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Preface

Advancing Women in Leadership On-line Journal was launched in 1997 with the intent of publishing manuscripts that report, synthesize, review, or analyze scholarly inquiry that focuses on women's issues. The intent of this journal is to encourage and support the proliferation of women in positions of leadership in all aspects of professional and corporate America. In the encouragement of advancing women in leadership, we present the following manuscripts. They are:

Women Faculty in Higher Education: Impeded by Academe by Dr. Dana E. Christman

Working Against the Grain: Rewards and Consequences of Developing a Personal Voice in Academia by Dr. Pamela LePage and Dr. Gretchen Givens-Generett

Creating Space for Subjectivity: Wandering Discourses of Female/Teacher by Dr. Donna K. Phillips and Dr. J. Camille Cammack.

Magazines: What Adolescent Girls are Reading and the Way They Shape Body Image by Dr. Rebecca A. Robles-Piña and Heidi Sauer

A Study of the Correlation Between the Motives of Female High Self Monitors and Emergent Leadership: A Literature Review by Charles Salter

Hispanic Female Superintendents in America: A Profile by Dr. Margaret A. Manuel and Dr. John R. Slate

Our intent is that this journal is viewed as a professional publication site for scholarly inquiry and perspectives that promote gender equity and advance women in leadership. It is our hope that you find this issue of Advancing Women in Leadership thought provoking, enjoyable, and that you look forward to subsequent issues. Suggestions for improvement, encouragement, and submission for upcoming issues are welcomed and appreciated. Genevieve Brown, Ed.D. & Beverly J. Irby, Ed.D. Editors

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Full Length Research Paper

Hispanic Female Superintendents in America: A Profile **Margaret A. Manuel & John R. Slate**

Margaret A. Manuel: Special Education Teacher in the Roanoke County Schools, Virginia

John R. Slate: Visiting Clinical Professor, University of Missouri, Kansas City

Hispanic women superintendents represent a dual anomaly in traditional constructs of societal perceptions of school superintendents.

Introduction

Many school districts across the country are searching for competent leaders to head their school systems (Henry, 2000; Johnson, 1996). Tingley (1996), Bowler (2000), and Czaja and Harman (1997) reported a growing concern over the shortage of qualified applicants to lead the nation's school districts. Fenwick (2000) stated that higher turnover rates, lower job appeal and a decreased number of candidates characterize the modern superintendency. As evidence, Fenwick (2000) quoted AASA Director Paul Houston as stating that, typically at any one time, interim superintendents hold 15% of superintendent positions. To compound the shortage problem, Krantz (2000) projected that 80% of superintendents are nearing retirement age. The lack of leaders to lead the nation's school districts may be a crisis confronting the future of public education (Henry, 2000). With concerns of where future leaders of the nation's school system will come from, the question arises: why aren't more women entering the ranks of the superintendency?

With the pool of superintendent applicants shrinking, the lack of female superintendents should be a significant concern (Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 1994; Keller, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1995). Education is a field dominated by women. Seventy percent of teachers are women; however, the superintendency is a position heavily dominated by men. More males than females are currently employed as superintendents (Ikpa, 1995; Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996; Papalewis, 1995). Female representation in the superintendency has fluctuated in the past 60 years, yet the number of female superintendents has not been equitable with the number of males. In 1928, 1.6% of the nation's superintendents were females. That percentage had only increased to 7.1% by 1993 (Montenegro, 1993). Today, females comprise a mere 12% of superintendents nationwide, whereas males constitute 88% of superintendents (Hornbeck, 1999).

The underrepresentation of women in the superintendency has prompted many researchers to investigate the reasons why more women are not superintendents (Bjork, 2000). According to Grogan (1994) and Brunner (1998a), gender is a factor in why women are not represented more in the ranks of the superintendency. Only in the past 20 years have women superintendents been studied (Tallerico, 1999). Grady and Wesson (1994) claimed that a paucity of research exists on women superintendents because most of the research has been focused on male superintendents. More knowledge about how women attain the superintendency is needed (Grogan, 1996). Brunner (2000) stated that the investigation of women superintendents has been a "previously neglected" area of research (p. 76). Issacson (1998) recommended that further research on career pathways of female superintendents was required in future studies.

Investigations into the way female superintendents gain their leadership positions are limited (Hodgkinson & Montenegro, 1999; Vail, 1999). Grogan (1996) stated that the superintendency is "not a particularly well-researched leadership position" (p. 119). Johnson (1996) characterized the research on the superintendency as "scant" (p. 19). In addition, researchers need to address the salient factors that influence superintendent retention and recruitment (Czaja & Harman, 1997).

Chase and Bell (1994) noted that several state departments of education, university departments of education, and some state legislatures have publicly identified the underrepresentation of females in the superintendency as a problem. However, Jackson (1999) asserted that "to date no one has compiled accurate, complete, and dependable information on women superintendents" (p. 143). The effort to acquire information on women superintendents has been minimal (Keller, 1999). Unreliable statistics on women superintendents, coupled with

the small number of women in the superintendency, has deterred many interested researchers from investigating the female experience in the superintendency (Kowalski & Stouder, 1999).

More disturbing than the overall inequity between male and female representation in the superintendency is the sparse numbers of minority women who reach superintendency positions. Hansot and Tyack (1982) reported that minorities, in general, seldom obtained positions as superintendents prior to the 1960s. Bell and Chase (1992) asserted that 96% of superintendents were white. In consideration of Hispanic women, rarely are they appointed to the position of superintendent (Ortiz, 1999). According to Mendez-Morse (1999), information on Hispanic women superintendents is almost nonexistent and this lack of information has created a "serious deficiency" in the knowledge base of educational administration (p. 126).

A little over 10 years ago, Bell and Chase (1992) endeavored to quantify female and minority representation in educational leadership positions across the United States. They reported a total of nine Hispanic women serving as superintendents across the country (Bell & Chase, 1992). A recent publication by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) described a national survey in which issues of career pathways and perceived barriers for women superintendents were examined. There were 2,262 respondents in the AASA study. Of that total, 297 were women superintendents, and only four Hispanic females contributed responses (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000). A need exists to conduct research on larger samples because, as Litwin (1995) suggested, reliability of research is increased through sampling larger numbers of a population.

Theoretical Framework

In their theoretical model of the career choices of college women, Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) postulated that a combination of independent and dependent variables influence the career paths of women. The model specifies factors that facilitate a "goodness-of-fit" between a woman and the woman's career success (p. 146). How the variables interact for women who ascend to the superintendency may be clarified and explained by using this framework.

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) identified four exogenous latent variables and five endogenous latent variables, which influence the plausibility of a woman's career choice. Independent variables presented in the career choice model are the cultural and social environments that influence a woman's career achievement (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Positive cultural and social contexts provide a basis for a woman to develop affirmative attitudes toward career progression. Work experience, academic success, perceived encouragement, and role models are the four independent variables. According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), the variables of work experience, academic success, role models, and perceived encouragement are precursors to and positive attitudinal formation of work, self

and sex-role, and lifestyle choices consistent with achieving high level executive positions like that of the superintendency.

In this study, our purpose was to determine the personal and professional experiences of Hispanic females in their pathway to the superintendency. We were interested in ascertaining what work experiences, academic achievement, and lifestyle choices characterized their ascension to the superintendency. In addition, we were interested in the presence and gender of role models and mentors for these women. Finally, we wanted to determine if the women felt differently in their perceptions of barriers for themselves, versus their perceptions of barriers for women, in general.

Methods and Procedures

Participants

Participants in this study were 23 Hispanic female superintendents of public school districts across the United States. The senior researcher generated a list of possible female superintendents from the 50 website addresses for the 50 state departments of education in the United States. State department of education websites were accessed and the researcher navigated the websites to obtain lists of public school districts and superintendents. Once the list of superintendents was obtained, the researcher reviewed the list to ascertain which superintendents were possibly female. The following criteria were used to identify possible females: 1) the superintendent's name is traditionally considered a female name (e.g., Betty, Margaret, Candace, etc.); 2) an initial was used as a first name without the title Mr.; 3) the name had the title Ms., Mrs., or Miss.; 4) the name is commonly used by either males or females (e.g., Jerry, Tony, Gerry, Marty, Pat, Terry, etc.).

Once the list of superintendents was reviewed based on the stated criteria, the senior researcher composed a comprehensive list of possible female superintendents and entered the names into an Excel database. Other issues related to the possible misidentification of superintendents as female when they are male was addressed in the data gathering process by providing a clear statement that only females should respond to the survey. Also contained in the survey instrument was a question for respondents to designate whether they are male or female and to specify their ethnicity. Women who selected Hispanic as their ethnicity were extracted from the larger group of responses from all women who responded to the survey. Thus, this study is a subsample of the larger set of female superintendents who responded to the survey.

Instrumentation and Procedures

Superintendents who responded to the survey completed a 53-item questionnaire to measure their responses to career pathways and perceived barriers to the superintendency. The questionnaire, designed to procure information on the career experiences and perceived barriers of female superintendents, was divided into seven sections. Section one, items 1 to 7, addressed demographic information. A second section on educational background, items 8 to 12, presented several choices for the respondent to document the educational

experiences that pertain to her. Items 13 to 26, in the third section asked respondents to indicate their career paths to the superintendency. Items 27 to 31, comprised the fourth section and contained questions about mentors and role-models. Lifestyle choices were covered in the fifth section of the questionnaire. Respondents delineated their marital status, history, and parental status. The sixth section consisted of five questions regarding school board/superintendent relations. A final section, items 42 to 53, contained two four-point Likert scales, with responses from "important" to "don't know", to ascertain the level to which women believed the barriers precluded a woman's ascension to the superintendency, in general, and the level to which they believed the barriers hindered their own ascension to the superintendency.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, including frequency distributions and percentages. Frequencies and percentages of Hispanic female superintendents responses to the survey items were calculated according to personal demographic information, district information, educational experiences, career pathways, and perceptions of barriers. Readers are referred to Tables 1 to 13 for the women's responses in frequencies and percentages to the survey items.

Demographics

Personal information on Hispanic female superintendents included the following: geographical location, age, marital status, number of marriages, number of children, number of children under 18 living at home, number of siblings, and birth order. Of the Hispanic female superintendent respondents, 73.9% were between the ages of 46 and 55, with 8.6% reporting they were less than 46 years of age. Only one woman documented being over 60 years of age. In regard to information on the birth families of Hispanic women superintendents, the number of siblings women superintendents reported ranged from 0 to 5. Seventy-three point nine percent of women reported having one to three siblings, with 4.3% reporting no siblings. Birth order of women responding to the survey, indicated that 43.5% were the firstborn child in their family. Almost 92 percent (91.3%) of women superintendents reported that they are first, second, or third-born children. Only 8.6% of the respondents were fourth or fifth-born in their family.

A majority of Hispanic female superintendents reported being married (78.3%), with no respondents reporting being single at the time of completing the survey. Being married one time characterized the marital history of 69.6% of the women. No respondents designated that they had been in more than two marriages. The number of children reported by Hispanic women superintendents ranged from zero to five. More than half (56.5%) of the women have two children, and 17.4% have one child. 17.3% reported having three or more children. In-so-far as women reported on how many school-aged children lived with them, 73.9% claimed that no child of school age lived with them.

District Information.

The size of the school districts that women superintendent respondents serve is depicted in Table 2. Serving in districts with enrollments of less than 3,000 students were 59.1% of our Hispanic women superintendent sample, with 26.0% being superintendents in districts with student enrollments of 10,000 - 99,999. Frequencies and percentages of students who receive free lunch in the districts of women superintendent respondents are depicted in Table 3. No Hispanic women superintendent respondents work in school districts where the percentage of students on free lunch was 20% or less. Exactly, 25.0% serve as superintendents in districts where more than half of the students receive a free lunch. The majority of women (70.0%) serve in districts where at least 61 percent of students receive free lunch.

Educational Experiences

The undergraduate majors of women superintendent respondents are provided in Table 4. Over one-third (35.3%) of the respondents reported that they majored in education for their baccalaureate degree. The next most common major was social sciences at 17.6%. The master's degree majors of women superintendents are reported in Table 5. It should be noted that this item required respondents to write in their master's degree major. Combining all education-related majors yields a percentage of 76.2%. The most common specific major was educational leadership/administration at 23.8%.

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents by level of education, and for those women who held a doctoral degree by doctoral major. Holding a doctoral degree was 60.9% of our sample, with 4.3% holding an education specialist degree. Reporting that they held a doctoral degree in educational leadership/administration/policy was 64.3% of our women superintendents who held a doctoral degree. Only one respondent indicated that her doctoral major was educational psychology/counseling. Regarding the distribution of women superintendent respondents by attendance at women's colleges and type of undergraduate institution, only 8.7% of the respondents indicated that they had attended a women's college, with 82.6% saying they attended a public undergraduate institution.

Career Pathways

The means and standard deviations for years of experience as a teacher, administrator, central office staff member and superintendent can be found in Table 7. It is interesting to note that the average number of years women superintendents served as a teacher and an administrator are almost identical, 10.95 years and 11.13 years, respectively. These data indicate that the "average" female superintendent spends a significant amount of time as a teacher and an administrator before attaining the superintendency. Women superintendents have served their school districts between four and five years (4.30 years).

Table 8 shows the career pathways of Hispanic women superintendent respondents. The most common career pathway reported by the respondents was teacher, elementary principal,

central office (34.8%). The second most common career pathways were teacher, central office (13.0%) and teacher, high school principal, central office (13.0%). More than 6 in 10 respondents (60.8%) indicated that they had served as a school principal at some level before assuming the superintendency. It is interesting to note that 17.4% of women superintendents reported a career pathway that was not included as an option in question 20 of the survey instrument. However, the percentages of those females who have served as elementary, middle, and high school principals are strikingly different. Approximately 70% (69.5%) of the respondents had central office experience prior to becoming a superintendent.

Women superintendents were asked to describe their career in relation to family. More than 5 out of 10 respondents (56.5%) indicated that they never took time off from pursuing their career because of family concerns. Almost 18% (17.4%) describe their career path in relation to family as "double track" - some time off with children. Only 8.6% of Hispanic women superintendents indicated that their career was interrupted for five or more years because of their children or for reasons other than family. Table 9 depicts the career pathway of Hispanic women superintendents in relation to family.

The mentorship of women superintendents is presented in Table 10. Over three-fourths (78.3%) of the respondents reported that they had a mentor. Of the women superintendents who had a mentor, more than 6 out of 10 (65.2%) were mentored by men. Reporting they had a role model was 82.3% of the women superintendent respondents, with 42.9% of these role models being men and 38.1% being women. Table 11 depicts the frequencies and percentages of Hispanic women superintendents who reported a role model and the gender of the role model.

When asked who encouraged the respondents most to obtain the superintendency, Hispanic female superintendent respondents reported encouragement from self (34.8%) and colleague(s) (30.4%) as being the most frequent, primary sources of encouragement in their careers (Table 12). Slightly less than 22% (21.7%) reported that they received the most encouragement from their spouse. Only one respondent indicated that a professor(s) was a primary source of encouragement.

Perceived Barriers

Section VII of the survey instrument listed 12 possible barriers to attainment of the superintendency. Women superintendents were asked to select the degree of importance each barrier was to women in general, and how applicable the barriers were to them in particular. Table 13 shows women superintendents' perceptions of barriers for women in general. All perceived barriers, except one, were rated by a plurality of respondents as "somewhat important," or "important." Only one perceived barrier, the perception that women have difficulty working with others, was perceived as "not important" by a plurality of respondents (56.5%), and only one barrier, lack of mobility of family members, received a plurality of support by more than

half (65.2%) of the respondents. Respondents had definite views regarding barriers to the superintendency. The percentage of respondents who responded, "don't know," ranged from 0.0% to 8.7%.

The data in Table 14 indicates respondents' perceptions of barriers from their own experience. Only 1 of the 12 perceived barriers, that school boards do not actively recruit women, was rated equally as "important" or "not important" by 40.9% of Hispanic women superintendent respondents. Only one perceived barrier, a lack of mobility of family members, was rated as "important" by more than 40% (40.9%) of the respondents. It appears that the respondents had definite views regarding barriers to the superintendency based on their own experience. The percentage of respondents who responded "don't know" was 0.0% for 9 of the 12 barriers and 4.5% for 3 of the 12 barriers.

Discussion

As Bell and Chase (1992) aptly stated, "any understanding of race and gender in the educational system in the United States needs to be based on information about where... women of various racial and ethnic backgrounds are located in that system." (p. 142). From a larger national sampling of 1010 women superintendents, we identified 23 Hispanic women superintendents and where they were located in the 2000-2001 school year. Furthermore, we gathered data on the personal demographic, school district information, education experiences, career pathways, and perceptual barriers these women reported. Because Ortiz (1999) estimated that only 25 to 30 Hispanic women held the position of superintendency nationwide, a response of 23 was accepted as an inclusive representation of a plurality of Hispanic Women superintendents in the 2000-2001 school year.

Of our sample, 47.8% reported serving in the southwest or far west region of the United States. This finding supports the research of Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2000) who found greater minority representation in these geographical areas versus other areas of the United States. In addition, our finding is consistent with Ortiz's (1999) contention that Hispanic women superintendents are appointed mostly in western states. The concentration of Hispanic women superintendents in the western states also suggests that Hispanic women are more likely to be selected for superintendent positions in areas dominated by large populations of Hispanic students, in comparison to areas where there is a low concentration of Hispanic students. Trueba (1998) stated that Hispanic students are well represented in the southwestern states of California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico.

In profiling the personal demographics of Hispanic women superintendents, we concluded that a plurality were married (78.3%), between the ages of 51 and 55 (43.5%), have entered into at least one marriage (100.0%), have two children (56.5%), and, the children were more likely to be over 18 years of age, not living in the female superintendent's home (73.9%). While we endeavored to create a personal demographic profile of a

Hispanic women superintendent, Hispanic women superintendents in our study resonated the findings of previous studies in which women superintendents, in general had been profiled according to personal demographic information. For example, Glass et al. (2000) discovered that 23.1% in their national study of women superintendents were not married and Grogan (1996) claimed that very few women administrators have never married. A majority of Hispanic women superintendents in this study (91.3%) reported having children. This finding is consistent with Obermeyer's (1996) and Wright's (1995) assertions that most women superintendents are mothers.

In the present study, Hispanic women superintendents tended to be first-born children (43.5%). A paucity of research exists on the birth order of women superintendents. Winkler (1994) and Schuster (1987) detected more first-born children among female superintendents than later-born children. Manuel (2001) concluded from her study of 1010 women superintendents nationwide, that close to 50% (49.5%) of women superintendents were first-born children.

Our findings related to the school district information of Hispanic women superintendents in the present study were consistent, yet inconsistent, with the existing literature on the size of school districts women, in general, have been reported to lead. Many researchers have purported that women serve in smaller districts (Anderson, 1998; Angulo, 1995; Jackson, 1999; Wright, 1995). Glass et al. (2000) stated that the average school district size across the nation to be 3,000 students. In the present study, the highest concentration of Hispanic women superintendents (21.7%) reported leading districts with less than 300 students; therefore, supporting the contention that women serve in smaller districts. Conversely, the data of the present study showed that close to 45% (43.7%) of Hispanic women superintendents served in districts with 3,000 or more students.

Findings in the present study were that half (50%) of Hispanic women superintendents serve in disadvantaged school districts where 71% or more students receive free lunch. This finding is consistent with Chase and Bell's (1994) assertion that minority women are often leaders of disadvantaged school districts. However, Manuel (2001) reported from her study of 946 women across the United States that a mere 11% of women led districts with 71 percent or more students qualifying for free lunch, thus suggesting that among all women superintendents, minority women are more likely than white women to be appointed to school districts with high percentages of disadvantaged students.

In the present study, a plurality of Hispanic women superintendents reported majoring in some field of education at the Master's level (76.2%) and obtaining a doctoral degree (60.9%). These findings were consistent with Glass et al.'s (2000) national study of superintendents whereby minority and female superintendents were more likely to have achieved a doctoral level of education in comparison to white male

superintendents. In Ortiz's (1999) qualitative study of 12 Hispanic women superintendents, 9 of the 12 women she studied possessed doctoral degrees.

Particular significance was noted in the high percentage of women (64.3%) who majored in educational leadership, administration, or policy at the doctoral level. Ortiz (1999) suggested that women tend to major in areas affiliated with curriculum and instruction, which does not prepare women for superintendent responsibilities in the areas of finance and personnel. Though no respondents in our study reported majoring in curriculum and instruction at the doctoral level, we speculate that our finding may substantiate Ortiz's (1999) contention in so far as Hispanic women who actually obtain the superintendency are granted access to the position because they did not major in curriculum and instruction, but majored in leadership, administration, or policy. Overall, our findings suggest that Hispanic women who achieve the rank of superintendent majored in education at the undergraduate level, obtained a master's degree in some area of education, and acquired a doctoral degree with a concentration in education leadership, administration, or policy.

The predominant career trajectory reported by over half of Hispanic women superintendents (56.5%) was a teacher, principal (elementary, middle, or secondary), central office, superintendent pathway, with 34.8% of respondents designating that they served in the position of elementary principal. This finding negates findings by Logan (1999) and Tallero (2000a) who reported that women who have served in elementary principalships seldom move up to the ranks of the superintendency, and Alston's (1999) claim that the classic pattern for women is teacher-central office. Only 13.0% of the women in this study reported a teacher-central office career pathway to the superintendency. Findings in the present study are consistent with Baumann (1999) who reported on the career pathways of women superintendents, respectively, that women superintendents more often serve as elementary principals sometime during their careers.

In their study of 297 women superintendents across the nation, Glass et al. (2000) reported that 45.9% of women superintendents followed a teacher, principal, central office career pathway; 20.6% followed a teacher, principal pathway; and 17.2% followed a teacher, central office pathway. We found similar career patterns among Hispanic women superintendents.

Analysis of career pathways in relation to family revealed that 56.5% reported that their career path was uninterrupted by concerns related to their family. Many researchers have commented on the importance of mentors and role models for women who aspire to reach the superintendency (Flak, 1998; Funk, 1986; Renner, 1991; Wenner, 1998). In our study, a plurality of women reported having mentors and role models, 78.3% and 82.6%, respectively. We speculate at least two reasons for this finding. First, Hispanic women who were successful at attaining the superintendency actively seek

mentors to assist them in their career progressions. Secondly, Hispanic women who experience sponsorship or exposure to role models are more likely to achieve the superintendency than those women who do not experience sponsorship or exposure to role models.

Woodworth (1990), Renner (1991), and Bourdreau (1994) noted that sources of encouragement are an important influence in the careers of women leaders. The present study was aimed at ascertaining which sources of encouragement were more important among Hispanic women superintendents. Respondents to this study reported that their primary sources of encouragement were themselves (34.8%) and colleagues (30.4%). The finding that women cited themselves as their primary source of encouragement was not surprising. Many researchers have noted a high sense of self-efficacy among successful Hispanic women leaders (Gandara, 1994; Mendez-Morse, 1999). Comparatively, the assertion that colleagues are an important source of encouragement for female superintendents has been substantiated by Bourdreau (1994), Kowalski and Stouder (1999), Ortiz (1999), and Winkler (1994). Whereas spousal support has been emphasized by Issacson (1998) and Hensley (1996) in their research on women superintendents, findings in the present study indicate that spousal support was only mentioned by close to 22% (21.7%) of women as a primary source of encouragement and parental or sibling support was not indicated by any of the women as a primary source of encouragement in attaining the superintendency. These findings appear to dispute the assertions of Renner (1991), Dörner (1982), Jackson (1999), Mendez-Morse (1999), and Lundin (1993) who stated that family encouragement was a predominant source of inspiration for women superintendents.

The respondents in this study reported a low percentage of professorial support (4.3%) for Hispanic women superintendents, which is not surprising. Logan (1999) found that professors view female students as having more barriers than male students in achieving the superintendency. An earlier study by DeLong (1986) suggested that professors perceived females as having less potential than males in educational administration programs.

The presence of barriers for women who want to be superintendents has been a component of several studies of female superintendents and women aspiring to the superintendency. A number of researchers (Chase & Bell, 1994; Kowalski & Stouder, 1999; Zumsteg, 1991) have reported findings consistent with this study, that barriers women face are factors in the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency.

In our study, respondents indicated that for women in general, all 12 barriers were "somewhat important," or "important," with the exception of the perception that women have difficulty working with others. Conversely, a plurality of Hispanic women superintendents reported that, in their own experience, 6 out of the 12 barriers were not important factors for them in

acquiring a superintendency. The remaining six barriers that women classified as "important" or "somewhat important" for women in general as well as in their own experience is a notable finding as previous researchers have purported a tendency for women superintendents to perceive the degree of barriers for women, in general, as stronger than the barriers for themselves. Recent studies by Stouder (1998), Dobbertein (1996), and Woodworth (1996) concluded that a preponderance of women superintendents evaluated barriers for themselves as less important than barriers for other women. Manuel's (2001) aggregated data in a national study of 946 women superintendents indicated that women rated all 12 barriers for women, in general, as "important" or "somewhat important," yet the women rated barriers in their own experience as "not important." The opinions Hispanic women superintendents diverged from this point. That is to say that Hispanic women did not indicate that for women, in general, all 12 barriers were "important" or "somewhat important," and all 12 barriers in their personal experience were "not important." Based on their own experience, 50% or more of Hispanic women superintendents claimed that they perceived six of the obstacles as influential. These six barriers were: school boards not actively recruiting women, lack of professional networks, perception of school board members that women are unqualified to handle finances, perception that women will allow their emotions to influence administrative decision, perception that women are not strong leaders, and lack of mentor/mentoring in school districts.

Several explanations may be postulated why 50% or more Hispanic women would rate these barriers as "important" or "somewhat important" versus "not important." Four of these obstacles on the survey requested that the respondents rate social perceptions of women in leadership positions. Why Hispanic women would classify these perceptions as formidable obstacles in their experience may be explained by the women's challenges to be recognized as leaders in educational systems where the overwhelming majority of leaders are white males. Hispanic women superintendents represent a dual anomaly in traditional constructs of societal perceptions of school superintendents. In our culture, the position of public school superintendents is synonymous with being male and White (Shakeshaft, 1995; Tallero, 2000b); therefore, Hispanic women superintendents defy traditional ethnic and gender perceptions (Mendez-Morse, 1999; Ortiz, 1982). This may offer a reason why 50% or more (50.0% - 59.1%) of Hispanic women have classified that they perceive school boards not actively recruiting women, the perception of school board members that women are unqualified to handle finances, the perception that women are not strong leaders, or the perception that will allow their emotions to influence administrative decision as being "important" or "somewhat important" obstacles which they experienced in their quest for the superintendency.

Particular significance was noted in the large percentage of women who responded that a lack of professional networks

(63.7%) and a lack of mentor/mentoring in school districts (59.1%) were "important" or "somewhat important" barriers in their career paths toward the superintendency. Professional networks and mentoring relationships involve interaction among or between the Hispanic woman and the people she affiliates with professionally. By citing the significance of these barriers, Hispanic women seem to suggest that they do not receive encouragement from people within educational systems. This finding appeared inconsistent with two other aspects of the survey in which a plurality of women (78.3%) responded that they had mentors, and that colleagues were a primary source of encouragement for at least one-third (30.4%) of the women. We can speculate at least three reasons for our findings. Though Hispanic women found mentors, the mentors were not readily available to the women. Another plausible explanation may be that the Hispanic women in our survey were not satisfied with their mentoring relationships, although they did have mentors. Finally, the colleagues that served as a primary source of encouragement for 30.4% of Hispanic women were not personal contacts within the domain of the women's professional networks.

Readers are urged to be cautious in the extent to which they make generalizations from these findings. Our study is limited by its sample in that our sample comprised Hispanic women superintendents who chose to respond to a survey on their career pathways and perception of barriers. Second, the extent to which our Hispanic women superintendents are representative of other Hispanic women superintendents is unclear. Third, the sample size itself is small. Readers should note, however, that the actual number of Hispanic women superintendents is not believed to be substantially larger than our sample of respondents. Moreover, we used a quantitative survey as our measurement of attitudes toward career pathways and perceived barriers. The use of a different measurement instrument, perhaps one in which open-ended questions were present, might yield different findings. Until these findings are replicated and extended to other settings, readers should be tentative in whatever generalizations they make from these findings. In addition, readers should not generalize these findings either to majority or to other minority women superintendents. Readers should instead note that these findings are based solely on our sample of Hispanic women superintendents.

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