

International School Leadership Development Network Study Summary

We would like to collect information about the research studies being conducted as part of the International School Leadership Development Network. For each study you have conducted (or are conducting), please provide the following information:

1. Research team members' names and affiliations.

Slater, C.L.,	California State University Long Beach
Gorosave, G.L.,	Universidad Autonoma de Baja California
Silva, P.,	Universidad Nacional Costa Rica
Torres, N.	Universidad Nacional Costa Rica
Antúñez, S.	Universidad Nacional Costa Rica
Romero, A.	Universidad Nacional Costa Rica

2. Which project area does your research study address?

Leadership for social justice

Leadership in high-need schools

3. Briefly describe the study setting, participants, data collection instruments, and dates of the investigation.

Purposeful sampling of directors used criteria similar to those of Theoharis (2010) criteria to identify public school directors who believed that social justice was a key reason for their assuming leadership, kept issues of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other marginalizing conditions in focus, and had some evidence to indicate that the school was more just following their leadership. The researchers in consultation with regional educational authorities identified schools that they were aware of that confronted inequality of income, conditions of ethnic and cultural diversity, exclusion from the larger society, and poverty. The schools were also selected because the principals were women who were recognized by regional educational authorities as addressing social justice issues.

During 2016, data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in each school. The protocols were based on those used in other ISLDN studies (Norberg, Arlestig, & Angelle, 2014; Richardson & Sauers, 2014; Slater, Potter, Towers, & Briceño, 2014; Sperandio & Wilson-Tagoe, 2015; Szeto, 2014; Torrance & Forde, 2015). The protocols are intended to bring out the narrative of each school director. Other studies in Spanish speaking areas have used this narrative approach, such as, Coral Aguirre, Caso, and Rodriguez's (2016) work with college students.

The length of each interview was approximately 90 minutes. It was digitally recorded and transcribed. During October of 2016, authors who were native Spanish speakers and residents of the country wrote a narrative for each school director based on the transcript. The narratives were reviewed by team members and translated into English. This study is an attempt to understand the experiences of participants through the systematic analysis of their narratives (DeMatthews, Edwards,

& Rincones, 2016; Samier, 2017; Slater, 2011).. The transcripts and narratives were examined for common themes, and comparisons were made between the experiences of schools directors in each country (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The names of the directors have been changed in the following accounts.

4. List key findings of the study.

The three school directors in this study had many of the characteristics of inclusive leaders as described by Gardner (2011). They were willing to confront injustices based on what they had experienced in their own lives. Liliana, an attractive young leader, grew up in a Costa Rican family in which injustice was viewed as a personal embarrassment. She went to work in a rural school in an area similar to where she grew up. She became active politically and earned the trust of parents. Cecilia's experience in Mexico was more dramatic. She persevered through domestic abuse and raised a child with Down Syndrome; often having to confront school authorities to address his needs. Meanwhile Araceli had developed empathy for immigrants outside of Spain and travelled to see other cultures. The maximum complexity of diversity in her school was a motivation for her to rally on behalf of immigrants.

These three women found their voice to speak on behalf of others. They focused on the community and put parent involvement at the center of their work. Inclusion was at the center of their stories of social justice. Their leadership is consistent with what DeMatthews, Edwards, and Rincones (2016) found in their study of Mrs. Donna, a school director along the Mexico Texas border. Her leadership was oriented toward the lived experiences of marginalized communities, and she saw how their lives connected to achievement in school. She was committed to a view of schooling that included more than academic achievement and gave priority to interaction with the community. She challenged dominant ideologies and had the strength to admit that she did not have all of the answers and had to enter into partnership with parents to educate their children. She had a commitment to promoting socially just family engagement through school-community partnerships that draws upon cultural community wealth and prioritizes the needs of students, families, and communities. (p. 784).

The research question of this study was: how did school directors learn to become social justice leaders? The answer for these women seems to come from early family experiences that gave them strength and core values. Two of the three met adversity in young adulthood which only reinforced their commitment to inclusive leadership. They may have admired other leaders, but we did not ask about mentoring experiences, and they did not mention formal learning experiences in their development. Rather, these leaders reflected and sought out their own learning.

5. Presentations and publications reporting the study.

Slater, C.L., Gorosave, G.L., Silva, P., Torres, N. Antúnez, S. & Romero, A. (2017). Women becoming social justice leaders with an inclusive view in Costa Rica, Mexico, and Spain. *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership*, 2(1), 78-104.