

PATHWAYS TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY: CASE STUDIES
OF HISPANIC SUPERINTENDENTS IN TEXAS

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PREVIEW

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the people who traveled on this journey with me: my son, Edward; my mother and father; my brother and sister, and friends and family who supported me throughout this process.

To my son, Edward, thank you for being the inspiration in my life. Your unwavering support and encouragement has been pivotal to my success. Our endless conversations about life, love, and leadership have inevitably left a mark on my humble life. Wise beyond your years, may God continue to bless you and bring you years of happiness, good health, and a prosperous life. The future is yours for the taking!

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From the bottom of my heart, I thank you all!

PREVIEW

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were (a) to learn about the pathways to the superintendency for Hispanic superintendents in Texas and (b) to examine cultural issues encountered along the way. Collected data were compared to Schein's theory of organizational career mobility. A triangulation approach consisting of in-depth interviewing, survey completion, and observational data solicited information pertaining to their career development tracks, personal and career preparation, and incentives or disincentives to pursuing the superintendency. Participants were purposively selected from approximately 120 to 130 current Hispanic superintendents in Texas. The selected superintendents lead large districts (student enrollment exceeding 25,000) throughout various Texas geographical regions. Specifically, 11 current Hispanic superintendents met the research criteria to participate in the study. It was found that, rather than looking at pathways to the superintendency as the acquisition of titles (principal, director, area/associate superintendent), what determines career advancement or leads to the pathway to the superintendency for Hispanic individuals is their (a) self-perception, (b) attitudes, and (c) behaviors as they traverse specific work experiences related to school leadership. The "glass ceiling" for Hispanic leaders who wish to advance to the superintendency involves changing perceptions about Hispanic leaders and serving as the impetus for future educational leaders so they too are considered viable candidates.

Key Words: Hispanic superintendents, case study, career mobility, career advancement, cultural issues

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Superintendent studies conducted in the past 100 years show a remarkable stability in the demographic profiles of persons occupying this position. One of the first superintendent studies, conducted in 1899, described superintendents to be predominately middle-aged, White, native-born, Protestant, married males (Tyack, 1976). Little has changed in the demographic profiles for race and ethnicity of current superintendents in the United States, with slow growth in particular for Hispanic superintendents (Kowalski & American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2011). (References made to Hispanics in this study include Latino ethnicities, as well.) With a rapidly growing nationwide population, it is essential to investigate factors that have enabled some Hispanic educational leaders to reach the level of superintendent and in particular, what pathways they took to advance to this position.

The focus of this qualitative case study was to collect data from current Hispanic superintendents in the state of Texas and apply Schein's theory of organizational career mobility (OCM) to the findings. (The terms *career mobility*, *career tracks*, *pathways*, and *advancement* are used interchangeably in this dissertation). A triangulation approach of in-depth interviews, survey, and observation solicited information pertaining to their career development tracks, personal and career preparation, and incentives and disincentives to pursuing the superintendency. Participants were purposively selected from approximately 120 to 130 current Hispanic superintendents in Texas (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2014a). The superintendents led large districts (student enrollment exceeding 25,000) throughout various Texas geographical regions. Specifically, 11 current Hispanic superintendents from five of the seven state geographical regions met the research criteria and were thus eligible to participate in

the study. As seen in Table 1, 2011 Hispanic geographical and demographic data identified Texas as one of the top 10 states by Hispanic population, second only to California (Brown & Lopez, 2013). The researcher's residence in Texas was the primary reason for studying this question in Texas.

Table 1

Top 10 States by Hispanic Population, 2011

State	Population (in millions)	Percentage of total population
California	14.4	37.7
Texas	9.8	25.7
Florida	4.4	19.1
New York	3.5	19.5
Illinois	2.1	12.9
Arizona	1.9	6.5
New Jersey	1.6	8.8
Colorado	1.1	5.1
New Mexico	1.0	2.1
Georgia	0.9	9.8

Source: *Mapping the Latino Population, by State, County and City*, by A. Brown & M. H. Lopez, 2013, retrieved from http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/08/latino_populations_in_the_states_counties_and_cities_FINAL.pdf

This study was designed to answer questions such as (a) What was the pathway to the superintendency for current Hispanic superintendents in Texas? (b) What career tracks did

Hispanic superintendents pursue? (c) What is the extent of their personal and career preparation? (d) What incentives or disincentives exist for current Hispanic superintendents as they pursued their career? And (e) How does the career advancement toward the superintendency for Hispanic leaders in Texas compare to the theoretical framework of Schein's theory of OCM?

In the American School Superintendent 2010 Decennial Study (Kowalski & AASA, 2011), minority superintendents (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Other) accounted for a 6.0% of superintendents in the United States, of whom 2.0% specifically identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. (The definition of Hispanic or Latino origin used in the 2010 U.S. census refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race; Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2012).

In Texas, Hispanic superintendents account for 10.8% of current district leaders (TEA, 2014a), despite Hispanic students making up 51.8% of the student population (TEA, 2014c). Finding educational leaders representative of the current diverse student populations is of significance to understand population needs, support cultural identities, and advocate for these student groups (Kalbus, 2000; Meier, O'Toole, & Nicholson-Crotty, 2004). Research that examines the impact of Hispanic or Latino superintendents makes a positive and significant impact of the effects of Hispanic superintendents on Hispanic students by influencing policy for these students and improving educational experiences, such as increasing the number of Hispanic students taking college board examinations and advanced placement classes.

Latinos at all levels of the governance system, political and managerial, influence representation at all levels. Findings also indicate that Latinos at each level of governance

have positive effects, directly and indirectly, on outcomes for Latino students. (Meier et al., 2004, p. 1)

Various studies have looked at the role of school superintendents from different viewpoints (Azinger, 2003; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Howley, Pendarvis, & Biggs, 2002; Kalbus, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; McGee, 2010; Tallerico, 2003). Researchers have delved into areas indicative and expected of superintendents, such as the superintendent as a teacher-scholar, business manager, statesman, social scientist, and communicator (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski & AASA, 2011). Although the research on various aspects of the superintendency is extensive, little attention has been given to qualitative studies of Hispanic superintendents, in particular the experiences of current Hispanic superintendents in Texas as they advanced through their career. In light of research showing that the total years of experience as a superintendent ranges from 2 to 8 years (Kowalski & AASA, 2011), it is critical for local school boards, preparation programs, and school districts to identify key factors and experiences that have led to career advancement for Hispanic leaders in order to fill vacancies to achieve leadership representation similar to the growing number of Hispanic students.

Problem Statement

A universal problem at national, state, and local levels is the reported shortage of superintendents applying for positions and a limited applicant pool in the profession (Azinger, 2003; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Howley et al., 2002). With these shortages across the board, having superintendent representation that is reflective of today's diverse student populations is a major concern. Table 2 shows that, between 2010 and 2021, enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States is projected to decrease 2% for students who are White,

Table 2

Projection of Changes in Enrollment in Public and Secondary Schools, 2010–2021

Race/ethnicity	Percentage enrollment change
White	-2%
Black	+5%
Hispanic	+24%
Asian/Pacific Islander	+26%
American Indian/Alaska Native	+16%
Two or more races	+34%

Source: *Projections of Education Statistics to 2021* (NCES 2013-008), by W. J. Hussar & T. M. Bailey, 2013, Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

increase 5% for students who are Black, increase 24% for students who are Hispanic, increase 26% for students who are Asian/Pacific Islander, increase 16% for students who are American Indian/Alaska Native, and increase 34% for students who are of two or more races (Hussar & Bailey, 2013).

In Texas, as in the United States, the student population in elementary and secondary public schools is diverse. Table 3 shows the student demographics in Texas indicating that Hispanic/Latino students make up the majority (51.8%) of the student enrollment in Texas (TEA, 2014c).

Although Hispanic students currently constitute the largest percentage of the state student population in elementary and secondary schools, data suggest they are not enrolling in higher education programs at the same rate as students of other ethnicities. In 2010, 31.9% of Hispanic

Table 3

Texas Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2013-2014

Race/ethnicity	<i>n</i>	%
American Indian or Alaska Native	20,225	0.4
Asian	189,906	3.7
Black or African American	652,719	12.7
Hispanic or Latino	2,668,315	51.8
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	6,801	0.1
White (not Hispanic or Latino)	1,517,293	29.5
Multiracial	96,666	1.9
Total	5,151,925	100.0

Source: *Enrollment in Texas Public Schools 2013-14* (Document GE15 601 03) by Texas Education Agency, 2014c, Austin TX: Author.

students enrolled in Texas public community colleges and universities, compared to 46.2% White, 15.7% Black, and 6.2% Asian and Other populations (Murdock, Cline, Zey, Jeanty, & Perez, 2014). Table 4 shows the disparities in higher education enrollment.

The percentage of students actually completing high school and college is noted in Table 5, with data indicating that, among Hispanics, 59.6% graduate high school and 11.6% graduate college, making the demographic group with the lowest rates of completion (Murdock et al., 2014).

Educational attainment for Texans ages 25 and older in 2010 is improving from past years; however, the attainment rate for Hispanics decreases as each educational level advances

Table 4

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, Texas Public Community Colleges and Universities

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian and other	Total
2010	46.2	15.7	31.9	6.2	1,276,3278

Source: *Changing Texas: Implications of Addressing or Ignoring the Texas Challenge* (p. 109), by S. H. Murdock, M. E. Cline, M. Zey, P. W. Jeanty, & D. Perez, 2014, College Station: Texas A & M University Press, copyright 2014 by Steve H. Murdock, adapted with permission.

Table 5

Percentage of Population Ages 25 Years and Older in Texas Who Are High School Graduates and Higher or College Graduates, by Race/Ethnicity, 2010

Educational Attainment	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian and other	Total
High school and higher	92.0	86.4	59.6	87.1	80.7
College and higher	34.1	19.7	11.6	46.0	25.9

Source: *Changing Texas: Implications of Addressing or Ignoring the Texas Challenge* (p. 110), by S. H. Murdock, M. E. Cline, M. Zey, P. W. Jeanty, & D. Perez, 2014, College Station: Texas A & M University Press, copyright 2014 by Steve H. Murdock, adapted with permission.

(Murdock et al., 2014), prompting a call for action to inspire and motivate these students to advance their education. Table 6 denotes that rates of attainment of a high school diploma were 25.8% for Hispanics, 25.3% for Whites, 30.4% for Blacks, and 17.3% for Asians and Others.

Table 6

Educational Attainment for the Population Age 25 and Older in Texas in 2010

Race/ethnicity	Total	Less than high school	High school diploma	Some college or Associate degree	Bachelor's degree or more
White	8,099,053	8.0	25.3	32.6	34.1
Black	1,762,154	13.7	30.4	36.3	19.6
Hispanic	5,063,779	40.4	25.8	22.2	11.6
Asian & Other	847,136	12.9	17.3	23.8	46.0
Total	15,772,122	19.3	25.6	29.2	25.9

Source: *Changing Texas: Implications of Addressing or Ignoring the Texas Challenge* (p. 112), by S. H. Murdock, M. E. Cline, M. Zey, P. W. Jeanty, & D. Perez, 2014, College Station: Texas A & M University Press. Copyright 2014 by Steve H. Murdock. Adapted with permission.

The 25.8% of Hispanic students completing high school is the group most accessible to public school superintendents in Texas. Based on the theory of representative bureaucracy (see the literature review), the impact of Hispanic superintendents leading schools comprised of predominately Hispanic students and other minorities is significant to the field of educational research. Improving the interests of minority groups through advanced education affects the economy in Texas through a skilled labor workforce leading to increased projected income for the state and population as a whole (Murdock et al., 2014).

Hispanics are expected to account for 51% of the population growth between 2000 and 2050, so that by mid-century, the Hispanic population is projected to reach 98 million, representing about one fourth of the total U.S. population (Llagas & Snyder, 2003). Currently, the reported Hispanic population in Texas is 25.7 million (Brown & Lopez, 2013), an indication

that U.S. projections are slated to meet, if not surpass, early indications of Hispanic growth. In response to the Projections of Education Statistics to 2021 (Table 2), indicating that between 2010 and 2021, enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools is projected to increase 24% for Hispanic students (Hussar & Bailey, 2013), along with year 2050 projections that assume that 50.1% of Hispanic students will enroll in public colleges and universities (Murdock et al., 2014), an investigative look at viable options for Hispanic leaders to pursue that may lead to district leadership reflective of student populations in order to influence and address the needs of minority populations is warranted.

To address and combat reported shortages of superintendent applicant pools and promote commitment to equity, preparation programs and education associations are utilizing various strategies to recruit and prepare future leaders for the superintendency (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Tallerico, 2003). Three broad categories for increasing the number of viable candidates for the superintendency are (a) improving recruitment by supporting possible successors within the organization, (b) looking outside of education for candidates with alternative routes to administrative certification, and (c) increasing the attractiveness of administrative work to include the superintendent position (Tallerico, 2003). Similarly, policy makers are rescinding or modifying state licensing policies so that noneducators are permitted to serve in administrative positions (Kowalski & AASA, 2011). The demand for advanced degrees, such as a doctorate, has led preparation programs to see an increase in the number of earned doctorates for superintendents in the United States, from 29% in the early 1970s to 45% in 2010 (Kowalski & AASA, 2011). Research has made its case for universities and workshop programs to focus on competencies that promote district-level improvement and improved incentive packages to attract future leaders from those currently working in classrooms who may be looking for career

advancement in educational leadership (Azinger, 2003; Howley et al., 2002; McGee, 2010).

Table 7 identifies the ethnicities of future potential educational leaders whom are currently teaching in Texas public schools.

Table 7

Distribution of Race/Ethnicity of Teachers in Texas, 2013

Race/Ethnicity	Percentage
African American	9.0
Hispanic	24.9
White	63.2
Other	2.9

Source: *Snapshot 2013 Summary Tables: State Totals*, by Texas Education Agency, 2013b, retrieved from <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/snapshot/2013/state.html>

These recruitment efforts have prompted some growth and opportunities, not only for Hispanics but for other minorities in the profession, however, efforts are still not meeting the goal of increasing the percentage of minority superintendents consistent with the general ethnic makeup of student demographics, as evident with 51.8% of Texas Hispanic students (Table 3) versus 10.8% of Texas Hispanic superintendents (TEA, 2014a). Table 8 provides the demographic distribution of current Texas superintendents by ethnicity.

The shortage of Hispanic educational leaders from which to select for the superintendent position is a problem not only in Texas but in the nation as well (Kowalski & AASA, 2011).