

The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Education

35: Gender and Educational Management

Charol Shakeshaft

The research on gender and management begins with women's representation in formal leadership positions, explores access and barriers to access, and examines female leadership patterns. Across countries, one of the first things researchers want to know is how many and at what levels women are found in organizational management. Once women's representation has been documented, researchers pursue data that help to explain why women do not hold more positions in school management. Then, the ways women manage – often in contrast with men – are explored.

Fitzgerald (2002) notes that early studies tend to present women leaders as if they are an 'homogenized group and considerations of circumstances such as ethnicity/social class/location and beliefs have been discounted' (p10). The pioneering studies collapsed the distinctions among women partly to provide a meta-narrative. Many of the early studies assumed the norm of heterosexual, privileged, white women for all women. As research has matured, the intersections of ethnicity, culture, class, and gender have begun to be examined. Fitzgerald comments that although early studies might have included discussions of 'black women in educational management', these analyses were add-ons. 'There has not been a conscious attempt to theorize how power is exercised and differentiated in gender and race based ways' (Fitzgerald, 2002: 15).

The number of representative studies at each of these levels varies by country. In some cases, researchers are just beginning to document the lack of women in educational leadership. In other countries, this information has been in the public domain for a number of years and studies are focusing on female leadership styles and decisions.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Trying to document the number of women in school administration worldwide is difficult: administrative titles and jobs are not comparable across countries, and few countries keep accurate records by sex of administrative office holders. Thus, there is no one study that gives a global snapshot of the number of women in school administration.

The USA is a case in point. There is no single repository for documenting the number of women in school administration. The US Department of Education collects comprehensive annual national statistics on the approximately 94,000 public elementary and secondary schools in 17,000 school districts. These statistics provide insight into many characteristics of schools and schooling, such as school size, finances, class-size, level of violence, teacher attitudes, and instructional approaches. Yet, there are no national figures documenting the number and/or proportion of women superintendents in the USA. With considerable sleuthing and access to the US Department of Education's data files, it is possible to document the proportion of women principals in a representative sample of US schools. However, determining the proportion of women superintendents or superintendents and principals by both race and gender is beyond the scope of available data. Currently, the field primarily relies upon membership counts in administrative organizations, occasional surveys by these organizations, or occasional surveys by the National Center for Education Statistics to report the percentage of women in administrative positions in US public and private schools.

There are a number of explanations for this lack of data, both in the USA and in other countries. Documentation reflects values and governments document what is important and what is valued. Numbers allow comparisons as well as accountability. Without comparable data, it is difficult to know the extent of the underrepresentation of women in educational management or if there are changes over time. Several theorists believe that failure to report proportions of leaders by sex and ethnicity indicates resistance to changing those proportions.

In the USA, women constitute approximately 75% of teachers, the pool from which principals and superintendents are selected. The most recent available figures indicate that approximately 34.5% of principals and 18% of superintendents in the USA are female (NCES, 2003).

Although not directly comparable by year or title, there are individual country-by-country accounts which document the underrepresentation of women in school management and which offer a reliable understanding of international practice. In a study of international patterns of women's educational leadership, Cubillo and Brown (2003) from the UK note that 'the teaching profession in this country and internationally is, with few exceptions, predominated by women. However, a look at the statistics reveals that despite large numbers of women in the profession, they are greatly under-represented in positions of management' (p279). An issue of the *European Journal of Education* (vol 31, no. 4) in the mid-1990s documented that in most European countries, women were less well represented in administrative positions than they were in teaching jobs. Across most European countries, the older the student, the fewer women teachers and leaders are present.

A study of women in educational management in 10 European countries indicates that the majority of school managers are men, while the majority of teachers are women (Ruijs, 1990). This study highlights the disparity between the number of male and female school administrators:

There is a large gap between the percentages of male teachers and principals ... In the average European country (with the exception of Greece) the percentage of female principals should be almost doubled to reflect the percentage of female teachers. This is true for primary as well as secondary education.

(Ruijs, 1990: 1-2)

Women in Third World countries fare no better, according to Davies' (1990) study of women in educational management in these countries. The difference between many of these countries and Western systems is that teaching is not necessarily dominated by women. For instance, Davies reports that in the countries she studied:

Teaching is by no means a 'feminine' profession internationally. At the primary level, 46 of the 71 countries ... have fewer than 50% women teachers; at the secondary level, 50 out of 60 countries have fewer than 50% women. The proportions of female headteachers, inspectors or senior Ministry personnel bear no relation to their proportions in the teaching force as a whole. Women are seriously underrepresented in power positions across the world, even in countries where education is seen as the prerogative of the female.

(Davies, 1990: 2)

In many countries, the supply of female candidates begins to diminish in primary schools. The lack of equitable female education affects overall proportions of women in leadership positions. Lower female education leads to fewer women teachers and role models and eventually fewer female administrators. For instance, in Uganda's over 622 secondary schools with a total population of over 230,119 students, the majority (60.2%) of students and the majority (82.6%) of teachers are male. 'Girls constitute 45% of the student body in primary schools, 30% in the lower secondary ... and 20 in the upper secondary' (Brown and Ralph, 1996: 20). It is no surprise, then, that in Uganda 'female teachers are not usually promoted to higher managerial levels, especially if they are unmarried' (Brown and Ralph, 1996: 20). Table 35.1 provides some rough comparisons of the proportion of women in selected countries in educational roles. The figures from these studies illustrate that women are underrepresented in positions in school management worldwide.

Table 35.1 Women's representation in educational management

<i>Country</i>	<i>Percent elementary teachers</i>	<i>Percent elementary principals</i>	<i>Percent secondary teachers</i>	<i>Percent secondary principals</i>	<i>Percent all principals</i>
Australia					20
Belgium	75	32	55	33	
Botswana		11		9	
Brunei	66	2	49	27	
China			29	11	
Denmark	57	1		7	
Greece	49	41	48	43.5	
France	71	45	50	23	
Ireland	76	47		35	
Italy		34		27.5	
Netherlands	65	12	27	4	
Philippines	77	22	57	12	
Portugal		90		34	
Spain				19.5	
United Kingdom	78	44	50	16	
Uganda			82.6		
United States	83.5	16.9	50.1	3.5	
Zimbabwe	40	1	32	10	

BARRIERS TO WOMEN IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Studies that examine the barriers that keep women from becoming school administrators document a number of reasons that have prevented women from moving into formal leadership positions in schools. Cubillo and Brown (2003) note that gaining access to positions of power transcends national borders. Theories that explain women's lack of progress of the managerial ladder have been surprisingly similar across countries and cultures.

Devaluation of women/sex discrimination/socialization

Sex discrimination in educational leadership is primarily rooted in the devaluation of women in society or the socialization of members of society into patterns and beliefs that support unequal expectations and rewards for women and men. Fitzgerald (2002) argues that Maori women in New Zealand historically represented a society in which women and men were equally valued, even if differently valued. 'One of the more powerful indications of the gender-neutral way in which the Maori world operated was that there are no personal or possessive pronouns in the Maori language that signify a hierarchy of sex' (p16). However, although gender varies across cultures, there is no culture that values women and men the same.

Across cultures, power relations within educational institutions are hierarchical and paternalistic (Acker and Feuerverger, 1996; Blackmore, 1999; Brown and Ralph, 1996; Garrett, 1997; Heald, 1997; Court, 1998). Coleman (2000) documents resistance to female leadership in the UK that is not dissimilar to that of the experiences of women educational administrators in Uganda (Brown and Ralph, 1996) or in the USA (Shakeshaft *et al.*, in press).

The factor that explains the most about the resistance to women in positions of power in schools is the worldwide devaluation of women. Across cultures, women are seen as less than and different from men. While equity gains have been made, different expectations of and attitudes to women and men still exist. Studies indicate that negative attitudes to women by those who hire still constitute the major barrier to female advancement in school administration. Most of why women do not become school administrators can be explained by understanding that women are not valued as much as men and that this bias results in negative attitudes and practices toward women aspiring to be school administrators.

Coleman (2000) found that male teachers resented women head teachers in the UK and Wales and that women continued to have to prove themselves more than men. More than half of the women studied reported 'experiencing sexist attitudes from their male colleagues' (p23).

A study of barriers to women across nine countries – Indonesia, China, Cyprus, Greece, Kuwait, Iraq, Commonwealth of Dominica, Gambia, and Zambia – found similar patterns of stereotypic expectations and social and cultural expectations that devalued women (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). Brown and Ralph (1996) identified patriarchal patterns and male privilege as a barrier to women in Uganda, while Chisolm (2001) pointed to similar issues in South Africa. Chisolm attributed the lack of equitable representation in leadership positions of women in South Africa to the identification of competence in leadership with whiteness, masculinity and rationality.

Similarly, in a study of Catholic principals in New South Wales, Australia, women, more so than men, believed that the environment was unsupportive and that gender issues and discrimination were a primary reason that women were not principals (d'Arbon *et al.*, 2002).

Support systems

A second explanation of why women do not become school administrators is that they lack the support systems to encourage career advancement as well as to help them find and secure jobs. Successful women

administrators almost always acknowledge of the importance of family support. For instance, in Cubillo and Brown's analysis of women managers from nine countries, women reported the importance of support from parents, especially fathers. Cubillo and Brown suggest that paternal support is especially important in many of the male-dominated countries they studied. 'This emphasis on paternal support may have been a consequence of the strongly patriarchal societies into which many of these women were born and socialized' (p285). Luke (1998) found a similar need for family support among women in Singapore. Luke points out that the support is two way: women need the support of their families, and women also maintain nurturing roles within their families.

In addition to family support, women need both networks and mentors. Women are much less likely than men to have formal or informal networks that let them know about jobs and help them be interviewed. They are also less likely to have mentors – whether male or female – to help them negotiate careers.

Support from networks, sponsors, and mentors is less likely to go to women than to men. Blackmore (1999) describes women managers as 'outsiders inside' working within the institution, but not in the male network. Lack of access to this network – not lack of aspiration or confidence – helps to explain women's representation at the managerial level (Cubillo, 1999). Ehrich (1994) examines the differences between networks and mentorships in Australia and argues that while both are important, mentoring is more necessary for career advancement. Citing Still and Guerin (1986), who found that males and females network differently, Ehrich concludes that 'networking is a less powerful practice for women than for men. Not only do women join less powerful formal networks (feminist and sociocultural as opposed to mainstream) but also they network more with females (who have less power than males) and they approach networking differently (i.e. they do not evaluate contacts primarily as keys to providing them with favours and help' (p7).

Stronger networks and sponsorship among men may explain why they are more likely to apply for jobs for which they are both qualified and not qualified and why females generally apply only for jobs for which they are highly qualified. Females rarely apply for positions for which they are not qualified. As a result, there are usually more male applications for a position and a male – even a less-qualified male – is likely to be hired.

When women are successful, they tend to report strong female network support as well as male support. Chisolm (2001) notes that Black women in South Africa draw upon the 'collective strength and capability of women rooted in maternal feminism' (p387).

Women report not only a lack of networks but also hostility within organizations. Cubillo and Brown (2003) found a 'lack of peer support, particularly from the men' across the women leaders they studied. These women noted male hostility toward them as well as describing the ways in which 'masculine culture was enacted to actively maintain power relationships between men and women' (p287). Coleman (2000) found that the women secondary head teachers in England and Wales that she studied were 'patronized' and that they felt 'isolated'. Many of the women reported that males had difficulty with female bosses, and more than half of the women in her studies had experienced sexist attitudes and behaviors from their male colleagues.

Family responsibilities

In most families, women are still responsible for the majority of child-care and homemaking. Women's responsibilities for family life – whether current or anticipated – slow women's progress because of both external expectations and internal accommodations.

Although there is no documentation that being a parent diminishes managerial ability, there are still many who believe that such responsibilities inhibit the ability of women to perform their jobs as school managers, and, therefore, that such responsibilities make women undesirable candidates for administrative positions.

At the same time, women sometimes say that family responsibilities keep them from applying for and assuming

administrative positions, not because these women do not think they could do everything, but because they believe the costs would be too high for their families and themselves. A study of the principalship in Catholic Schools in New South Wales, Australia, indicates that family responsibilities deter both females and males (d'Arbon, *et al.*, 2002). In this study, women at both primary and secondary levels indicated that the impact of the principalship on personal and family life ranked first in importance among the reasons they were unwilling to apply for a principalship. Women and men believed that 'the role intrudes too much on personal and family life' and 'the time pressures are too stressful' (p476). The search for balance among family, work, and personal lives explains some women's reluctance to take on the public responsibilities that come with some leadership positions.

Lack of interest in the job

Some women have indicated that the tasks of administration are not of interest to them because they entered education to teach. However, as these women come to understand that administration takes many forms, they are also likely to show more interest in becoming administrators. Likewise, studies of women administrators indicate that they do the job differently than do men, focusing more on teaching, learning, and children (Shakeshaft, 1987). The more women see other women administrators incorporating the values of teaching, learning, and contact with children, the more likely women are to decide they are interested in becoming school administrators.

Preparation

Studies of the formal preparation needed to become school administrators indicate that in countries where there are certification or educational requirements, women are just as likely as men to have these qualifications. In countries where no formal managerial qualifications are required, such as the Netherlands, but where special programs in management for women have been begun, studies indicate that even when the women held advanced training in management, they were less likely to be hired than men with no training.

Lack of preparation was less likely to be the reason for women than for men for passing up opportunities for a principal's position, according to d'Arbon, *et al.* (2002) in a study of the Catholic principalship in New South Wales, Australia. Men were more likely than women to give 'lack of expertise' as the reason for not pursuing the principalship.

FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES

A number of researchers have noted that, historically, leadership theory is based primarily upon studies of males. Blackmore (1999), Fitzgerald (2002), Shakeshaft (1987), Theobald (1996), and Shakeshaft, *et al.* (in press) are among many researchers that have documented the male framework that dominates studies of leadership. Because of this androcentric conceptual bias, researchers – as early as the 1970s – began to examine how women lead. In the USA, many of these early studies were done to document female capability. At that time, it was important to have evidence to argue that women administrators were at least as good as, if not better than, men administrators. This research was in response to the assertions that women are unfit for administrative jobs due to their supposed inability to discipline students, work with men, 'command' respect, and possess rational and logical approaches to leadership. While these negative attitudes about women administrators have lessened, there is evidence that they are not extinguished.

In these early years, studies that did not compare women to men were deemed 'inadequate' and were not likely to be published. Critics of studies of female populations argued that findings on women were valid only if compared to findings on men. Male behavior was the measuring stick against which all studies of women were to be compared. Therefore, these early studies almost always included both females and males and were generally quantitative.

As more women moved into school administration and as scholars argued that women's styles should be researched in their own right, studies that observed, interviewed, and surveyed only women administrators emerged. These studies sought to identify the ways in which women lead as well as to describe best practice, regardless of whether or not female leadership differed from male leadership. Comparison studies by gender have continued to be published, but the bulk of the studies from 1985 to 2005 are single-sex inquiries.

Although research on women's leadership styles has grown, the norm of these 'meta-narratives' has been that of the white woman in Western countries. Among others, Fitzgerald (2002) notes that:

discourses that universalize the complex participation of women and 'women's leadership' have produced universal and somewhat troublesome narratives that privilege 'feminine' values. In this way, categories of 'woman' and 'educational leader' have become fixed and the possibility for substantive diversity among and between women does not appear possible. (p10)

Female leadership styles

Several themes emerge from studies of female leaders. Particularly in qualitative studies that only examine female behaviors, women educational leaders are portrayed as committed to social justice, relationships, and instruction.

Social justice

Women believe that leadership will bring about change in the lives of children and families. In many studies, women describe their social justice mission as one that they carry out through education. This is a thread that runs through a number of descriptions of what motivates women to enter administration and what keeps them focused (Strachan, 1999; Sanders-Lawson, 2001; Smith-Campbell, 2002; Shapiro, 2004).

Women discuss their desire to 'make things better', right social wrongs, and increase support for underserved groups. Several studies cast women's approach as 'servant leadership' (Brunner, 1997; Alston, 1999) in which women seek to serve others by being the facilitator of the organization, bringing groups together, motivating students and staff, and connecting with outside groups. In these studies, women 'minister' to others. For instance, the 10 African descent women superintendents in Collins' (2002) study described their jobs as 'a mission'. Although not specifically identified as striving for or achieving a social justice mission, the work of Hines (1999) categorizes women administrators as transformative leaders on the Leadership Practices Inventory, and Burdick (2004) found that teachers were more likely to rate women principals, as opposed to men, as reform leaders. Coleman (2000) found that women secondary head teachers in England and Wales valued service through changing the lives of children that they could accomplish.

Spiritual

Women are more likely than men to talk about the spiritual dimensions of leadership. Several US studies document a ministerial approach to leadership that includes a spiritual dimension. This is true for both women of color (Logan, 1989; Bloom, 2001; Sanders-Lawson, 2001; Collins, 2002; Jones, 2003) and white women (Donaldson, 2000; Miller, 2000; Stiernberg, 2003).

These women administrators discuss the relationship between spirituality and the ways they model behavior and inspire others. Further, these women acknowledge the importance of their spirituality to their success and ability to push forward, often in conflictual and difficult situations.

Relational

Since Gilligan first proposed that females value relationships more than males, research on female approaches to leadership have documented a relational aspect. In these studies from the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, female administrators note the importance of relationships as evidenced in

communication styles, teamwork, collaboration, and community connection (Shakeshaft, 1987; Blackmore, 1999; Adler and Izraeli, 1994; Hall, 1996; Jirasinghe and Lyons, 1996). Several studies document women's propensity to listen to others (Bynum, 2000), whether in groups or one-on-one. Researchers have explored the themes of nurturing, emotional connections, and interpersonal relationships among women administrators, connecting these to societal expectations for women as 'mothers'. However, the research is unclear whether these 'connected' styles emerge naturally or whether they are necessary for women to be accepted. Fitzgerald (2002) describes a framework that includes the approaches of indigenous women in New Zealand that value community and connectedness. Coleman's (2000) study of female secondary head teachers in England and Wales found that more than 62% of her respondents identified their leadership style as collaborative, team related, supportive, and consultative. Gibson's (1995) cross-national study of administrators in Norway, Sweden, Australia, and the USA found that women administrators placed great emphasis on facilitating interaction among staff members.

Many, if not most, women educational leaders do not describe themselves as powerful and are uncomfortable with a discussion of their own power in the traditional sense (Formisano, 1987; Carnevale, 1994; Smith, 1996). Comfortable descriptions of power for many women cast power as the ability to help others and is conceptualized as shared (power with) as opposed to power over. For women, but not for men, sharing power is directly linked to positive relationships. For women, power used to help others strengthens relationships, while power used to control others damages relationships.

Instructional focus

A number of studies note that instruction is central to women. Women administrators are likely to introduce and support strong programs in staff development, encourage innovation, and experiment with instructional approaches. Women are likely to stress the importance of instructional competence in teachers and be attentive to task completion in terms of instructional programs. The importance of instruction overlaps the social justice agenda of many women administrators. Coleman (2002), for instance, noted that the most often cited value promoted by secondary head teachers in England and Wales was student achievement.

Striving for balance

Women's leadership styles are developed within a framework of balancing personal and professional needs and responsibilities. Women administrators often report that it is difficult for them to determine the line between personal and professional.

Gender differences in leadership

Identifying themes in the ways women lead does not necessarily mean that there are gender differences in leadership. In an examination of a number of US studies of gender differences in leadership style, the results are mixed and suggest that findings are related to the research method used (Shakeshaft *et al.*, in press). Qualitative studies are much more likely to find differences between men and women than are quantitative studies with 100% of the qualitative studies, but only 14% of the quantitative studies, reporting gender differences.

Similar to the US quantitative findings, studies in the UK (Evetts, 1994; Coleman, 2000) found no differences in leadership styles of male and female secondary head teachers. Pounder and Coleman (2002) in a review of gender differences in leadership argue that there are many additional variables that might account for differences, including national culture, socialization, workplace experiences and socialization, type of organization, and organizational demographics.

Examining gender differences across cultures may be problematic for a number of reasons. Luthar (1996) notes that many of these studies are from the USA or the UK, countries in which democracy is embedded in the national culture. Carless (1998) is skeptical of the generalizability of the leadership experiences across cultures

because of this democratic frame. Pounder and Coleman (2002), referencing research in the Shaanxi province of China (Coleman *et al.*, 1998), indicated that the 'underlying patriarchal values made it very difficult for women to transcend entrenched attitudes to women and take on senior management roles in schools, despite the general approval of the idea of equality between the sexes' (p128).

Where differences are reported, women are more likely than men to be rated by both those who work with them and by themselves as instructional, task-oriented leaders (Nogay, 1995; Spencer and Kochan, 2000). Women are identified as more relational and interpersonal than are men, logging in more one-on-one contacts with staff (Counts, 1987; Perry, 1992; Nogay, 1995). Men are more likely to make contact through memos or directives and women are more likely to meet in person.

Genge (2000) found that women are more likely than men to use humor to forge relations, often making fun of themselves. Humor, as a way to lessen tension and diffuse conflict, is not atypical of women. The research contradicts the stereotype that women do not have a sense of humor.

Garfinkel (1988) reported differences in the ways in which women and men define loyal staff members. For women, a loyal staff member is first an employee who is competent. For men, the most loyal staff members are those who agree publicly.

According to Gardiner, *et al.* (2000) and Eagley and Johnson (1990), the gender context of the workplace makes a difference in leadership styles. Women are more likely to be more interpersonal than males in female-dominated workplaces, but equally interpersonal in male-dominated workplaces. Women are equally task oriented in female-dominated organizations, but more task oriented than men in male-dominated organizations. Among the 12 female secondary principals that Applewhite (2001) studied, leadership approaches were strategically chosen by the context, women sometimes using more female-identified strategies and sometimes using more male-identified strategies. Barbie (2004) and Rottler (1996) both describe a mix of traditionally male and female styles. Anatole (1997) found no specific Meyers-Briggs pattern among the high-school principals studied, although Harris (1991) determined that the female high-school principals she studied used primarily holistic or whole-brain cognitive patterns.

SUMMARY

The research on women in educational administration is remarkably similar across countries and cultures, although there are important cultural and national differences. Nevertheless, women are less likely to be represented in formal positions of leadership in schools than are men across all countries. It is noteworthy that finding statistics on gender proportions in formal leadership positions is difficult in most countries, and assembling comparable statistics across countries is not possible.

Barriers to the entrance of women into leadership positions include patriarchal societal structures and the devaluation of women within societies. These factors lead to sex discrimination and reinforced stereotypes about female inadequacy. Societal expectations that women are responsible for child-care and home maintenance increase the workload for women who work outside the home. Because of these beliefs, women are often assumed to be less available for leadership positions by those who hire. Additionally, many women make career decisions around issues of family, while many men make family decisions around issues of career.

The literature on gender differences in leadership style is mixed, with one set of literature documenting differences and another reporting no differences. Whether they are different from male administrative approaches, women's leadership styles often include a focus on communication, collaboration, teamwork, inclusiveness, and attention to instructional issues.

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