Women in Educational Leadership

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Abstract

Women dominate the education profession, serving in large numbers as classroom teachers. When the focus shifts to educational leadership positions, however, women are grossly underrepresented. This paper will examine the different paths that men and women take to leadership roles within education and the barriers and hindrances that women encounter along the way. Whether it is called the 'glass ceiling', 'sticky floor', or some other metaphor that prevent women from ascending into an administrative position, the genesis is all the same. Women face pervasive gender role stereotypes, a patriarchal system, difference in leadership styles, and other organizational features that discriminate and are biased against women as educational leaders. This will shine light on the disparity and recommendations for creating a more equitable environment for women will be presented. Even though women have made great strides in entering the workforce and achieving leadership positions, this problem is still widespread in education and the only way to change course is to uncover the true barriers and make systemic changes.

Keywords: women, leadership, education, gender roles

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Education has been widely stereotyped as feminized work and that it provides a great schedule for working mothers. This stereotype resulted from educators of the 1800s that declared that women were the 'natural' teachers and were better suited to teach children especially in grade school (LeQuire, 2016). Therefore, women were encouraged to enter education, and they have been ever since. According to the United States Department of Education (2021) for the 2017-2018 school year, 76% of public-school teachers were female and 24% were male, with less male teachers at the elementary school level (11 percent) in comparison to the secondary school level (36%). Translating this into numbers, at the elementary and middle school levels there were 785,151 male teachers in 2014 nationwide compared to 2.4 million females (LeQuire, 2016). Despite these high rates of women in the teaching profession, they are greatly underrepresented in administrative roles. Of the 14,000 school districts in the United States, less than a quarter are led by a woman in a superintendent role and less than 30% have a female high school principal (Olson, 2019). At this rate, it will be 77 years before women are no longer statistically underrepresented. Low rates of women in leadership roles are also present at the higher-education level. Women represent only 26% of college presidents, 13% of medical school deans, and 30% of law school deans (Brower et al., 2019).

The education field is not unique in its lack of female leadership. As in other types of organizations, the rise of women to leadership positions is due to a variety of obstacles or barriers. Male-dominated societal structures and perceptions of women can inhibit the path a woman follows to gain an educational leadership position (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). Internal hindrances such as differences in education or fear of not living up to expectations can also cause women to avoid seeking an administrative role. Additionally, Brower

et al. (2019) claim in academia women experience attributional ambiguity which are situations in which minority groups cannot determine if interactions both positive and negative have occurred due to their minority status or other unrelated reasons. For example, in a study of the effects of attributional ambiguity on performance, women were less successful at complex tasks when discrimination based on their gender was ambiguous than when it was either explicit or nonexistent, suggesting that women were more motivated by the desire to challenge sexist behavior than to feel threatened by it (Brower et al., 2019).

Educational leadership can also be affected by such factors as management, leadership skills, background, and experience (Brinia, 2011). Therefore, to combat the discrimination that women face regarding their leadership abilities, it has been suggested that a clearer definition of school leadership be established. To be successful as an educational leader, a multidimensional approach is necessary as these leaders face various dimensions such as structural, political, symbolic, and human realms (Brinia, 2011). Empirical evidence has also revealed the need for androgynous leader styles in education which highlights how men and women both have qualities that are necessary for leading in an educational organization.

Woman, while representing a large segment of the education profession, continue to face internal and external barriers that prevent them from aspiring and/or seeking an educational leader role. This paper will examine the obstacles or hindrances that women face and will assess the features of a successful leader which will show that women are equally, if not more, capable than men for such positions. Recommendations for practice will be presented to aid in encouraging and supporting women in education administrative positions. These findings can be used for aspiring educators, those currently in practice, and others within the field to create a culture where leaders are respected regardless of gender.

Literature Review

Historically, the education field began as a mainly male-dominated profession but pivoted to one that is predominately female due to changes in society. Education in the early colonies was only for boys from wealthy families and consisted of religion, reading, Latin, and mathematics to aid in college studies and business. These classes were taught by males since females could not attend grammar school or college. However, America's massive social and industrial changes of the mid-1800s transformed the education system and shaped the feminization of teaching (LeQuire, 2016). With the Industrial Revolution, males began to leave the teaching profession to seek wealth in the owning and operating of factories, railroads, mining companies, and in the stock market. The increase of available work in America attracted waves of immigrants, and ultimately children, to eastern cities and states. Additionally, in 1884 public funds began to be used to support the expansion of secondary schools (Armstrong, 2012). With males leaving the profession, more children needing schooling, and the expansion of secondary schools, teachers were in high demand. It was at this time that women were called upon to take the place of male teachers as they were natural teachers, were more benevolent, and were more qualified to work with human development (LeQuire, 2016). Teaching allowed females to hold a high and honorable profession and to gain economic independence, especially for single educated women. By the 1930s female teachers were largely successful in the push to create teacher unions. However, despite the gains they achieved, few females forged ahead into administrative roles (LeQuire, 2016).

Gender Role Stereotypes

There are multiple documented and theorized reasons for the 'sticky floor' that impede women as they attempt to climb the organizational ladder into leadership positions. One of the

primary barriers is that women, regardless of the organization, face bias as leadership and management have been traditionally male-dominated roles. The saying 'women take care and men take charge' perpetuate the stereotype of how men and women ought to be in the workplace (Northouse, 2019). Research on the content of gender stereotypes uncover the themes of communion and agency. Communion orients people to others and their well-being, and they express traits such as concern for others, sensitivity, and nurturance. Agency orients people to the self and their own mastery and goal attainment, and they exhibit characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, rationality, and decisiveness (Eagly et al., 2020; Northouse, 2019). Predominantly, women are viewed as communal and males agentic which arise from direct and indirect observations of each gender in their social roles. These beliefs become prevalent within the culture as people within the society share similar observations and attribute certain behaviors and traits to a group (Eagly et al., 2020).

The gender biases that women face based on these stereotypes are persistent within society, are well-documented within the literature, and are difficult to change. These stereotypes are especially challenging for women as they can lead to biased judgements about who should be leaders. The traits of a leader often align to the masculine agentic characteristics which is expressed in the phrase, 'think manager, think male' (Diez Gutierrez, 2016). For women, the agentic qualities thought necessary for a leadership role are incompatible with the communal qualities that are often assigned to the female gender. Therefore, it can be particularly damaging for women as they attempt to confront them. Women who emphasize competition and instrumentality, typical masculine leadership traits, are perceived as 'too manly,' but then can be viewed as not being 'female enough' if they do not. Likewise, women who emphasize group processes and consensus are judged as being 'too communal' (Brower et al., 2019).

These opposing expectations for women result in the perception that they are less qualified and effective in elite leadership positions (Northouse, 2019). Women that violate gender role stereotypes are penalized in the workplace in terms of hiring, compensation, and evaluations. Researchers have found that confident and assertive women who were not perceived as nurturing received lower hire-ability ratings than men who were not perceived as nurturing (Brower et al., 2019). Similarly, a meta-analysis reviewing gender and the evaluation of leaders showed that women leaders who were perceived as uncaring received lower performance evaluations than men who were perceived at the same level of uncaring (Brower et al., 2019). Women face this criticism from colleagues regardless of the evaluator's gender. It was uncovered that women perceive other women as emotional, aggressive, and high in dominance and would prefer to work for a male manager as they have more trust in male leaders (Brinia, 2011).

Despite the perceived pervasiveness of gender role stereotypes and bias against women, a new analysis is justified to determine if these still hold true. Since the mid-1900s, women labor force participation has increased from 32% in 1950 to 57% in 2018 while men's has fallen from 82% to 69% (Eagly et al., 2020). With such drastic changes in the workforce, it would be hypothesized that the gender stereotypes in the labor market should also show such shifts. Research conducted by Eagly et al. (2020) which is based on national opinion polls of over 30,000 American adults from 2010-2018, show that there is a clear increase in the ascription of communion to women with little to no change in agency. The authors reason that women have been pushed into work roles that emphasize social skills and social contribution which are strongly linked with communal traits. Positively though in these polls, women have made gains in their level of competence relative to men over time.

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Leadership Styles

Although there have been some improvements in the bias men and women face due to gender role stereotypes, in an assessment of male and female leaders, there are still marked differences between the gender's leadership styles. Women tend to be more influenced by a desire for independence, consider their children as motivators more than men do, and tend to be more ethical than males with increased ethical judgement and intention (Brinia, 2011). Females are rising to leadership positions by embracing these characteristics as well as their communal qualities. Modern organizations have shifted to stressing teamwork and working relationships which align to female leadership styles. Women are more likely to employ transformational leadership approaches and place more emphasis on the human dimension of leadership (Northouse, 2019). This leadership style has been described as 'interactive leadership' and is comprised of characteristics such as "encouraging participation, sharing power and information, enhancing self-worth, altering self-interests, relating power to interpersonal skills, and believing that people perform" (Brinia, 2011, p. 40).

While the masculine construal of leadership has decreased over time, this has given rise to something termed gender-based attributional ambiguity where gender roles may be rigid in some situations yet quite fluid in other instances. For example, acceptable gender norms for a female educational leader may differ significantly from the norms for a female business leader (Brower et al., 2019). Even within the same organization, the acceptable gender norms may differ. So, while gender norms differ across generations, ethnic and cultural groups, disciplines, and geographic regions, the inconsistency of gender expectations has leaders from both genders uncertain of how to proceed in some roles (Brower et al., 2019). This has led to some researchers

highlighting the need for an androgynous leadership style that combines the best qualities from both genders (Brinia, 2011).

Patriarchal Structure

Closely related to gender stereotypes and gender roles, is the pervasive phenomenon of a cultural patriarchal structure. Male domination spreads through inequalities in the law, at home, and in the workplace. The long-standing history of this system is a powerful cultural norm and is supported by tradition, education, and religion (Higgins, 2018). Therefore, the patriarchal ideology has become natural and is inevitable in society. The feminist Sylvia Walby in her 1991 book, "Theorizing Patriarchy," cited six areas where male-dominance or oppression of women existed. These included areas such as at home where women do a disproportionate amount of the housework and child-rearing, in the workplace where there exists a gender pay gap, and even at the state level where women are underrepresented in nearly all parliaments, legislatures, and the military (Walby, 1991, as cited in Higgins, 2018). Many of these issues from 30 years ago are still very present today as 72% of women surveyed in 2017 through the Bright Horizons Family Index stated that they felt it was their job to organize child's activities, a gender wage gap is slowing but significant, and only 57 out of 278 speakers of parliament worldwide are women (Kleinjan et al., 2017; Korver, 2021; Soares & Sidun, 2021).

In the workplace, male dominance has taken shape in the development of male camaraderie and the 'think manager – think male' mentality. Within many organizations invisible networks or invisible associations have developed which refer to "subtle, implicit, and in many cases unconscious strategies that men deploy to support other men as they move up the hierarchy of power" (Diez Gutierrez, 2016, p. 347). Others call these networks the 'old boys' club' where men socially interact with upper management outside of the workday often through

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masculine activities and develop strong interpersonal relationships to aid each other professionally (Korver, 2021). Whether it is called an invisible network or 'old boys' club', this social association among males reinforce the idea of men's capacity for leadership positions and make the selection of their peers within the group favorable (Diez Gutierrez, 2016). Women attempting to be accepted by this group or challenge the male candidate that has been backed by the group will be a challenging and difficult course of action.

Women Educational Leaders

The type of leadership that exists within an organization has monumental effects on the culture of the work environment and worker productivity. In a meta-analysis of 146 studies conducted in 33 countries, a significant relationship existed between the leader's gender and long-term organizational performance (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). When looking specifically at educational entities, there is mounting evidence that school leaders and their leadership styles are essential components and determinants in school effectiveness and improvement. Data has shown that school leadership has an impact on the faculty and students within the building. The quality of the leader is a key factor in teacher motivation and the quality of teaching (Brinia, 2011). Likewise, school leaders can influence student morale, behavior, academic performance, and empowerment. To see success within these areas, school leaders must enter the role with a multidimensional approach. In education there is a need for a structural leader to ensure efficiency, structure, and policy as well as a human leader where the leader cultivates empowerment and facilitation. The role also demands a political leader who negotiates and networks with stakeholders, a symbolic leader who carries out traditions and school rituals, and an educational leader who supports the methods of teachers and achievement of students (Brinia, 2011).

Looking at the leadership styles of an educational leader mentioned above, it can be argued that women and their leadership traits and gender-based communal qualities, are not only better suited for the education field through a teaching role, but also educational leadership positions. Past research on student performance has shown that women leaders in education have certain gender-specific behaviors that influence the individual performance of students and the overall function of the school (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). Some research has confirmed that teachers tend to be more involved, collegial, and cooperative with female administration, and student achievement within school and on state ratings can significantly improve when the principal is a woman (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). This is due to women principals using the power of their position to enable a positive energy for change and growth rather than for wielding power.

Studies have revealed that the leadership philosophy of female leaders may be the reason for positive impacts. Women stated that they can make a change in education through the development of certain leadership styles that stress diversity, values-orientation, the need to strive for social justice, democracy and equity, and the importance of a spiritual development (Brinia, 2011). In addition, women education managers tend to place more of a focus on the human dimension of leadership and employ a collaborative, people-oriented style of leadership. Women uphold close relationships with key stakeholders including students, staff, parents, and colleagues and use these relationships for shared decision-making and problem-solving so the leader can concentrate on the search for the best solution to most problems and issues in the interests of the greater good (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019).

Female school leaders may also be more successful in their positions because they are often more prepared and educated for these roles. Statistics reveal that women have more

education degrees than men at all levels (bachelor, masters, or doctoral level) which can be tied

to the research that women tend to be more prepared in advance for leadership positions through

degrees and professional development (Korver, 2021). Additionally, women tend to have more

classroom experience before seeking an administrative role. On average, women spend seven to

ten years teaching in comparison to men's five to six years (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). This

experience increases their knowledge of curriculum and instruction and gives them the

confidence to be a leader of such areas. Females may also be stronger educational leaders

because they wait until they have met all the requirements before applying for administrative

positions (61%), while only 5% of males do the same (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). In analysis of

these trends, however, prolonged time in the classroom, obtaining advanced degrees, and seeking

more professional development may be due to women's family duties and child-rearing (Korver,

2021).

Women bring to educational leadership qualities that enhance their leadership potential in

comparison to men. Some, however, have cautioned that highlighting these differences continue

to perpetuate gender-role stereotypes and are pushing for less pronounced gender delineations. A

meta-analysis of 69 leadership studies found that effective leadership characterized as masculine

has been decreasing over time and is even less pronounced in educational entities when

compared to other society sectors (Brower et al., 2019). This has been confirmed in studies of

female educational leaders. These women leaders report that they feel no substantial differences

in the way they are perceived by parents, teachers, and students (Brinia, 2011).

Underrepresentation

While women have leadership styles that are best suited for educational leadership, they

continue to be underrepresented in administrative roles due to a wide range of constraints. One of

the reasons women hesitate to seek a school management or administrative role is because household and child-rearing responsibilities often coincide with the prime years of a woman's professional life (Brower et al., 2019). Despite the increase of women within the workforce since the mid-1900s, there are gender role expectations that are prevalent where women undertake a disproportionate share of household and parenting duties (Korver, 2021). According to several studies, females' household and childcare responsibilities prevent them from advancing in their career. Garcia's (2015) study of female principals overwhelmingly reiterated the theme that it was a necessity to have a balance between housework and parenting duties and their careers. Without adequate childcare or supports in place, they feel it would be too difficult to manage both school and home responsibilities simultaneously. In one study by Brinia (2011), a well-educated female principal noted that:

> We do display the drive and the motivation to progress, but eventually we are held back by our family responsibilities and get simply get tired somewhere along the way. I believe this is not quite fair, when it comes to reflecting on the career potential that we have compared to what men have (p.47).

Women recognize the struggle necessary to balance both home and work responsibilities, and the lack of women moving further into leadership roles is correlated to the unbalanced proportion of home responsibilities.

In addition, women do not pursue school leadership positions due to cultural and social factors. While gender bias and discrimination were mentioned previously as a barrier that all women face when seeking a leadership position, it has been stated as a hindrance in the education field as well. Notably, women face discrimination concerning their capabilities to be educational leaders which can be detected in the selection and promotion process and while in

the role (Brinia, 2011). While formulating administrative teams, one female principal expressed, "if there is already a woman in one of the administrative positions in the school then a man would fill the other positions. It was not a problem for two males to have administrative positions in the same school, but it was for two women" (Korver, 2021, p. 70). Women experience bias in hiring decisions as governing boards and search committees often exert ethnocentrism and/or homosociality and seek males. Some research has suggested that education administration is a 'male-normed' workplace and that women have a greater tolerance for accepting men as their superiors than men have for accepting women as their superiors (Brower et al., 2019). Once in a position, women leaders may experience microaggressions such as subtle discriminatory acts that is due to their gender or overt microaggressions when they are barred from participating in the 'good old boys' network that can assist in career advancement (Brower et al., 2019).

The feminized view of education also places hindrances on the progression of women into management roles. Because of women's communal traits and gender roles, they can be segregated into positions that impede their rise up the management ladder. Researchers cite occupational segregation that can be both vertical and horizontal. Vertical segregation is the traditional discrimination against gender where opportunities for career progression for women is limited. Horizontal segregation, on the other hand, is where the genders are separated into different kinds of work based on occupational characteristics (Lippa, Preston, & Penner, 2021). In K-12 administration, women are most concentrated at the elementary level and least likely to serve as a high school principal. When extending the view to central administration, only 25% of superintendents in America are female (Korver, 2021). While women are making strides having a presence in educational leadership roles, they still seem to be segregated into roles that hold

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less prestige and may require more communal traits. This holds true in higher education as well as women state they often complete 'academic housework' which refers to women taking on gendered responsibilities associated with caring in the workplace such as mentoring and committee work that can result in an excessive amount of time-consuming and lowly esteemed service work inhibiting or delaying promotion chances (Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). Macfarlane and Burg (2019) found that women professors in STEM subjects were more likely to experience an additional sense of responsibility to fulfill service commitments in comparison to males. Likewise, typical women responsibilities also arose in a qualitative study of women Vice Chancellors at universities in the United Kingdom and Germany by Read and Kehm (2016). They found a pattern where women were elected or appointed when there were problems and change was needed and wanted. Some of the participants described this in terms of the duties of the traditional housewife where 'cleaning up' or 'straightening out' had to be done. These women felt the reasons for their appointment are valued less culturally in contrast to the more highly valued qualities of 'charismatic' masculinized leadership traits (Read & Kehm, 2016).

Female educators that have moved into leadership roles have provided insight into their ambitions as well as the aspects of their position that they enjoy. Many women who participated in a study of educational leaders stated that they had been in the education field for several years and sought a higher position that allowed them to stay close to teaching and students (Brinia, 2011). They cited a strong support system, both personal and professional, that encouraged and aided in their seeking of an administrative role and while serving in that position (Kruse & Krumm, 2016). This highlights that working mothers need a partner to take on more home responsibilities, and shows the importance of social networks within the school system to support and encourage women to seek leadership roles. Women leaders also displayed a drive to

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somehow give back to the educational system as a principal where they could continue to transfer knowledge to teachers and students. Other respondents had an ambition from an early age for a management level position to gain recognition and job satisfaction (Brinia, 2011). Most of the female school leaders within this study did not want to move any higher in a leadership position as it would take them further away from the classroom which they find to be the core of their job description.

The lack of women leaders is evident in all organizations from government to industry to education. The education system is unique in that it generally is a field that is dominated by women within the classroom, but when the focus shifts to the leadership within the school, a great disparity is evident as well. Women's underrepresentation within these managerial roles is not due to a lack of competence or desire, but is rooted in long-held social structures and norms that are difficult to overcome. Women are fighting against gender role stereotypes, patriarchal systems, leadership norms, and home responsibilities that make leadership positions challenging to seek and acquire. To have more equitable opportunities for females, these norms must be challenged.

Analysis

The root and continuance of the lack of women educational leaders is complex, multifaceted, and has been studied from many different angles. Social scientists have researched the influence of gender socialization, gender roles, and gender stereotypes, as well as social policies that make it difficult for women to synchronize work and family roles (Lippa, Preston, & Penner, 2014). Others have approached the subject through the lens of the differences between educational backgrounds of men and women and the human capital, while others dove into the interests, values, and motivation of both genders. While the literature was analyzed based on

these perspectives, this section will highlight the four major themes that have emerged and will relate these themes to existing theoretical frameworks.

Through all the research that has been conducted on the lack of women leaders in education, as well as other industries, the barrier that continues to stand in the way is social structure of gender roles. These gender roles segregate women and men into different professions and normalize men in leadership roles. In a study of 845 school superintendents in the United States in 2015, males were more likely to be in a relationship (94.2%) in comparison to females (81.3%). These studied female superintendents are nearly three to four times more likely to be childless in comparison to their male counterparts (Robinson et al., 2017). Likewise, 68% of female administrators studied by Hoff, Menard, and Truell (2006 as cited by Kruse & Krumm, 2016) stated that they waited until their children were grown because of the challenges in balancing their home lives and extra duties that were required beyond the school day. Obviously, young women are not finding the progression into school leadership as appealing especially if they aspire to have a family or are currently in a relationship or a mother. Since the demands of the family is not an issue cited by men in research conducted on their leadership, it can be seen that there exists a social norm that predominantly exists with women. Diez Gutierrez (2016) states that it is considered acceptable for men in leadership positions to devote less time to their families, yet the opposite reception can occur for female leaders. Women that hold leadership positions are viewed by some as bad mothers since they will have less time with their partner and children and will neglect household chores (Diez Gutierrez, 2016).

The paradigm of inequality of women can be analyzed using the Feminist Standpoint Theory, a subset of Critical Theory. As with other feminist theories, it would be somewhat misleading to represent it as a single set of epistemological commitments or a single

methodological approach, and it is best described as 'standpoint theories' (Bowell, n.d.). These theories specifically deal with exploitations based on sex and gender and stress the view that the social situations experienced- her gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and physical capabilities-, or her standpoint, are central in forming what we know and limiting what we can know (Bowell, n.d.). Since women's lives are much different than men's in almost all cultures and societies, they "see and understand the world in ways that are different from and challenging to the existing male-biased conventional wisdom" (Narayan, 1989, p. 256, as cited by Kruse & Krumm, 2016).

This is certainly true in thinking of how women and men both view entering a leadership position within a school. As mentioned previously, men most often do not consider family and home demands when moving into leadership positions. It has been shown in the literature that women educational leaders are less likely to be in a relationship or have children in comparison to their male counterparts. If they do have families, most educational leaders claimed that they waited until their children were older before seeking an administration position. Their view of the leadership role and conflicts with home duties aligns to the Feminist Standpoint Theory. Additionally, while the position has the same requirements and demands regardless of gender, each sex approaches even applying for the role with different perspectives. Females tend to have more years (average seven to ten) of classroom experience than males (average 5 to six) before moving into an educational leader role (Korver, 2021). Furthermore, women often have more than the required educational degrees and wait to apply for administrative positions until they have secured all the requirements needed – 60% of women compared to 5% of men (Korver, 2021). Through the Feminist Standpoint Theory, it can be seen that the individual's social

identity led to different social norms which affected their behavior towards seeking an administrative position and the timing of such a move professionally.

Another theme that was recurring within the literature was that even if women do attain an educational leader role, there still exists gender discrimination due to the dominant patriarchal social culture. To this point, Diez Gutierrez (2016), in their study of female principals in Spain frankly states that "low female representation in school leadership positions is more related to structural aspects of our society and cultures that stem from the dominant patriarchal worldview transmitted from generation to generation, which is so ingrained that it is difficult to change" (p. 344). While an analysis by Lippa, Preston, and Penner (2014) show that occupational sex discrimination has lessened over the past 40 years, there now exists vertical and horizontal occupational sex discrimination. This is evident in the fact that some claim that the superintendency is the most gender stratified occupation in the United States with less than a quarter of all superintendents being female (Korver, 2021). Additionally, while more woman have moved into administrative roles, they are concentrated at the elementary level or in positions based on curriculum and instruction which may require more communal qualities (Kruse & Krumm, 2016; Eagly et al., 2020). Social norms and customs still continue to herd women educational leaders into roles that often do not have as much prestige such as the superintendent or high school principal.

This structure can be assessed using the Social Role Theory which explains that potential disparities between women and men leadership behavior are based on the differences in their roles (Campos-Garcia & Zuniga-Vicente, 2019). These gender roles are formed as people observe male and female behavior and infer that the sexes possess corresponding dispositions (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Supporters of the Social Role Theory attribute the persistence of gender

roles and discrimination from generation to generation to cultural processes that are difficult to

break. Looking deeper into the origins of such a cultural phenomenon, some argue that the

genesis of sex differences in social behavior stem from evolved dispositions that differ by sex or

by social structure that places women and men in different constructs (Campos-Garcia &

Zuniga-Vicente, 2019). Thus, women educational leaders in America were raised in a society

that had these strong gender role beliefs and consciously or subconsciously play out their role.

The hesitancy to seek a leadership position is a result of these strongly held social beliefs. How

others respond to the women in an administrative position stem from their own beliefs about

what employment positions the genders should be appropriated to.

Another point that has emerged from the literature is the perceived differences between

the leadership styles of men and women. Since women are viewed as more communal (selfless

and concerned with others) and less agentic (self-assertive and motivated to dominate), their

leadership styles are often viewed from these perspectives (Campos-Garcia & Zuniga-Vicente,

2019). There seems to be a conflict between the mainstream press and academic researchers

whether there actually is such a difference. Press articles have claimed that men and women lead

differently and women are more effective in contemporary society, while researchers argue that

there is little to no relationship between gender, leadership style, and effectiveness (Northouse,

2019). Meta-analyses of studies on leadership and gender found that women are not necessarily

more likely to lead in a more interpersonally-oriented and less task-oriented manner than men.

However, it was found that women do lead in a more democratic manner which may be an

adaptive behavior since women are devalued when they are viewed as leading in a masculine

manner (Northouse, 2019). In terms of effectiveness as a leader, a meta-analysis was conducted

and men and women were equally effective leaders, but there were noted differences such that

men and women were more effective in leadership roles that were aligned with their gender (Northouse, 2019). For example, women were less effective in military positions and more effective in fields such as education, government, and social services.

These perceived gender stereotypes regarding leadership styles are especially damaging to women as conflict arises between the traits needed for a strong leader and the types of qualities held by each gender. According to the Congruity Theory, the agentic characteristics required for a leadership position are in direct incompatibility with the predominantly communal qualities that are stereotypically attributed to women (Northouse, 2019). This has led to women being perceived as less favorable for leadership roles and if women exhibit the behaviors that are attributed to a strong leader, they are viewed negatively. Therefore, attitudes are less positive toward female leaders, and it is more difficult for women to attain a leadership role and achieve success (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This is just another example of the barriers that women face and must overcome to ascend into a leadership role.

Lastly, there is a lack of female educational leaders because of institutional or organizational blockades that often create invisible forms of discrimination or hardship. Diez Gutierrez (2016) stresses the power of invisible networks or associations in influencing the scarcity of female educational leaders. These networks serve to employ subtle, implicit, or sometimes unconscious strategies that aid men in supporting other males like themselves professionally. Sometimes called the 'old boys' club', these tight-knit networks reinforce the expectations of leaders as male and provide informal support and mentoring while at the same time discouraging females due to the challenges they would face to seek a leadership position (Diez Gutierrez, 2016). Men within these social circles strengthen these ties at work over lunch or dinner, outside of work over drinks, or through masculine activities such as sports. The

existence of the 'old boys' club' highlights what females lack within the workplace to secure a leadership position. Women do not have these support systems and it was noted that there is a lack of female role models for aspiring leaders. The literature stressed the importance of mentors for females as women who were in a leadership role stated that they formally or informally had a mentor who encouraged them to seek a leadership role and supported them within the position (Korver, 2021).

The connection between a potential leadership candidate's support base and their progression into a managerial role can be tied to the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm. Through this perspective, individuals are attracted to others who are more similar to themselves in terms of demographics, personality, social status, values, and beliefs than otherwise (Kuo, 2019; Wells & Aicher, 2013). This paradigm suggests that similar attributes directly relate to their interpersonal connection and creates positive expectations for the future (Wells & Aicher, 2013). When women find mentors who bond based on this principle, positive outcomes can come to fruition. The development of the male-dominated social networks within organizations can be explained according to this paradigm. When males within the organization have more similar characteristics, a strong bond is created which impacts future outcomes. Looking at this inversely, women will be prevented from being pulled into this powerful social network due to having less similar characteristics both externally and internally. Wells and Aicher (2013) state that within organizations, dissimilarities have been connected to negative effects such as the hindering of social integration and peer relations.

With an analysis of the literature, four themes have emerged that were prominent in many of the articles and were reiterated throughout as well. The first theme was the social structure of gender roles which was viewed through the Feminist Standpoint Theory. The second, gender

discrimination due to the dominant patriarchal social culture, was analyzed with the Social Role Theory. The third was the difference in the perceived leadership styles of men and women which was explained with the Congruity Theory. And lastly, there are barriers within the institution or organization that hinder women from either seeking or securing a leadership role. This theme can be summarized in the phrases, 'think manager, think male', and was assessed with the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm. Each of these themes are not unique to women in the education field and educational leaders but can be broadened to many other industries and fields. If these pervasive barriers are going to change, society needs to recognize their prevalence and make adjustments to change course.

Ethical Implications

The leadership of women in educational settings and the lack of women in administrative roles can be viewed through an ethical implication lens. To understand the leadership of women and how it sometimes is in contrast to how men lead, a review of the moral development of women and men should be assessed. The timing and the progression of psychological and moral developments of adolescent boys and girls can have effects on the actions of the individual into adulthood. A connection between this development and the morality and responsibilities that adults of each gender value are a result of these early interactions. Therefore, it is imperative to review the moral development of each gender to gain a better understanding of women leadership. Likewise, the lack of women leaders in education may be a result of discrimination and inequalities between the genders that must be rectified to prevent this bias from perpetuating and influencing future generations. It is the duty of school entities to create environments where social constructs display equity and equality for all marginalized groups.

The leadership of women, in contrast to men, can be assessed according to each gender's moral development. Feminist writings have led to the development of an 'ethics of care' which places an "emphasis on traits valued in intimate personal relationships, such as sympathy, compassion, fidelity, discernment, and love" (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001, p. 369). Ethics of care is most often displayed by women while men predominately exhibit an ethics of rights and obligations. Carol Gilligan, in her book, *In a Different Voice*, reiterates this claim that women speak in a voice of care that centers on responsiveness to care for and take care of others. This has led women to develop moral concerns that are sensitive to the needs of others and to include in their judgement other points of view (Gillian, 2016). Through this lens it can be seen that women are not inferior to men in their leadership abilities, but place value on different aspects due to the integral factors of their moral development.

Since most psychological studies and other ideals have been based on males, women's strength of personal relationship and care has been devalued. Women continue to be viewed as secondary to men with their unique strengths ignored. There is a perpetuation that man's experience in these roles stands for all human experiences and the voice of women that do hold these positions are shut out (Gilligan, 2016). Hence, the situation has been created within society that the social ideals and expectations of men and women in leadership roles is hard to amend. Ethically, the discrimination and bias that women face should be of more concern to more people. In a country formed on the principles of freedom and equality, there cannot be half of the population that is viewed as inferior or incapable of becoming leaders. Much can be gained from women in administrative roles. So while it may be different to some based on their ideal of what managers should look like and how they should behave, more women need to be encouraged to pursue leadership positions if this discrimination is ever going to change.

The inequality in the number of male to female school administrators, whether intentional or unintentional, perpetuates sex discrimination. Schools especially should not be the place where gender stereotypes are reinforced and where girls indirectly observe the barriers they face to ascend to a managerial or administrative role (Krover, 2021). "We silently say to young girls that leadership is a masculine role and when they see that the majority of their teachers are female but the leader of the school or school division is a male we continue to perpetuate the substantial gender roles that are still part of our culture" (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009 as cited in Krover, 2021, p. 68). As it has been continually shown, despite the strides that have been made in gender roles since the 1970s, the role of school administrator continues to display marked sex segregation (Lippa, Preston, & Penner, 2014). For adolescent girls experiencing a school environment that is rooted in highlighting the experiences of powerful men, this marks the beginning of self-doubt and development of psychological dissociation between societal expectations and the hearing or listening to one's voice. The internalization of this environment will add another layer to the glass ceiling for women, but this barrier, unfortunately, will be one that girls place there themselves. They will doubt their abilities to be leaders and will be exposed to the social and cultural barriers that they face in their pursuit of leadership if they so choose. Without a more encompassing view of what leadership can look like, the next generation of boys and girls will continue to accept past gender roles and stereotypes in regard to their leadership abilities and capabilities. Ethically, if society values equity, equality, and diversity, the lack of female representation in school administration must be an area of concern.

The lack of women educational leaders has many origins and continues based on a multitude of social norms and stereotypes. The great disparity between the number of men and women in these positions can be analyzed with an ethical focus. From a broad perspective, there

exists social norms and gender role stereotypes that influence how women and men should act, what professions they should seek, and what leadership looks like. Narrowing the focus, women and men are then raised with these social norms and they become part of the fabric of their moral and psychological development. At the individual level, young males and females internalize and perpetuate the expectations of their gender which lead to discrimination and biases. Research continues to show these trends and their effects are damaging and discriminatory. Ethically, it must be rectified.

Policy Recommendations

The question then arises, how can the continual lack of female educational leaders be remediated? To address the answer, each of the barriers that prevent women from ascending into a leadership position must be studied and scrutinized. Within this paper four hindrances were identified: gender role stereotypes, a patriarchal system, unequal home responsibilities, and different leadership styles among the genders. This section will highlight policy recommendations that should be implemented to assist women in overcoming these challenges.

To help increase the number of females in education leadership, other women need to pave the way. Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente (2019) found that gender equality and the creation of more inclusive schools resulted from having a greater number of female administrators. When a woman principal led a school, the proportion of women in leadership positions was greater than when the principal was male. These findings resonate with previous research that argued that high-status women have favorable attitudes towards other women managers, and this leads to the forming of alliances, collaboration, commitment to changing social structures, and bringing awareness to gender-based leadership (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). Women in educational leadership roles also impact female teachers within the

buildings they serve. The conclusions from the research conducted by Campos-Garcia and

Zúñiga-Vicente (2019) could not preclude the possibility that women teachers working under

female leadership feel empowered even though there were no measurable effects on school

performance.

     Despite the challenges that women face in acquiring a leadership role, there are several

practices or changes that can aid a female in her advancement into leadership. First, for a woman

to attain a role as a school educational leader, she must be hired. The long-standing pattern of

male dominance and relationships outside of work influence the hiring process. Known as the

'old boys' club', males will often participate in masculine activities, such as sports or socializing,

which create strong interpersonal networks (Diez Gutierrez, 2016 as cited by Korver, 2021).

Statistics revealed that 65% of male superintendents in 2000 previously coached athletics and

that coaching provides the easiest pathway to the high school principal position (Kruse &

Krumm, 2016). Tied closely to the cronyism of the social boys' club is the fact that when hiring,

homosociality, or selecting candidates who closely resemble themselves or the previous leader, is

applied (Korver, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative that state school code or school district board

policies be amended to ensure that hiring committees, whether composed of school board

members or school personnel, include more females and the hiring process be more objective.

The criteria used to evaluate candidates needs to be explicit to limit the influence of other

decision makers and each hiring committee members' conscious and unconscious bias (Eagly &

Carli, 2008). Although research by Óladóttir and Christiansen (2021) revealed that more female

board members felt their efforts to hire female CEOs were thwarted by their male counterparts,

this policy would create a movement in the progress of women leaders.

Secondly, women need school-based leadership development programs that are geared towards women. This can include providing mentoring and coaching for women, by women, in the field to provide advice, support, confidence, and insight. The American Association of School Administrator's Mid-Decade survey in 2015 revealed a lack of mentors for females aspiring to and currently serving in a superintendent position (Robinson et al., 2017). Therefore, a truly effective program must be developed and implemented in a well-planned and resourced manner that will supply women with role models and support systems. There is research to support a high correlation between women who held administrative positions and the identification of a mentor that aided them (Korver, 2021). However, this mentoring program does not only need to be for current school administrators. Since women tend to seek encouragement to advance, this program will also aid those female teachers still in the classroom who may have the leadership abilities and skills to feel empowered to seek an educational leadership position (Korver, 2021). Even if this formal program is unavailable, informal mentoring relationships can provide effective professional support and improvement for the mentee.

Since one of the major barriers to women aspiring to leadership positions is the conflict with home and child responsibilities, work-life support must be strengthened, and old ideologies must be challenged. This can begin with changing the tradition that household responsibilities fall solely on the shoulders of women. In order to accomplish this, females need to negotiate with both spouses and their workplace to change role expectations at home and at work (Northouse, 2019). Within the household, there needs to be a more equitable distribution of responsibilities and/or acquire outside help when necessary. At work, the ideas of uninterrupted full-time careers and separation of work and family must be challenged and women need to push for reforms such

as job-protected maternity leave (Northouse, 2019). While the time demands of a school administrator are great, the structure of the role can be adapted to be more attainable for working mothers.

And lastly, women need a way to rise above the gender-role stereotypes that hinder their rise to leadership. A set of standards must be developed for women that incorporate competence and the appropriate amount of femininity. One way women can accomplish this task is by combining their communal qualities such as warmth and friendlessness with agentic characteristics like competence and assertiveness. Research shows that females have become more masculine in their leadership by expressing assertiveness and power without being perceived as less feminine (Northouse, 2019). Overall, the incongruity between female gender roles and leadership roles is on the decrease and leadership roles are viewed as less masculine and more androgynous. To continue to monitor these changes between leadership and gender and declines in gender-role stereotypes, more research must be conducted. Further research can also focus on the development of the standards that blend competence and the appropriate amount of femininity for women in leadership roles.

<div style="text-align:center">Summary</div>

Women in leadership roles was not studied until the 1970s since women before this time were often excluded from holding such positions. Research into this topic has changed throughout time including the research questions and findings. Initially scholars began by asking, "Can women lead?" which certainly is no longer applicable. The literature cited above has shown that women can be leaders and bring qualities to the role that make them successful. Questions then studied included, "Do men and women lead differently?" and "Are men more effective leaders than women?" (Northouse, 2019, p. 403). To these questions, studies have

shown that in some organizations, there is a difference between men and women and their leadership styles. Women are more likely to employ transformational leadership approaches and place more emphasis on the human dimension of leadership (Brinia, 2011). In the education sectors, female school leaders value the attainment and sustainability of good relationships with students, parents, teachers, and the community (Brinia, 2011). Regarding the question of whether or not women are more effective leaders, studies have shown that there exists a small but statistically significant relationship between leader gender and long-term organizational performance (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019). In the education field, the relationship between women in leadership and school performance is positive if they occupy the highest level of the school hierarchy (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019).

While these studies demonstrate that women can be successful in leadership roles, there still exists the question, "Why are women underrepresented in elite leadership roles?" (Northouse, 2019, p. 404). Specifically in this paper it was assessed why there continues to be a deep lack of women in educational leadership positions. To this, there are several reasons cited as to what prevents women from ascending into leadership positions. Women face bias as leadership and management have been traditionally male-dominated roles. Male leaders are viewed with characteristics such as confidence and assertiveness while women are stereotyped with communal traits such as concern for others, sensitivity, and nurturance (Northouse, 2019). These conflicting gender stereotypes cause women to experience cross-pressure where they attempt to exhibit male leadership traits but then are labeled as being too masculine or not feminine enough. However, if female leaders emphasize group processes and consensus they are judged as being too communal (Brower et al., 2019).

In addition, there are also pervasive gender stereotypes and gender roles that segregate women into workforce roles that are not as prestigious. Statistics revealed that in education women predominately serve in the teacher role. One researcher claimed that the low representation of women in leadership positions within schools is directly related to the dominant patriarchal worldview that is ingrained into society (Diez Gutierrez, 2016). This bias prevents the hiring of women in leadership positions as some research has suggested that women have a greater tolerance for accepting men as their superiors than men have for accepting women as their superiors (Brower et al., 2019). Women moving into leadership roles also need to challenge the 'old boys' club' and the invisible network that has been forged among men within the organization. If women were in administrative positions, they were concentrated at the elementary level and were least likely to serve as the head of a school district as superintendent. And lastly, women also face cultural and social pressures based on these stereotypes and gender roles that are not experienced by men. Women are more likely to have household and childcare responsibilities that hinder them from taking on leadership positions at work that would require more time and energy.

From this analysis there does not appear to be different barriers or hindrances for women in educational organizations in comparison to women in other industries. Challenges that are experienced by women such as discrimination and cultural/social pressures exist for women no matter what business or industry they are in. However, it was revealed that the perception of effective leadership characterized as masculine is less pronounced in educational entities when compared to other society sectors (Brower et al., 2019). Females in educational leadership report that they feel no substantial differences in the way they are perceived by parents, teachers, and students (Brinia, 2011). In terms of female leadership, women appear to present their unique

leadership style in comparison to men in all industries. This includes leading with a style that stresses diversity, values-orientation, the need to strive for social justice, democracy and equity, and the importance of a spiritual development (Brinia, 2011). There is evidence to suggest that this style of leadership translates into long-term organizational performance, and in the education field, the relationship between women in leadership and school performance is positive if they occupy the highest level of the school hierarchy (Campos-Garcia & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019).

In conclusion, women represent a large segment of the education profession but face internal and external barriers that prevent them from aspiring to and/or seeking a leader role. These challenges include gender-role discrimination that prevents their hiring and performance evaluation as well as cultural/social pressures such as household responsibilities that must be addressed. Ethically, society can no longer ignore the discrimination and bias that have become commonplace against women leaders. To address these issues several recommendations were presented. These include more public attention to the problem, leadership development programs that are geared towards women, other women forging the way, strengthening work-life supports and challenging old ideologies, and the development of standards for women that incorporate competence and the appropriate amount of femininity. Through these changes adjustments can be made to educational organizations and society at large that will create more hospitable environments for women to thrive in leadership roles and where leaders are respected regardless of gender.

About the Author

Amanda M. Forgione is a current doctoral candidate in the Strategic Leadership and Administrative Studies program at Maywood University embarking on a dissertation regarding gender discrimination experiences by K-12 female educational leaders. She holds a Master of Science in Educational Leadership with PA K-12 Principal Certification from Wilkes University and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Scranton in Secondary Education with a concentration in Biology where she completed and published a thesis entitled *The Effects of Inquiry-Based Instruction in the Included Science Classroom.* Ms. Forgione is a high school biology and chemistry teacher at Mid Valley Secondary Center and an adjunct professor in education.

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