that.

She reiterated about Hispanic women not wanting to be the responsibility of being someone's boss because of fear or assumption that it should be a man. Ms. Maldonado noticed this mentality with her strong Hispanic teachers.

Mrs. Aguirre discussed the difference of an Anglo principal being at her campus, "I think it would be different, if it was a white person. I don't think a white person would do well here. They could, I'm not saying that they wouldn't. I've never really thought about it like that but I don't think that a white person would be a good principal at this school." Her reasoning was that, "They don't understand the importance of that cultural celebration to our families. To both the African American and the Hispanic families and being able to come together and really celebrate each other and appreciate each other."

Ms. De la Paz concurred with Mrs. Aguirre in the connection of cultures compared to Hispanic principals. She stated,

I think there's a big disconnect. It's true that females that are not Hispanic, that's a big disconnect from what I've seen. Not all of them, there's some that really want to help, and really want to understand the culture and the backgrounds of our students, but there's still a big disconnect.

Mrs. Santiago mentioned the career path for Anglos probably a lot easier as she states,

Yeah, it's probably easier, they probably don't get questioned as much they probably are respected more. Probably, like I said, not questioned, like their

ability is not questioned, you know what I mean. I feel I've had to prove myself more than somebody else probably did. I don't know if this is a cultural thing or not, but maybe they're more willing to move to where the job is whereas I'm real tied to my family that maybe some people are not.

Mrs. De la Paz could relate to Mrs. Santiago by explaining her experience of being overlooked by stating,

I was passed off several times. Even though they always tell you they're trying to find the right fit. That doesn't mean I could not work in a school where maybe we have 30% Hispanic and 25% white. I could do that too. I did that. I taught in a school like that when I started working. Many of my students were not Hispanics.

She emphasized that she could be a principal at any campus not just a predominately Hispanic campus.

Seeking Mentorship

All participants mentioned either having a mentor in their career path or the lack of a mentor. Mrs. Aguirre was fortunate to have her principal and superintendent to encourage her into the principalship. She discussed how her superintendent saw something in her,

I think I've been blessed that somebody has always seen something in me, because I don't know if I would've had the confidence to just go after it myself. Even with the master teacher, I think I didn't apply because I was afraid I wasn't going to get it.

Mrs. Santiago continues to be supported by her current superintendent. Mrs.

Santiago mentioned, “That I would say one of the reasons I wanted to move here was the superintendent, because she's just got one of these personalities.” She developed a connection and friendship with her superintendent and has motivated her to continue to learn. She continues about her superintendent, “She is very supportive and I don’t know. She believes in me.” Although she has had support from principals, superintendent, and professors, she has lacked a Hispanic mentor. Mrs. Santiago stated,

I’ve lacked a Hispanic female to look up to, to guide me, to tell me, to show me. I found other people to fill that role, but that would be a dream come true if I had somebody to say, ‘Hey Valeria, this is what you do. This is how you do it.’ Or for example, the PhD thing. Yeah, I want to do that but I need somebody to push me to do it, and to support me through it. It's not that I don’t have that but not in the way that I envision.

Ms. Maldonado expressed some hardships and obstacles through her career path. She stated,

I think finance was one, and I guess maybe lack of a mentor. A lot of times you're thrown in the principalship, and there is no mentor. You have colleagues within your district, but a lot of times your colleagues are like, ‘Eh, I don’t want to help,’ and, ‘She's brand new. What if she does better than me? How will people perceive that?’

Mrs. De la Paz has learned from observations and experiences. She mentioned the district support by saying, “They did offer me support, but they were too busy too.

Many times I would just observe the principals.” Mrs. De la Paz gave credit of mentorship and learning to her educational leadership program to prepare her for the internship. Some principals gave her advice on how to handle situations, but she has not had a true mentor in educational leadership. None of the participants had a Hispanic mentor in education, but all mentioned their family as a form of support.

Strong Work Ethic

All participants contributed their successes to their inner drive and work ethic. These qualities were instilled by family or motivation to improve their district. Mrs. Aguirre stated, “I had a good work ethic so I always did what I was supposed to do . . . I was very driven from the time I was very young. Perfectionist, which sometimes held me back . . .”

When it comes to work ethic and inner drive, Mrs. Santiago can also relate. She speaks about her father and his connection,

I’m happy to look like others in my family. It makes me feel connected. While I do not have my father’s clear blue eyes or light skin, I still feel connected to him and he’s part of my biological makeup. He’s given me many things, including his early graying hair, and a strong work ethic that has been passed down to him.

She continued to describe not only the physical inheritance from her father but her personality and background. She stated, “I think it's like a firstborn self-personality type. I don’t know. My parents did not go to college, neither one of them did. They didn’t tell me I had to, but my own personal drive, I knew I wanted to.”

Along with inner drive and work ethic, some participants faced the fear of failure. Ms. Maldonado stated, “I think it’s fear of failure. Then, it’s just seeing even with family members, maybe, that aren’t where they should be. I think it’s that, and then just being raised as a strong woman. I guess the drive is just for my family and being eldest of 27 cousins.” Mrs. De la Paz grew up poor but with lots of love from her parents. She was unaware of her struggles, since she had a lot of support growing up. She attested that her inner drive provided her with the strength to deal with struggles and obstacles. Mrs. De la Paz stated, “I don’t want to struggle. I want to be able to pay mortgage.” She also finds the drive to be a great principal on seeking improvement and making changes necessary for her students.

Summary

This chapter presented a narrative analysis of the non-fiction stories of four Mexica-American female principals of predominately Hispanic elementary campuses.. Each principal was honest and generous in providing copious narratives about their experiences and perceptions regarding their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. The narratives were systematically categorized into themes that emerged from the data analysis process of coding. From reviewing the data, seven conceptual categories emerged in this presented in this order: students, parents, family, bilingual and bicultural, Anglo principals, mentorship, and work ethic. Chapter X presents a summary of the study, discussion, conclusion, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER X

Summary, Conclusion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

The research revealed relevant information to current concerns in education today regarding Hispanic female administrators. As revealed in the literature review, there is disproportionate number of Hispanic school leaders in comparison to the number of Hispanic students in our schools. There is the need for educational leaders to understand the culture, issues, and language related to our Hispanic student population (Sanchez et al., 2008). The number of Hispanic educational leaders is not representative of our increase number of the nation's Hispanic student population (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). According to Sanchez et al. (2008, 2009), it is vital for school leaders to mirror their student population as role models, to better understand the students' culture, and assist parents with language barriers.

The study provided narratives from four Mexican-American female elementary principals of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. The significance of this study was to further clarify Hispanic female perspective of their experiences of becoming an elementary principal at a predominately

Hispanic campus. The research questions provided the opportunity to fill in gaps in existing literature and make a contribution in the field of educational leaders, women leaders, minority, and specifically Hispanic principals or aspiring leaders. This study contributed to the unique individual stories of Mexican-American female principals. Hopefully, this study provided a better understanding of Mexican-American female principals' perspective and may assist to in motivating other Hispanic females in pursuing an administrative role in education. Chapter X consisted of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, conclusion, and closing remarks.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this narrative non-fiction study was to enable Mexican-American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to share their stories of their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influences of being a Mexican-American female principal. The participant stories provided a voice of hope to encourage other Hispanic females to consider the principals and other administrative roles.

This narrative non-fiction study explored the experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals in Texas. An additional purpose of this study focused on the investigation of what influenced these Mexican-American females and their perceptions of their experiences to become principals. By identifying the internal and external challenges, and experiences, there can be reflection on how to overcome obstacles and advance career responsibilities. Historically, little is known of the

individual lives of Hispanic women who occupy the position of principal. This study provided the opportunity for them to share their voices and their stories to assist others in gaining similar success.

The problem of this study centered on the lack of Hispanic female principals and what factors preclude leading to the principalship. The thoughts and perceptions of Mexican-American female principals serving in elementary public schools in Texas were examined. There continues to be a lack of Hispanic representation in school administrators. The problem with a lack of representation of Mexican-American females holding administrative positions was explored through their experiences related to their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their successes, and their influence of being a Mexican-American principal at predominately Hispanic campuses.

The information from this study of Mexican-American female principals provided information could inspire aspiring Hispanic school leaders to pursue administrative positions. The presentation of stories from Hispanic female administrators can be empowering, educational, beneficial, and therapeutic to others who may seek a principalship but have not had the opportunity to have someone to relate to their own culture or ethnicity. The following five research questions were central to the study and guided the interview process and the data gathered from Mexican-American female principals:

1. What are the Mexican-American females' perceptions on how they became a principal at a predominantly Hispanic campus?

2. What are the Mexican-American females' roles as a principal and factors that contribute to success?
3. What are of the influences on Mexican-American female principals to become school principals?
4. What are the Mexican-American females' perceptions of their career path and how it might differ from that of non-Hispanic females?
5. What are the barriers encountered throughout their career paths from a Mexican-American female perspective?

Analysis of the narratives was used within a theoretical framework of intersectionality in order to analyze the lived stories narrated to the researcher from the participants. The life experiences and career paths provided participants with exposure to other cultures. These opportunities gave participants a broader perspective, which in turn provided them with the advantage of developing connections and relationship with other people. The stories of four Mexican-American female principals that participated were analyzed through an interview process. Themes emerged after several readings and were coded in NVivo 11. The identified themes were: students; parents; family; bilingual and bicultural; Anglo principals; mentorship; and work ethic.

Conclusions

The U.S. Census Bureau (2013) projected that the Hispanic population will increase dramatically through 2060, and so should the number of Hispanic women available and willing to assume educational leadership roles. In seeking to draw conclusions for this study, several points should be noted.

The findings of this study confirmed the lack of research written about Hispanic female principals, especially in current research. Women are underrepresented in administrative research (Shakeshaft, et. al, 2007). In the literature review, intersectionality was introduced as a theoretical framework to address ideological, political or economic issues (Weber, 2010). Intersectionality theory assisted with the understanding of the qualitative study, and narrative non-fiction provided guidance for the interpretations. Through narrative analysis and the framework of intersectionality theory, there was a unique contribution of stories shared from all of the principals.

Intersectionality presupposes that categories of structural inequities (i.e., gender, race, class, ethnicity, etc.) intersect and produce complex relationships and emphasizes the “non-additive effects of multiple forms of oppression” (Choo & Ferree, 2010, p. 132). Although participants revealed some type of oppression such as sex-role stereotyping and gender discrimination (Shakeshaft, et al., 2007) throughout their career path to the principalship, this was not a common obstacle for them. Each participant was aware of their oppression and decided to overcome barriers or even break barriers in their districts. Participants did mention their experiences compared to Anglo female and male principals. The differences of career paths of Anglo female and Hispanic female principals were not addressed in the literature review and could have been of value to the study. Two participants mentioned machismo and the pressures of being a Hispanic female within their household.

Participants discussed women in leadership and how in general it is more difficult than men. The findings from the study supported the oppression from men and from

Anglo principals. Women have standards to meet and must present themselves similar to their male counterparts (Barsh & Yee, 2012). One of the participants discussed how she had to completely change the way she presented herself and her dress for district level meetings. All of the participants were assertive in nature, but also were more apt to build on relationships, unlike their male counterparts (Johns, 2013; Rhode, 2016).

Family responsibilities were mentioned from each of the participants and the cultural pressures to be the perfect woman. Each participant agreed within the Hispanic culture that women typically do not leave their families, especially for their careers. One of the participants discussed facing anxiety as a result of the balance in her life. Female leaders tend to report a higher mental and physiological strains than male leaders (Haines, et al., 2008). Three of the participants experienced divorce or separation from their husbands. As supported by Bain and Cummins (2000), women advancing in their careers suffer in marital strain and may end in divorce. Although it was not confirmed if their career directly impacted their relationship with spouses, three of the participants had experienced divorce. One of the participants was single and has never been married. Her reasoning was that she was focused on career. Women who are single have more freedom to focus on their career (Gonzalez & Ortiz, 2009). Culture and being bilingual developed their character and values as a leader. Each participant had support from their family and were seen as role models by family members and students.

Based on their narrative stories, each participant had strong leadership styles and were not afraid to make decisions for the betterment of their students. Community and relationships with students and parents were discussed throughout their interviews. They

attributed the influence to being a Hispanic principal at predominately Hispanic elementary campuses. Galante (2010) revealed that Mexican American women in leadership roles considered their Hispanic culture a positive influence fostering abilities consistent with transformational leadership.

Three of the participants discussed acculturation in the sense of being bicultural. Participants mentioned the balance of two cultures: American culture and Mexican culture. The findings support the literature review of the importance of cultural connectivity at the campus and district level. Hispanic culture and family has been proven to influence Hispanic women educational and career goals (Méndez-Morse, 2000)

The participants attributed the underrepresentation of Hispanic females in educational leadership to the lack of mentors, cultural influences of being a Hispanic female, and the difference of career paths of Anglo principals. As a result of the lack of Hispanic female principals, it was concluded that these women lacked a Hispanic mentor to relate to culturally. All participants felt the need of having someone that would motivate them and encourage them throughout their career path and their lives. Although each participant revealed other barriers, these were the common influences based on the narratives. The findings confirmed the lack of role models and mentors for Hispanic women and students. Hispanic women have reported to having their mothers as their first mentors (Méndez-Morse, 2004). All participants mentioned their mothers and their close relationships which supported the literature review.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study in the four narratives stories and the narrative analysis of the stories, presented several implications. This study revealed common career paths in which Hispanic female principal followed. All participants were assistant principals or instructional leaders prior to the principalship. Women who are minorities, especially Hispanic women who are certified or seeking the principalship need assistance on addressing the issues of educational leadership barriers and support systems. This could be assisted by districts, universities, principal preparation programs. All participants in this study broke barriers in their districts and/or families of being a positive representation for Hispanic females. This study describes their personal backgrounds and experiences throughout their career path. These participants all had an incredible passion for students and their school communities. The study brings forth the unique and complex barriers and obstacles Latinas may face, including cultural and gender expectations.

School districts must take lead in staffing campuses with campus leaders that are culturally relevant to the student population. There continues to be a need of development and understanding Hispanic cultural norms and values for researchers, districts, and universities, etc. The knowledge of Hispanic cultural norms and values could potentially guide principal preparation programs, teacher academies, districts, and campuses to increase the number of Hispanic females in education.

The reasoning of why Hispanic teachers do not pursue school administration needs to be explored. Hispanic teachers could provide reasoning and the data could assist

principal preparation programs and districts. With this data, universities and districts could eliminate hesitations or concerns eluding into the career path of the principalship.

Current administrators could provide mentorship or mentorship program to encourage Hispanic teachers to pursue educational leadership. Implications for practice included a strong family support for Hispanic females entering the educational field. Mothers were their main mentors in life and career, and their mothers were viewed as a positive role model for Latinas. Their early influences of family and culture influenced their inner drive and motivation to pursue leadership.

Local school boards, in conjunction with their superintendents, should review hiring policies for recruiting, training, and retaining Hispanic principals. Districts need to attract high schoolers into educational careers and intentionally focus on minority students. College and universities could work closely with high schools to find ways to seek more minorities into educational programs.

The study may serve to inspire Hispanic leaders to pursue the principalship. The data may also provide assistance for districts, preparation programs, and educational agencies to prepare and retain underrepresented Hispanic female principals throughout the United States.

Discussion of the Findings

Chapter IX presented a narrative analysis of the non-fiction stories of participants, which illustrated the key perceived experiences of four Mexican-American female elementary principals throughout their educational, family, and career experiences. As the researcher, narrative non-fiction provided, “. . . a way of understanding experience. It

is a collaboration the between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction” (Clandinin & Connely, 2000, p. 20). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) described qualitative data as comprising “. . . of open-ended information that the researcher gathers through interviews with participants. The general, open ended questions asked during these interviews allow the participants to supply answers in their own words” (p. 6). This was accomplished by in-depth semi-structured interviewing, thematic analysis, and is conveyed through essential narratives of the participants interviewed (Creswell, 2013).

A theoretical framework of intersectionality was discussed as a suitable lens to view the career pathway of each participant to the principalship. Intersectionality proposes that all people are positioned within socially created categories of oppression and domination such as race, culture, gender, and class that are located within a historical context. The framework identifies some oppressed identities, the vast majority of people are also simultaneously positioned in dominant spaces, and experience our various and intersecting social statuses simultaneously (Steinbugler, Press, & Dias, 2008).

The main themes that transpired from the narrative analysis are: students, parents, family, bilingual and bicultural, Anglo principals, mentorship, and work ethic. The narratives of the principals conveyed their desire to make a difference in the lives of students at their campuses and ensure that all students reach their highest potential. The participants also identified the ability to communicate in Spanish, which increased parent and community involvement. Due to the demographic make-up of each campus, the participants served as positive images of success for students on their campus. They

were advocate for their students and passionate about their overall well-being and success. All participants felt that their Hispanic background assisted them in becoming the principal of predominantly Hispanic campuses. This was based on the understanding of the Hispanic culture, great work ethic, and being bilingual. Their roles as Hispanic principals are vital in order to connect with community and students. Their successes are based on some mentorship and family influences. All of the principals were advocates for students and wanted to be able to make better decisions. Three of the principals wanted to be change agents, as a result of other administrators or district decisions.

All participants identified with being Mexican-American that encompassed the cultural traits of language and values. The principals felt a strong connection with their family background and were aware of Hispanic values and beliefs. The findings supported the fact that being Hispanic encouraged parental support and involvement at their campus. Parents were less fearful about communicating with the school and would seek assistance in other areas from the participants.

Family was vital to all participants, since they provided support in various ways. Some families would assist by taking care of children, providing moral support, and instilling values for success. Their families influenced their hard work and need to pursue a college degree. Three of the four participants had English as their first language. The participants were all bilingual, which they viewed as a benefit for their campuses. Along with being bilingual, culture influenced the participants' career paths. Their Hispanic culture at home provided them the opportunity to assist their campuses to

communicate and connect with students and parents. Two of the participants revealed the struggles of being bicultural and acceptance in today's society.

Another area the participants found helpful in their career path was having a mentor. Two of the participants had people who guided and supported them but not a consistent mentor. In all interviews, it was learned that there were no Hispanic administrator mentor available. They all agreed it would have been helpful to have a Hispanic female mentor to relate ethnically and culturally to their experiences. Two of the participants had other Hispanic administrators in their district, and the other two did not have a Hispanic administrator present in their district.

Work ethic was a common denominator from all participants. Inner drive and work ethic were another reason for reaching the principalship. The participants admitted to the constant fear of failure and learned ways overcome obstacles in their personal lives.

Another theme that submerged was the discussion of Anglo principals. All participants felt that Anglo principals would not have the cultural connection to students and parents, as much as they do. Their perception was that Anglo female principals have an easier career path to the principalship. Anglo female principals may not be questioned as much as Hispanic female principals.

This study has affirmed some of my assumptions prior to the interviews. All participants mentioned their mother's as a positive influence in their lives or viewed as mentor. Their mothers became a figurehead of the representation of family and expectations as a woman in the Hispanic culture.

One of the reveals from this study was that not all participants were proficient in Spanish. Three of the participants were continuing to develop their second language. One of the participants was proficient in Spanish, since it was her native language.

Recommendations

With the Hispanic population being the majority in Texas (Krogstad & Lopez, 2015), there continues to be a concern of the lack of representation of principals to the student population. The data collection and findings have developed recommendations to encourage the number of Hispanic females in educational leadership. The following recommendations for professional career advancement, practice, and future research must be noted in order to assist aspiring and/or current Hispanic female principals.

Recommendations for professional career advancement.

Hispanic female aspiring principals should consider networking with other female principals, in order to seek guidance about becoming a principal. Current and aspiring leaders must join and be involved with organizations of Hispanic administrators and establishing formal and informal networking systems to develop mentorship or career opportunities. There should not be an assumption that Hispanic female principals can only be principals of predominately Hispanic campuses.

Current Hispanic female administrators should motivate and encourage other women to pursue advanced educational degrees and seek positions of leadership. Along with this recommendation, Hispanic female administrators should sponsor or serve as role models to other women and offer suggestions to obtain a principal position.

Recommendations for practice.

Research is needed on minorities and women as principals. The results of the research may assist principal preparation programs to become more effective for graduate students to realize the need for role models and leaders for children. Stories about Mexican-American females need to be shared in graduate classes, along with other minority females. Discussions need to be made about cultural adaptations and identity challenges Hispanic females may endure.

Districts need to establish a mentor program that allows opportunities for female principals to network on a weekly or monthly basis with other principals or district leader. Principals could receive professional development on the management aspect of the principalship, especially during their first year. Professional development could include school law and how to challenges of the role of the principal.

Also, districts should provide an aspiring leadership program to give those who aspire to become a principal concrete guidance and learning experiences to prepare for the principalship. With current assistant principals and instructional coaches, districts could provide cross training opportunities about responsibilities of a principal and/or shadow successful principals.

Recommendations for future research.

Instead of limiting the study to Texas, future studies could look at the career paths of other Hispanic women besides Mexican-American on a national level. In addition to widening the geographic scope of future studies, it would be of interest to analyze the responses of Hispanic male principals and/or Mexican-American male principals.

There continues to be a disparity between the representation of Hispanic female principals and the number of Hispanic students. Another recommendation would be to examine reasons Hispanic females are not promoted to administrative positions. Another recommendation would be research pertaining to the development of programs to promote mentoring, role modeling, and networking for aspiring Hispanic female principals.

This study was delimited to four Mexican-American female elementary principals of predominately Hispanic campuses. Further research with an increased number of participants from other areas of educational administration would strengthen the findings of this qualitative study. There could be an increased representation of female administrators from schools of all sizes and all geographic locations in Texas.

Future researchers could also pursue investigating the comparison of the benefits of Hispanic administrators at predominately Hispanic campuses versus non-Hispanic administrators of these campuses. This in turn could be compared to the successes of these campuses.

In addition, qualitative research could be implemented on the student perspective and experience with having a Hispanic principal. This could be narrowed to the impact and influences of the educational experience of all students at their prospective campuses. In addition, future researchers may gain deeper insight by comparing and contrasting the lived experiences and perceptions of Hispanic male and female principals' career path. Through the results, we could develop a better understanding on reasoning on lack of Hispanic administrators and ways to encourage them into education.

Finally, future research could also compare and contrast perception of Hispanic female principals' career path compared to those in suburban and urban school districts in Texas, especially of predominately Hispanic versus minority Hispanic student population.

Closing Remarks

This narrative nonfiction qualitative study explored the experiences related to their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their successes, and their influence of being a Mexican-American principal at predominately Hispanic campuses. As the researcher and a Mexican-American female principal, this study affirmed my own personal beliefs on the reasoning behind the lack of Hispanic female administrators.

The geographic location of districts also influences the availability of Hispanic educators. More Hispanic educators and principals are more prominent near border towns. In this case, they do not want to leave their familiar communities. Within our culture, Hispanic women do not leave their household until marriage. There is a constant fear of the unknown and of being successful. There is a lack of not only female administrators but lack of Hispanic female administrators. The visibility and understanding could motivate aspiring principals.

These women were impressive and had a common goal and vision for their students. Their own expectations and drive continued to motivate me as a leader. This study captured an underrepresented group of women in leadership and revealed their attributes as strong leaders. These women were motivated by their own inner drive,

families, and to become change agents of their students. Students were a priority for all of these women and are strong advocates for children.

Being a Mexican-American female principal, this study has continued to motivate me in encouraging other educators to grow in the profession. We must always be life-long learners to improve or master our skills. The growth will not only impact students but pave the way for others.

I was fortunate to meet these strong Latinas and hear their stories. The experience confirmed that we (Latinas) truly do impact students. This makes me even more proud of my own background and culture.

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APPENDIX A

To Possible Participants,

My name is Betsy Janet Mijares, and I am currently a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education and Educational Leadership at Stephan F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. The purpose of this letter is to invite your support and participation in my doctoral research study.

Through the process of non-fiction inquiry, the purpose of this narrative non-fiction study is to examine the narrative stories of Mexican American female principals in predominantly Hispanic elementary campuses to reveal their experiences related to their career paths, barriers experienced throughout their career, factors contributing to their success, and their influence of being a Mexican American principal at predominately Hispanic campuses. This narrative non-fiction study will explore the experiences of four Mexican American female elementary principals in Texas, including myself as the researcher.

The significance of this study is vital for the understanding of the Hispanic female perspective in educational leadership. The research question provides the opportunity to fill in gaps in existing literature. This study contributes to understanding unique individual stories of Mexican American female principals.

If you choose to participate, there will be three 45-60 minute interview sessions in which the interview will be audio recorded for integrity. After the interviews, participants will receive a transcript of the interview to confirm accuracy of the transcription. You will be assured confidentiality in this study, as a pseudonym will be used rather than participants name or school district's name. As a participant, you will be given the opportunity to withdraw your consent prior to the beginning of the research or may discontinue your participation in the research at any time.

I will contact you by phone in a few days to follow up with this invitation and determine your willingness to participate in this valuable study. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed consent form. I will retrieve from you at our first interview session.

Questions or concerns regarding this research may be directed to Betsy Mijares at 936-526-9385 or by email at betsymijares@gmail.com. My committee chair, Dr. Pauline Sampson, Professor and dissertation advisor can be reached at 936-468-1573 or by email at sampsonp@sfasu.edu. Dr. Sampson could also assist you on any questions concerning this research. I look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

Betsy J. Mijares

APPENDIX B

Participant Consent Form

I have read this letter and understand the purpose of the study. I have read the requirements of participation in this study, and I agree to participate in this research. I understand that I will have the opportunity to create a pseudonym for myself and district to remain anonymous in the reporting of the study. The responses will remain confidential. I realize that I may withdraw at any time and that my participation is voluntary.

Any concerns with this research may be addressed to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Stephen F. Austin State University at 936-468-6606.

Signature of Researcher _____ Date _____

Signature of Participant _____ Date _____

Betsy Mijares
105 Sawgrass Circle
Lufkin, TX 75901
936-526-9385

Dr. Pauline Sampson
Stephen F. Austin State University
PO Box 13018
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APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

The following sets of questions were used to guide the three separate interviews for each participant.

Level One Questions:

1. Please share your age, background, birthplace, etc.
2. Why did you choose to pursue the educational field?
3. Can you describe when you became interested in becoming a principal?
4. How did your family influence your career advancement?
5. What types of support or mentorship did you encounter, as you moved into educational leadership?
6. Why do you feel you were chosen to be a principal of a predominantly Hispanic campus?

Level Two Questions:

7. What is your role as a Mexican-American principal? Benefits? Disadvantages, if any?
8. What factors have contributed to your success? Personal?
9. Do you feel that there is a lack of representation of Hispanic principals? What is your assumption?
10. What internal factors did you face throughout your career path? Hardships?
11. How does your career path differ than non-Hispanic females as a Mexican-American principal?
12. What were some barriers that you encountered throughout your career path?
13. How did you overcome those barriers?

Level Three Questions:

13. What are the obstacles that you still face today?
14. What words of encouragement would you have for aspiring Hispanic female principals?
15. How has your background influenced students and parents at your campus?
16. Is there anything you wish to share with me regarding your experiences of your career path in becoming a principal?

VITA

Betsy J. Mijares graduated from Lufkin High School in 2001. She attended Sam Houston State University and received her Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice in 2004. She began teaching 8th Grade Language Arts at Lufkin Independent School District in 2005 and continued her education to pursue her Masters of Educational Leadership. She conferred her Masters of Educational Leadership in 2009. In January 2012, she became an assistant principal at Burley Primary and was appointed as principal in 2014. She was accepted into the 2014 Doctoral Cohort at Stephen F. Austin State University, where she earned a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership in 2017. Currently, she continues to serve as the principal of Burley Primary at Lufkin Independent School District.

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