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FIVE FORMER TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE HIRING OF LATINA SUPERINTENDENTS

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the perceptions of five former pubic school board members in Texas regarding the hiring of Latinas aspiring to the superintendency. The intent of this case study was to discover the characteristics of effective leadership that former public school board members desire in a Latina seeking the superintendency. This agenda is relevant because of the low numbers of minoritized women, in particular Latinas, holding a superintendent position in the United States and in Texas. Interviewing five former public school board members from Texas utilizing a semistructured interview protocol allowed the researcher to gather data about their perceptions of a Latina and the leadership skills needed or that could be used to her advantage to obtain the superintendency. Chemers's model on leading diversity groups was used to contextualize this study. This model provides insight regarding skills that are needed to lead diverse groups. Findings were classified into three themes according to Chemers's integrative leadership model. The image management theme examined the superintendents' legitimacy, credibility, trust, and loyalty. The theme of relationship development probed the superintendents' motivation efforts, effective relationships, and building among groups. The resource deployment theme investigated the aspiring Latinas' empowerment, ability to work in teams, and ability to reduce stress in the organization.

There are more than 55 million Latinas/os in the United States and Texas ranks second in the nation with more than eight million Latinas/os. However, Latinas still

comprise an unsatisfactory 1% of the school superintendents in the country. This study identified effective leadership characteristics that five former Texas public school board members considered necessary for a Latina to enter what has been called the most male-dominated executive position in any profession in the United States.

DEDICATION

To my father, who is no longer with me: my infinite gratitude for always instilling in me the value of education: I know how proud you would have been to see me graduate. I will forever love you.

To my mother: You have taught me the value of resiliency as a wife, mother, and professional. Thank you for never giving up, even in struggling circumstances. You have always lead by example. Love you mamá.

To my sister, brother, and in-laws: Thank you always for your extreme confidence in my intellectual abilities and for never doubting that I would finish, having sometimes more hope that what I had in myself.

To my daughters, Carlotta and Victoria: I am watching you grow into two beautiful, intelligent, and talented girls, and I realize how most of your short lives you have seen me studying. Thank you for being so patient with me and not making me feel guilty for not spending more time with you. I want you to know that discipline, capability, and perseverance surpass the barriers of gender and ethnicity. Do not ever be afraid to follow your dreams.

To my husband, Miguel: Thank you for seeing qualities in me that I would have never been able to see for myself and for encouraging me to become a better person and not be afraid of taking risks. Thank you for your love, friendship, and support. Without it, I would have never started this endeavor. I love you very much.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT ii

DEDICATION iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS vii

LIST OF FIGURES x

LIST OF TABLES xi

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 3
Statement of Purpose and Research Questions 6
Significance of the Study 8
Overview of Methods 9
Data Sources 9
Data Collection 11
Data Analysis and Interpretation 12
Overview of the Conceptual Framework 14

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE 17

A Historical Perspective of Women in the Superintendency 19
Minority Women Superintendents 21
African American Women Superintendents 22
Latina Superintendents 25
Barriers to the Representation of Minority Women in the Superintendency 26
Academic Preparation 27
Poor Networking 27
Recruiting and Hiring Practices 28
Gender Discrimination and Biases 29
Lack of Mentors 30
School Board Hiring Practices 32
Chapter Summary 35

Page

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY 36

Purpose of the Study 36
Research Design 37
The Participants 38
Margaret 38
Carol 39
Lori 39
Minita 40
Jorge 40
Data Organization 41
Research Sample 45
Selection Criteria 45
School District A 45
School District B 46
School District C 46
School District D 49
School District E 51
Summary 52
Instrumentation 53
Institutional Approval 53
Interview Preparation 54
Data Collection Procedures 54
Data Sources 55
Data Analysis 56
Trustworthiness 58
Chapter Summary 60

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 61

Three Categories of the Chemers Model 62
Overview of Findings 64
Theme 1: Image Management 65
Subtheme 1A: Legitimacy 66
Subtheme 1B: Credibility 71
Subtheme 1C: Trust and Loyalty 75
Theme 2: Relationship Development 78
Subtheme 2A: Motivating Followers 79
Subtheme 2B: Effective Relationships 82
Subtheme 2C: Building Groups 87
Theme 3: Resource Deployment 90
Subtheme 3A: Empowerment 91
Subtheme 3B: Team Involvement 94
Subtheme 3C: Stress Reduction 96
Chapter Summary 97

Page

CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 98

Summary of the Findings 99
Image Management..... 101
Relationship Development..... 103
Resource Deployment..... 104
Conclusions 105
Research Question 1 106
Research Question 2 108
Research Question 3 111
Concluding Thoughts and Methodological Reflections 113
Recommendations for Latina Aspirants to the Superintendency 114
Recommendations for Further Study 115

REFERENCES..... 116

APPENDIX A: OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 132

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET..... 133

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM..... 134

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL 137

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page

1 The Chemers integrative leadership model: Image management relationship development, and resource deployment..... 63

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District A (AISD)	47
2	Staff Experience and Salaries, School District A (AISD)	47
3	Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District B (BISD)	48
4	Staff Experience and Salaries, School District B (BISD)	48
5	Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District C (CISD)	49
6	Staff Experience and Salaries, School District C (CISD)	49
7	Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District D (DISD)	50
8	Staff Experience and Salaries, School District D (DISD)	51
9	Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District E (EISD)	52
10	Staff Experience and Salaries, School District E (EISD)	52

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The visibility of working women has increased dramatically in recent years at every level of the public and private sectors in the United States. Likewise, in the public school systems, the number of female educators is growing annually at the elementary and secondary levels (Gonzalez, 2007; Quilantán & Ochoa, 2004). According to the National Center for Education Information, women constitute approximately 84% of the 3.4 million teachers who make up the teaching force across the nation (Feistritzer, Griffin, & Linnajarvi, 2011). However, among the 3.4 million educators and 15,000 public school districts in the United States, fewer than 1,000 superintendents are women (Grogan, 1996; Ortiz, 2000). Therefore, as the nation's population becomes more diverse, women and minorities are more frequently seeking to move into leadership positions, including the superintendency, a profession that has been identified in the Study of the American School Superintendency (De Santa Ana, 2008; Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2001) the most male-dominated executive position in any profession in the United States.

The Latino/Latina population in U.S. schools is growing; according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), Latinos represented 17.1% of the U.S. population and will grow to 25% by 2050. Latinos currently surpass African Americans as the nation's largest minority group. As of 2014, approximately 28% of CGCS superintendents were women; 13% were Black, 13% were White, and 2% were Latinas (CGCS, 2014). At the current rate of change, three more decades will pass before the percentage of female

superintendents approaches parity with the percentage of male superintendents (Derrington & Sharratt, 2009). Unfortunately, racial or ethnic minorities, particularly Latinas, are even more seriously underrepresented in the superintendency (Aceves, 2013; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellserson, 2011).

In Texas, the proportion of Latino superintendents is also much lower than that of Caucasians (Cervantes, 2010). Women were only 140 of the 1,041 (13.4%) superintendents in public school districts in Texas (Weatherly, 2011). According to Rodriguez (2014), there were 1, 144 superintendents in Texas; 911 were male and 233 were female. Of the current 233 female superintendents, only 14 (1.2%) were Latinas. Iselt, Brown, and Irby (2001) found that 76 female superintendents in Texas reported that their programs were less relevant than those of 76 male superintendents. Female superintendents indicated that legal issues, organizational culture and climate, ethics, working with the cultural and political system, collaboration, networking, the use of mentors, and interviewing practices were not emphasized in their programs.

Latinas actively seek the superintendency but the gatekeepers (school boards and search consultants) are not letting them in at the same rate as White men (Handy, 2008). Thomas, Bierema, and Landau (2004) stated that Latinas experience even greater challenges than other women, and the glass ceiling is a significant factor in their ascension to positions of educational leadership. This research finding supports the negative, discriminatory effects that Latinas face for being members of a “double minority,” a term used to describe the psychological state and its practical effects when two degraded identities (in this case, gender and ethnicity) interact to affect people

negatively. Latinas are barred, not only as females but also as a result of their ethnicity and embedded cultural values about their identities (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). Ramos (2008) stated that Latinas believe that their ceiling is like an adobe, rather than glass, ceiling: They cannot see through it because above the ceiling is a thick barrier that cannot be shattered (p. 31). Metaphorically, Latinas find it much more difficult to break through an adobe ceiling than through a glass ceiling and thus to make it through to the other side and into the ranks of leadership (Martinez-Ramos, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Although many women have entered the ranks of educational administration in the past few decades, participation by minority women in educational leadership positions remains minimal (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2010; Méndez-Morse, 2004). The underrepresentation of women in the superintendency has prompted many researchers to investigate the reasons for more women not being appointed to leadership positions (Björk, 2000; Brunner, 1998; Glass et al., 2001; Grogan, 1996; Sharp, Malone, Walter, & Supley, 2004; Tallerico, 1999).

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reported that one of the reasons females still fall behind in top district posts is that school boards are not willing to hire women superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2011). White males who are married, highly experienced, and active Protestants usually occupy top administrative positions (Sanchez-Portillo, 2012; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Studies have indicated that board members are more likely to select candidates who resemble themselves (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Tallerico, 2000b). Therefore, because the majority of board members

are men, male candidates earn an advantage based on the unwritten criteria that they share with decision makers (Severns & Combs, 2013). The AASA survey indicated that 45.4% of women superintendents had encountered discrimination in their search to be a superintendent. Forty-seven percent of women superintendents surveyed perceived that gender discrimination was a strong factor in restricting access to the superintendency.

Gender and ethnicity continue to be barriers to the ascension of women to leadership positions. The American School Superintendency Decennial Study in 2011 revealed that only about 1 in 4 superintendents in the nation was a woman. While this figure increased by 10.9% between 2000 and 2010 (Glass et al., 2001; Kowalski et al., 2011; Severns & Combs, 2013), Latinas comprised only 1.3% of all superintendents in both metropolitan and rural areas (Glass et al., 2001; Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). In addition to the gender challenge that female administrators face, data suggest that ethnicity is a barrier for Latina superintendents, as they are still underrepresented in today's educational system (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass et al., 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005b; Handy, 2008). It should be noted that studies published in the past 14 years that focused on Latinas in leadership positions were few, based on small samples, or largely descriptive in nature (Méndez-Morse, 2000; Ortiz, 2000; Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004; Tamez, 2011).

Despite the increasing number of Latinos employed in education, a clear gap exists for Latinas in senior-level educational leadership roles (Couch, 2007; De los Santos, 2008; Tallerico, 2000b). According to research on discriminatory hiring practices (Brunner, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009), 46.9% of minority superintendents

reported discrimination as a major problem, compared to only 10.1% of nonminority superintendents. Unfortunately, no researchers have focused on the barriers to selection of Latinas to top administrative positions (Björk & Kowalski, 2005; Manuel & Slate, 2003; Méndez-Morse, 1999), and very few studies have been dedicated to the study of Latinas aspiring to the position of public school superintendent (Couch, 2007).

A major challenge identified by Shakeshaft et al. (2007) for women entering leadership positions was gender discrimination in hiring and promotion. Numerous studies have documented overt gender discrimination by school boards that have prevented women from becoming school administrators (Glass et al., 2000; Muñoz, Pankake, Ramalho, Mills, & Simonsson, 2014; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). In a study conducted by the AASA (Kowalski et al., 2011), nearly 82% of women superintendents indicated that school board members did not see minority women as strong managers, and 76% stated that school boards did not view them as capable of handling district finances. Sixty-one percent described a glass ceiling in school management that limited their chances of being hired.

Marriage and family also appear to be strong forces contributing to the lack of administrative success for women (Kowalski et al., 2011; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). School boards find men more attractive based on family and marriage (Glass et al., 2001; Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). In addition, women experienced discrimination as leaders in the workforce and gender discrimination allowed men advantages regarding earnings and promotions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The Congressional Joint Economic Committee reported that women who were employed full

time earned 81 cents for every dollar that men earned. Hegewisch, Liepmann, Hayes, and Hartmann's (2010) model suggested a statistical relationship between earnings for high-skilled jobs and gender: Men in high-skilled occupations earned approximately $1,555 per week, while women earned only $840 per week, or 46% less than men. White men have tended to earn more than any other gender or race category within most service-sector organizations; White women and women of color are consistently at the bottom of the wage hierarchy (Acker, 2006).

Manuel and Slate (2003) conducted research with 23 Latina superintendents working in public school districts across the United States. The participants identified six major barriers to succeeding in their careers: (a) School boards were not actively recruiting women, (b) Latinas lacked professional networks, (c) school board members are biased in favor of men handling finances, (d) hiring committees feared that Latinas would let their emotions influence their administrative decisions, (e) Latinas were not seen as strong leaders, and (f) Latinas lacked mentoring opportunities in their school districts.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

School districts in Texas range in size from very small districts composed of fewer than 10 students to highly populated school districts (Sanchez-Portillo, 2012). One commonality across the state of Texas is that nearly all superintendents are men (Grogan & Brunner, 2005a; Skrla, 2000); only 16% are women (Sampson & Davenport, 2010) and 1.2% are Latinas (Rodriguez, 2014). The purpose of this study was to examine how former public school board members perceive the characteristics of effective leadership

concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents. Former, rather than current, public school board members were selected for participation in this study in an effort to create an environment in which the interviewees felt safe and free to express their views and perceptions on hiring superintendents in Texas.

Latinas face the challenging presence of the career "adobe ceiling" and they frequently find it difficult to ascend to and maintain positions at the highest levels of the school administration (Magdaleno, 2006). The number of Latinas who achieve the position of superintendent of schools is disproportionate to the number of Latinas employed in public schools (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004). One of the reasons Latinas are underrepresented in the superintendency is that White males often prefer to hire White males (Kanter, 1977; Ortiz, 1982; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). According to Grogan (2000), the superintendency is defined in male terms, creating the notion that the concept of superintendent is synonymous with males.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are former school board members' perceptions of the characteristics of effective leadership for a Latina trying to become a superintendent?

2. What are former school board members' perceptions of the educational and career experiences that are important for the success of a Latina superintendent?

3. How do former school board members perceive the selection process with regard to gender and ethnicity of the superintendent?

Significance of the Study

Despite the fact that women hold 84% of the nation's teaching certifications, they continue to be underrepresented in top-level positions, including the superintendency (Barrios, 2004; Björk, 2000; Couch, 2007; Grogan & Brunner, 2005a). A limited number of research studies have focused on educational leadership from a female perspective and, unfortunately, much of the scholarship in this area is outdated (Daye, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989; Wesson & Grady, 1994).

Tyack and Hansot (1982) have been repeatedly cited in the literature as a result of their historical precedent to address the lack of research on women in education.

> Amid proliferation of other kinds of statistical reporting in an age enamored of numbers, reports so detailed that one could give the precise salary of staff in every community across the country and exact information on all sorts of other variables data by sex became strangely inaccessible. A conspiracy of silence could hardly have been unintentional. (p. 13)

This comment is frequently cited in research on females in educational leadership to stress the intentional absence of data on women in that field.

Researchers who have investigated female administrators often failed to include women of color; knowledge of how Latinas compare to White women or other minority female leaders remains limited (Méndez-Morse, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), Latinos are the nation's largest minority group and among its fastest-growing populations. Texas is one of three states in which Latinos outnumber other ethnicities. More research is needed regarding how Latinas can be successful in

becoming superintendents of schools in Texas (Blount, 1998; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). The lack of research to date could be due to the fact that Latinas are rarely selected as school superintendents (Couch, 2007; Ortiz, 1999; Quilantán, 2002).

According to Björk and Keedy (2001), data and literature on superintendents of color tend to be devoted to African Americans. However, recent large-scale superintendent studies in the United States have recorded participation by Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans. African Americans account for 5.3% of superintendents and Latinos account for only 2.7%. School districts in which more minorities serve as superintendents are located in the southwestern and southeastern United States—areas with large minority enrollments (Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011). In addition to Hispanic underrepresentation, Latina superintendents filled only 1.2% of the superintendencies in the United States (Rodriguez, 2014). An examination of the perceptions of former school board members with regard to leadership skills that they perceived are needed for hiring Latina superintendents may increase awareness of the barriers to their hire.

This study adds to the body of knowledge by demonstrating how former public school board members in Texas perceive characteristics of effective leadership concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents.

Overview of Methods

Data Sources

The intent of this study was to identify the perceptions of former Texas public school board members regarding the hiring of Latina superintendents. The focus of the

research was to explore characteristics of effective leadership concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents from the perspective of five former school board members in Texas.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling techniques; this type of sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases that yield insight and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2005). Five former public school board members in Texas were randomly selected based on the following characteristics: (a) served as a public school board member in a Texas urban district with an enrollment of at least 20,000 students, (b) served in this role for a minimum of 2 years, and (c) had experience in interviewing applicants for the superintendency.

This type of purposeful sampling is designed to identify a group of people who can inform the researcher about the research problem under examination (Creswell, 2007). In order to gather information, the researcher established three main criteria. The first criterion required five former public school board members from large school districts in Texas with an enrollment of at least 20,000 students. There are 1,238 independent school districts in Texas, ranging from 18 students to 215,225 students. Of all public school districts in Texas, only 62 enroll more than 20,000 students (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2015a). The second criterion required participants to have at least 2 years of experience as a public school board member. The third criterion required participants to have at least 1 year of experience in hiring a superintendent.

Potential participants were contacted via mail, email, and the professional correspondence network LinkedIn to invite them to participate in the study. After initial

contact, those who agreed to participate received a formal consent letter. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained for all participants. After the interview was completed, a copy of the interview transcript was sent to each participant for a check for accuracy.

An interview protocol (Appendix A) was used to present participants with topics and issues to be addressed. The researcher decided on the sequence and expression of questions throughout the course of the interviews (Patton, 1980).

The study was also concerned with understanding and phenomenologically describing respondents' lived experiences (Sanchez, 2008). Analysis of the data focused on these former Texas public school board members' perceptions. Data analysis followed each recorded interview. Each interview was defragmented to find possible themes, which were interpreted and analyzed through color coding of each theme to determine whether it warranted further study. The most prevalent themes were selected for further study in order to concentrate on them with a more powerful lens (Sanchez-Portillo, 2012).

Data Collection

A qualitative case study approach was used in this study. Qualitative research was selected as the primary method for data collection and data analysis in order to reveal the meanings that participants had constructed about their worlds and experiences (Sanchez, 2008). A case study approach allowed for selection and individual interview of five former public school board members in order to understand their perspectives and worldviews regarding hiring Latina female superintendents in Texas (Merriam, 2002).

The data collection strategy included in-depth interviews and reflective field notes. Reliability of the findings was addressed, and an audit trail and reflexive journal were maintained throughout the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of the focus on hiring Latina superintendents, the researcher chose to engage former public school board members from the state of Texas rather than current public board members in order to allow participants to comment freely and to provide credibility and validity to their responses. Each participant was given a copy of the informed consent form to review once the interview date and time were confirmed. Each participant was afforded the opportunity to ask questions relevant to the study prior to beginning the interview. The signed informed consent form was obtained prior to each interview. A reflexive journal was also maintained throughout the data collection process. This assisted with creating the greater context of each campus environment and included observations made by the researcher during the interview sessions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for the purpose of identifying recurring themes (Spradley, 1980). In order to preserve the ethical integrity of the study, the identity of participants remained confidential. All data collected in the interviews were stored in a secure location. The data will be destroyed 1 year after the conclusion of the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis of the data began almost immediately after each interview (Sanchez, 2008). A qualitative thematic strategy for data analysis based on Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative approach was used to categorize and make judgments about the meaning of the data (Boyatzis, 1998). The coding process was based on an approach

developed by Bogdan and Biklen (1992); emerging themes were identified and categories of findings were created based on identified themes. Prevalent themes and patterns provided analytic insights during the data collection process (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Member checking, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and triangulation were used to increase the probability of producing credible findings and to ensure the trustworthiness of the procedures used in conducting the study (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research began with prolonged engagement and observations in the research setting during the visit (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher conducted one face-to-face interview with each of the five participants. The interviews were based on unstructured open-ended questions that were developed to elicit participants' views and opinions about the study topic (Creswell, 2003). Member checking was also employed: The researcher presented interview transcripts, analytical notes, and drafts of the final report to participants to ensure that the resultant representation of their ideas was accurate (Glesne, 1999). At the beginning and close of each interview, the participant was invited to provide written feedback pertinent to his or her profile (Cooper, Brandon, & Lindberg, 1998). A peer debriefer had access to all collected data, including research logs and interview transcripts (Cooper et al., 1998). Triangulation assisted the researcher in use of data-collection methods and theoretical perspectives (Glesne, 1999). Once the transcript from an interview was completed, the participant was invited to review the transcription to ensure that the information was accurate.

Overview of the Conceptual Framework

This study was framed by the Chemers (2000) model of leadership, which outlines three main pillars of leadership effectiveness: image management, relationship development, and resource deployment. These pillars were fundamental in guiding the researcher toward an accurate vision of the functions that Latinas should fulfill as effective leaders in the superintendency. In addition to Chemers's functional integration framework, C. Jones's (2002) framework for how females of color in leadership positions are perceived guided the researcher to understand former school board members' viewpoints regarding hiring Latina superintendents in Texas.

These study frameworks were applied to the perceptions of former school board members about hiring Latina superintendents in three main ways. First, Chemers (2000) pointed out that people who act in ways consistent with an observer's expected leadership models are seen to be more credible. According to Gonzalez (2007), most female minorities, including Latinas, who pursue the superintendency are expected to hold a doctorate, be a true natural leader, have strong core values, and be passionate about the work. Second, Chemers (2000) noted that cultural socialization, personal histories, and contemporary factors might contribute to a follower's readiness for one or another type of leadership. Third, Méndez-Morse (2004) found that Latinas' personal experiences as children may influence their decision to become superintendents. Their personal histories become a fundamental factor in their decision to become Latina superintendents. Fourth, Chemers (2000) stated that a leader's ability to use available resources effectively is influenced by the fit of the leader's skills to the situation.

Leaders whose motivational orientation and environmental factors are in agreement—in other words who are a good "fit" for a situation—are more confident and are able to perform at higher levels.

Based on his review of existing literature, Chemers (2000) created a model of leadership that integrated what was known to be leadership effectiveness, defined as functional integration. This model consists of three major functions that leaders should fulfill to be effective. The first function is image management. Followers will allow themselves to be led and give up their independence only if they believe that their leader's authority is genuine. Whether people are following a leader into battle or into the boardroom, they must believe that the leader is truthful, ethical, and principled (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). The second function is relationship development, by which Chemers (2000) meant that the establishment of an effective relationship between the leader and followers depends on the followers' individual situation. Building an effective relationship depends on the followers' cultural socialization and personal histories, as well as the leader's ability to minimize any potential egocentric or defensive biases. Leaders who work with members of different ethnic backgrounds must recognize cultural differences in their followers that may affect the ways in which relationships are developed and negotiated (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Leaders should make accurate judgments about where the followers are and where they need to go. The third function of an effective leader, after the leader has successfully established credibility, is to awaken followers' motivation. Then energies, knowledge, skills, and resources should be directed toward supporting the group's mission.

In a study of how leaders of color are perceived in education, C. Jones (2002) examined teachers' perceptions of African American principals' leadership in urban schools. Jones indicated that minorities were for many years perceived as followers who were guided by White principals. As minority leaders, they believed that they were insignificant (Delpit, 1995), less talented (Foster, 1995; C. Jones, 2002) and less skilled in the realm of school administration (Sizemore, 1986). Despite the barriers and social constraints that these leaders encountered, they continued to be successful (J. A. Banks, 1991; C. Jones, 2002). Scholars have found that a person's socialization has an impact on his or her perception of and interaction with people who are ethnically, culturally, or otherwise socially different (G. R. Jones, 1983). Therefore, as people are socialized about dissimilar others, they may make value judgments, character assessments, and stereotypical comments (J. A. Banks, 1991). S. N. Jones (2003) found that leaders of color played crucial roles in creating inclusive schools and diverse organizations. Leaders of color are involved in the recruitment and retention of subordinates of diverse ethnicities and carry the responsibility of creating culturally responsive organizations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Issues related to underrepresentation of female superintendents have been addressed in the literature. This chapter concentrates on factors influencing the lack of female superintendents and the barriers that they encounter to attain the superintendency. In order to explain the underlying issues of these factors, six strands of relevant literature were reviewed: (a) a historical perspective of women in the superintendency, (b) minority women superintendents, (c) African American women superintendents, (d) Latina superintendents and, (e) barriers to the representation of minority women in the superintendency.

Every year of the new millennium has presented greater opportunities for women and minorities in administration (Alston, 2000). Females represent 50.1% of the population, as well as 51% of the school children in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Women comprise approximately 75% of the teaching force (Duncan, 2013) and 52% of the nation's principals. However, they hold only approximately 22% of the superintendencies, 16% of the chief executive office positions, and 20% of all superintendencies in Texas (TEA, 2015b).

An even more alarming fact is that 5% of male and female superintendents come from traditionally marginalized groups (De Santa Ana, 2008). An even greater disparity exists for Latina superintendents in the United States. Unfortunately, Latinas account for less than 1% of public school superintendents in the country. In a 2009-2010 census, Latinos accounted for 18.7% of the Texas population, which was also the fastest-

growing state population in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the TEA, Texas student enrollment reached 4,847,844, with a breakdown in ethnicity of 48.6% Latinos, 33.3% Caucasians, and 14% African Americans. Former Texas state demographer Dr. Steve Murdock predicted that Texas schools would increase their enrollment by 1.1 million students between 2000 and 2040. It is predicted that, by 2040, 66.3% of the students will be Hispanic or Latino, 19.9% will be Caucasian, and 8.3% will be African American (Murdock, Cline, Perez, Jeanty, & Zey, 2013).

Women scholars are making significant empirical contributions to an understanding of women's experiences in aspiring to the superintendency and leading and managing school districts (Björk, 2000). Unfortunately, research studies investigating only female administrators infrequently include women of color, although their inclusion in studies has increased recently. Nevertheless, there is limited knowledge about how Latinas are similar to or different from Caucasian or other minority female educational leaders (Méndez-Morse, 2004). This chapter reviews existing literature and provides an overview of current available information and research regarding women's journeys to superintendencies. The chapter presents a historical perspective of women in their quest for leadership roles in the superintendency and an overview of African American, Latina, and other minority superintendents. Also included in this chapter is an examination of literature on the glass ceiling phenomenon, barriers to Latinas' representation in leadership positions, and school board members' relationships related to Latina hires. While each of the major sections may stand alone, collectively they

provide the framework for the critical factors that contribute to underrepresentation of Latina superintendents in public school systems.

A Historical Perspective of Women in the Superintendency

Historically, women have made up a majority of the work force in education but they have never comprised the majority in the superintendency (Kowalski et al., 2011). In a study of the history of women in the superintendency, during the first half of the past century, two factors were deemed to increase access to the superintendency. First, there were many small rural school districts and, thus, more superintendents than there are today (Shakeshaft, 1999). Second, the suffragist movement, which was also referred to as the "golden age" of women administrators (Hansot & Tyack, 1981), opened doors for women to obtain public administrative positions (Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Kim, 2010). During those "golden years," women held 55% of elementary principalships, 8% of secondary principalships, and 25% of all superintendent positions (Blount, 1998). One female pioneer who was instrumental in establishing roles for women in the superintendency was Ella Flag Young, who became the first female public school superintendent, in Chicago in 1909. Young strongly believed that, because education was a woman's natural profession, more women than men would inevitably lead educational systems (Blount, 1998; J. Smith, 1994). After Young's departure, the city of Chicago did not hire another woman superintendent until Dr. Ruth B. Love from Oakland, California, was appointed more than 70 years later (Blount, 1998).

Women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century motivated the presence of women in administrative roles. While some women were hesitant to participate in

politics, others realized the value and importance of political power. Suffrage activists openly campaigned and were successful at electing women to the superintendency (Blount, 1998). At the beginning of the 20th century, approximately 9% of school superintendents were women. This proportion increased steadily to 11% by 1930. After several decades, during which time schools were consolidated, women's representation as chief executive officers in districts declined to reach 9% by 1950 (Björk, 2000).

During the last half of the past century, bank telling, secretarial work, and school teaching were transformed from almost exclusively male positions to predominantly female occupations (Blount, 1998; Reskin & Roos, 1990; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). However, the 1950s and 1960s also witnessed a revival of prejudices against women that hindered their advancement to administrative positions. Prejudices in education included the perception that women could not manage a large school, much less a school district (Shakeshaft, 1989; Sharp et al., 2004). Following World War II, men were also encouraged to become teachers and administrators and women were encouraged to remain at home (Shakeshaft, 1989).

By the turn of the 21st century, women already accounted for more than 70% of all teachers (Blount, 1998) but the superintendency was still dominated by men, who occupied 85% to 96% of these administrative positions (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). In fact, during the 1999-2000 school year, only 13% of superintendents were women (Brunner, 2000; Glass et al., 2000).

In the 21st century, women still comprise the majority of the teaching profession and yet continue to be underrepresented in the superintendency (Skrla, Reyes, &

Scheurich, 2000). Furthermore, researchers have documented that women continue to take on more household duties than men. Women administrators struggle to find a balance between work and home, child, and/or elder care (Duncan, 2013; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Current barriers are not distinctly different from those encountered by women in the 1900s. Gender, race, lack of traditional mentors, stereotypes, lack of networks, and marginalization still cause underrepresentation of women in professional leadership roles (Davis-Jones, 2013).

Minority Women Superintendents

Even though women are obtaining more access to education than in previous generations (P. Gandara, 1982; Mendez-Morse, Murakami, Byrne-Jimenez, & Hernandez, 2015; Vasquez, 1982), it is very difficult for minority females to get to leadership positions of power. Women of color are very scarce in these positions, including the superintendency (Alston, 1996, 1999, 2005; Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000; E. H. Jones & Montenegro, 1983; Shakeshaft, 1989). In addition to the scarcity of female leadership, the literature on female superintendents of color remains limited and tends to focus only on African American and Latina superintendents. Little literature exists on other ethnic groups (Tallerico, 1999).

Throughout their 10-year study, Glass and Franceschini (2007) found that the predominant ethnicity among superintendents was White. These women often serve in large urban districts with substantial numbers of minority students. No studies to date have identified superintendents' race by district. In a 2010 survey of superintendents

serving districts belonging to the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), 54% indicated minority status (CGCS, 2010).

African American Women Superintendents

Due to their small number, African American women in educational administration have rarely been the focus of research. Their professional aspirations, obstacles confronted as they pursue their goals, or the roles of mentors and sponsors in helping to advance their careers remain unknown (Allen, Jacobson, & Lamotey, 1995). Very few African Americans served as superintendents in the United States before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Before 1956, the fact that a Black woman superintendent existed was remarkable (Revere, 1986).

Prior to the 1970s, only four African American female superintendents have been documented. Velma Ashley served as superintendent in Oklahoma between 1944 and 1956. Three other African American women assumed superintendencies by the early 1970s (Blount, 1998; Kowalski & Brunner, 2005; Revere, 1986): Edith Gaines worked in Hartford, Connecticut; Margaret Labat was based in Evanston, Illinois; and, the most notable, Barbara Sizemore, led school administrations in Washington, DC (Revere, 1986). Sizemore argued that scholarly work about Black superintendents must be interpreted according to the larger social reality of Black life and historical context of the struggles of Blacks in education (Sizemore, 1986). Her insights clarify the personal and professional experiences, as well as the odds that Black women face as superintendents within a context of racial and gender discrimination in the United States (Driver, 2014).

Currently, the United States is divided into approximately 17,000 school districts. Seventy districts are classified as urban through their membership in the CGCS (CGCS, 2010). The nation's largest urban school districts serve approximately 14% of the nation's 48.7 million K-12 students and 33% of the country's historically disadvantaged students, including those living in poverty, students of color, and English language learners (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010).

Urban superintendents face systemically different challenges from those of the rest of the nation (Driver, 2014). The underrepresentation of African American women in the superintendency is exacerbated by the increasing challenges of the position. African Americans usually obtain superintendent positions in either difficult urban centers or older suburban communities (Alston, 1999). Furthermore, although many have proven to be effective administrators, they continue to be underrepresented, in comparison to White women and men (Simpson, 2012). African American female superintendents face overwhelming obstacles in the position (Alston, 1996, 2005) and those who serve as public school superintendents continue to meet challenges in educational leadership.

A major obstacle that African American women confront with school administrators, who are predominantly White and male, is the "double bind" of race and gender bias. They struggle to identify mentors or sponsors from the traditional "old-boy" network (Doughty, 1980). Despite this fact, women of color are better prepared than any other group to assume the superintendency; approximately 85% of those applying for such positions have already worked as assistants, associates, or deputy superintendents

and hold or are working on requisite certifications. In contrast, 73% of White female applicants have held the same positions and certifications (Brunner & Grogan, 2007).

In the 21st century, one of the most prevalent characteristics of African American female superintendents is that they tend to be in their late 40s or early 50s and have worked as teachers for 12 to 20 years. Outside of school, they often dedicate time to church activities and are more likely to have held administrative positions (Alston, 2005). Despite these facts, recent data reveal that the number of African American men and women in upper-level educational administrative positions is lower than that of Whites (Alston, 2005).

One of the major obstacles that African American women who aspire to become administrators have identified is that their institutions and districts do not select or recruit them for training programs in the administration field. This presents an additional barrier to African American women breaking into the system (Shakeshaft, 1987). In the African American community, many say that the failure of women to advance to the highest office is due to their lack of ability to influence others, even when they share the same access to mentors ("Breaking the Glass Ceiling," 2009).

A review of the research reveals a shortage of educational leadership literature that addresses recruitment, retention, and role of African American female superintendents (Alston, 1996, 1999, 2005; Doughty, 1980; Pigford & Tonnsen, 1993; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Therefore, African American women in leadership positions must be inspired to share their experiences in order to inform, empower, and encourage other women (Alston, 1999). A prevalent barrier found in a

study conducted by Hill and Ragland (1995) regarding recruitment and retention of African American female superintendents was a lack of political capital that prevented them from advancing to the superintendency. Men act as gatekeepers, and deals are often made before women even know that positions are available (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Another barrier for African American females aspiring to the superintendency is that the coursework in graduate leadership programs continues to present a traditional model of leadership that prioritizes managerial practice over instruction and community engagement. The role that university educators might play in perpetuating the repression of women seeking to become education administrators has rarely been addressed (Davis-Jones, 2013).

Latina Superintendents

The literature on African American administrators is scarce, but studies of Latinas in educational administration are even more limited (Campbell-Jones & Avelar-Lasalle, 2000). This limited the number of Latina superintendents may account for their neglect by educational administration researchers (Méndez-Morse, 1997). Thus, data regarding Latinas and the superintendency have clearly illustrated their underrepresentation (Gonzalez, 2007). Furthermore, little research has addressed how Latinas compare with White or other minority female educational leaders (Méndez-Morse, 2004). According to 2000 and 2005 AASA studies, Latinas represented only 1% of the women in the superintendency (Glass et al., 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005b).

Latina educational administrators are beginning to find coverage in recent research studies (Méndez-Morse, 1997, 2004). This may be due in part to projections

that Latinos will comprise as much as 17.8% of the American population by 2020 and 24.4% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Associated Press credited Latinos with driving population growth in the United States, which is estimated to be approaching 300 million (Ohlemacher, 2006) Nearly 50% of the population increase in the United States is attributed to the Latino population (Ohlemacher, 2006). Unfortunately, this booming population has not been reflected in school superintendencies. However, Latina superintendents would bring to their position the resources associated with their gender and ethnicity (Ortiz, 2001) that could serve this growing population.

Unfortunately, Latinas represent a double minority. They are barred from leadership positions, not only as females but also as a result of their ethnicity and embedded cultural values. Furthermore, Latinas in the public school superintendency constitute a three-time minority as they encounter the challenges of navigating a politicized position and remain isolated from the organization (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

Barriers to the Representation of Minority Women in the Superintendency

Only two generations ago, the words *woman* and *leader* were rarely used in the same sentence (Hansen, 2009). Today, women are gaining more opportunities and are, in fact, competing with men in some areas that previously had not been accessible to them (Fernandez & Mors, 2008). Despite this fact, they continue to be underrepresented as professionals in the superintendency (Skrla et al., 2000).

Derrington and Sharratt (2009) found that perceived barriers for women superintendents have changed over time, but certain barriers continue to limit women's

involvement in educational administration. Barriers include academic preparation, poor networking, recruiting and hiring practices, gender discrimination and biases, a lack of mentors, and school boards' hiring practices (Alston, 1999; C. A. M. Banks, 1995; Dana & Bourisaw; 2006; Glass, 2000; Glass et al., 2001; Jackson, 1998; Ortiz, 2000; Skrla, 2000; Tallerico, 2000a; Wolverton & MacDonald, 2001).

Academic Preparation

The first roadblock to the superintendency encountered by many minority women is found in higher education. Literature reveals that academic preparation programs have not adequately encouraged or prepared women minorities to make their mark in educational administration (Grogan, 1994; Skrla et al., 2000). Glass (2000) studied the state of the superintendency for several decades. In the article "Where Are All the Women Superintendents?" Glass identified several possible factors that discourage women from seeking the superintendency, including the fact that women are often not employed in positions in education that normally lead to the superintendency. Minority women elementary principals who moved up from classroom teaching positions often lack opportunities to serve in other administrative positions before applying for the superintendency. Thus, they lack the requisite leadership experience.

Poor Networking

Networks comprise informal connections between individuals, including those who serve as sponsors or mentors and future leaders. A lack of established networks is a constant barrier to minority females who wish to enter the superintendency (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). An effective district network would connect minority females to decision

makers in the school district and provide educational services to their school community. A common challenge cited by female minority superintendents is the extensiveness of male-dominated social networks (Ortiz, 2001). Superintendency can be attained through extensive networking in a community, but generally only if the gender and ethnicity of the leader and network are similar (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

Dana and Bourisaw (2006) reported that having one or more mentors is essential for a new minority female superintendent. The value of a good mentor has been well documented in other studies. Another point of view expressed in the literature is that men have greater access to mentorships. The burden is often on superintendent candidates to make these connections, and women generally find it easier to network and form informal mentorships with other women (Eagly & Carli, 2009).

Recruiting and Hiring Practices

According to Glass and Franceschini's (2007) mid-decade study "State of the American school Superintendency," leadership ability is the reason cited by nearly half (49.2%) of superintendents as the deciding factor for the boards that hired them. Only 21.7% agreed that personal characteristics such as honesty, integrity, ethics, or dedication factored significantly into their hire. Management skills in instruction, personnel, and budget were cited by only 14% of respondents. Only 9.4% of the superintendents reported that they were hired due to their experience as "change agents."

In two AASA studies (Glass et al., 2001), superintendents reported on the extent to which they faced discriminatory hiring and promotional practices. The contrast between responses by Whites and those by persons of color is stark in both reports. In

the 1992 report, 59.7% of persons of color and 16.6% of Whites responded that discriminatory hiring practices were a “major problem” (p. 62). In the 2000 report, 46.9% of persons of color and 10.1% of Whites responded that discriminatory hiring and promotional practices remained a “major problem” (p. 112). Despite disparities in hiring, minority women do aspire to the superintendency and they prepare to fulfill their aspirations (Shakeshaft et al., 2007).

Gender Discrimination and Biases

In many studies, one reason given for the failure to hire or promote women has been their gender (Shakeshaft, 1987). Konnert and Augenstein (1990) suggested that women face the “good old boys’ network” in terms of gender discrimination and bias. This network is a well-documented, informal constellation of prominent White males that has been credited with perpetuating the appointment of White men to positions of power and influence. Through this network, protégés learn about job openings, gain understanding of administrative strategies, increase their visibility with headhunters, and benefit from a broader support system (Kamler, 2006). In part due to the advantage of a male-dominated network, White males have achieved more advanced communication skills, a well-developed sense of purpose for the district, and the ability to handle situations that arise to a greater extent than their women counterparts. Qualified women candidates have generally remained the second choice of school leaders as they make new appointments (Sampson & Davenport, 2010).

In contrast to these data, in a 2007 mid-decade report on the superintendency the presence of a glass ceiling was ranked as less important than all other challenges to

appointment, including working conditions in the superintendency (27.1%), family concerns (21.0%), and gender discrimination by school boards (17.3%). Seven years later, gender discrimination was cited by only 10.6% of superintendents as a reason for comparatively fewer females in the superintendency (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). These recent figures indicate that a change is on the horizon with respect to reducing gender discrimination regarding the superintendency.

Even more infrequent is the appointment of a Latina to the superintendency that, in many ways, creates tension for the organization and the individual. Due to perceptions regarding gender and ethnicity, a Latina's appointment is accompanied by skepticism with regard to her abilities, as well as the suspicion that she will act in favor of members of her own group (Ortiz, 1999).

Lack of Mentors

As Shakeshaft (1987) noted, the importance of mentors and sponsors in the socialization and success of aspiring educational administrators cannot be underestimated. Mentoring is an important practice for integrating a novice in an organization, as well as a means of socializing the newcomer to the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions required in the new role in the organization (Méndez-Morse, 2004). Mentors are crucial because they often serve as mediators between superintendent candidates and school boards. For example, mentors provide candidates with information on in-district mobility opportunities and prospective job offerings in neighboring districts and counties (Dabney-Lieras, 2008).

Mentors are essential to women who seek the superintendency. However, studies show that mentors have historically not supported women. Carranza (1988) suggested that while some Latina women in managerial positions reported having mentors, about 40% responded that they "did not progress rapidly primarily because of the lack of mentors and sponsors" (p. 87). In a study conducted by Manuel and Slate (2003), respondents reported that they lacked a professional network (63.7%) and mentoring in school districts (59.1%). These shortcomings constitute barriers to the career pathway to the superintendency.

Ortiz (1999) found that Latinas who move rapidly toward the superintendency plan ahead to attain this leadership role. They prepare themselves professionally for the position and apply for the superintendency at an earlier age than do members of other ethnic groups. For Latinas, mentorship and sponsored mobility create more opportunities. Role models, especially other women, become significant to the formation of expectations. However, since Latinas are largely absent in superintendencies, their potential mentors or role models are also scarce (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

A similar opportunity denied to Latinas is sponsored mobility (Ortiz, 1982, 1999), in which senior administrators sponsor junior administrators throughout their careers. This practice effectively excludes Latinas from the superintendency because most senior administrators are White men who are most likely to sponsor those with whom they share the most in common (Glass, 1992).

School Board Hiring Practices

In the great majority of cases, school board members and former superintendents on search committees control appointments to the superintendency. The number of women and minorities in the superintendency is increasing (Ortiz, 2000), but most of these individuals are White men.

School board members tend to assume that former high school principals will be more successful than elementary school principals. Women more commonly hold positions as elementary principals, and high school principal appointments are usually dominated by men (Barrios, 2004). In a study conducted by Skrla (2000), three former women superintendents stated that the school board was gender biased, displaying gender role stereotyping. They reported that school board members acted in subtle ways and said things to them that, under the same circumstances, would not have been said to male superintendents (Skrla, 2000).

The school board has the final authority and responsibility for the selection of its public school superintendent. A good mix of candidates helps to stretch the perspective of the board. The best consultants also attempt to steer school boards toward particular candidates who will excel and who be a good fit with the needs of the school district (Stellar, 2010)

Female candidates applying for superintendent positions face challenges that differ from those of their male counterparts. They tend to remain in teaching positions for a longer time than their male counterparts before applying for an administrative position (Sharp et al., 2004). Thus, school board members must be guided to understand

the importance of diversifying the superintendency (Quilantán & Menchaca-Ochoa, 2004).

The most successful Latina superintendents have developed personal connections for support, understand the interdependence between symbolic and professional expectations, and exhibit a subtle political profile. The most vulnerable Latina superintendents lack personal support and have not had experiences integrating symbolic, professional, or political skills (Ortiz, 1998).

Unlike the appointment of White males to the superintendency, the appointment of Latinas has symbolic and political overtones. When a Latina is appointed as superintendent, she serves as a symbol for the board and community. Latinas are often hired when it is perceived that the Latino student community is the cause of unrest in the school district. They are also hired after a long history of superintendent turnover or when a district is in a state of crisis (Ortiz, 2000). Such appointments are problematic for both superintendents and their school districts, and the position of the superintendent is affected in two major ways when it is assumed by Latinas: It is merely symbolic of the school board and community and it challenges the existing organizational structure of the school (Ortiz, 1998).

The theoretical frameworks described in this dissertation were applied to the perceptions of former school board members about hiring Latina superintendents in three main ways. First, Chemers (2000) pointed out that persons who act in ways consistent with an observer's expected leadership models are seen to be more credible. Second, Chemers (2000) noted that cultural socialization, personal histories, and contemporary

factors might contribute to a follower's readiness for one or another type of leadership. Third, Chemers (2000) stated that a leader's ability to use available resources effectively is influenced by the fit of the leader's skills to the situation. Leaders whose motivational orientation and environmental factors are in agreement—in other words, who are a good "fit" for a situation—are more confident and are able to perform at higher levels.

Following his review of existing literature, Chemers (2000) created a model of leadership that integrated what was known to be leadership effectiveness, defined as functional integration. This model consists of three major functions that leaders should fulfill in order to be effective. The first function is image management. Followers will allow themselves to be led and give up their independence only if they believe that their leader's authority is genuine. The second function is relationship development, by which Chemers (2000) meant that establishment of an effective relationship between the leader and followers depends on the followers' individual situations. Building an effective relationship depends on the followers' cultural socialization and personal histories, as well as the leader's ability to minimize any potential egocentric or defensive biases. Leaders who work with members of different ethnic backgrounds should recognize cultural differences in their followers so that may affect the ways in which relationships are developed and negotiated (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). They should make accurate judgments about where the followers are and where they need to go. The third function of an effective leader, after having established credibility, is to awaken followers' motivation, which allows the leader to direct energies, knowledge, skills, and resources toward supporting the group's mission.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented an historical perspective on women in the superintendency. Female minority superintendents can be divided into three main groups: women of color, African Americans, and Latinas. Factors that have led to barriers to the superintendency for minority women were explored, and the six primary barriers that have contributed to underrepresentation of women in the superintendency have been discussed. Chemers's (2000) model of leadership was outlined. A lack of research that specifically examines Latinas, as well as the need for Latinas' experiences to be documented and their knowledge applied to support and improve the professional opportunities for other women, was explored (Aceves, 2013).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

> I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way to know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. (Spradley, 1980, p. 34)

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description of the methodology and research design that was used to document former public school board members' perceptions about hiring Latina superintendents. After a short introduction, this chapter describes the methodology, research design, participant selection methods, Institutional Review Board approval, interview preparation, data collection procedures, and data analysis process.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this interpretative qualitative study was to examine how former public school board members perceived the characteristics of effective leadership concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents. Specifically, this study engaged these leaders in a discourse addressing their perceptions as public school board members. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are former school board members' perceptions of the characteristics of effective leadership for a Latina trying to become a superintendent?

2. What are former school board members' perceptions of the educational and career experiences that are important for the success of a Latina superintendent?

3. How do former school board members perceive the selection process with regard to gender and ethnicity of the superintendent?

Research Design

A feature of qualitative research is that the researcher is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Qualitative researchers are "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6). This case study used a qualitative approach in which the researcher explored multiple bounded systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). A case study design was used as an appropriate strategy because information gleaned from the participants was not subject to truth or falsity, but rather to scrutiny on the grounds of credibility (Merriam, 1998). Interviews were conducted with five former public board members, utilizing open-ended questions. Interviews are one of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research (Mason, 2002). A transcription was made of the recorded interviews and the data were classified or analyzed to identify possible themes. Classifying pertains to taking text or qualitative information apart and looking for categories or themes (Creswell, 2007).

Using pseudonyms to represent each of the five Texas public school board members, a brief profile of the participants is given with the background and professional experience that these participants had related to their roles in their public school district, along with a quote from each participant with a significant phrase or sentence that captured the researcher's attention during the interview. The intention of

these quotes is to provide snapshots of the interviews to reflect each participant's personality. Following these profiles, the researcher discusses each of the four themes and eight subthemes that emerged from the data. The chapter concludes with a summary.

The Participants

The former public school board members who participated in the study were very keen to share their stories and their perspectives during the interviews. While they all had very busy schedules, they were willing to share their experiences and their perspectives on hiring a Latina superintendent in Texas. The majority of the interviews were held at their respective work offices, and one interview was held at a coffee shop.

The following profiles outline the former board member's biographical information. In compiling these profiles, the researcher utilized interview transcriptions, emails, reflexive journal notes, state education records, and school district records of the research participants. In order to ensure anonymity of the participants, the researcher assigned pseudonyms for the participants, their school districts, and their cities.

Margaret

"The good old boy I scratch you, you scratch me and the machismo makes it very difficult for Latinas to succeed." Margaret is a Caucasian certified public accountant who served as a public school board member for 3 years. During the interview, Margaret stated that she had suffered from the glass ceiling when she was the first female board president appointed in her public school district. She empathized with Latinas trying to achieve the most coveted leadership positions. She noted that the "good old boy" system

was detrimental to the female's professional growth. At the time of the interview, she was volunteering with the Texas Council on Autism Research and Treatment, Junior Forum. She is also a former member of the special education citizens' advisory committee. Margaret described herself as detail oriented, structured, helpful with her colleagues, and always prepared.

Carol

"Latinas must be intentional about their career goals and prepare themselves professionally and academically to make that jump." Carol is a Caucasian with more than three decades of experience as a public relations practitioner. She was very cautious in expressing her opinions about the female minority. She had read and was well prepared for all interview questions. She said that she recalled interviewing only one Latina for the superintendency and stated that it was just after reading the questionnaire that she became aware of that fact. Carol holds a bachelor's degree in business administration. She served on the board of trustees for 6 years and is now a board member at a higher education institution. She has also served as the president of the Board of Directors of a Texas public relations association and a chamber of commerce member. She described herself as organized, visionary, and family oriented.

Lori

"Latinas have to apply for the superintendency and not get discouraged. Keep trying. They have to network and be visible and participate in different kinds of association and community groups." Lori is a Latina who attended a large university in Texas. She served as a public board member for 8 years. She was very passionate in

answering anything about Latina leadership. She stated throughout the interview that there is a very bad stigma on Latinas and would commonly include herself when inferring about the bad stereotype in the professional realm for Latinas advancing to leadership positions. Lori also served on the board of directors of the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) for 6 years. During her service on the TASB, Lori served on the bylaws and resolutions, nominations, and member services committees. Lori was employed by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts at the time of this research. She described herself as passionate and knowledgeable, action driven and compassionate, but also teachable and a consensus builder, and always trying to bring people along.

Minita

"To become a successful superintendent; Latinas must be bilingual and bicultural." Minita is a Latina and a former educator with more than 25 years of experience. She served as a district board member for 10 years. She received a bachelor's degree in science and later became involved in educational organizations such as the Texas State Teachers Association and the Association of Texas Professional Educators. Minita urged Latinas to be bilingual and bicultural. She perceived that the only way a Latina could achieve the superintendency was to go beyond the professional expectations of the superintendency. She described herself as passionate, honest, self-driven, caring, and very organized.

Jorge

"Don't think that by being a superintendent you are on top of the world. That will not make you last very long." Jorge is Hispanic and a successful broker. He served for 8

years as a public school board member. Jorge was formerly employed in automotive sales and has worked as a construction consultant. In his board term, the district hired four superintendents, one of whom was Latina. During the interview he was unempathetic with Latinas wanting to ascend to the superintendency. He repeatedly referred to the time that the board had hired a Latina and did not have a good experience with her performance. Jorge described himself as hard working, energetic, fair, motivating, realistic, and very dependable.

These five former public school board members are still very active members in various organizations in Texas. Their experiences were varied, but all stated that they had significantly contributed to making a positive change in their districts. They are very passionate and self-driven individuals and were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences and their stories in an effort to contribute to the literature regarding perceptions on hiring Latina superintendents.

Data Organization

The process for data collection began with a list of the names of all public school board members in Texas from 2010 to 2014. The list was sent by the TEA at the researcher's request. This list contained only names and district information; the TEA could not provide personal information on the former board members. The researcher carried out an Internet search of the names of those board members, focusing on finding their personal information. The prospective participants were contacted either by LinkedIn, email, telephone, or letter (Appendix B). This method of identifying participants yielded 52 potential participants from public school districts in

Texas with more than 20,000 students. Of those 52 potential participants, seven were willing to participate in the study but two did not meet the criterion of having experience in interviewing an aspiring superintendent. Upon exclusion of these potential participants, the sample size was reduced to five former Texas public school board members.

Once initial contact was made, the researcher described the intent of the study, explained the data collection process, interview protocol, and confidentiality components of the study, and emailed the consent form (Appendix C). As soon as the researcher received the signed consent form, each participant was contacted by e-mail and telephone to schedule a face-to-face interview. The researcher posed 13 semistructured open-ended interview questions (Appendix A). The questions were formulated according to the theoretical framework. The individual interviews allowed the former Texas public school board members to share their stories related to their experiences as public school board members in a school district in Texas.

The researcher observed participants as they told their stories in the interviews. She obtained qualitative descriptions that are at the core of a person's experience (Patton, 1990). Qualitatively, many factors must be considered in interviews; the interactions with the participants, the way in which interview questions are organized, and most important, avoiding persuading participants to say something that they are not willing to convey (Madsen & Mabokela, 2016). The goal of the researcher was to capture the rich descriptive text about the participants' experiences and to re-tell the story from the participants' point of view (Yin, 1989).

The researcher served as both interviewer and “participant observer” (Creswell, 2015, p. 213). The researcher asked questions and interacted with each participant while recording the interview via digital recorder. Participants were cognizant that the researcher’s cultural background was fundamental in creating genuine interest in the study. As participants shared their lived experiences, they repeatedly referred back to the researcher (as a Latina), as if they were trying to give the researcher personal advice about gaining the superintendency.

Each interview began with “grand tour” questions (McCracken, 1988). Each participant displayed a unique personality that determined the direction of the interview. The five participants are all leaders by nature, with strong personalities and distinctive convictions. They were all very engaged and passionate about the questions and were interested in adding to the literature on aspiring Latina superintendents.

Schostak (2002) stated that an interview is, in a sense, addressed toward something that one may want to call “the truth,” “an honest account,” or “the reality” (p. 55). The researcher invited participants to answer each interview question with no sense of urgency, in an effort to find that truth and honest account and the reality referred to by Schostak. The interviews were scheduled to be 90 minutes in length; all lasted at least 1 hour and one lasted 2 hours. The interviews were audio recorded and extensive field notes and elaborated memos were taken during the interview process. The researcher later transcribed the interviews to produce verbatim documents of all information on the recordings. After each interview, the researcher read through

the field notes to obtain a general sense of the information, reflect on the overall meaning, and incorporate the process of data reduction.

The transcribed interviews, field notes, and memos were analyzed using the constant comparative method to identify repetitive key phrases or words, a process that led to identification of themes (Merriam, 2009). The data were coded using various colored highlighters to organize the material into "chunks" (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). According to Marshall and Rossman (2014), coding the data is the formal representation of analytic thinking. The demographics of the respective school districts were also color coded, although little mention was made of school district demographics during the interviews.

To ensure validity and reliability of the collected data, interview and observational data were triangulated. According to LeCompte and Schensul (2010), triangulation of information on the same topic from different data sources is critical to the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Triangulation of the data identified recurrent themes and perceptions. A colleague served as a peer debriefer, which process the researcher found to be valuable. The peer debriefer was initially given all of the raw data and then discussed the data with the researcher to identify emerging themes from another perspective. The researcher and the peer debriefer agreed on most of the findings (Handy, 2008).

The findings of this study were classified into three themes according to Chemers's integrative leadership model. The theme of image management examined the Latina's legitimacy, credibility, trust, and loyalty. The theme of relationship development probed the

Latina's motivating efforts, constructing effective relationships, and building among groups. The theme of resource deployment investigated the Latina's use of empowerment, teaming, and workers to reduce stress.

Possible prevalent themes and patterns began to emerge. Initially, personal career experience compelled the researcher to understand the phenomenon of interest. During the interviews, it became evident that the researcher also enjoyed listening to participants' stories, taking notes, and identifying body language that could not be audio recorded—how each participant's story began years ago and when the search for a superintendent had commenced.

Research Sample

Selection Criteria

The researcher used purposeful sampling to select five former public school board members in Texas from 52 former school board members who were invited to participate in the study. Seven responded to the invitation but only five met the following criteria: (a) served as a public school board member in an urban district in Texas with an enrollment of at least 20,000 students, (b) served in this role for at least 2 years, and (c) had experience in interviewing applicants for the superintendency.

School District A

School District A (AISD) is located in south Texas. The district serves almost 50,000 students in 54, including 7 high schools, 11 junior high schools, 3 alternative schools, and 31 elementary schools. The district is a major employer in the area, with 7,400 employees, including 4,100 full-time classroom teachers. AISD is governed by a

traditional school board. The board of trustees is composed of seven board members who serve 4-year terms.

Table 1 shows the ethnic distribution of students at AISD. The largest ethnic population in the district is Hispanics (97.8%). Table 2 provides information regarding district staff experience and salaries. District A has more than 4,000 employees, with an average of 12.5 years of experience and an average salary of $49,904.

School District B

School District B (BISD) is located in a coastal city in Texas. The district serves more than 35,000 students and employs 4,772 individuals, 2,800 of whom are certified teachers. During Carol's eight years with the district as a member of the board of trustees, the school district had 61 schools, including 37 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 8 high schools, and 4 special campus schools. BISD is governed by a traditional school board of seven board members who serve 4-year terms. Table 3 presents the ethnic distribution of students at BISD. The largest ethnic population is Hispanics (74.4%), followed by Whites (17.0)% and African Americans (5.4%). Table 4 provides information regarding district staff experience and salaries. BISD has more than 4,772 employees, with 14.1 years of experience, and the average salary is $49,904.

School District C

School District C (CISD) is located in central Texas. The student population is 86,000. The district employs 11,150 individuals, 7,140 of whom are certified teachers. During Lori's 8.5 years with the district as a member of the board of trustees, the school district had 129 schools, including 84 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, and 16

Table 1

Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District A (AISD)

Race or ethnicity	%
African American	1.0
Hispanic	93.3
White	1.7
American Indian	0.0
Asian	4.0
Pacific Islander	0.0

Table 2

Staff Experience and Salaries, School District A (AISD)

Factor	Measure
Number of teaching staff	4,125
Average years of experience	12.5
Average salary	$49,104
Beginning salary, with bachelor's degree	$41,904

high schools. CISD is governed by a traditional school board of seven members who serve 4-year terms.

Table 3

Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District B (BISD)

Race or ethnicity	%
African American	5.4
Hispanic	74.4
White	17.0
American Indian	0.2
Asian	1.8
Pacific Islander	0.0
Two or more races	1.2

Table 4

Staff Experience and Salaries, School District B (BISD)

Factor	Measure
Number of teaching staff	4,772
Average years of experience	14.1
Average salary	$49,989
Beginning salary, with bachelor's degree	$40,803

Table 5 presents the ethnic distribution of students at CISD. The largest ethnic population in the district is Whites (63.1%), followed by Hispanics (26.9%). Table 6 provides data regarding district staff experience and salaries. CISD has 11,160 employees with an average of 11.6 years experience and an average salary of $46,435.

Table 5

Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District C (CISD)

Race or ethnicity	%
African American	6.8
Hispanic	26.9
White	63.1
American Indian	0.2
Asian	1.6
Pacific Islander	0.1
Two or more races	1.3

Table 6

Staff Experience and Salaries, School District C (CISD)

Factor	Measure
Number of teaching staff	11,160
Average years of experience	11.6
Average salary	$46,435
Beginning salary, with bachelor's degree	$43,792

School District D

School District D (DISD) is located in South Texas. The student population is more than 25,000. The district employs 3,552 individuals, 1,494 of whom are certified

teachers. During Minita's 7 years with the district as a member of the board of trustees, the school district had 32 schools, including 20 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, 4 high schools, and 4 special campus schools. DISD is governed by a traditional school board of seven members who serve 4-year terms.

Table 7 presents the ethnic distribution of students at DISD. The largest ethnic population in the district is Hispanic (99.5%). Table 8 provides information regarding district staff experience and salaries. DISD has 3,560 employees with an average of 12.8 years of experience. The average salary is $49,911 and the beginning salary is $41,466.

Table 7

Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District D (DISD)

Race or ethnicity	%
African American	0.0
Hispanic	99.5
White	0.3
American Indian	0.0
Asian	0.1
Pacific Islander	0.0
Two or more races	0.1

Table 8

Staff Experience and Salaries, School District D (DISD)

Factor	Measure
Number of teaching staff	3,560
Average years of experience	12.8
Average salary	$49,911
Beginning salary, with bachelor's degree	$41,466

School District E

School District E (EISD) is located in south Texas. The district serves almost 42,300 students. The district has earned an accountability rating of *academically acceptable* during the past 5 years. The school district has 43 schools, including 5 high schools, 10 junior high schools, 1 alternative school, and 27 elementary schools. The district is a major employer for the area. A total of 6,000 employees, including 3,100 full-time classroom teachers, work for the district. EISD is governed by a traditional school board of seven members who serve 4-year terms.

Table 9 presents the ethnic distribution of students at EISD. The largest ethnic population in the district is Hispanic (93.6%). Table 10 provides information regarding district staff experience and salaries. District E has 2,476 employees with an average of 11.2 years of experience. The average salary is $48,817 and the beginning salary is $43,195.

Table 9

Ethnic Distribution of Students, School District E (EISD)

Race or ethnicity	%
African American	0.3
Hispanic	93.6
White	4.5
American Indian	0.1
Asian	1.0
Pacific Islander	0.0
Two or more races	0.5

Table 10

Staff Experience and Salaries, School District E (EISD)

Factor	Measure
Number of teaching staff	2,476
Average years of experience	11.2
Average salary	$48,817
Beginning salary, with bachelor's degree	$43,195

Summary

CISD is the largest district, with 129 schools, 86,000 students, and 11,500 employees. DISD is the smallest district, with 32 schools, 25,000 students, and 3,500

employees. DISD serves the highest percentage of Latino students (99.6%), followed by AISD (97.8%). CISD has the lowest percentage of Latino students (26.0%).

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were conducted with the five participants. Interviews were guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored (Appendix A). The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to record field procedures and notes, including reflections, observations, and thoughts about participant responses. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the reflexive journal as a kind of diary in which the investigator records, on a daily basis or as needed, information about self (hence the term *reflexive*) and methods.

> With respect to self, the reflexive journal . . . consists of . . . a personal diary that provides the opportunity for catharsis, for reflection upon what is happening in terms of one's own values and interests, and for speculation and growing insights. (p. 327)

Institutional Approval

The study commenced during summer 2015. Prior to collecting data, approval was gained from the Texas A & M University Institutional Review Board (IRB; Appendix C). All participants were informed about the purpose and methods of the research. Participants were guaranteed confidentiality and signed an informed consent document (Appendix B) to formalize the agreement with the researcher to participate in the study (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996).

Interview Preparation

Face-to-face semistructured interviews were the primary means of collecting data for this study. Interviews were used because the researcher's ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful lenses for understanding the social reality that this research was designed to explore (Mason, 2002).

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection for case studies usually focuses on three sources of data: observations, interviews, and document analysis (Merriam, 1998, 2002; Patton, 1980). Data for this study were collected from three sources: interviews, TEA records, and observations. Interviews took place in cities in central and south Texas.

Interviews were the means to understand the perceptions of former board members about hiring Latina superintendents. The participants expressed in their own words their experiences, perceptions, and expectations about hiring Latinas as superintendents. A semistructured interview was used; participants responded to a few grand tour questions (McCracken, 1988) and from that point forward, each interview was guided by the participant.

According to Kvale (1996), the semistructured interview proceeds rather like a normal conversation but with a specific purpose and structure, characterized systematically in the form of questioning. Kvale stated that the interviewer's questions should be brief and simple; opening questions may ask about a concrete situation.

Thirteen questions were prepared to guide the interviews, along with possible follow-up questions (Appendix A). The researcher also took notes, listened, and observed the participants while they were face to face with the researcher. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) asserted that a favored qualitative research tool is "the art of asking questions and listening" (p. 353). Related, Patton (1990) noted, "We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things" (p. 278). Dexter (1970) identified three variables in every interview situation that determine the nature of the interaction: "(1) the personality and skill of the interviewer, (2) the attitudes and orientation of the interviewee, and (3) the definition of both of the situation" (p. 24). Rubin and Rubin (2011) emphasized the importance of working with interviewees as research partners, rather than treating them as objects of research. They argued that the core of responsive interviewing involves formulating and asking questions, probing and presenting follow-up questions, and ensuring that main questions address the overall research.

Data Sources

The intent of this study was to identify the perceptions of former Texas public school board members regarding the hiring of Latina superintendents. The focus of the research was to explore the characteristics of effective leadership, concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents, from the perspective of five former school board members in Texas.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling techniques. This type of sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases that yield insight and in-depth understanding, rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2005). Five former public school board members in Texas were randomly selected based on the following characteristics: (a) had served as a public school board member in an urban district in Texas with an enrollment of at least 20,000 students, (b) had served in this role for a minimum of 2 years, and (c) had experience in interviewing applicants for the superintendency. Participants were contacted via email, telephone, and the professional correspondence network LinkedIn to invite them to participate in the study. After initial contact was made, they received a formal consent letter. Participation was voluntary and confidential. Confidentiality was maintained for all participants. A copy of the interview transcript was sent to each participant, inviting feedback to check for accuracy.

The study was concerned with understanding and phenomenologically describing respondents' lived experiences (Sanchez, 2008). Analysis of the data focused on former Texas public school board members' perceptions about hiring Latina superintendents. Data analysis followed each recorded interview. Each interview was defragmented to find themes that were interpreted and analyzed through color coding to determine whether the themes warranted further study. (Sanchez-Portillo, 2012).

Data Analysis

The researcher searched for, categorized, and synthesized patterns across the data in order to interpret the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Delamont, 1992; Denzin, 1989; Dobbert, 1982; Fetterman, 1989; Glesne, 1999; Lincoln

& Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990; Silverman, 1993; Strauss, 1987; Tesch, 1990). According to Glesne (1999), when data analysis and data collection are carried out simultaneously, the researcher can shape the study as it proceeds. For the purpose of this case study, the researcher interviewed five former public school board members in Texas. Each board member was asked 13 semistructured open-ended questions. Each interview was unique, as each participant had a story to tell. Even though participants came from different districts across the state, there were instances in which they provided very similar answers to a particular question. For example, all five former board members mentioned that they would prefer a traditional career pathway rather than a nontraditional career pathway for a superintendent.

While the interview questions were well designed, modifications were made during each interview to acquire the desired information without forcing participants to repeat responses. Each interview was a learning experience for the researcher Interviewees took time and effort to provide thoughtful responses and important insights regarding their experiences. Based on the responses, the researcher developed naturalistic generalizations by analyzing the data and applying them to this case (Creswell, 2007). In order to develop naturalistic generalizations, the researcher reviewed each interview carefully to identify possible themes that would allow for interpretation. Numerous themes were generated during this process. The researcher narrowed the focus to the most common themes (Sanchez-Portillo, 2012).

Upon completion of each interview, the researcher turned off the audio recorder and, following the advice of Kvale (1996), debriefed each participant. “Debriefing is likely to occur after the tape recorder has been turned off. . . . The interview may bring up topics he or she did not feel safe raising with tape recorder” (p. 128). During one of the debriefings a participant talked about a Latina whom he had interviewed for the superintendency and described how she had shared in her interview that her husband was willing to relocate with her, giving up on his successful career in their home city so she could grow professionally. The participant shared that she thought that relocation was probably one of the most difficult process for a Latina in seeking the superintendency.

Trustworthiness

“How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). As in any qualitative study, the researcher must meet trustworthiness criteria that provide evidence of the rigor of data collection procedures and analysis of the data. The study’s findings should correspond to the reliability and validity of quantitative research (Sanchez, 2008). Researchers often struggle to establish what Lincoln and Guba (1985) called the “trustworthiness” of particular pieces of unobtrusive data. As Hodder (1994) argued, objects cannot speak back. Interpreting meanings and the significance of unobtrusive data is, therefore, heavily inferential, and it is incumbent on researchers to construct careful interpretations (Hatch, 2002).

A primary factor in trustworthiness of results from a qualitative field study is the preparation of the human instrument for research. Yin (1989) provided a format for such research:

> To help prepare an investigator to do a high quality case study, intensive training should be planned, a case study protocol developed and refined, and a pilot study conducted. These procedures are especially desirable if the research is based on multiple-case design or involve multiple investigators (or both). (p. 61)

This qualitative case study depended on a variety of methods for gathering data. The use of multiple data collection methods contributes to the trustworthiness of data. This practice is commonly called *triangulation* (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). According to Tellis (1997), triangulation is the means by which a researcher may confirm the validity—or trustworthiness—of the methodology used in the study. Triangulation is a validity procedure in which researchers search for convergence among multiple and variant sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A variety of data sources, investigators, perspectives or theories, and methods is employed to crosscheck data and interpretations (Denzin, 1971; Guba, 1981). Triangulation of data was employed in this study in order to guarantee the data's trustworthiness and the study's credibility through three techniques: participant observation, interviews, and document review (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Member checking is a strategy in which the validity procedure shifts from the researchers to study participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checks as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility"

(p. 314). Member checking is used to determine the "accuracy of the qualitative finding by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether participants feel they are accurate" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The research participants determine whether interpretations are accurate representations of their responses. As a strategy to implement member checking and ensure accuracy, the researcher provided participants with copies of interview transcripts and a list of themes to check whether they were logical, realistic, and accurate. Participants were invited to provide feedback on the transcripts and themes in order to ensure that the participants' perceptions were accurately represented.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on defining the research problem and describing the methodologies used in this case study of the perceptions of five former public school board members in Texas to address the guiding research questions:

1. What are former school board members' perceptions of the characteristics of effective leadership for a Latina trying to become a superintendent?

2. What are former school board members' perceptions of the educational and career experiences that are important for the success of a Latina superintendent?

3. How do former school board members perceive the selection process with regard to gender and ethnicity of the superintendent?

The decision to use a qualitative approach was based on the nature of the research questions, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the intended audience (Creswell, 2003).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the study findings regarding former Texas public school board members perceptions about hiring a Latina superintendent. The chapter begins with descriptions of the three categories that were used to code the data, followed by an overview of the board members' perceptions and an in-depth analysis of the perceptions of leadership based on the Chemers model of image management, relationship development, and resource deployment.

The Chemers model of integrative leadership frames the hiring perspectives of five former board members from large public school districts in Texas. Chemers (2000) noted that minority leaders face difficulties in attaining leadership positions because they are unable to establish trust levels across gender and race groups. In contrast to White male counterparts, minority leaders must consider how diverse followers perceive their effectiveness as a leader (G. R. Jones, 1986). Since this study examined how former public school board members perceived the leadership of a Latina aspiring to the superintendency, the Chemers (2000) leadership model of how to lead a diverse workforce was used. This leadership model provides a framework by which to examine Latinas aspiring to the superintendency. To lead a diverse workforce, a leader must be able to sustain dependable relationships among a diverse group of followers and enable and motivate followers by increasing their personal efficacy (C. Jones, 2002).

Three Categories of the Chemers Model

This study describes what public school board members considered to be important skills in a Latina who is aspiring to gain the superintendency. The data collected from the participants in this study were coded under these three categories. The data were collected via interviews, onsite observations, the researcher's reflective notes, and field notes. Chemers's model on leading diversity groups was used to contextualize this study. This model provides insight regarding the skills needed to lead diverse groups.

The Chemers integrative model (Chemers, 1993; Figure 1) describes how a leader functions in an organization with a group of diverse followers. The three functions of leadership in the model are image management, relationship development, and resource deployment. *Image management* refers to how followers allow themselves to be led and give up their independence only if they believe that their leader's authority is genuine. Whether people are following a leader into battle or into the boardroom, they must believe that he or she is truthful, ethical, and principled (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). The second function is *relationship development*, by which Chemers (2000) meant that the establishment of an effective relationship between the leader and followers depends on the followers' individual situations. Building an effective relationship depends on the followers' cultural socialization and personal histories, as well as the leader's ability to minimize potential egocentric or defensive biases. Leaders who work with members of different ethnic backgrounds must recognize cultural differences in their followers so that may influence the ways in which relationships are developed and negotiated

Theme	Subtheme Areas Analyzed	Leadership Features
• 1. Image Management	• A. Legitimacy • B. Credibility • C. Trust and Loyalty	• Communicates her influence to followers
• 2. Relationship Development	• A. Motivating • B. Effective Relationships • C. Building Among Groups	• Motivates followers to pursue and accomplish organizational tasks
• 3. Resource Deployment	• A.Empowered • B.Teaming • C. Workers reduce stress	• Facilitates followers'skills and resources to accomplish organizational tasks

Figure 1. The Chemers integrative leadership model: Image management relationship development, and resource deployment.

(Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Leaders must make accurate judgments about where the followers are and where they need to go. The third function of an effective leader is *resource deployment.* After the leader has established credibility to awaken followers' motivation, the leader's energies, knowledge, skills, and resources should be directed toward supporting the group's mission (Kouzes & Posner, 2008).

According to Chemers and Murphy (1995), a leader must be able to communicate credibly with followers to provide leader legitimacy to followers. Relationship development refers to the establishment of an effective relationship between the leader and followers that is focused on the followers' individual situations.

Building an effective relationship depends on the followers' ethnic group and background, as well as the leader's ability to minimize any prejudicial actions toward the followers.

Chemers and Murphy (1995) asserted that the leader must understand his or her actions in order to react to followers' particular needs and desires. Leaders who work with members of different ethnic backgrounds must recognize cultural differences in followers because those differences affect the ways in which relationships are developed and negotiated (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Leaders must make accurate judgments about where followers are and where they need to go. Resource deployment refers to the leader's ability to use his or her talents to facilitate the followers' skills to work as a team to accomplish organizational objectives. Questions posed by the researcher were designed to learn how a governance style of a Latina aspiring to the superintendency would affect organizational goals and capacities of the district leadership, teachers, and staff and promote an environment that would be equal and accepting of all employees.

Overview of Findings

This study used the variables of gender and ethnicity to categorize former Texas public school board members' perceptions about what leadership qualities are needed when hiring a Latina superintendent. In their interviews, all five former board members stated that, when they interviewed applicants for the superintendency, gender was not a factor of consideration. They emphasized that they chose the best candidate for the position; they indicated that, in almost all instances, the best candidate happened to be male and White.

The former board members agreed that their leaders must possess certain qualities to establish legitimacy. In the area of image management, the former public school board members perceived that leadership capacity was indispensable for a Latina to gain the superintendency. They agreed that a successful superintendent must be an experienced leader. They also expressed that aspiring superintendents should communicate effectively with board members and the community. They agreed that aspiring Latinas candidates should develop strategic relationships through building their own networks and be empowered to confront and anticipate any adverse situation that she might encounter.

The following sections present results of the analysis of Texas public school board members' leadership perceptions regarding hiring a Latina superintendent, according to the themes and subthemes that emerged from the data. The section describes their perceptions based on the Chemers model of image management, relationship development, and resource deployment.

Theme 1: Image Management

The first theme of leadership based on the Chemers model is *image management*. Image management is the function by which successful leaders establish credibility by projecting an image of leadership competence and honesty that meets the expectations of followers (Chemers, 1997). The interview participants were aware of the importance of the image of a superintendent to the diverse group of school leaders, staff, and community as a whole. Therefore, specific to this study, image management involved the aspiring Latina superintendent's ability to develop an image as a legitimate, credible,

trusting, loyal, and successful leader who is able to communicate and engage primarily with the public school board members and then with the school leadership, teachers, staff, and community members. Board members agreed that these were essential skills that Latinas who aspire to the superintendency must possess.

The interview questions were designed to elicit responses that would describe how former public school board members perceived Latinas aspiring to the superintendency in terms of developing and maintaining a legitimate and credible image as leaders. This theme focused on a person's image as a leader in the organization. It was very important to these former public school board members that the aspiring Latina be distinguished as legitimate, credible, trustworthy, and loyal by the diverse group of school leaders, teachers, staff, and community members. The participants' responses regarding image management produced the following emergent subthemes: (a) legitimacy, (b) credibility, and (c) trust and loyalty.

Subtheme 1A: Legitimacy

Chemers and Murphy (1995) described a leader's legitimacy in an organization as a crucial element in "social influence" over followers. The followers' perceptions of the leader had an impact on the leader's credibility and ability to lead. The researchers also found that leaders of color faced additional barriers to leadership influence. Chemers (1997) described a leader's legitimacy as crucial to the success of any organization.

The former public school members in this study reported that they required that the aspiring Latina have competency to lead effectively. All agreed that, to lead a school

district, the female minority superintendent must be a legitimate leader with the ability to be a problem solver with high principles, task oriented, and an excellent communicator who could articulate the district's vision.

Data coded under this subtheme indicated that, when interviewing for this leadership position, the former public school board members were in search of a legitimate superintendent with the ability to resolve organizational problems. They indicated that being a problem solver is an essential skill for a Latina to achieve the superintendency.

This perception offered by one former public school board member reflected a consensus among the participants:

> An excellent school district leader needs to wear many hast, be versatile and task oriented, be able to solve problems and maintain high standards for the district, be able to maneuver through all the different constituencies that affect public education.

Lori stated that being a problem solver with high standards and well-developed decisions was evidence of a legitimate Latina leader and a fundamental skill to reach the superintendency. Lori expected a Latina aspirant to be a versatile problem solver, task oriented, and able to make the right choices to support the values of the district.

These former public school board members agreed that a successful aspiring Latina to the superintendency should be versatile in organizing the many tasks associated with the operations of district leadership, such as managing governance, facilitating budget and operational matters, and communicating internally and externally

with followers. They perceived that the ability to accomplish tasks and resolve problems while promoting high principles for the district contributed to the legitimacy of minority females who aspired to the superintendency. One participant expressed her perceptions about resolving administrative difficulties:

> Curriculum and finance and leadership development, community relations and being a thought leader in all of those areas for the school district means that they have to be a balance; they have to really be an excellent leader in all of those areas.

The second perception expressed by former public school board members regarding legitimacy was the required skill to be resourceful. The participants agreed that hiring an efficacious female Latina leader with the ability to foresee the district's direction with extraordinary levels of proficiency while effectively communicating with the board and community members was a prerequisite for a legitimate leader.

Effective communication in a large public school district represents a unique challenge for the superintendent. Therefore, how leaders promote the exchange of information or ideas or provide dialogue opportunities is important in establishing the legitimacy of a minority leader (Chemers & Murphy, 1995). The participants perceived that their communications with the superintendent was exceptionally narrow. All agreed that the must communicate the vision and goals of the organization. Also, superintendents must facilitate two-way communications with the board and community members.

The communication approach that former public school board members required

of Latinas aspiring to the superintendency was consistent with the legitimacy that they searched for in a superintendent. They expected their leader to communicate effectively with the board and all members of the community. Community, staff, and the public school board members must be convinced that the leader's authority is authentic. Aspiring Latinas will influence main stakeholders through effective communication.

Jorge expressed his perception about the Latina's legitimacy as follows:

> I was very fortunate to go to a handful of superintendents in my term as a superintendent board member, and I learned what all the other board members were looking for in a superintendent. We, as board members, tried to have good relationship and communication with the superintendent, to make sure that all the laws were being enforced . . . . I had superintendents that did not have an open door policy. We had to make appointments and wait for up to 3 weeks to be able to talk. When this starts to happen, it all starts falling apart.

Jorge's aim was to maintain open communication channels between the superintendent and the school board. He questioned the legitimacy of a superintendent who does not have an open door policy.

The third perception of legitimacy related to followers' perspective about their leader's *vision and expert knowledge* to lead the district. The participants agreed that having a vision and proficient understanding of managing a school district were indispensable characteristics of a legitimate leader. Latina leaders were expected to have the vision and ability to inspire stakeholders. The participants sought a visionary who is capable of leading the school district in a planned and positive way.

Lori summarized her perception of the successful Latina superintendent's legitimacy as follows:

> Someone that got along really well with the personnel was motivating to them and not work the bottom-up approach, not so much the top-down approach . . . but had strong leadership skills supporting the district's values in order to move forward with the policy and the vision in a positive way.

The Latina's leader legitimacy depends on mutual perceptions of unbiased and impartial exchanges between leader and followers. Therefore, these former school board members understood that, in order to encourage and stimulate collaboration and shared knowledge, the Latina candidate for the superintendency must acquire the learning that is required to achieve the district's vision and goals.

One participant characterized the collective perception of a leader's vision to lead the school district: "A Latina superintendent needs to have a very clear vision of how to make the district succeed and help her subordinates get there."

Latinas who are aspiring to the superintendency must enjoy a high level of legitimacy. A central assumption by the former public school board members was that subordinates of legitimated leaders must comply with a leader's directives (J. M. Gandara, 2006). Leaders derive their power or the ability to succeed organizationally through support from subordinates. With minor variations, these former public school board members perceived that Latinas who aspired to the superintendency must portray an image as a district leader. Legitimacy in the organization relates to the leader's ability to influence followers by maintaining communication channels.

Subtheme 1B: Credibility

The second subtheme of image management that emerged from the data was the Latina aspirant's *credibility*. As Chemers and Murphy (1995) stated, minority leaders of color face credibility challenges when supervising a diverse group of followers. Thus, concerns about leading ethnically diverse districts imply that leaders of color may play an important role in accomplishing their districts' goals. The participant former public school board members perceived credibility of a female superintendent of color to be based on a doctorate degree in education, with extensive experience in the public sector, outstanding ability to connect culturally with a Hispanic community in their language, and possessing extensive knowledge in the many areas of education.

The participants echoed throughout this study that a Latina's credibility was based on academic credentials. They agreed that Latinas who aspired to the superintendency could enhance their credibility by expressing their ideas intelligibly, congruently, and coherently; one of the ways to do this is to earn the position through qualifications and certifications, such as professional degrees, certifications, and awards.

The former public school board members viewed a Latina's leadership as a reflection of her accomplishments for the organization. Carol summarized their collective view as follows: "I think it is very important to have a Latina with professional experience, but also with the educational credentials such as a doctorate degree to hold the title of superintendent."

Latinas who pursue the superintendency are expected to hold a doctorate, be a true natural leader, have strong core values, and be passionate about the work (Gonzalez,

2007). The participants expected to hire a Latina with the highest academic credentials and an extraordinary career pathway that would make her a credible leader.

Another aspect of credibility is expertise held by leaders in the public sector. The participants perceived that a Latina leader's credibility should be based on educational professional experience in the public education sector. They stated that the unique way in which leaders communicate their expertise in the public sector can enhance a Latina leader's credibility.

Lori noted that a leader of a Fortune 500 company cannot be compared to a superintendent of a large school district and questioned the legitimacy of district leaders without a background in education. She emphasized that an aspiring candidate for the superintendency must be knowledgeable to make the right decisions for the school district and opposed the idea of hiring a superintendent from the business realm. Lori's district was one of the five largest school districts in Texas and one of the 40 largest districts in the nation. Lori said that, when superintendents come to work in such large districts, they must come with career experience in many areas of education. She stated that an individual outside the educational domain would not be likely to make the right choices for the district. "Someone that works in a huge district like mine with 12,000 employees and 87,000 kids and then surrounded by a very diverse community needs to be a genuine educational leader."

The participants' expectations for credibility related to her ability to influence followers to have experience in public education. They agreed that Latinas could gain credibility only if they came from the public sector. Even though they were cognizant of

male superintendents from the public sector, they perceived that a Latina's credibility would be questioned if she came from any sector other than education.

Another aspect of credibility perceived by former board members as vital for a Latina to ascend to the superintendency was the ability to *display professional competence*, which entails an outstanding ability to communicate with a diverse community. These former board members agreed that a Latina who aspires to lead a school district must be able to communicate with the Hispanic community in their language. She must bring personal and cultural attributes that could be very useful to a school district, both symbiotically and politically (Ortiz, 2000). She must bring personal attributes associated with the culture and the community. Bilingualism and biculturalism are critical attributes for district leadership as they increase the ability to represent parts of the community that may have felt underrepresented (Iglesias, 2009).

Minita stated that, in order to establish credibility, a Latina who is contending for the superintendency must be able to connect with community members and utilize bilingualism and biculturalism to her advantage. According to Bass (1985), credible leaders have exceptional abilities. Minita said that she would encourage the Latina aspirant to use her bilingual and bicultural abilities as an asset to the district as she reached out to community members. "A successful superintendent needs to have the ability to communicate and connect with parents. She needs to be bicultural-bilingual because we have lot of students and a lot of parents that do not understand the English language."

Pardo (1999) reported that many Latinas used their bilingual Spanish-English skills to inform community members about issues that had a wide impact on the neighborhood. These skills have proved significant in enabling strong and united community efforts to address local concerns (Méndez-Morse, 2003). That is precisely what these former public school board members expected of a Latina who aspired to lead a school district. They would expect a Latina to take advantage of her ability as a leader with a bilingual and cultural background to establish credibility with diverse cultures and to bring positive attention to the district. Minita would require a Latina superintendent to communicate with students, staff, and families in their language and identify with their common cultural background.

The participants stated that the Latina superintendent would be expected to use her pivotal advantage of connecting with members of the largest growing community in the United States and bond with them in language and culture. Latina superintendents in south Texas have stressed the significance of achieving positive communication skills with community members through written communication in English and Spanish, as well as through conducting meetings in both languages. Successful Latina superintendents from south Texas take traditional foods to community meetings, conduct holiday programs in English and Spanish, and use to their advantage their bilingual and bicultural abilities to bring the community together (Castillo, 2016).

All participants agreed that a Latina aspirant to the superintendency should have extensive experience, both academically and professionally. They stated that a successful superintendent must hold a doctorate degree, hold years of experience in the

area of education, be bilingual and bicultural, and have extensive knowledge of task-relevant sectors in the school district.

Subtheme 1C: Trust and Loyalty

The third subtheme of image management was *trust and loyalty*. For this study, trustworthiness is characterized by the aspiring Latina's ability to establish competency and gain the loyalty and confidence of the diverse group of board members, school leadership, teachers, staff, and community members through her personal and professional performance. Trustworthiness was considered essential to reach the goals of the district in a collective interest (Chemers, 2000). The study participants questioned the extent of trustworthiness and loyalty of a Latina leader with a career vision in the superintendency. The majority of the participants agreed that superintendents must exhibit loyalty to board members by being unbiased with each member of the school board and cultivate meaningful relationships through effective communication with the school board.

The study participants reported a lack of trustworthiness with some of their past district superintendents and agreed that a Latina aspirant must be loyal to district board members. They agreed that equal treatment of board members is a valuable leadership characteristic that embraces image management by the leader and enhances trust and loyalty in superintendency aspirant. They agreed that superintendents must communicate with all members of the board and establish trust across the board. They encouraged superintendents to spend equal time in communicating with board members rather than focusing the majority of time on the board president or developing preferences with

certain members of the board. They agreed that successful communication between the superintendent and each member of the board is a very strong link that serves sustains the superintendency.

Carol indicated that school superintendents occasionally prefer to communicate with certain members of the board. She advised Latinas seeking the superintendency to consider the importance of building trust and loyalty with every member of the board as they are all equally important. She summarized, "Sometimes, superintendents just want to communicate with two or three board members, the ones that they feel are the strongest. But you never know which are the strongest."

Another participant commented,

> I did not care if it was a female or male who was going to be hired as a superintendent as long as he or she would communicate impartially with the board. The superintendent that we hired happened to be a male Anglo. It could have been a woman. I was happy with him as long as he would get along and he would loyally communicate with all members of the board.

The participants perceived that leaders who aspired to the superintendency should create a sense of trust and loyalty toward school board members. They condemned the inability to cultivate trustworthy relationships with all members of the board and identified this deficiency as one of the major barriers to succession to the superintendency. These participants were cognizant that building trust and loyalty in the community and among subordinates is an essential skill for a Latina who aspires to the superintendency and emphasized that Latinas must develop trust and loyalty through

building equitable relationships with board members. Folger and Skarlicki (1998) found that some leaders tended to avoid interpersonal contact with employees, especially when delivering bad news, and could experience anxiety in telling subordinates the truth, based on reluctance to transmit bad news. Interview participants were mindful that superintendents were inclined to avoid some members of the board, particularly when they were experiencing challenging conditions in their district. However, they were insistent that building trust and loyalty with all members of the board is more significant than any challenging condition that the school district may encounter.

The participants perceived that an aspiring Latina must build trust and gain loyalty and confidence of the school board through personal performance. She must gain the board's loyalty before being considered trustworthy of the position.

These former school board members stressed the importance of nurturing confidence and reliability between school board members and the superintendent. They agreed that gender and ethnicity were irrelevant in terms of hiring a superintendent, so long as that person communicated consistently and equitably with all members of the board.

To have a relationship that embraces trust and loyalty with the board, a Latina must have outstanding communication skills to foster dependability and honesty and increase flourishing relationships with all members of the board

The participants established that the Latina who aspires to the superintendency should be able to communicate with all school board members and develop a sense of trust with them. They valued the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and building

community relationships, which they considered was possible only through developing trust and loyalty with all members of the board. Trust and loyalty were characterized by the ability to be perceived as equanimous, fair, and honest in communicating with each board member.

Theme 2: Relationship Development

The second major theme of the Chemers (1993) model is *relationship development*. This theme focuses on the quality of interpersonal relationship between leader and followers (Chemers, 2000). This study showed that the Latina aspiring to the superintendency must be a motivational leader, build effective relationships with the board, staff, and community member, and be able to build empowering teams for the school district.

This theme focuses on the leader's interactions with subordinates. It was imperative to these former public school board members that the aspiring Latina be motivated to pursue the organizational goals and build effective relationships. The interview participants agreed on the significance of developing organizational goals and building relationships to motivate subordinates to have a bottom-up approach to leadership. They perceived that subordinates would be motivated to follow the district's vision if they could be promoted based on their skills and abilities, starting from the lowest level of the organizational structure.

The former public school board members' responses were based on their perceptions of how a Latina's personal relationships might affect ascension to the

superintendency. The participants' decisions on hiring a superintendent were influenced by (a) motivating followers, (b) effective relationships, and (c) building groups.

Subtheme 2A: Motivating Followers

Motivating followers is the first subtheme identified as part of relationship development. This subtheme examines the aspiring Latina's ability to influence school board members, district leadership, teachers, staff, and the community. The participants stated that they needed to believe that hiring a Latina was worthwhile and that the new superintendent's efforts would make a contribution to the school district. Motivating followers is characterized as the leader's interactions that promote or affect followers' active participation in pursuing organizational goals. Chemers and Murphy (1995) found that the quality of the relationship between leader and followers affects followers' commitment to the organization as a whole. As a result, followers reach out to leaders for encouragement, feedback on performance, and opportunities for personal growth.

Margaret, a former public school board member, commented that an ideal inspirational superintendent would be someone who

> got along really well with the personnel was motivating to them and had the bottom-up approach not so much the top down approach, but had strong leadership skills in order to move forward with the policy and the vision in a positive way.

As Chemers (2000) found, the leader's ability to overcome negative bias from followers helps the leader to make a more accurate judgment of where subordinates are and where they need to go next. Chemers and Murphy (1985) found that followers who

were motivated committed their efforts to achieving organizational goals and, as a result, followers reached out to their leader for encouragement.

In this study, the former public school board members perceived that the aspiring Latina must have the power to motivate followers. They commented that they expected a Latina superintendent to be willing to motivate followers through creating a risk-taking environment. These interview participants agreed that future minority district leaders should create a risk-taking environment by establishing leadership opportunities, encouraging principals, teachers, and others in the district to take advantage of all possibilities that improve education of every student and creating a supportive environment that allows for failure and encourages subordinates to take chances (Kowalski & Oates, 1993). They perceived that Latinas who seek the superintendency must be motivated to become a school leader and risk taker and they agreed that the minority female leader must share risks with followers and display the vision of the organization through actions, ideologies, and communication (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003).

Smith (2015) found that successful female superintendents valued risk takers and expected subordinates to lead the implementation of innovative programs or instructional practices that would result in improved student learning. However, the women also recognized their own responsibility, as district leaders, and were unafraid to step in to provide support as needed. Although successful female superintendents have considered themselves as risk takers, researchers have proposed that risk taking is primarily a male trait, and the distinction could be considered a form of gender bias

(Bardwick & Douvan, 1971; Sampson & Davenport, 2010; Skrla, 2000).

Based on her 7 years of experience as a board member, Minita expected a Latina superintendent to be willing to take risks and to encourage risk taking by subordinates in parallel work in collaboration with the board. She summed her view as follows: "We were seeking a leader who was unconventional willing to take risks and that could work in collaboration with the board."

Margaret reported her perception of a Latina's motivating ability in risk taking as someone who would "think a little out of the box, creative, unconventional and risk taker and hopefully be able to work with the board."

Minita and Margaret expected a successful Latina superintendent to motivate her followers by taking risks while working in collaboration with board members. They perceived a Latina as someone who would assess district problems and motivate the school board to face difficult issues that affect the school district.

The participants perceived that a successful Latina superintendent would be a risk taker. They commented that they were motivated when they interviewed a superintendent candidate who was willing to create a risk-taking environment and establish nourishing relationships with the school community and the board.

Minita commented, "To have a Latina as a superintendent, she would have to be a risk taker that could work in collaboration with the board." Based on her 7 years of experience as a board member, Minita was aware of the increasingly complex challenges of the relationship between superintendents and school board trustees (Moody, 2011). She recognized the importance of a minority leader not being afraid to take risks.

Subtheme 2B: Effective Relationships

Effective relationships emerged as the second subtheme of relationship development. Building effective relationships derives from the superintendent maintaining purposeful communication with the school board and community members. Chemers (1997) stressed that effective leaders build relationships of mutual understanding with subordinates. He stated that this leader-subordinate relationship is built on a foundation of mutual understanding, nondefensive perception, and communication and leads to rewarding exchanges that make followers satisfied and productive. A successful leader-follower relationship increases the followers' production levels by making them more intrinsically motivated, capable, and committed to achieving organizational goals (J. M. Gandara, 2006).

All participants agreed that communication and networking in a large public school district represent a unique challenge for the aspiring superintendent. Therefore, how leaders promote exchange of information or ideas or provide dialogue opportunities is vitally important to realization of organizational goals (Chemers & Murphy, 1995).

Effective relationship development depends on mutual perceptions of unbiased and impartial exchanges between leader and followers. The study findings revealed that communication was a major challenge for aspiring Latina superintendents and a major obstacle that has hindered relationships between superintendents and school board and community. The participants noted that disruptive relationships between the school board and the superintendent can arise from the superintendent's failure to communicate influence to followers. Troublesome communication appears to be a major source of

conflict between superintendents and school boards and to affect organizational morale. In fact, several studies of school board-superintendent relationships have found that school board members consider communication problems to be the single most significant cause of conflict between the two parties (Norton, Webb, Glugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

Superintendents must be able to inform and persuade community members and integrate the actions of the school district with those of the community (Kowalski, 2005). Participant Carol asserted that effective communication skills were crucial for a superintendent in engaging with all school board members and the community. It was one of the characteristics that she had required when hiring a Latina superintendent in her district. "One of the main characteristics that they need to demonstrate is excellent communication skills—not only with all members of the board but as a public figure, in terms of effective communication between superintendent and community members." Carol described how disruptive the relationship between school board members and superintendent can become if the superintendent refuses to develop and maintain powerful relationships, especially with board members. The participants strongly agreed that Latina superintendents must develop effective relationships based on successful communication in order to establish goals and procedures to support teaching, mentoring, and learning for all students (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 2005).

Latina who aspire to the superintendency must be able to develop confidence and efficient relationships through open and honest communication (Moody, 2011). It is also extremely important that minority members who seek the superintendency cultivate

nurturing relationships with board members because the board members expect the female leader to communicate effectively with a wide range of constituents, subordinates, and colleagues for the purpose of introducing or sustaining district reform initiatives (Kowalski & Keedy, 2005). Even though successful relationships can be very complex and challenging for minority superintendents, Latinas who aspire to such leading positions can find pathways to that goal by learning how to establish and maintain meaningful interactions based on authentic and honest communication with district stakeholders.

The second aspect of relationship development is the positive use of networking. The former public school board members who participated in this study agreed that there was a significant need for aspiring Latinas to build effective relationships by creating their own networks. Based on their experience in working and hiring superintendents, the participants perceived that it is vital for minority women to create communities and they agreed that building community with the right people can significantly extend the Latina's reach.

Networking groups that focus on Latinas are an effective way to expose women to other women in leadership (Pimienta, 2014). By participating in professional business trade organizations, Latina leaders gain access to development and networking opportunities that could have a positive effect on career advancement.

Unfortunately, Latinas who aspire to the superintendency struggle to identify and connect with women like themselves, chiefly because the number of Latinas who have the intention of becoming superintendents or who have achieved the position is still very

small (Carrion-Mendez, 2009; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). Nevertheless, more than half of successful Latina superintendents in the United States have reported that the lack of relationship building through professional networks was a major barrier in their career pathway to the superintendency (Manuel & Slate, 2003).

The need for Latinas to network within their field is paramount. Guidance provided by a veteran administrator or Latina superintendent could provide a Latina who aspires to the superintendency the opportunity to learn things that can only be taught from one person to another (Tallerico, 2000a). Dana and Bourisaw (2006) stated, "Women who aspire to leading positions can find pathways to reaching that goal when they learn to establish strong and significant networks" (p. 196). Unfortunately, many women superintendents have shared experiences connected to seclusion, operating singly, and deficient colleague support (D. J. S. Smith, 2015).

Through aspiring Latinas' networking, their cultural socialization and personal histories affect the building of effective relationships. Networking cultivates in leaders from a different ethnic background the ability to recognize cultural differences in their support group that may affect the ways in which relationships are developed and negotiated (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002).

Interview participant Minita stated that she was familiar with the scarcity of building constructive relationships through relating to other female educational leaders. She recognized the need for networking to build relationships for Latina aspirants. As a minority member herself, she considered the lack of networks to be a significant obstacle in the development of constructive relationships and problematic for building effective

relationships with subordinates. Minita had had first-hand experience with networking and building effective relationships among Latinas. She was the only female Latina public school board member in her district and she became the first Latina board president. She commented on the importance of building effective relationships through the use of clever networking. “When I was on the school board, I was the only female president. I had to build my network. We [women] have to learn how to build own networks and be supportive. “

Minita, another former Texas public school board member said, “For a woman in educational leadership, they have to build that network. I saw the problem a lot less in the private world. It is still there, but in the education world, I saw that a lot.

These former board members realized the importance of building networks. Networking is one of those most powerful tools to increase representation of Latinas in the superintendency. It is through networking with trusted colleagues or organizations that Latinas who aspire to the superintendency can find the right school district via informed advice and feedback from the network circle (Aceves, 2013). These network circle provides effective relationships that contribute insights and information about job opportunities and allows aspirants to increase visibility in the target community (Elder, 1994).

The interview participants agreed that, without a strong network, it is difficult to build relationships in order to ascend to the superintendency. Studies have shown that women benefit from networking with leaders both in work and outside of work to increase the chance for advancement (Lundquist, 2005; Walsh, 2012; Weidenfeller,

2012). According to Hudson (1994), women and minorities are not as likely to be hired as superintendents because they are unable to "build strong informal job contact systems based on professional ties" (p. 391). However, women of color may not have access to as the extensive influential networks that are available to White men.

The literature suggests that effective relationships are based on the provision of coaching and guidance that are appropriate to the follower's individual situation (Chemers, 2000). In this study, it was found that strong communication skills by a minority female aspirant to the superintendency and the right use of networking can become solid bases for achieving district leadership. Minority leaders must be sensitive to the skills, knowledge, personal values, needs, and goals of school board members, district leaders, teachers, staff, and community members in order to establish successful effective relationships that will help them attain and maintain the superintendency (Chemers, 2000).

Subtheme 2C: Building Groups

The third aspect of relationship building is the leader's ability to *build groups*. This aspect is characterized as bringing diverse followers together by the leader to capitalize on their collective abilities (Chemers & Murphy, 1995).

In school districts, *building groups* refers to ways in which leaders create opportunities and situations for diverse followers to work together to solve problems, plan policies, and evaluate needs in order to distribute resources to achieve organizational goals (C. Jones, 2002). Through building groups, superintendents have advanced in their careers. These former public school board members realized the

importance of team building by minority superintendents. They understood that a leader must coordinate the team's collective human and capital resources for successful and effective completion of assignments, develop relationships, and ultimately advance to the superintendency.

These former public school board members perceived that a Latina who aspires to the superintendency should have the ability to build inclusive and purposeful teams. They were conscious of the importance of team building by female leaders. Effective minority leaders should be able to utilize teams to accomplish tasks in the organization (Chemers, 1997). The participants' responses were based on how they perceived a future Latina superintendent leadership role in her ability to become an efficacious team builder to help her followers to complete organizational tasks and ultimately to accomplish the organizational mission (Chemers, 1997; J. M. Gandara, 2006).

These former public school board members desired that a minority superintendent be able to include a diverse team of followers to improve the school district. They agreed that collaboratively teaming everyone in the organization would benefit everyone and minority females would have more opportunities to climb to the superintendency.

Interview participant Jorge said that Latinas who aspire to the superintendency must show evidence of capacity to lead a diverse team. One of the most important practices to advance in educational leadership is to build teamwork within and outside the organization (Sabatini, 2008). Jorge's recommendation to Latinas was to build teams to achieve objectives. A consensus view described by one participant: "You have to be

able to build strong teams that you can all gain from each other. We need to know how good she is in organizing people to get the job done."

Jorge also emphasized the significance of Latina leaders' ability to build teams to accomplish goals. Motivating followers involves the leader's interactions that promote active participation in reaching organizational goals. These interview participants described a successful leader and superintendent of schools as having the ability to influence subordinates and to be highly motivated, mission oriented, and team and goal directed (Chemers, 1997).

The second aspect of building groups is the Latina's leadership ability to utilize those groups wisely to achieve the superintendency. It is through effective team building and networking that female superintendents have advanced in their careers. The team building and connections occur in many day-to-day interactions with a host of people already in key positions, such as sitting superintendents, school board presidents, professors, and professional recruiters, as well as the connections made through superintendent programs outside the traditional educational setting (Calzada, 2015). Participant Margaret summarized her perspective: "It is through being visible as part of strong teams where a Latina can get the superintendency. They ought to participate in different kinds of associations and groups and get involved."

Latinas must consciously acknowledge that they are women and that they must connect with other women. The study results showed that team building is a valuable activity for establishing career goals and achieving career advancement. Interview participant Margaret advised Latinas who aspire to the superintendency to build teams

and to be visible. According to Sabatini (2008), one of the most important rules for professional advancement is to build relationships within and outside the organization and to find ways to be visible

Through building groups, superintendents have advanced in their careers. The human connection, through organizations, associations, and so forth, is said to occur in many day-to-day interactions with a host of people already in key positions, such as sitting superintendents, school board presidents, professors, and professional recruiters, as well as connections made through superintendent programs outside the traditional educational setting (Calzada, 2015).

Theme 3: Resource Deployment

The third theme of Chemers model is *resource deployment*. Chemers (2000) stated that a leader's ability to use available resources effectively is influenced by the fit of the leader's skills to the situation. Leaders whose motivational orientation and environmental factors are in agreement or who are a good "fit" for a situation are more confident and are able to perform at higher levels. Once a leader has built a motivated and skilled team, capacity must be coordinated and applied to achieve success. Two processes are involved. First, high levels of leadership and collective efficacy help to maintain energy and attention through difficult stages of mission accomplishment. Second, the strategies chosen for deployment must be matched to the nature of the organizational environment (Chemers, 2011).

The real test of leadership is how well the organization performs the task of accomplishing the mission. Image management and relationship development are

essential ingredients for leaders to be deemed successful in an organization, but productivity and performance are the ultimate goals (J. M. Gandara, 2006). Therefore, questions posed by the researcher were designed to obtain information about how these former public board members perceived empowerment, team involvement and stress reduction in teams of a Latina who aspires to the superintendency.

Subtheme 3A: Empowerment

In the category of resource deployment, all participating former board members agreed that Latinas must be empowered leaders of transformational change. The participants stressed the importance of Latinas who want to ascend to leadership positions to be empowering and not give up under challenging conditions. They pointed out that Latinas who seek the superintendency should inspire and be determined to surpass all obstacles, with the ability to gain from their struggles. They agreed that Latinas should be persistent, with the capability to recover from a loss without relinquishing. They envisioned a Latina superintendent excelling in spite of difficulties, with the aptitude to improve from misfortunes and respond effectively in stressful situations. They agreed that only Latinas who were capable of weathering the inevitable volatile conditions and who recognized greater opportunities behind obstacles would be able to accomplish their leadership goals (Murphy, 2015).

Participant Margaret encouraged Latina leaders to overcome barriers that must be faced before attaining the position. Margaret recognized that it was not easy for a Latina to attain the superintendency but she advised the aspirant not to give up but serve as an example for other Latinas in search of leadership positions. Margaret characterized her

perception of Latina empowerment as tenacity and not relinquishing. “Apply, hang in there. It is rough. It is very political, but don’t stop applying, do not get discouraged.”

The interview participants urged Latinas to become empowered leaders with tenacity to make necessary changes and to persist through times of uncertainty. Latina aspirants were advised to be buoyant and to understand that they may not succeed the first time (Shambaugh, 2010). As empowered leaders, these minority females who seek the superintendency should be continuously aware of the barriers that they face at every step of their career and should still be inspired to overcome these obstacles.

The former public school board members noted that having a definite professional goal empowers a Latina to gain superintendency. They urged Latinas to be intentional about their career growth and expectations and to foresee the professional course to achieve the superintendency. Aspirants who understand the events and leadership skills that superintendents are able to foresee problems and make informed decisions about career building (Blount, 1993).

Another factor in strengthening Latina empowerment is the need to eradicate negative stereotypes. An adverse stereotype causes public school board members to avoid the possibility of performance issues and subsequently not to consider Latinas as serious candidates (Méndez-Morse, 2004). Three retired Latina superintendents and three aspiring Latina superintendents from the Southwest agreed that there is a need to be empowered to attain and sustain leadership positions (Couch, 2007).

Interview participant and former board member Carol shared that, when interviewing females for the superintendent position, she expected Latinas to

demonstrate an intentional career goal. She expected minority females to have the superintendency as a professional goal and not as professional coincidence.

> I like to see a Latina superintendent come into a district with the intention of staying there and seeing some sort of systematic change through whatever initiative they bring into the district and to stick with it, but they would have to make some decisions about what they want professionally and being intentional about it. Finding the experiences to help them prepare for that position.

Carol advised the potential Latina superintendent to be intentional about career moves in order to obtain desired results. Latinas who have become superintendents have certain commonalties, one of which is to make conscious decisions about how far they wish to go in their public education careers. They set goals and make sure that they have the academic credentials to achieve the goal (De Santa Ana, 2008).

Carol expected the Latina candidate to present a plan for systemic change and to describe how she would contribute positively to the organization. Systemic change is a strategic vision and process for reaching the future (Rainey, 2010). Carol was emphatic about the importance of Latinas having a clear vision and goals to provide systematic change to the district based on professional expectations

Carol motioned that she was concerned about how a female minority superintendent would deal with relocation and family to attain the superintendency. “I think that relocating might be a gender issue for women or limiting themselves because of family concerns or some other issue.”

The interview participants agreed Latinas must be empowered to accomplish

leadership goals. In a study conducted by Gallagher and Golant (2000) of 70 senior women leaders, the most successful leaders viewed their work and family choices as positive and personal decisions, not as sacrifices. The perceptions of the interview participants indicated some concern about family issues such as relocation and implied that only through empowerment could Latinas overcome these challenges.

These interview participants, who had years of experience in collaborating with school superintendents, identified precisely the magnitude of persistence that these minority leaders must put forth. They understood that a Latina would encounter many obstacles to achieve the "most powerful position in public education."

Subtheme 3B: Team Involvement

The third subtheme of resource deployment was *heterogeneous groups (teams) to complete tasks*. In this study, heterogeneous group teaming was characterized as bringing diverse followers together under the leader's guidance to exploit their collective capacities to complete tasks (Chemers & Murphy, 1995). In school districts, heterogeneous group teaming refers to ways in which superintendents create opportunities and situations for diverse followers to work together, solve problems, and achieve organizational goals (C. Jones, 2002).

Participating former public board members expected the Latina aspirant to the superintendency to be able to establish inclusive and purposeful collaborative teams. First, they perceived that the Latinas aspirant must bring a vision of innovation on how to create heterogeneous teaming to improve the school district. They agreed that collaborative teaming was of great benefit to the district and urged Latinas to offer

innovate ideas about collaboration to complete tasks efficiently.

Participant Jorge suggested that school districts operate best when there is a strong bonding and teaming approach between the school board and the superintendent. Teamwork by superintendent and school board is a key aspect in a superintendent leading an effective school district. These former public board members perceived the difficulty of working as a team with the superintendent. They noted the scarcity of communication as a fundamental factor in organizational advancement as a team. They envisioned a high goal achiever with the ability to base organizational missions on completion of tasks in a proficient manner, utilizing such skills as communication and coordination (Weber, 1947).

One interview participant commented regarding purposeful teaming,

> I was very fortunate to go to a handful of superintendents in my term as a board member, and I learned what all the other members were looking for in a superintendent. We, as board members, tried to have a good relationship and work as a team with the superintendent to make sure that all the laws were being enforced and to get the job done but I had superintendents that did not want to work as a team.

The interview participants stated that they expected Latina aspirants to employ the teaming concept to keep everyone focused on identified targets. They expanded their perspective on purposefulness of teaming to include improved relationships, staying focused on organizational goals, and securing additional resources. They noted that teaming permits everyone to assist in achieving organizational goals, and thus this ability

was an expectation for a Latina superintendent.

Jorge advised Latinas to work in collaboration with the board and criticized superintendents who failed to work collaboratively and did not prioritize teaming. All participating former public board members agreed that working as a group in a collaborative effort enhances achievement of organizational goals by the school district.

Subtheme 3C: Stress Reduction

Stress reduction was the third subtheme related to resource deployment. The interview participants acknowledged that efficacious Latina leadership can reduce stress in an organization. They agreed that Latina superintendents should be inclusive in their leadership and convince subordinates that they are connected to a larger purpose and to others who are working to achieve organizational goals (Fullan, 2003). These former public school board members perceived that a successful Latina leader would be in charge of the situation. Leaders who managed hectic situations positively showed higher levels of satisfactions, positive mood and confidence, and lower levels of stress and stress-related illness (Chemers, Ayman, Sorod, & Akimoto, 1992).

The interview participants agreed that leaders who use noninclusive governing styles, who fail to clarify organizational goals and responsibilities, and who exert pressure may be expected to have work groups who report greater tension and stress (Offermann & Hellmann, 1996). They stressed the importance of engaging the school board and district personnel in all decisions. When decisions are made that affect employees, opportunities for them to express their opinions can significantly reduce anxiety and stress in the organization (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003). Interview

participant Jorge complained of a bad experience with a controlling superintendent and described the stress that the leader caused for board members and district staff members.

> There are some superintendents that want to have all the control and get into this power trip and they stop communicating with board members and that causes a lot of friction and anxiety and tension within the board and in the school district.

Jorge emphasized that job stress and anxiety can affect productivity, attitudes, and commitment by subordinates. He stated that he expected a superintendent to reduce stress among followers, noting that subordinates cannot perform at their best when distressed or anxious (Reglin & Reitzammer, 1998). These interview participants agreed that they should be responsible to hire a superintendent who is capable of diminishing or eliminating stress in the school district.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative study examined how former public school board members perceived the hiring of a Latina as a school district superintendent. The study analyzed the five participants' perceptions of leadership using the Chemers (1997) integrative model of leadership as the theoretical framework. Three major themes emerged from analysis of the data: image management, relationship development, and resource deployment. Each theme and its related subthemes were presented, based on participant responses in their interviews.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the key findings and observations from an analysis of five Texas public school board members' perceptions about hiring a Latina leader for the superintendency. Since this is a somewhat new research area, little is known about the effects of such perceptions on leadership in the organization.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the research findings to consider the wider implications of the perceived experiences of the five former public school board members who participated in the study, with the over-arching goal of understanding the continuing underrepresentation of Latinas as superintendents in Texas public schools. The findings from this qualitative study contribute to the existing body of research regarding the low numbers of Latina superintendents in Texas (Barrios, 2004; Sanchez-Portillo, 2012). The research questions and theoretical framework that guided the research enabled the researcher to investigate insights about hiring a Latina superintendent and the desired characteristics of leadership based on the board members' perceptions.

This qualitative study is not the definitive work on perceptions of former public school board members about Latinas' leadership when they desire to enter the superintendency. Rather, it is a snapshot of the perceptions of five former public school board members describing their perceptions of Latinas aspiring to the superintendency.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section presents a summary of findings related to the three research questions, the problem statement, the

purpose of the study, and the methodology. The second section summarizes the study's key findings and conclusions, as well as recommendations for action. The third section presents considerations for further research.

Summary of the Findings

The primary research intent of this study was examine how former Texas public school board members perceived the characteristics of effective leadership concerning the hiring of Latina superintendents. Despite the fact that women hold 84% of the nation's teaching certifications, they continue to be underrepresented in top-level positions, including the superintendency (Barrios, 2004; Björk, 2000; Couch, 2007; Grogan & Brunner, 2005b). A limited number of research studies have focused on educational leadership from a female perspective, and much of the scholarship in this area is outdated (Daye, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989; Wesson & Grady, 1994).

Researchers who have investigated female administrators have often failed to include women of color, and knowledge about how Latinas compare to White women or other minority female leaders remains limited (Méndez-Morse, 2003). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2013), Latinos are the nation's largest minority group and among its fastest-growing populations. Texas is one of three states in which Latinos outnumber other ethnicities. More research into how Latinas can be successful in becoming superintendents at schools in the State of Texas is needed (Blount, 1998; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). The lack of research to date could be due to the fact that Latinas are rarely selected as school superintendents (Couch, 2007; Ortiz, 1999; Quilantán, 2002).

An examination of the perceptions of former school board members regarding hiring Latina superintendents may increase awareness of the barriers to their employment.

Clearly, knowledge of Latinas who are aspiring to the superintendency is becoming increasingly critical for public school administrators and female minorities in educational leadership as the percentage of Latino students in Texas continues to rise. While scholarly research has been conducted on female superintendents, information on Latina superintendents is almost nonexistent (Méndez-Morse, 2004). Furthermore, while educational institutions are mainly staffed by female teachers, there is a scarcity of research that contributes to the attainment of the superintendency by Latinas.

Three research questions guided this study.

1. What are former school board members' perceptions of the characteristics of effective leadership for a Latina trying to become a superintendent?

2. What are former school board members' perceptions of the educational and career experiences that are important for the success of a Latina superintendent?

3. How do former school board members perceive the selection process with regard to gender and ethnicity of the superintendent?

The analysis of the board members' perceptions of Latina aspirants to the superintendency was based on Chemers's integrative leadership model (Figure 1). Major findings are reported in the participants' words. Analysis of the data revealed three emergent themes from which conclusions were drawn to provide insight into the issue of study.

Image Management

The theme of image management examined the Latina's ability to relate credibility to followers via expertise. In this study, image management focused on the Latina aspirant's actions and conduct as she worked to express her (a) personal legitimacy, (b) credibility, and (c) trusting/loyalty with followers.

Legitimacy in the organization related to the leader's ability to influence her followers to complete organizational tasks and expand her image as a leader. With only slight variations, the former public school board members perceived that Latinas who desire a leadership position must be (a) problem solvers, (b) task oriented, and (c) excellent communicators with a vision to lead the school district.

Some participants said that the Latina's leadership image was based on her ability to resolve issues within the district. Their comments were closely matched to the perceptions about how well she could handle district matters effectively.

Other participants stated that the Latina's leadership image was based on her ability to be task oriented. They said that aspiring Latinas must demonstrate the skills to stay on target and not deviate from the district's goals.

All participants acknowledged that the Latina's leadership was reflected in her communication skills. They complained about their negative experiences in operating with superintendents who were unable to connect with the board.

Credibility was a point of agreement among all participants. Minority leaders often face credibility barriers when supervising a diverse group of followers. Concerns about leading large and diverse public school districts in Texas imply that Latinas may

play an important role in accomplishing their districts' goals. The participants' perceptions about Latinas' credibility varied. With minimal variations, the participants perceived that Latinas who desire the superintendency must be (a) academically competent, (b) experienced in the public sector, and (c) bicultural and bilingual communicators.

Some participants said that they assessed Latinas who aspire to the superintendency based on intellectual capabilities. Their comments were closely matched to their perceptions, with a particularly high degree of agreement about the importance of academic recognition of minority females in search of the superintendency.

All but one participant stated that they preferred a superintendent with experience in the public sector. They favored superintendents who follow a traditional career path, starting as teachers and gradually ascending the public school district ladder.

The participants agreed that, in order to stimulate effective communication, the Latina superintendent selected is required to be bilingual and bicultural to realize the district's goals.

Trust and loyalty were characterized by the Latina's leadership ability to be perceived as competent, confident, and honest. A leader who demonstrates trust and loyalty is accorded greater legitimacy on which to base influence over followers. The participants' perceptions of trust and loyalty in the Latina varied but included the following: (a) They must communicate equally with the board, and (b) they must cultivate nourishing and meaningful relationships with board members.

The participants agreed that, in order to stimulate collaboration, the Latina superintendent must be able to share knowledge and ideas impartially with all members of the board.

All participants emphasized the importance of Latinas having the skills to sustain beneficial relationships with school board members. All reported negative experiences with superintendents who were incapable of supporting fruitful relationships with them.

Relationship Development

The theme of relationship development examined the superintendent's capacity to promote quality interpersonal relationships with followers. These relationships were demonstrated through the Latinas' actions and behaviors as they worked to motivate followers, build effective relationships, and build among groups.

Motivating followers was characterized as the Latina's efforts to influence followers to participate in accomplishing organizational goals. The participants agreed that Latinas must influence followers' motivation by being risk takers in the school district. The participants commented that they were motivated by superintendents' willingness to create a risk-taking environment to accomplish organizational goals. They agreed that they would require this of a Latina who aspires to the superintendency.

Effective relationships were described as the leader's ability to collaborate with the followers in the organization. This collaboration is developed by maintaining purposeful communication with the school board and community members. All participants offered variations on effective relationships in the Latina's leadership. In this area of effective relationships, the participants agreed that it was imperative for a

Latina superintendent to build lasting interpersonal relationships with the members of the board, staff, and community. They agreed that followers must feel comfortable in interacting with district leaders and noted that many superintendents fail to accomplish this connection goal.

Building among groups was described as a leader's ability to bring a diverse group of followers together to capitalize on their collective abilities. In this study, building among groups refers to ways in which Latinas might create opportunities and situations for diverse followers to work together to solve problems and achieve organizational goals. The participants urged Latinas who aspire to the superintendency to include followers in decision making and demonstrate the ability to exploit individual members' strengths in the organization to accomplish a common goal.

Resource Deployment

The theme of resource deployment examined the Latina's ability to facilitate followers' actions and district resources to accomplish goals. The participants agreed that the Latina leader must have the skills to manage the district's resources efficiently. These former public school board members agreed that it was imperative to gain input from the superintendent when making decisions about the district's resources.

Empowered was described as the Latina's ability to be strong, influential, and resilient to accomplish organizational goals. In this study, the Latina's empowerment included (a) the tenacity to be loyal to the ideal superintendent, and (b) the determination to keep the superintendency as an intended goal and not a professional coincidence. Most participants urged Latinas to be persistent in attaining the superintendency. They

recognized that it is a difficult task but advised these minority leaders not to give up under adverse professional circumstances. Three of the five participants advised Latinas to have the superintendency as a deliberate goal and not to fall into a category of mere professional happenstance.

Groups to complete tasks was characterized as the Latina's ability to establish collaborative teams to achieve organizational goals. At least one major distinction was perceived in this study. The former public school board members perceived that Latinas must have the skill to keep followers focused on achieving organizational goals. All agreed that Latinas must be able to organize the team's communal human and capital resources for successful completion of district tasks.

Workers reduce stress was characterized as the Latina's ability to be inclusive and influence subordinates who are struggling to achieve goals. A major variation emerged from the data about the perception of former board members on hiring a Latina leader with the skills to diminish or eliminate friction in the school district to accomplish organizational tasks. Most participants agreed that conflict within the district was a major obstacle to the organization and encouraged the Latina superintendent to create an environment free of conflict to enhance district resources.

Conclusions

There is evident incongruence between the number of male public school superintendents and the number of female superintendents; there is even a larger discrepancy regarding Latina superintendents both across the nation and in Texas. Latina superintendent candidates must be aware of the leadership characteristics that public

school board members prioritize in a minority candidate and must ensure that their applications reflect these characteristics (Glenn, 2008). This study explored former public school board members' perceptions about the leadership characteristics needed by a Latina to attain the superintendency. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with five former public school board members across the state of Texas. The participants expressed four major themes that could be perceived as a bridge to help a Latina to reach the superintendency. This study's findings could assist aspiring Latinas to attain the superintendency and other leadership positions and could encourage university programs to improve their focus on the needs of female minorities for the superintendency.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, *What are former school board members' perceptions of the characteristics of effective leadership for a Latina trying to become a superintendent?* Interviewing to gain feedback from five public school board members in Texas enabled the researcher to analyze the data from the perspective of contracting a Latina superintendent. There is a lack of research on Latinas in educational leadership, and the existing literature on Latina leadership is mainly descriptive and based on narratives (Sanchez de Valencia, 2008). The research on Latinas attaining leadership positions from the board members' perspective is even more limited.

The five former public school board members who participated in the study emphasized that effective leaders must be very resourceful. They identified several specific characteristics of an effective leader, including being well rounded and knowledgeable in many areas, having the capacity to develop curriculum and vision,

having the ability to manage finances (including budgets), demonstrating effective communication skills, and presenting themselves as open minded.

One participant was specific in addressing a strength that a Latina should utilize when applying for the superintendency. Minita proposed, “They should be bicultural and bilingual.” Minita was the only participant who used the terms *bilingual* and *bicultural* as an expression of a strength that a Latina should possess. She understood the importance of being a bridge between the cultures and using those qualities as an asset to reach the superintendency.

The participants perceived that an aspiring superintendent should be a multifaceted leader. One participant stated that an excellent school district leader must “wear many hats.” All participants expected an aspiring superintendent to be knowledgeable in many areas of the education realm.

The participants in this study did not acknowledge a gender or ethnic bias in hiring a superintendent. Even though the questions were targeted for Latinas, the participants avoided the word *Latina* and spoke instead about a person who was experienced in many areas of public education. They emphasized that the hiring of the superintendent was not about gender or race but about hiring the right person to do the job. One commented, “Race and gender wasn’t an issue for us; it’s always been about finding the right fit.” Another mentioned that ethnicity or gender was irrelevant so long as the superintendent could work in collaboration with the school board.

> I did not care who was doing it as long as it was doing the job. He happened to be Anglo, it could have been a women. I was happy with him as long as he would get along with the board.

This participant also argued that hiring a superintendent was not about gender or ethnicity but instead about communication skills.

If the former public school board members stated views that indicated that gender and ethnic criteria were nonexistent in hiring a superintendent in Texas, the question remains as to why Latinas continue to be significantly underrepresented in the superintendency in Texas and in the United States.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, *What are former school board members' perceptions of the educational and career experiences which are important for the success of a Latina superintendent?* Four of the five participants agreed that an aspiring Latina superintendent must follow the traditional educational and professional route to the superintendency. According to Farmer (2007), the most common path to the superintendency is a secondary teacher, secondary principal, and then superintendent. However, the career paths for Latino superintendents in Texas most often have included teacher, assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, and then superintendent (Padilla, 2003). Comparing the two studies of career pathways between superintendents and minority superintendents, the data on the most followed pathways reflects that Latino superintendents must have taken an extra step into a central office leadership position before being given the opportunity to become district leaders.

The participants stated that it was important for Latinas who seek the superintendency to have both a professional and academic educational background. These results align with Cervantes's study (2010) on Latino superintendents in Texas. Cervantes identified the most important characteristics for being selected as a Latino superintendent in Texas as educational level, previous experience in school administration, and years of experience in education.

Participant Margaret commented that a school superintendent should have a traditional educational background.

> I prefer the conventional pathway—a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and administrator— [I] think is important to have done those jobs before the superintendency. But I think it really depends on the needs of the district. Whether they are in awful financial troubles, they need somebody very strong in finance and if the district needs someone in curriculum that is what the district needs. It really depends on the needs of the district.

Margaret also mentioned the importance of a Latina with district leadership aspirations having experience teaching, leading a school, and leading a department at central office.

Interview participant Carol mentioned that it was important for her to hire a Latina superintendent with central office experience. Cervantes (2010) noted that a central office position is one of the most common characteristics of career pathways in Latino superintendents. Carol emphasized the importance of having a variety of central office leadership positions before a Latina could aspire to the superintendency.

> I think it has to be a traditional path. I think Latinas have to have spent time in the classroom teaching, I think and then they ought to have a central administration mid management position. But then, before they make the transition into an assistant position they really ought to look at something out of their comfort zone. They need to have expertise in curriculum or school leadership maybe they ought to try to move into finance or public affairs or move into human resources. So that you can understand what goes into the administrative before they jump into a superintendent position. I just think that it's probably good to think about having a good administrative portfolio.

Interview participant Lori commented that she did not feel comfortable in hiring a superintendent with a noneducational background. She expressed the belief that the complexities faced by a school leader in a large public school district in Texas do not relate to the difficulties that a leader from a Fortune 500 company might face on a daily basis.

> I think it's really helpful to have some type of educational experience. When districts hire people or former chief executive officers from a Fortune 500, I'm not sure that they would they can actually relate to the issue in public education. Maybe some can . . . . I'm not convinced that nontraditional candidate who holds a business degree from the private sector can really relate to public education.

The researcher asked participants whether they would consider hiring a Latino superintendent from a noneducational background. Only one participant, Jorge, expressed the belief that great school leaders did not need to have an educational

background. He reported that, during his term, he had voted for a nontraditional superintendent.

> An aspiring superintendent does not have to move up the ladder in education, what the district needs is an aspiring superintendent with proper communication skills and with their heart with the child, and you can tell that by asking the proper questions in the interviews.

Jorge had voted for a nontraditional Latino superintendent in his district and he was very pleased with the superintendent's performance as the school leader. He stated that he did not believe that school leaders necessarily had to be educators.

The findings in this study showed that the majority of former public school board members preferred Latinas who aspired to the superintendency to come from a traditional conventional educational and professional background, starting as a teacher and advancing professionally as an assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, and then superintendent. None required a doctorate in education to achieve the superintendency.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, *How do former school board members perceive the selection process in regards to gender and ethnicity of the superintendent?* None of the participants acknowledged a gender or ethnicity bias when hiring a superintendent. Some could not remember reviewing Latina applications and began to question whether the applications may have stayed at the search consultant level or whether Latinas were even interested in applying for the superintendency.

Researchers have found that search consultants are a major external barrier to women's access to the superintendency (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Tallerico, 2000a). School boards usually hire search consultants to recruit candidates for the position. These search consultants are eventually the ones who regulate the application process and control the interviews and final selection process. Therefore, they can become a major obstacle to the entrance of a Latina to the superintendency (Ortiz, 2000; Tallerico, 2000b). Interview participant Lori agreed that she perceived that Latinas were not entering the superintendency because of the screening process.

> Race and gender wasn't an issue for us. It was always about finding the right fit, but I think the biggest barrier is going to be getting through the screening process at the consultant level or maybe there are not applicants in the first place, Latina applicants.

Interview participant Carol also questioned the reliability of search consultants because she could not remember screening any Latina aspirant applications when her school board was hiring a superintendent.

> Do you even have a small minority of women who are applying for those positions? I don't know. It would be very interesting to have some quantitative data and know who is even applying for positions.

In an analysis of the data on female superintendents, Glass (2000) identified several consistent obstacles that women face when applying to become a superintendent. Glass argued that women lack the career pathways that normally lead to the

superintendency, as well as credentials, professional experience, and they do not enter the superintendency for personal reasons.

Jorge asked,

> But the ones that do apply, why they don't make it through the screening? I don't know. That was never brought up. We did not perceive gender or ethnicity as a barrier. We were very open minded. The reason there was a lot turnover was because of communication.

Carol commented, "Race and gender weren't an issue for us. It's always been about finding the right fit."

Concluding Thoughts and Methodological Reflections

The findings from this study can point the way for female minority leaders to comprehend the challenges facing their leadership as district superintendents. Although the participating former public school board members described the Latina's leadership in the areas of image management, relationship development, and resource deployment somewhat differently, they based their perceptions on the three pillars of leadership model described by Chemers.

Communication was a central theme that substantiated the three principal supports of the leadership model. The interview participants described the importance of interacting and connecting to fulfill the Latina's image management, relationship development, and resource deployment. This overarching theme described an essential element for ascending to the superintendency.

This study of former public school board members' perceptions of leadership in a Latina who aspires to the superintendency exerted a major impact on this researcher. First, as a Latina, I discovered that race is still a challenging topic and it is very well carried verbally but not inside the organizations. Leadership characteristics of minority female leaders are often stereotyped, creating a barrier to ascend in their organizations. Most of the former public school board member participants contradicted themselves as they discussed the existence of gender-related barriers and stereotypes relative to the superintendency. While they reported that they had never considered gender or ethnicity as a factor in hiring a superintendent, during the interviews they often raised their expectations when asked about considering hiring a female minority.

Second, Latinas have to raise the bar and exceed expectations academically and professionally to be considered for the superintendency. These former board members stated that Latinas should hold a doctorate, along with state certifications, and have many years of experience in the public sector to be considered for the superintendency.

Third, instead of persistent attempts to cover expectations for Latinas in leadership positions, hiring decision makers must acknowledge the negative impact of gender and ethnic expectations for women of color. Revealing these truths can open the door for emergence of a new paradigm of Latinas in leadership roles.

Recommendations for Latina Aspirants to the Superintendency

Based on the findings of this study, in combination with a review of the literature, the following are recommendations for Latinas who aspire to the superintendency. First, they must become great communicators in order to develop and

sustain fruitful, efficient, and effective board relations. Second, they should form networking groups that focus on Latina women to expose them to other Latinas in leadership positions. Third, they must be made cognizant of how their career choices early in their lives will influence their ability to obtain a superintendent's position.

Recommendations for Further Study

Part of the research problem identified in this study is the significant void in the literature. There is very limited literature on Latina superintendents (Barrios, 2004; Rodriguez, 2014; Sanchez-Portillo, 2012). The main suggestion for researchers is to extend the body of knowledge for scholarly research related to Latina superintendents.

The researcher found several prominent areas for potential future research of vital importance for Latinas aspiring the superintendency. First, additional research is needed on Latina superintendents to understand how a Latina's leadership is perceived from the contracting perspective. Second, additional research is needed on networking strategies for minorities who aspire to a leadership position. Third, additional research is needed regarding hiring consultants and their practices for recruiting and selecting superintendent candidates. Their influence on gender and ethnic composition of the candidate pools is strong and should be studied. Fourth, additional research is needed to determine whether Latinas are actually applying for the superintendency. Fifth, this study included a diverse group of five former Texas public school board members from Texas; additional research is needed to include a larger number of participants so that more definitive conclusions can be drawn.

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APPENDIX A

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years were you a board member?
2. Tell me about your professional background.
3. What comes to your mind when you think about a Latina in a leadership position?
4. How would you describe a successful superintendent?
5. What leadership characteristics were you looking for when hiring a superintendent?
6. What skills, strategies, and experiences do you believe contribute to a successful superintendency?
7. How much of a barrier do you consider gender and race to be when it comes to obtaining a superintendency?
8. In your term as a former Texas public school board member, how many superintendents did you hire? Do you recall any of them being Latinas?
9. What are your career expectations when hiring superintendents? Do you believe that these expectations are exactly the same when it comes to gender?
10. What career pathways do you prefer of a superintendent?
11. What advice would you give to Latinas who desire to become superintendents in Texas?
12. What recommendations can you make for women considering the superintendency as a career?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add that you feel may be pertinent to this study and important for aspiring Latina superintendents to know?

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION SHEET

The purpose of this dissertation research study is to examine the perceptions of former board members about hiring Hispanic female superintendents. The research study will assist the researcher in understanding the board member expectations in terms of effective leadership of Hispanic female superintendents, career experiences, educational experiences, career pathways and cultural and social cultural backgrounds when hiring of Hispanic female superintendents aspire to the state superintendency.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

1. Take part in the interview process by agreeing to be interviewed for one hour to one and one half hours in length.

2. Have the interview audio taped. Prior to the tapes being transcribed, all identifying information will be removed from the text of the tape.

3. Provide the interviewer with a follow-up interview, if necessary, via telephone.

4. Complete the ex-board member data sheet.

Additional information

1. Ex-board members will be assigned pseudonyms and remain anonymous.

2. Data will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

A study of former Texas public school board member's perceptions concerning the hiring of Latina Superintendents.

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by Liliana R, Portilla a researcher from Texas A&M University. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. If you decide you do not want to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits you normally would have.

The purpose of this study is to examine former Texas public school board members' perceptions on hiring Latina superintendents. It is my intent to determine if there are observable and perceived barriers including race and gender that prevent Latinas form obtaining a superintendency position. I am seeking your voluntary participation in my research study. The study I am conducting will consist of one interview session that will have 90 minutes duration.

You are being asked to be in this study because you were randomly selected from the twenty service centers in Texas as a public school board member in an urban district with an enrollment of at least 20,000 students; served in this role for a minimum period of two years; and had interview experience at applicants searching for the superintendency position.

Overall, a total of five participants from the state of Texas will be invited at five different locations (Starbucks or McDonald's) to be interviewed.
I will send you the interview questions at least two weeks in advance for your reference.
At the beginning and the conclusion of the interview you will be allowed to provide a written feedback about your profile.
You will be asked to have an interview with Liliana R. Portilla. Your participation in this study will last one 90 minutes interview and includes one visit.
The researcher will make an audio recording during the study so that the interview could be transcribed only if you give your permission to do so. Indicate your decision below by initialing in the space provided.

_____ I give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.
_____ I do not give my permission for audio recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.

The things that you will be doing are no more risks than you would come across in everyday life. Although the researchers have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions/procedures that are asked of you will be stressful or upsetting. You do not have to answer anything you do not want to. Information about individuals and/or organizations that may be able to help you with these problems will be given to you.

TAMU IRB will be notified in case of any medical emergency. If a medical emergency should occur; continuing medical care and/or hospitalization for research related injury will not be provided free of charge nor will financial compensation be available, or be provided by Texas A&M University or the investigator.

Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.
You will not be paid for being in this study
The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records along with consent form will be stored securely under locked key and in a password protected and encrypted computer. To ensure privacy all applicants will be assigned pseudonyms. Only Liliana R. Portilla and research study personnel will have access to the records. Records will be kept 3 years after completion of the project, after that, all data will be shredded and erased from computer files. Records stored on a computer hard drive will be erased using commercial software applications designed to remove all data from the storage device.

People who have access to your information include the Protocol Director (Liliana Portilla and research study personnel. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly.
Information about you and related to this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law.

You may contact the Principal Investigator, Liliana R. Portilla, doctoral student at Texas A&M University about a concern or complaint about this research at 956-285-8646 or lportilla@laredoisd.org You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jean Madsen at (979) 862-2421 or jamdsen@tamu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a research participant; or if you have questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, you may call the Texas A&M University Human Subjects Protection Program office at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

This research is voluntary and you have the choice whether or not to be in this research study. You may decide to not begin or to stop participating at any time. If you choose not to be in this study or stop being in the study, there will be no effect on your relationship with Texas A&M University.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I agree to be in this study and know that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. The procedures, risks, and benefits have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered. I know that new information about this research study will be provided to me as it becomes available and that the researcher will tell me if I must be removed from the study. I can ask more questions if I want. A copy of this entire consent form will be given to me.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

INVESTIGATOR'S AFFIDAVIT:
Either I have or my agent has carefully explained to the participant the nature of the above project. I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the person who signed this consent form was informed of the nature, demands, benefits, and risks involved in his/her participation.

_____ _____

Signature of Presenter Date

_____ _____

Printed Name Date

IRB NUMBER: IRB2014-0771D IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/18/2015 IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 05/15/2016 **TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION PROGRAM CONSENT FORM**

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL

DIVISION OF RESEARCH
Research Compliance and Biosafety

DATE: May 18, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jean Madsem

TAMU - College Of Education - Educational Adm & Human Resource Develop

FROM: Dr. James Fluckey
Chair
TAMU IRB

SUBJECT: Expedited Approval

Study Number: IRB2014-0771D

TITLE: A CASE STUDY OF FIVE FORMER TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE HIRING OF LATINA SUPERINTENDENTS

Approval Date 05/18/2015
Continuing Review Due: 04/15/2016
Expiration Date 05/15/2016

Documents Reviewed and Approved:

Submission Components			
Study Document			
Title	Version Number	Version Date	Outcome
Email Script	Version 1.0	02/10/2015	Approved
Telephone Script	Version 1.0	02/10/2015	Approved
Questionnaire/Survey	Version 1.1	02/06/2015	Approved
Proposal	Version 1.2	03/03/2015	Approved
FORMER TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS	Version 2.6	03/04/2015	Approved

Document of Consent: Written consent in accordance with 45 CF 46.116/ 21 CFR 50.27

Comments: This study has been approved.

This research project has been approved. As principal investigator, you assume the following responsibilities:

1. **Continuing Review:** The protocol must be renewed by the expiration date in order to continue with the research project. A Continuing Review application along with required documents must be submitted by the continuing review deadline. Failure to do so may result in processing delays, study termination, and/or loss of funding.
2. **Completion Report:** Upon completion of the research project (including data analysis and final written papers), a Completion Report must be submitted to the IRB.
3. **Unanticipated Problems and Adverse Events:** Unanticipated problems and adverse events must be reported to the IRB immediately.
4. **Reports of Potential Non-compliance:** Potential non-compliance, including deviations from protocol and violations, must be reported to the IRB office immediately.
5. **Amendments:** Changes to the protocol must be requested by submitting an Amendment to the IRB for review. The Amendment must be approved by the IRB before being implemented.
6. **Consent Forms:** When using a consent form or information sheet, you must use the IRB stamped approved version. Please log into iRIS to download your

stamped approved version of the consenting instruments. If you are unable to locate the stamped version in iRIS, please contact the office.

7. **Audit:** Your protocol may be subject to audit by the Human Subjects Post Approval Monitor. During the life of the study please review and document study progress using the PI self-assessment found on the RCB website as a method of preparation for the potential audit. Investigators are responsible for maintaining complete and accurate study records and making them available for inspection. Investigators are encouraged to request a pre-initiation site visit with the Post Approval Monitor. These visits are designed to help ensure that all necessary documents are approved and in order prior to initiating the study and to help investigators maintain compliance.
8. **Recruitment**: All approved recruitment materials will be stamped electronically by the HSPP staff and available for download from iRIS. These IRB-stamped approved documents from iRIS must be used for recruitment. For materials that are distributed to potential participants electronically and for which you can only feasibly use the approved text rather than the stamped document, the study's IRB Protocol number, approval date, and expiration dates must be included in the following format: TAMU IRB#20XXXXXX Approved: XX/XX/XXXX Expiration Date: XX/XX/XXXX.
9. **FERPA and PPRA:** Investigators conducting research with students must have appropriate approvals from the FERPA administrator at the institution where the research will be conducted in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) protects the rights of parents in students ensuring that written parental consent is required for participation in surveys, analysis, or evaluation that ask questions falling into categories of protected information.
10. **Food:** Any use of food in the conduct of human subjects research must follow Texas A&M University Standard Administrative Procedure 24.01.01.M4.02.
11. **Payments:** Any use of payments to human subjects must follow Texas A&M University Standard Administrative Procedure 21.01.99.M0.03.

This electronic document provides notification of the review results by the Institutional Review Board