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Teacher Ratings of Principal Applicants: The Significance of Gender and Leadership Style

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This paper focuses on the results of a study examining the relationship among gender, leadership style and principal selection. A sample of 64 Arizona elementary teachers participated in the study. Key issues related to gender and leadership style were identified through a literature review, teacher ratings of four fictitious principals, coded comments, and survey results. Independent samples t tests on mean ratings were used to determine statistical significance. Teachers selected principals based on leadership style rather than gender; reform principal applicants were rated significantly higher than traditional principal applicants by all teacher respondents. Although not statistically significant, gender was associated to respondent selections. Female teachers rated a female reform principal higher than males, and male teachers rated a male reform principal higher than females. Male teachers rated a traditional female principal higher than they rated a traditional male principal, suggesting a gender interaction.

Introduction

Does gender play a role in the relationships between teachers and principals in a school setting? Benn (1989) posited that there are two main gender expectations apparent in schools: Women are linked to mothering and caring and men are linked to power and authority. American school personnel expect both management and strong and effective leadership from principals and superintendents. The traditional leadership style identified with McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (1960, as cited in Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000) and Bennis' (1989) distinction between leadership and management provide frameworks for understanding a new paradigm of leadership. The traditional model is evolving into a participatory management associated with such feminine characteristics as warmth,

About the Authors

A native of Chicago, Illinois, *Dr. Debbi Burdick* received her Bachelor's degree from Western Illinois University where she was named the Outstanding Senior in Education, two masters degrees from Eastern Illinois University, where she was named the Outstanding Educational Administration graduate, and her doctorate from Arizona State University where the Arizona School Administrators honored her as the outstanding ASU doctoral student in Educational Leadership, Dr. Burdick has been an educator for over 30 years. While with the Decatur Public Schools (IL), she served as an elementary and middle school teacher, a teaching consultant and an elementary school principal. In 1988, she was chosen as a Christa McAuliffe Fellow by the U.S. Office of Education for her design of one of the first formal induction programs in the state of Illinois. In addition, Dr. Burdick served as a teaching consultant for the state of Illinois and was an adjunct instructor for Milikin University. Since moving to Arizona in 1995, she has been both an elementary and middle school principal and currently is the Associate Superintendent for the Cave Creek Unified School District. Dr. Burdick lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, with her husband, Gary. They have three grown children who also live in Arizona.

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nurturing, caring and trusting. New ideas reinforce the need for the "feminine modality" (Spore, Harrison, & Haggerson, 2002) in 21st century organizations if they are to be successful, progressive and effective, whatever their product and business.

Has the entry of women in educational administration changed administrative practice? Perhaps. The new call for administrative leadership, which has taken hold concurrently with the push for gender equity, is how women have been stereotyped; it is a call for engagement, participation in decisions, paying attention to the human side of organizations, and raising the place of individual efficacy over organizational efficiency. The restructuring movement calling for the empowerment of teachers, site-based management, and decentralization of authority is in line with the positive stereotypes of female leadership. (Schmuck, 1995, pp. 213-214)

In the 1980s, the emphasis in leadership studies shifted to studying differences in style between men and women. Shakeshaft (1989) put forward the concept of a female organizational culture. Sadker, Sadker, and Klein (1991) asserted that female leadership styles were more effective than those of males in the operation of successful schools. They found women administrators characteristically exhibited valued qualities such as care and concern for others in the organization; an emphasis on teaching and learning; an increased focus on the monitoring and evaluation of student learning; resourcefulness and creativity in securing outside resources to promote improvement of instruction; a democratic, participative and collaborative style; and the effective fostering of connections to the school community. These qualities are associated with more innovative schools, and more reform minded school leaders.

Spencer (2001) recognized that the "gender relationships" between teachers and principals affect their interactions and exchanges. Female teachers were inhibited in interactions with male principals. Gilligan (1982) posited that men seek to know women through knowing themselves; women think that if they know others, they will come to know themselves. Gender affects how people perceive relationships, and perspectives differ for men and women. An American teaching force that is overwhelmingly female, and an administration that is dominated by males, makes differences in perspectives and relationships predictable. In order for communication and trust to develop, gender perceptions, stereotypes, and characteristics must be understood and, if necessary, challenged, in order to develop a healthy and sustaining organizational culture.

Gender and Educational Administration: A Brief Review

Feminist theory, along with other post-modernist perspectives, describes organizational research and theories as male-dominated, male-gendered, and supporting male ways of knowing. Feminists assert that the prevailing norms

in organizations reproduce the systems of male domination, and bureaucratic rules, procedures, and rationality reproduce male manners of power and control (Blackmore, 1989). Individuals are viewed as commodities, appreciated only for their contributions to the achievements of the organization. Ferguson (1984) viewed feminist discourse as embracing values of care, connection and commitment to participatory democracy in opposition to organizations that reproduce patriarchy.

In schools, administrators, who were first socialized as teachers, hold strong beliefs about what men and women do there. In the first half of the 20th century, stereotypes against women were a major factor in the limited number of women administrators. Women were considered unable to maintain order or impart discipline because of their smaller stature and purported lack of strength (Shakeshaft, 1989). Men were considered better at working with the external community issues and with *difficult* issues. Men were seen as able to take charge more capably than women and also viewed as better at establishing contact with students, especially males. Women were viewed as better teachers and men as better managers.

The research of Eagly, Karau, and Johnson (1992) found the most significant gender difference in leadership style was the tendency for female principals to lead in a more democratic and less autocratic style than their male counterparts. Women were inclined to act in a collegial manner and actively bring in other constituents to take part in decision-making. Shakeshaft (1989) found that female superintendents spent more time in classrooms than male superintendents, and female principals spent more time with novice educators with instructional difficulties than did their male counterparts. Women educational leaders, using the feminine traits of inclusion, collegiality and webbing, also appear more comfortable in the role of instructional leader than males (Eagly, Karau, et al., 1992). Bell and Chase (1989) found that women superintendents defined the school organization as being about people and attempted to de-emphasize hierarchies and increase participation and staff development.

Loden (1985) described Rosener and Schwartz's dominant Alpha leadership style as more male dominant and the Beta style as more female dominant. The Alpha is analytical, rational, and quantitative driven. The Alpha is structured through hierarchy and relies on prescribed solutions for problem solving. However, Betas synthesize, add the dimension of intuition to decision-making, think qualitatively, and utilize integrated solutions in problem solving situations (Regan, 1995). Regan dubbed the feminist attributes of leadership, "relationship leadership," and identified five components: collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision. She called

for a double helix model of leadership in which the best of male and female traits is blended into an optimal leader regardless of gender.

Transformational Leadership and Gender

Transformational leaders rely heavily on collegiality (a feminine associated style) and practices benefiting all leaders and their organizations (Rosener, 1990). Women leaders tend to talk more about the "web of connections which emphasizes empowerment, affirms relationships, seeks ways to strengthen human bonds, simplifies communications and gives means an equal value with ends" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 52). In a web structure of management, the figurehead is the heart, and top down layers are not necessary to reinforce status. Influence comes from connections to the people around, encouraging a team approach. The feminine values of inclusion and connection are now viewed as current valuable leadership traits. Additional feminine leadership characteristics are caring, using intuition to aid decision-making, and reducing emphasis on traditional management structures.

Transformational leadership style may be more congenial to women because its communal behaviors assist female leaders with the specialized difficulties of lesser authority and legitimacy that they encounter in the workplace more often than do males. Considerable research has shown women facing negative reactions and dislike in leadership roles, especially when they use authority over men, demonstrate high levels of ability, or use a dominant manner of communication (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Such negative responses can be decreased when female leaders display warmth and lack of self-interest by smiling, supporting others, and expressing interest in helping others meet their personal goals (Carli, 2001). Contingent reward behaviors, such as praising subordinates' well-done performances, can also further positive work relationships (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

The reform, or modern leader, encompasses a list of qualities that typically have been attributed to the female styles of leadership. These attributes position the contemporary leader to lead in a web of connections and relationships, fitting with modern day organizations. Through traits such as caring, collaboration and communication, personal associations foster creative systems with the ability to respond to fluid environments.

Gender-Centered Perspectives

The gender-centered perspective posits that individual attributes vary according to their gender (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, as cited in Carless, 1998)

and women develop a feminine style of leadership that is distinguished by caring and nurturance. Men have been generalized to have a masculine style of leadership that is dominating and task-oriented (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) proposes that individuals behave in the manner that society expects them to behave, as defined by their gender. As women have assimilated into school leadership, they have fostered alternative styles to educational leadership and have redesigned the format of management and leadership for all administrators (Enomoto, 2000). The feminine representation of leadership is comprised of characteristic transformational leadership behaviors of collaboration, democratic decision-making and meaningful relationships between the leader and her subordinates (Helgesen, 1990). There are researchers, however, who suggest this style may simply fit the new paradigm of leadership espoused by newer or younger managers (Shakeshaft, 1999). The structural perspective suggests that the organizational position of the individual is more significant than the gender of that individual (Kanter, 1977). Therefore, in an organization, the managers must meet the expectations prescribed and avoid conformance to the gender roles. Consequently, when comparing gender differences in leadership, the comparisons must be made between men and women who hold the same positions at the same level in the hierarchy in the organization (Carless, 1998).

Leadership and Caring

Noddings (1984) wrote of practical ethics from the feminine view and focused on caring—what it means to care and be cared for. She clarified, however, that "all humanity can participate in the feminine as I am describing it" (p. 172). In order to care, one must have a relationship of a sort—reciprocity. The "one-caring" has a recipient in the "cared-for." Noddings viewed ethical caring as the "relation in which we do meet the other morally" (p. 4). Ethics has historically been expressed in a masculine voice, focusing on principles such as fairness and justice. Men are said to use the approach based on rules and principles to unravel moral dilemmas. Women may ask for more information when having to decide a moral question. They want to discuss the issue with those involved in order to "feel" along with them. To keep her receptivity, the one-caring is cautious of conventions and principles. Because of this more subjective approach to ethics and morality, women have been considered as second-rate when compared to men in this domain (Kohlberg, 1971, as cited in Noddings, 1984).

Noddings (1984) quoted Gilligan (1982) in her description of the feminine caring approach: "Women . . . judge themselves in terms of their

ability to care. Woman's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies" (p. 96). Women are better able to cope with caring than men due to the deep, psychological structures inherent in the mother-child relationship. Noddings' (1984) ethical ideal comes from two thoughts: natural sympathy and the need to enhance the most caring moments we have felt. Caring is grounded in relation—any moral dilemmas becoming shared with the one-caring. Moral decisions may be decided only through the ethical ideal of caring. The one-caring teaches the cared-for by talking about feelings: hers, his, and others. She listens with intensity and gives nonjudgmental advice. She is nurturing. Dialogue, reflection, and practice are crucial for the cared-for. The one-caring is the model and she is committed to the reciprocity that is the defining issue in ethical caring. Noddings posited girls learn these skills through their relationship with their mothers. Boys are often destined to the "impersonal and abstract" worlds of their fathers (p. 123). Mothering and caring are seen as intertwined.

School culture and the ethic of care. The culture of a school has rituals and communication patterns that are unique to the feminine culture (Bernard, 1981, as cited in Valentine, 1995). School cultures link the private world of home with the public world of the workplace. Helgesen (1990) found women to be better managers because of the experiences and expectations of motherhood that they bring with them to the workplace. Motherhood is excellent training for the skills of "organization, pacing, balancing of conflicting claims, teaching, guiding, leading, monitoring, handling disturbances, and imparting information" (pp. 31-32). Mothers find there is always something new to be included into the day, and there is not the expectation of complete control of a daily schedule. Since the days when men were hunters, their work lasted from daybreak to sundown. Yet the women in the hunter-gatherer societies saw their work as continuous and unending, leading them to have more of a process orientation where the emphasis was on the process rather than the closure.

Gender Differences in School Administrators

The literature includes numerous qualitative studies of female educational administrators and the view that women bring favorable practices to the school organizations that have not existed in the past but are essential for school reform (Regan & Brooks, 1995; Sadker et al., 1991). However, it must be noted that few of these studies provide comparable data from males; therefore, answers to questions about gender-related approaches to leadership are not conclusively answered. Fuchs Epstein (1988) argued that the differences between men and women are deceptive, and the overlap between

men and women on almost every measured characteristic make it impossible to recognize categorical attributes that apply universally to all females or all males. When males or females are in similar situations and working under matched expectations, they tend to behave in similar ways. Kanter (1977) believed that stereotyping women as "better" is as limited as thinking they are inferior; such beliefs widen the distance between men and women.

Both males and females exhibit different strengths and have different needs, yet gender stereotypes hamper both men and women (Sadker, 2002). There is a general cultural attitude that men are superior leaders, and many studies have concluded that neither men nor women want to work for a woman (Kanter, 1977). In a 1999 study, Rudman and Glick measured fictitious applicants for "feminine" and "masculine" high-status positions, as described in job descriptions. Male applicants were rated higher than female applicants overall despite a requirement for feminine traits in certain job descriptions. Yet, in other studies evaluating leadership styles, there appears to be no significant preference for men or a noted propensity to perceive men and women differently. When hearing that a new principal will be hired for a school, researchers have found that subordinates hope against the new leader being a woman and then admit their surprise when a woman is appointed and successful at leadership (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987). The preconceptions that are established about leaders and leadership wield potent control over their conclusions and behaviors, even when they are subconscious (Schein, 1985, as cited in Hart, 1995). Shakeshaft (1986) reported that "women . . . are likely to view the job of principal or superintendent as that of a master teacher or educational leader while men view it from a managerial, industrial perspective" (p. 118).

Differences in expectations. A study by Rosen and Jerdee (1973, as cited in Kanter, 1977) found that employees who have worked for a female are more likely than those who have not, to have favorable opinions toward women leaders. Also, women are slightly more accepting of having a women supervisor than are males. People, however, prefer the powerful as noted above and low power can have a negative effect on morale. Therefore, a preference of men may be a preference for power in organizations where women do not hold equal levels of power. Kanter supposed that followers may rate male leaders higher to credit them "imagined future payoffs" (p. 200).

Summary

This review of literature drew upon the Chinese proverb from Helgesen's, *The Female Advantage* (1990): "Women hold up half the sky" (p. xli). This

view suggests that women do half the work and thinking in the world, and, for the sky to be whole, both halves must work together. Multiple perspectives originating from both the masculine and feminine facets of life are vital in the restructuring of schools. It is essential to understand how gender is related to school leadership, and how leadership is associated with the gender perceptions and expectations of followers.

The Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender and elementary teachers' selections of principal candidates. Do elementary school teachers select and rate their principals based on gender and/or leadership style? Are there differences among male and female teachers' expectations? The following sub-questions served as guidelines for the study.

1. Are traditional principal candidates rated differently than reform principal candidates?
2. Are male principal candidates rated differently than a matched group of female principal candidates?
3. Do male and female teacher respondents rate leaders differently?
4. Are there interactions among leadership style, applicant gender, and respondent gender? Specifically,
   a. Is there an interaction between the gender of teacher respondents and the leadership style of the principal applicants?
   b. Is there an interaction between the gender of teacher respondents and the gender of principal applicants?
   c. Is there an interaction among the gender of the teacher respondents, leadership style, and the gender of principal candidates?
5. Are there differences in selections based on respondent experiential and demographic variables?

Research Methodology

To determine whether gender or leadership style was associated with the selection of an elementary principal by elementary school teachers, teachers were asked to make a hiring decision from a traditional manager style or a reform-innovative, participative style, without the knowledge that the researcher was looking at the choice of gender. The researcher explored both the gender of the selected principal and the gender of the respondents. This quasi-experimental design study (see Figure 1) utilized quantitative research

methods to answer questions. Fictitious principal candidate packets, consisting of a cover letter, vita, and job application, were designed by the researcher to represent a female traditional candidate, a male traditional candidate, a female reform candidate, and a male reform candidate. A jury of ten acting or former elementary school principals reviewed the designed packets and survey tool. Jurors were asked to (a) review the packets for how well they captured leadership style, (b) suggest modifications, and (c) to note the time it took to complete the reading of the packet and the survey tool. In addition, a "think aloud" technique was used with a group of four teachers to pilot test and validate the instruments (Haladyna, 1999).

What?
Do elementary school teachers select (or choose) their principals based on gender and/or leadership style?

With Whom?
A convenience sample stratified by gender was used. Subjects were 64 elementary school teachers in Maricopa County, Arizona Schools divided into four subgroups

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How?
In an experimental design study, the teachers read one principal candidate packet and decided whether or not they would recommend for hire the fictional candidate. They then rated the candidate on five levels of performance and responded to survey and demographic questions. Independent variables of gender of the principals, gender of the respondents and leadership style were compared by means and *t* tests.
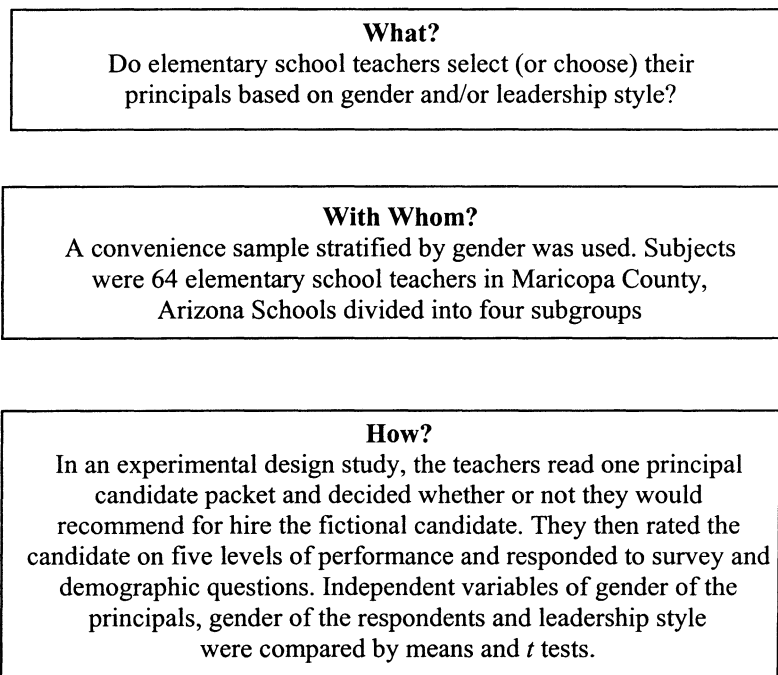

Figure 1. Research design.

Principal candidate packets with demographic survey and principal choice form were sent to a convenience sample, stratified by gender, of elementary schoolteachers in a major metropolitan center in the southwestern United States. Packets were divided among four subgroups. The four principal candidate packets were evaluated by four groups of 16 teachers with equal numbers of males and females. Each subgroup of teachers received one of the four principal candidate packets: female-traditional,

male-traditional, female-innovative, or male-innovative. Teachers reviewed the packets and then completed a response survey. They indicated whether or not they would hire the principal represented in their packets, and they rated the candidate on a 5-point scale. They also explained their recommendation for hiring. In addition, demographic information was requested on the response survey, isolating gender, age, years of teaching experience, and experience working for male and female principals.

Population and Sample

This study used elementary teachers from the metropolitan area for its population. The sample was taken from 11 area school districts: three small to midsize inner-city, central districts; three mid-size to large, urban districts; and five mid-sized to large suburban districts. The districts were chosen for their easy access by the researcher. The initial pool of subjects was volunteers. Principals or individual teachers of the schools were sent an email by the researcher that briefly explained the study and asked that it be forwarded to other teachers on the staff. The study of leadership was used as the rationale for the study with no mention of an interest in understanding gender. Interested teachers were asked in the email to contact the researcher directly via email or phone if interested in participating in the study.

From the pool of respondents, equal numbers of male teachers (32) and female teachers (32) were used for a self-selected, convenience sample stratified by gender. From these two gender groups, 4 groups of equal size and gender were formed with each group containing 8 males and 8 females.

Female participants were easy to locate; the necessary number responded within 24 hours. However, there were considerably fewer male elementary teachers available and finding 32 male volunteers was difficult. A second request, specifically asking for male participants, was made to identify the necessary number of male participants.

Instrumentation

The principal candidate packets contained (a) application materials for fictitious principals applying for a principal position in a fabricated state school district. Four different principal characters were invented: two candidates of the same innovative leadership style, but of opposite genders, and two candidates of the same traditional leadership style, but of opposite genders. The reform principals were named Pamela Peterson and Perry Peterson. The traditional principals were named Andrea Anderson and Andrew Anderson. Participating teacher respondents received only one of the packets depicting one leadership style and one gender. Each packet included

a cover letter describing the style of the candidate, a detailed job application for the position of principal, and a detailed vita outlining the candidate's professional history (see note at end of this article).

Careful attention was given to use language in the cover letters, vitas, and applications that described a traditional leader for one female and male principal candidate; reform descriptors were used for the other innovative female and male principal candidate. Language for the traditional candidates included verbs, such as *designed, implemented, organized and ran, oversaw, led, evaluated,* and *presented and instituted.* Verbs for the reform principals were *introduced, facilitated, assisted, fostered,* and *coached.* Additional skills and educational jargon were used that separated the two forms of leadership. For the traditional candidates, *clinical supervision of staff, essential elements of instruction, qualified evaluator trainer, effective school budgeting, designing teacher supervision instruments, effective manager, efficient management, budgetary efficiency,* and *raised test scores* were used. For the reform principal, skills highlighted were *working closely with staff, collegial models, teacher mentoring, strong coaching relationships, interpersonal communications, team-building, strong listening skills, working well with people, facilitating consensus decision-making, empowering staff,* and *collaboration.* The dissertation title for the traditional principals was *Financing Arizona Schools.* The dissertation title for the reform principals was *Principals and School Climate.*

The application was developed after a review of actual administrative applications from eight different local area school districts. The vitae were designed based on a review of the vitae of the researcher and two other practicing administrators.

The demographic survey was a one-page instrument designed to gather demographic information about the teacher respondents. Surveys were returned along with the consent form and rating/comment sheet. Seven questions were asked in a category format in which respondents checked the appropriate categories of demographic data that pertained to sample subjects personally: age, gender, years of teaching, positions held, current position, number of principals subjects had worked for, and the gender of those principals.

Sample respondents were asked (a) to identify the name of the fictitious principal identified in their principal candidate packet, and (b) decide whether or not they would recommend that the targeted candidate be hired as a principal. Respondents were then asked to explain in an open response format (a) why or why not they would choose the candidate and (b) what positive or negative attributes they identified. A 5-point rating scale ranging

from excellent to poor was included. Space for additional comments was provided.

The pool of participating teachers was stratified by gender and then each randomly assigned to one of two groups into four groups of 16 with 8 males and 8 females in each of the four groups. Each group was sent a principal candidate packet, the two instruments and the accompanying participation letter and consent form through the U.S. Mail. Teachers were matched to principal types through random assignment. All male participant names were placed in an envelope and all female participant names placed in a separate envelope. The four principal names were placed in another four envelopes with sixteen of each name in each envelope (Perry, Pam, Andrew and Andrea). A female name was pulled and matched to Perry; a male name was pulled and matched to Perry. A female name was pulled and matched to Pam; a male name was pulled and matched to Pam. This continued through Andrew and Andrea and then started over with Perry until all female and male names had been pulled and matched to each of the four principal names.

Findings

Demographics

The demographic information survey contained eight questions: age, gender, years of teaching, grades taught/positions held, current position, number of principals worked for, female principals worked for, and male principals worked for. Tables 1 and 2 display the demographic data. The age span of the sample was 23 years to 62 years. The mean age of the sample (N = 64) was 45 years with the female sample (N = 32) averaging 49 years of age and the male sample (N = 32) averaging 42 years of age. In all eight sub-groups, the female sample was older than the male sample. The greatest mean age difference was in the traditional male group (N = 16) with 14 years difference. The smallest mean age span was in the reform male sub-group (N = 16) with only one-year difference between males and females.

The female sample (N = 32) also had more teaching experience than the males with the females averaging 17 years to the males' 12 years. This was consistent in each sub-group pairing. The total sample (N = 64) averaged 15 years of teaching experience with a span of 1 year to 36 years. The largest mean experience difference was in the traditional female group (N = 16) with an average of 9 years difference. The smallest difference was in the reform male group (N = 16) with only one-year mean difference between males and females.

Table 1

Means for Demographic Data of Teacher Sample

Sub-group	Age (years)	Experience (years)	Principals #	Female Principals #	Male Principals #
Traditional Male Principal					
Females	50	15	5	3	2
Males	36	11	4	3	2
Traditional Female Principal					
Females	51	23	9	4	5
Males	43	14	4	2	2
Reform Male Principal					
Females	47	13	4	3	1
Males	46	12	4	3	1
Reform Female Principal					
Females	49	16	6	3	3
Males	43	12	7	4	3
All Females	49	17	6	3	3
All Males	42	12	5	3	2
Sample Mean	45	15	5	3	2

$N = 64$

Table 2

Years and Percentages of Teaching Experience of Teacher Sample

Assignment	Current	Previous
Primary	14 (22%)	30 (33%)
Intermediate	19 (30%)	43 (47%)
7th – 8th	6 (9%)	0 (0%)
Itinerant	2 (3%)	5 (5)
Special Areas	14 (22%)	3 (3%)
Counseling/Social Work	2 (3%)	1 (1%)
Teacher on Assignment	4 (6%)	6 (7%)
Administrator	0 (0%)	4 (4%)
Special Education	3 (5%)	0 (0%)

$N = 64$

Table 3
Mean Ratings of Principals by Age Groups of Respondents

| | Age of Respondents in Years | |
Sub-Group	23-48	49-62
Traditional Male by Female Teachers	3.67	3.40
Traditional Male by Male Teachers	3.50	3.40
Total Group	3.56	3.43
Traditional Female by Female Teachers	3.00	3.67
Traditional Female by Male Teachers	3.80	4.00
Total Group	3.57	3.78
Reform Male by Female Teachers	4.40	4.33
Reform Male by Male Teachers	4.50	4.75
Total Group	4.44	4.57
Reform Female by Female Teachers	4.50	4.00
Reform Female by Male Teachers	4.20	4.33
Total Group	4.29	4.44
Total Sub-Group by Age	3.97	4.06

Note. males = 32, females = 32.

Teaching Experience of the Sample (N = 64)

The teaching sample had worked for an average of five principals. As a group, the females had worked for an average of six principals, whereas the males worked for an average of five. In all groups but one (reform male), the female teachers had worked for more principals than had the male teachers. The number of principals worked for ranged from 1 principal to 28. Women in the sub-groups had worked with more principals than the men except in one group (reform female) in which there only was a difference of one in the mean.

The sample (N = 64) had worked for more female principals than male principals (a mean for female principals 3 with a frequency range from 0 to 10). The female and male samples had worked for an average of three female principals. The mean for *male principals worked for* was two with an absolute frequency range from 0 to 18. The female teachers as a group had worked for an average of 3 male principals, the male teachers had worked for an average of 2 male principals. The mean range was from 1 to 5.

Table 4
Mean Ratings of Principals with Sample Grouped by Years of Experience

Sub-Group	Years of Experience	
	1-13	14-36
Traditional Male by Female Teachers	4.00	3.20
Traditional Male by Male Teachers	3.60	3.33
Total Group	3.75	3.25
Traditional Female by Female Teachers	3.00	3.57
Traditional Female by Male Teachers	3.80	4.00
Total Group	3.67	3.70
Reform Male by Female Teachers	4.40	4.30
Reform Male by Male Teachers	----	4.63
Total Group	4.40	4.55
Reform Female by Female Teachers	4.67	4.40
Reform Female by Male Teachers	4.20	4.33
Total Group	4.38	4.38
Total Sub-Group by Age	3.03	4.00

Note. Dashes indicate no respondents in this group; males = 27; females = 37

Teachers in the sample worked in elementary schools although the configurations of the schools ranged from grades Kindergarten-3, 4-8, Kindergarten-6 and Kindergarten-8 (see Table 2). Thirty percent of the sample were intermediate grade teachers, 22% of the sample special area teachers (physical education, art, music, band, and strings), and 22% primary grade teachers (kindergarten through 3rd). Seventh and eighth grade teachers made up 9% of the sample; teachers on assignment made up 6% of the sample; special education teachers made up 5% of the sample, itinerant staff (reading, English language learners, gifted) comprised 3% as did counselors/social workers (3%).

Research Questions

Findings are presented for each research question. Research #1 asked, "Are traditional principal candidates rated differently than reform principal candidates?"

The independent variable, leadership style, was defined as either traditional or reform style. The dependent variable, preference, was operationalized as ratings of participants on two measures, style and hiring. Respondents were asked to "rate" the candidate whose materials they were

reviewing by applying a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) on five levels of preference for the style of leadership. Respondents were asked to indicate a hiring preference decision.

Based on a rating scale of 1 to 5, the reform principals were rated higher than the traditional principals by the 32 member sample. The reform group, both male and female, received a mean rating of 4.4; the traditional group, both male and female, received a mean rating of 3.6. The mean values were subjected to a t test; respondents indicated a significantly greater preference for reform principals than for traditional principals (mean difference = 0.8, p < .001).

Respondents were also asked to "rate" the candidates by answering the following question: "Would you seriously consider hiring this candidate?" Based on a dichotomous decision of hiring ("yes" or "no"), 100% of the sample that received reform principal candidate packets (N = 32) indicated that they would hire the reform candidate. Based on a dichotomous decision of hiring ("yes" or "no"), 84% (N = 26) of the sample that received traditional principal candidate packets (N = 32) indicated that they would consider hiring the traditional candidate; 13% (N = 5) of the sample (N = 32) indicated that they would not hire the candidate. One response was not usable.

Research question #2 asked, "Are male principal candidates rated differently than a matched group of female principal candidates?" When examining whether male principal candidates were rated higher or lower on the desirability than were a matched group of female principal candidates, the combined mean value for the female traditional and reform principal candidates (Andrea and Pam) was 4.1. The combined mean value for the male traditional and reform principal candidates was 4.45.

Furthermore, there was no significant difference between mean rating values for traditional male and female principal candidates (3.5 and 3.7, respective, p < 0.5) nor for reform male and female principal candidates (4.6 and 4.4, respectively, p < 0.5).

Research question #3 asked, "Do male and female teacher respondents rate leaders differently?" Regardless of gender, the male respondents (N = 32) rated the traditional principals higher (mean of 3.7) than did the female respondents (N = 32) by a mean difference of 0.2. There was no difference, however, in the mean ratings by men and women respondents for reform principals. Both gender groups substantially rated the reform candidates higher than they rated the traditional candidates; the male respondents indicated a mean difference of 0.7 and the female respondents indicated a mean difference of 0.9.

Research question #4 asked, "Are there interactions among leadership style, applicant gender, and respondent gender? Specifically,

1. Is there an interaction between the gender of teacher respondents and the leadership style of the principal applicants?
2. Is there an interaction between the gender of teacher respondents and the gender of principal applicants?
3. Is there an interaction among the gender of the teacher respondents, leadership style, and the gender of principal candidates?"

No significant interactions were found. However, the following observations about mean rankings were noted.

- No differences in ratings of male and female respondents for the male traditional principal candidates were found.
- Male respondents provided a more favorable mean rating (3.88) than did female respondents (3.50) for the female traditional principal candidate.
- Male respondents provided a more favorable mean rating (4.63) than did female respondents (4.38) for the male reform principal candidate. Male respondents provided a less favorable mean rating (4.25) than did the female respondents (4.50) for the female reform principal candidate.

Research question #5 asked, *Are there differences in selections based on respondent experiential and demographic variables?*

There were no statistically significant differences in selections based on respondents' demographic variables as illustrated in Tables 3 and 4. In all groups, the reform principals were rated higher than the traditional principals.

Through a two-tailed *t* test done on mean values, the major finding of this study was that principal selection by elementary teachers is most related to leadership. Reform principals were rated higher than traditional principals. Furthermore, gender of the principal candidate and/or gender of the teacher was not statistically significant when choosing a principal. Although there were some differences when comparing demographic data, these factors were not significant in principal selection. In the traditional principal group, male respondents rated the female principal higher than the female respondents. In the traditional male groups, there was no difference in rating between males and females. In the reform groups, the male respondents rated the male principal higher than the female respondents and the female respondents

rated the female principal higher than the male respondents. Primary teachers were highly represented in the reform sub-groups. Overall, the hopeful finding is that gender appears less important than principal leadership experience and actions. This is a change from the previous generation of school administrators when gender trumped experience and values.

Decision-Supporting Comments From Respondents

A total of 272 comments were offered by the respondents. Not all respondents commented, and some made multiple comments. The respondents who were reviewing principal packets offered more positive comments than negative comments. Approximately 56% of the comments were about traditional candidates; and 44% were about reform candidates. There were 99 positive comments and 55 negative comments—an approximate 2:1 ratio—about traditional principals. There were 102 positive comments and 16 negative comments—an approximate 6:1 ratio—about the reform principals. Respondents were more inclined to speak negatively about traditional candidates than about reform candidates. When the comments were distributed across gender groups, the respondents made more comments about males than female candidates and the comments were inclined to be more positive than negative. There were 109 positive comments and 40 negative comments about male principal candidates—an approximate 2.7: 1 ratio. There were 92 positive comments and 31 negative comments—an approximate 3:1 ratio—about women principal candidates.

Implications

We began this study with an interest in gender that had developed through experiences as spouses and parents and broadened in our professional lives as educators. The focus of the study was initiated from the curiosity of whether or not elementary teachers selected their principals for their gender or their leadership style. The study results were encouraging in that the modern day teachers in this sample have moved past gender issues to the qualities in a leader that impact a high quality school system.

Teachers in this study initially and significantly chose their principals by leadership style rather than gender. However, a slight preference for feminine leadership characteristics filtered into their partiality. In order to build a productive learning community and a culture that emphasizes teaching and learning in elementary schools, the building educational leader, specifically the principal, must meet the challenges through modern leadership. No longer is the building principal simply a manager but as the educational leader, she must use the tenets of reform to foster a focus on student

achievement through innovative and research based instructional methods. In order to center teachers on instructional methods and materials that have been proven effective and train them through valuable professional development, the principal must first and foremost, be an expert communicator who can teach her diverse staff, just as the teachers teach their diverse learners.

Effective communicators affect change and foster reform through listening, caring, collaborating, training, modeling, and connecting with staff. These are all characteristics of the new educational leader represented by the reform principal candidates created for this study. They are also typically feminine characteristics as documented through inquiry and observation in what Shakeshaft calls "a woman's way of leading" (1999, p. 116).

All principals, male or female, must meet the mounting challenges of 21st century schools by embracing the new paradigm of leadership. The business manager prototype no longer fits the requirements for effective school leadership. Teachers want the empowered partnerships encouraged by reform leadership. They want to have powerful conversations with their principal along with collegial respect. They practice reflective discussion and even collegial disagreement with their principals in the spirit of thoughtful practice and accelerating student achievement. Schools are becoming active learning communities where every educator in the school, from novice to master teacher to principal, works as an informed team member and an educational model for others in the education quest. Just as "women hold up half the sky" (Helgesen, 1990, p. xli), men hold up the other half. Regardless of gender, principals must embrace the softer side of leadership as compared to top-down management in order to connect, motivate, and elevate their educational teams.

NOTE

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