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"You have an affiliative leadership style. That's going to be a problem for you.": Feminized orientations to school leadership and navigating the pipeline

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All gender identity is socialized, but anything gendered feminine is marginalized. Up to this point, work on gender and education leadership has remained within the bounds of patriarchy and thus been confined to binary, hierarchical gender definitions. This study pushes past prior work to advance a more complex and messy understanding of how identity impacts aspiring leaders in their careers. The main question for this study is as follows: How do gender identity and gender performance impact the career journeys of aspiring K12 school leaders? Using Carol Gilligan's Listening Guide Method, this study contains the interviews of 18 aspiring K12 school leaders who are graduates of Education University. This study focuses on the key finding that relational leadership, which we come to understand as a feminized orientation to leadership, had a significant impact on aspiring leaders' career journeys. This feminized way of leading, keeping relationships at the center of how school leaders thought about their roles, created obstacles and barriers for them on their way to leadership and for some subjects, once they became school leaders. This study focuses on the interviews of four of the subjects: Rachel, Winston, Taylor, and Charlie. These interviews are representative of the themes around relational leadership. Rachel is a white, heterosexual woman who is at a mid-to-late career stage. She has struggled to advance into school leadership because she thinks about her colleagues first and the institution second. Winston is a white, heterosexual man who was successful in becoming a school leader but has left education all together. He found that the higher he ascended as a school leader, the more he was forced to sever his relationships with faculty and students. Taylor is a gender non-conforming school leader who keeps relationships central to his leadership but has questions about how a non-DEIJ-focused leadership position will enable him to show up. Finally, Charlie is a Black, heterosexual woman school leader who has been able to keep relationships central to her work. All four interviews demonstrate how relational leadership is marginalized, keeping white patriarchy as the framework for school leadership.

KEYWORDS

gender, sexuality, leadership, K12, pipeline

Introduction

This study is the result of an investigation into how gender identity and gender performance impact aspiring K12 school leaders' career trajectories. The 18 participants are all graduates of the same leadership preparation program at Education University. They are men and women, queer and straight, and of various racial and ethnic identities.

The purpose of the study was to understand how gender impacted their leadership trajectories. While over 80% of K12 teachers, nationally, are women, around one-third of superintendents are women, and women are underrepresented in the principalship at every division (Ingersoll et al., 2018). There is something happening between being a teacher and becoming a leader that continues to hold women back, but that must now be considered in a less binary manner. It is no longer sufficient to say women are not entering the pipeline because they have children or do not want to lead in the way the job requires (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). The construction of womanhood cannot be relegated to mothering or being relational. These are *feminine* (Gilligan and Snider, 2018) ways of being, but they do not exist in biology. Women are socialized to be this way, and intersecting identities put women into more and more narrow boxes (Alston, 2005; Watson, 2020). Therefore, by describing women as only a narrow group of attributes, the field of educational leadership is further reifying white patriarchal norms. Gender is a performance (Butler, 1990) and an identity, and being born with one identity does not determine all the ways we establish our identity. We need a complex and messy (Manalansan, 2014) framework for gender that enables us to see how the pipeline enables some to traverse it while rejecting others.

This study is unique in that it did not focus solely on women, but rather looked at a diverse set of aspiring leaders, to understand the systems and barriers to their leadership through gender identity and performance. This study focuses on one of the findings around relational leadership, which, in a white patriarchal social hierarchy, is defined as *feminine* leadership. Prioritizing intimacy, as well as connection to others, is seen as a feminine trait in US society (Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Relational leadership is a feminine performance of gender (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan and Snider, 2018). In this study, both men and women, of different races and sexualities, who exhibited more relationally focused leadership styles encountered difficulty in the K12 leadership pipeline.

The K12 School Leadership literature on gender has been almost exclusively focused on women and school leadership (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011), with few studies examining how men's gender identity affects their career path. An exception is the work of Bass and Alston (2018), who has studied Black masculine caring and how it impacts their practice as leaders. Bass writes that some of Black men's practices run counter to white patriarchal leadership schema, thus putting Black men at odds with a leadership schema that requires them to be individualistic and uncaring. It is these qualities that white patriarchy socializes as *masculine* leadership traits. Bass' work opens a window into a more expansive, intersectional understanding of gender identity and moves scholars toward seeing a less binary and stereotypical gendered leadership.

Feminist and transfeminist scholars inquire as to what gender identity might look like apart from white patriarchy. Going back to the work of de Beauvoir (1949), Friedan (1963), Gilligan (1982), Anzaldua (1987), and Butler (1990), educational leadership scholars should be thinking about gender identity and its intersections as socialized and not biological or intrinsic.

Transfeminist scholars have pushed gender identity past the bounds of patriarchy and moved into imagining a world where gender identity cannot fit within a neat matrix of categorization

(Enke, 2012; Manalansan, 2014; Barcelos, 2019; Chu, 2019). Literature studies on how white supremacy and patriarchy are intertwined, as well as work on intersectional gender identities, add another important dimension that must be considered in any study of gender and educational leadership (Crenshaw, 1989; Hill Collins, 1990; Gilligan and Richards, 2016). Keeping scholarship in a genetically deterministic binary, i.e., men's leadership or women's leadership, continues to limit who enters the school leadership pipeline by reinforcing a binary system of gender that often ignores intersections of identity. The scholarship, by defining caring and community as *feminine* and being individual and uncaring as *masculine* (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan and Snider, 2018), ends up perpetuating the idea that women and men lead in separate ways, rather than calling into question how the pipeline is socializing individuals into *feminine* or *masculine* behaviors.

Pulling on all of these threads, this study uses Gilligan's Listening Guide (1995), an interview-based method employing three "listensings" that allow the researcher to resist binary identity categorization. The Listening Guide is both a method and a methodology and provides the analytic framework for the study. The Listening Guide is a method that provides a way of analyzing the interview, and it is a methodology in that it calls upon the researcher to replace judgment with curiosity throughout both the interview and analysis process. The researcher stays close to the text during the three listensings of the interviews, similar to how one might do a close reading to analyze literature, only allowing the researcher to compose an analysis after completing the three listensings. It requires the researcher to abstain from putting any of the languages or interviews into bins (Shay, 1994) until the final step. The result is a composite portrait of gender and leadership that should not be restricted by patriarchy or white supremacy and is complex in its full realization of the identity of each interview subject. A messy (Manalansan, 2014), complex understanding of gender identity and its inward effects, gender performance, and its outward projections, will enable aspiring educational leaders to understand how gender plays a role in the leadership pipeline.

Literature review

Gender and educational leadership

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* that the construction of women was socialized. As she asserted, the biological components of those born as women, ovaries and breasts, do not force women into material feminine behavior (wearing dresses and red lipstick). Aside from performative femininity (Butler, 1990), women's roles were considered to be wives, mothers, and keepers of the home (de Beauvoir, 1949). However, women often do not perform all of these traditional characteristics of femininity, or any of them. What Beauvoir and subsequent theorists of gender like Betty Friedan, Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldua, Patricia Hill Collins, and Andrea Long Chu have all grappled with is the question of whether a lack of adherence to the unwritten rules of womanhood makes an individual any less of a woman.

While these gender theorists were grappling with such questions, those in educational leadership ask different questions about why women were underrepresented in the field and what to

do about it (Marshall, 2000; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). They wondered about how women's leadership, so often ignored in the literature, might look different than men's leadership. As a result, I argue that the study of gender and educational leadership is or has been synonymous with the study of women and educational leadership. In this way, men become the invisible gender. Men are not studied in relation to their gender and are infrequently judged by whether their leadership is aligned with their masculinity (Gardiner, 2002). Non-binary and transgender leaders are rarely considered, if at all. When women are studied or theorized as educational leaders, authors frequently imply that they are white and heterosexual (Grogan, 1996; Marshall, 2000; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Blackmore, 2013, 2014). Leadership performance (Butler, 1990) determines success through the pipeline, so rather than ascribing behaviors to all men or all women, research needs to articulate a more complex understanding of gender performance so that scholars understand how the educational leadership pipeline works.

This and other work focused on the experience of women educational leaders demonstrated that there was an alternative to white, masculine, heteronormative leadership. Arguably, Shakeshaft (1987) and Grogan (1996) work legitimized the study of women as leaders. An alternative narrative emerged from their work: the hero leader is not the only way to lead. It is legitimate to lead with community and not to be the first person in the room to speak. With each subsequent generation of scholarship, another layer of understanding the complexity of gender identity and performance has been added (Bloom and Erlandson, 2003; Alston, 2005; Beard, 2012; Horsford, 2012; Horsford and Tillman, 2012; Watson, 2020). Black feminist thought forged another way to study gender and educational leadership and articulated the experience of Black women leaders, but the dominant discourse is still that there is one way that these female identities—"women," and often "Black women"—lead. Looking at critical theorists in gender studies, one has to begin to question the assessment in educational leadership that all women are the same, just as Simone de Beauvoir questioned this premise in 1949. In addition to painting this group of "women" as a monolith, women's intersectional identities of race, sexuality, and ability need to be threaded into the discourse as well. Critical gender theorists (Gilligan, 1982; Lorde, 1983; Cohen, 1997; Ferguson, 2004; Enke, 2012; Manalansan, 2014) offer educational leadership researchers some ideas on how to approach this messy, complex understanding of identity.

Critical feminist, transfeminist, and queer theory: Toward a more expansive understanding of gender in educational leadership

Friedan (1963) ends *The Feminine Mystique* with this thought:

Who knows what women can be when they are finally free to become themselves? Who knows what women's intelligence will contribute when it can be nourished without denying love? Who knows of the possibilities of love when men and women share not only children, home, and garden, not only

the fulfillment of their biological roles but the responsibilities and passions of the work that creates the human future and the full human knowledge of who they are? It has barely begun, the search of[sic] women for themselves. But the time is at hand when the voices of the feminine mystique can no longer drown out the inner voice that is driving women on to become complete (p. 456).

She was the mother of the modern women's movement. Many have argued that without *The Feminine Mystique* there may never have been a push in the United States to get women working outside of the home. Critique of Friedan is that she wrote exclusively to white women (Hill Collins, 1990), who, when able to work outside of the home, were able to do so because Black women took care of the white children at home. While Friedan wrote these words in 1963, I see the parallels between what Friedan thought then and the current discourse around women as leaders in education. Friedan and her peers believed that women were only seen as walking wombs, with little value outside of their ability to bear children (Friedan, 1963). Women's entire self-worth was tied up in homemaking and the family. There appears to be a parallel line of thinking in educational leadership discourse that says women find balance in managing their homes and their districts (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Again, the implication is that to find a complete identity, there has to be a private life and a professional life that involves working and taking care of a family.

Rather than orient our conversations toward male or female, it is important to think of gender identity on a spectrum. There can be a practical need to categorize people for the purpose of coalition building, the default of describing an entire group as women, without nuance, makes them the only "gender" (Butler, 1990). Masculinity becomes the norm that everything revolves around, and rather than building coalitions, women become occupied with defining in-groups (white, heterosexual women) and out-groups (queer women, women of color), thus narrowing the working definition of gender (Butler, 1990; Hill Collins, 1990).

Gender identity is not a result of biology but rather a complex matrix of socialization that everyone goes through (Butler, 1990; Enke, 2012). All gender identity is constructed with attributes that are categorized as feminine perpetually pushed to the margins (Enke, 2012). The construction of gender lies at the intersection of sociology, psychology, anthropology, and history, and thus, more complex frameworks that attend to these issues need to be applied when studying women's experiences whether they be in educational leadership or elsewhere.

Theoretical framework

Carol Gilligan's human voice framework: Connection, knowledge, and power

Gilligan's later work (Gilligan and Snider, 2018) focused on the matrix of white, heterosexual patriarchy and how that keeps all women marginalized. Unlike *In a Different Voice*, which I discussed earlier, her more recent research is more nuanced, taking on board nuances of race, class, and sexuality and their intersections with

gender identity (Gilligan and Richards, 2016; Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Like Butler and Enke, Gilligan and Snider (2018) argued that most ways we perform our gender had been socialized through patriarchy and white supremacy. One of the most important moves that Gilligan and Richards (2016) make in their research is explicitly tying white supremacy to patriarchy. White men have controlled the power in the United States since its inception, and part of their project in controlling political and social power has been to keep all Black people and women out of power. While the ways that this project manifests itself are different in terms of the female experience and the Black experience, the point at which this power is exercised is common (Gilligan and Richards, 2016). Similar to educational leadership, white, heterosexual patriarchy continues to sit at the nexus of power in other spaces in the United States. This is reflected in the way research is and has been constructed in the space. Marginalized gender identities are pushed to the edges of educational leadership research as well.

Gilligan and Richards (2016) argued that feminism is an integral part of evolving leadership. They wrote the following:

Why feminism and why now? Because it was feminism that first drew our attention to how the conversation about gender was framed. It was feminism that revealed the patriarchal framework as a framework, a way of seeing, and led us to hear the patriarchal voice as a voice: a way of speaking about things rather than a statement of how things are. To take an example close to home, it was feminism that turned our ear to a different voice, raising implicitly the question: different from what? And thus revealing that the voice we had been taught to hear not as a voice but as the truth was in fact speaking from a patriarchal standpoint, where the gender binary and hierarchy were taken for granted. It was feminism that taught us to listen for and to hear the gender binary and hierarchy in, say, the elevation of reason (masculine) over emotion (feminine), mind over body, the self over relationships, white over black, straight over gay, culture over (mother) nature, justice over caring, and on and on (p. 124).

Patriarchy, in and of itself, is what keeps the binary intact in all of its forms. When discussing socially just leadership, whether we as educational leadership research scholars claim it or not, we are talking about patriarchy. White men continue to hold the keys to decision-making in our society. Approximately 70% of school superintendents (Modan, 2020) and heads of independent schools are men. Currently, 74% of United States senators are men, 76.8% of United States House of Representatives members are men, 67% of the justices on the Supreme Court are men, and 92.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs are men. There is only one sitting Black female senator, and there is one Black woman sitting on the United States Supreme Court.

System integrals to the functioning of society, like patriarchy and white supremacy, are just as embedded in education as they are in other social programs and corporate institutions. That is evident in the absence of all women and all people of color in positions to lead in both government and the corporate world and including schools as well. Speaking recently with a professor at the University of Delaware, I was reminded that most national surveys offer no gender identity beyond male and female. Schools play an

important role in forming people's ideas about the social world. As Sizer and Sizer (2000) wrote, the students are always watching us, learning how to behave in the world based on how adults in schools interact with one another (Sizer and Sizer, 2000). With only 30% of superintendents identifying as women (Modan, 2020), students are conditioned at an early age to see that men lead buildings and school districts, while women are with them day to day in the classroom.

Gilligan's most recent work, co-authored with Gilligan and Snider (2018), continues to question why patriarchy is so prevalent and provides a framework that may show people a way out of patriarchy's stronghold. Gilligan articulately shows that under patriarchy, men are taught to be divorced from their feelings. She refers back to masculinity as the "I don't care" ethic. At a young age, boys are told to hide their feelings in an effort to be more masculine (Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Those early messages manifest into male-identified adults who are taught that their feelings are unimportant (Gilligan and Snider, 2018).

Women are taught to stay silent, which Gilligan refers to as the "I don't know" ethic. Gilligan interviewed some adolescent girls where she pushes them to tell her what they think, and the girls will respond by telling Gilligan that if they share their ideas, nobody will want to be around them (Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Women are socialized into keeping the truth to themselves, particularly if they believe that their thoughts will not be popular in their social group. Both of these pathologies keep people from having authentic human relationships. Gilligan posits that this is the human voice: The ability to have authentically voiced relationships between people where neither is forced into the silence of knowledge or silence of intimacy (Gilligan and Snider, 2018).

The human voice can be embodied by any gender identity and exists beyond binary gender and patriarchal constructs. Women are more likely to hear the human voice because they have become trained to hear their own dissonance within the patriarchy (Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Speaking in the human voice is a political act of resistance and runs counter to how we have been socialized into performing our gender roles (Gilligan and Snider, 2018). Much of what Gilligan and Snider write echoes in the early work of Beauvoir, who sought to clarify what it meant to be called a woman. Gilligan's discourse also allows for a level of complexity absent in educational leadership discourse—the human voice can be complicated or enhanced by the subject identity intersections of race, sexuality, and ability. The researcher does not have to isolate gender within Gilligan's framework and ignore other identity markers and how they influence gender identity.

Materials and methods

Data and collection

This study of aspiring K-12 school leaders required a method that would enable marginalized voices to be heard, prioritizing silence as much as language. The Listening Guide Method (2015) is adopted from psychology and phenomenology, as well as influences from close textual reading, as one would do in literature. The Listening Guide (2015) was founded in opposition to other forms of interview coding, which either put data into predetermined

or binary categories. The Guide serves as both a method and a methodology, and the three “listenings” outlined in the Methods section served as the tool of analysis. Feminist psychologists believed that these other methods disappeared the undertheorized portions of subjects’ narratives (Sorsoli and Tolman, 2008; Cruz, 2020).

Data analysis

The Listening Guide is both a method and a methodology and served as the tool of analysis in this study. The first step of the Listening Guide is to come up with a real question by taking stock of all that the researcher knows about the research question and what they still need to investigate. Then, the interview is conducted with the interviewee. The interview is semi-structured, and researchers are encouraged to follow the subject and where they go with the interview. The interview then goes through three “listenings”, which are analogous to types of coding in other methods.

The first listening is called “Listening for the Plot”. The researcher takes note of what is present in the interview and what is absent. The researcher is encouraged to make two lists: one list with everything that comes up in the interview and a list of everything that the interviewer notices is absent. The second list is subjective but is informed by what the researcher knows about the subject or based on the culture in which the interview takes place. The researcher takes note of culture by noting the material space in which the interview takes place as well as the geographical space and whatever contextual clues are evident (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan and Eddy, 2017).

The second listening is called listening for the “I”. How does the self move through the interview? The researcher goes through the transcript of what the subject said and takes out each “I phrase” which consists of I and the subsequent verb. It is up to the interviewer to listen to the interview in this phase as well, to try and figure out where stanza breaks occur in creating this I poem.

The third listening is for contrapuntal voices. This comes from the phrase in music; contrapuntal means a counter melody that goes against the main melody. In this section, the researcher returns to the questions that guide their inquiry, goes back through the interview, and tries to decipher where those layered voices exist. The researcher is also supposed to be thinking about how the different voices come into conversation with one another, to reveal the multiple layers of the psyche and how they deal with the contradiction (Gilligan, 2015; Gilligan and Eddy, 2017). In my analysis of the interviews, I used all of the steps of the Listening Guide.

For this study, I interviewed 18 graduates of the school leadership master’s program at Education University. Notably, 10 interviews were analyzed because of the rich data that the Listening Guide yields. The purpose of the Listening Guide is not generalizability: It is to create a picture that cannot neatly be put into bins. Our impulse as researchers is often to immediately put our interview subjects into categories. The Listening Guide says to the researcher, before you categorize, before you analyze, you must listen (Gilligan, 2015).

With 10 interviews, I reached saturation. This study focuses on four interviewees because their stories clearly demonstrate

the theme of relational leadership. The interviews were all conducted on Zoom and lasted between 45 and 90 min. I then hand-transcribed each interview and went through the three steps of the Listening Guide to analyze the interviews. The students at Education University were distributed in both public and independent schools. I used a snowball process to gain participants—asking them for recommendations on whom I should speak to next. This study focuses on four of the interviews from the larger study (see Table 1).

The purpose of the study was to understand how gender identity and gender performance impacted aspiring school leaders’ career journeys. Several themes emerged from this study, which used the Listening Guide (2015) analysis for 10 of the 18 interviews. Interviews that were selected for analysis were picked because the stories were compelling, and the participants represented a diverse selection across gender, race, and sexuality. This study focuses on the finding of how leaders who were relational, a performance that we understand as feminine, faired in the K12 leadership pipeline. This was one of three main findings of the study and the focus of this study. Being a relational leader was not incumbent on being a man or a woman, being Black or white, or being gay or straight. There were participants of all identities and intersections who described themselves as motivated by a connection to others and were energized by working closely with students and faculty. Using Gilligan and Snider (2018) framework, I understand relational leadership as feminized leadership. It is a gendered behavior and one that we see as feminine. It is an important performance to see as gendered.

When the analysis is composed and written up as an article, each step of the Listening Guide contributes to that analysis. However, they are not typed up as individual steps in the composition. The hallmarks of a Listening Guide study are in the long block quotes and in being present in the voice and psychological world of the interview participant. It is also common to see the voice of the researcher in the analysis. This makes the composition of the analysis transparent to the reader, as opposed to having it narrated by an unnamed voice. The final analysis may sound like life history, but the steps to get there were quite different.

Independent schools and public schools as context

In assembling this article, a question has been raised as to what contextual differences exist between independent schools and public schools. Some independent schools pre-date the Common Schools movement and were set up as institutions for wealthy white boys (Khan, 2012). It could be argued that independent schools, therefore, had an extra layer of white patriarchy to overcome in diversifying their leadership pipeline. However, public schools may have been designed to have a white female teacher force, but the history of public schools documents that women, white or otherwise, were never supposed to lead public schools (Blount, 1995). Therefore, I argue that the contexts are more similar in terms of the structures that shape who has access to leadership than not, and the fact that most of my interviewees worked in both contexts also shows that there is more fluidity between the two contexts than common discourse perhaps suggests.

TABLE 1 Interview participants.

Name	Gender	Race	Experience	Current school	Position
Rachel	Female	White	Public/Indep.	Independent	Not applicable
Winston	Male	White	Independent	Independent	Not applicable
Taylor	Queer	White	Independent	Independent	DEIJ Director
Charlie	Female	Black	Independent	Independent	Division Head

Independent schools are also often conflated with the highest levels of economic privilege, as people conjure up the most resourced schools in the United States when they hear the term. They think of historic boarding schools, such as Phillips Academy Andover or Phillips Exeter Academy (where I attended high school). These two independent schools have the endowments of colleges and programs to rival many colleges as well. However, the reality of these few is not representative of independent schools in general. Many independent schools are highly tuition-dependent, and according to the National Association of Independent Schools, overall independent school enrollment is on the decline and still has not returned to enrollment levels before the 2008 financial crisis (Orem, 2022).

I spoke with John Gulla, the director of the EE Ford Foundation, over Zoom. EE Ford is the only foundation that awards grants to independent schools. Therefore, John is uniquely positioned to understand the independent school landscape and where it fits within education.

John told me that 90% of students are enrolled in public schools. Of the remaining 10% of students, 9% are in Parochial schools. The remaining 1% of students are in independent schools (this matches the 2021 National Association of Independent School data on how many students are in independent schools nationally), and of that 1%, approximately one-fifth of students are in schools like Exeter and Andover. I point this out to problematize the idea that all independent schools are incredibly well-resourced or share a similar culture. Independent schools are as diverse as public schools are in their makeup.

The clear difference between independent and public school leadership is the structure: independent schools have division heads instead of principals for lower, middle, and upper schools; independent schools have academic deans, deans of students, and deans of faculty; and independent schools have department heads like the director of admissions and director of advancement (Khan, 2012). I have included a table of the interview subjects at the end of this section so that you can see each interviewee's experience and current position.

Findings

"You have an affiliative leadership style. That's going to be a problem for you."

Prioritizing intimacy and the construction of school leadership

In the chapter on Resistance in Gilligan and Snider (2018) *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* they write of a human voice that resists the

tropes of patriarchy, which render women silent and men divorced from their emotions.

This voice of healthy resistance was the "different voice". A key discovery of the research on development lay in the recognition that this "different" voice is a quintessentially human voice, a cadenced, relational voice, a voice that joins thought and emotion, mind with body, and self with the relationship. It is the voice we hear in children's emotional honesty and perceptiveness, a voice we harbor within ourselves. It only comes to sound different following an initiation that alters the resonance, changing how voices sound and also how they are responded to and resounded by others. Thus, a voice that is emotionally attuned and responsive comes to sound "feminine" and become associated with relationships, with caring, and with women in society and culture where it is women who, for the most part, take on the responsibility of caring for others (notably for children, the old, and the sick). By contrast, and in accord with the gender binary and hierarchy, a voice that is self-assertive is heard as independent and comes to sound "masculine", associated with privilege and with men in a society and culture where for the most part, men hold power. In a patriarchal universe where a human voice becomes a different voice, it is as though relationships and the self are at opposite poles. So after a while, it becomes difficult to remember what otherwise is self-evident: that, in truth, self and relationship are interdependent (p. 37–38).

The pipeline exists in the world of white patriarchy. That means that my participants are living in the gender binary that Gilligan outlines, which makes it difficult to imagine anything else. Being relational is seen as feminine while prioritizing the individual is seen as masculine. How these behaviors, which I think of as part of the performance of gender, impact aspiring school leaders varies due to the intersections of their other identities. I am going to focus on the stories of four of my participants in this study: Rachel, Winston, Taylor, and Charlie. These four stories illuminate larger themes that came out of the 10 analyzed interviews, with each narrator using a story to describe how relational leadership played out in their careers. Rachel is a White woman who has held leadership positions in independent schools and has been questioned because she puts her relationships with colleagues above institutional priorities and has suffered as a result. Rachel has been teaching for over 30 years. Winston found the loss of relationships with others to make school leadership untenable for him. Winston has been teaching for 20 years. Taylor sees relationships as integral to his work in equity and inclusion, and Charlie, a Black woman who has led independent schools and found that relationships make her work stronger as well as something she puts central to the work that she does. Taylor is 12 years into his career, and Charlie is 15 years into her career. Each of these stories illustrates the complexity of how prioritizing relationships complicates becoming

a school leader, each story clearly articulating the intersection of positionality, intimacy, and leadership.

Rachel

Rachel is a lifelong educator. She has worked in both public and independent schools, all at the secondary level. When she was studying for her master's degree at Education University, she was also working at a single-gender boarding school in the Northeast. Rachel has worked at co-ed schools, and her husband is a lifelong educator as well. Rachel's trajectory into independent schools was never clear—she counts herself as a proud graduate of public schools, and she always saw herself as ending up in public schools. Her first position out of college was in a public school. Rachel majored in French in college and teaches high school French.

When I spoke to her, Rachel was taking time off from teaching. Her husband, who also teaches at a boarding school, has campus housing, and Rachel recently had a very disheartening experience with school leadership and was trying to figure out what her next move would be.

Rachel is an excellent and beloved teacher, but she wanted more than to be in the classroom. She loves working with faculty and helping them think critically about how they teach. Rachel gained extensive experience at the first independent school, where she worked on the student-life side of things. She was the dean of the girls in the summer school at the independent school where she worked, and she served as an advisor at all of the schools where she taught and worked in the dean of students office. However, while in her last position, she wanted more. She decided to attend the School Leadership Program at Education University and wanted to move to the academic and faculty side of school leadership. She told me, however, that she got some feedback from one of the professors in the program:

And so kind of late in my career was I think[sic] that I could be just a leader. You know not a teacher leader, but you know and I don't mean just in a like to make it seem small but only that, right or teach very little and do very little. And I did it for the past two years, you know this director of professional growth, and I'm not sure I was great at it. I think I did a decent job. You know I had different priorities from Todd and Susan as a leader and I remember Dr. Rawson had said to me like[sic] your affiliative approach to leadership could be problematic, you know, and I was like I can't help it, that's my approach. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work.

I pushed her on this point, wanting to hear more about how she interpreted this comment about her approach. Rachel went on to talk about how she was a baseball pitcher when she was growing up, as there was not a girls' softball team for her to join. Rachel was a natural leader as the only girl on this all-boys team. "You know", she told me, "I like a team". She talked about putting together a team and having people around her who made the entire organization better.

Interestingly, in the same part of this interview, she shared another story that seemed to be at odds with the

affiliative orientation to leadership, her professor told her she had. She brought up this story as an example of the conflicting messages she received about what might make her an effective leader.

And I was out to dinner the other day with some former colleagues and we were talking and you know somebody said something about the head of the upper school position and I said I might consider that job if this other person leaves and someone said, one of my friends said, it would be tough for you to get that job because the head of school doesn't want to be told what to do. And I said why is it that you think that's the kind of leader that I am? She said oh no no no, she backtracked and said oh, I don't mean it that way. What I mean is that you have very strong you know whatever leadership qualities okay, but you know, you said that. Like in my head, I'm like, you said that. So because I'm a person who has a firm philosophy or firm beliefs, I move through the world in a very confident way as a woman, somebody might be troubled by that. Like a 40-year-old guy might be troubled by that, you know.

Initially, I heard dissonance in the ways that Rachel was seen by others and the gendered ways her behavior could be interpreted. Being an affiliative leader is a highly stereotypically feminized way of behaving, particularly in leadership where under white patriarchy, society values the individual, the white-male hero leader, who has come to save the day. Rachel is seen as being in a relationship with the people that she is leading, working shoulder to shoulder, and she is told that is undesirable as a leader. Yet, another friend sees her as bossy, someone who would tell her head of school what to do. Rachel clearly resists that definition and pushes back.

When I interview Rachel, she is sitting in a large chair in what I presume is her living room. She has large, hip, thick-framed glasses on and often has her chin resting between her pointer finger and her thumb. However, when Rachel becomes animated, her head moving toward the camera of her computer, is when she talks about injustice. In her last school, the administration created a position for her called "director of faculty growth", which was similar to an instructional coach. The school did not have a dean of faculty, which is a role that is quite common in independent schools. Rachel saw herself as a champion for her colleagues in this role, and she would get the most animated when she spoke about this work. Rachel also saw herself as someone who could help her colleagues improve their teaching.

During the pandemic, Rachel took on another layer of this work by becoming a sounding board for her colleagues as they navigated working during this difficult time. This was work that Rachel took on passionately and without additional compensation. Three-quarters of the way through the year, the assistant head of school told Rachel that her position would go away in the 2021–2022 school year. It felt like a punch in the gut, a slap in the face to all of the work that Rachel did and the value that it had. It was then that Rachel decided to give notice and leave her school without anything else lined up. Rachel taught one class online for a service that provides courses to students in many independent schools, but she was not affiliated with a school for the 2021–2022 school year and took the year to figure out what she wanted to do next.

Rachel talks about education as a natural extension of who she is. Yet, when I spoke to her, she was at a crossroads in her future in the profession. Rachel resists patriarchal frameworks of how to behave: Rachel merges self and relationships and that is a problem for her as a school leader.

Winston

Initially, when I interviewed Winston, it was hard for me to hear anything beyond the immense privilege he holds within education. He is a white, heterosexual man. Winston was tapped by his head of school at the Montessori School, where he worked as a potential leader. He had an influential head of school in the area where he lived agree to mentor him. He applied for leadership positions and got them and kept moving up. Yet, he found that he was unhappy as a school leader:

You know I liked I enjoy like the development piece of education. I love thinking about, collaborating, [sic]building curriculum and program. I love working as closely as possible with teachers and um teacher development and also students. And to be honest I wasn't doing that [sic]the last couple of years. Um, when I was a division head I was like this complaint factory like you know whether it was teachers or parents or other administrators. I was putting out fires 98% of the day. And I did enjoy just about everyone I worked with. Just a great head of school, Rob Smith, like a great person, great people, like it wasn't that it was just my role and I had talked to Matt about that a number of times. We had a really, I'd say very good relationship with. He was easy to talk to. But my role, I just[sic] I hated it. And it was just parents and even teachers just yelling and upset with me or at me and looking back rightfully so. Looking back I didn't deal with it great. There was a decent support system around me but I didn't like that piece. And again like I said a few minutes ago I searched whether it was within St. Peters or another place just would that change if I went to another school. And the reality is probably not, you know when you're a head of school or in a higher up leadership position, people will come to you with their complaints, um so it was just yeah it was 17 years, it was the role that I was in, I was like let's do a change of scenery. I'm 44, like I don't want to do this I don't want to do that specifically for the next 20, 25 years. Because I wasn't really happy.

I found myself cringing internally when Winston told me this. I felt like he was living the dream—he sought out school leadership, he was given access, and he could not hack it because he felt like he was only dealing with angry people all of the time. I made a note of this in my research notebook.

However, as I analyzed the interview through the process of the Listening Guide, I found myself closing my eyes and hearing Dr. Gilligan in my head: What is Winston telling me? What can I hear if I replace my own judgments with curiosity? So, I tried to do that. What could Winston teach me about the educational leadership pipeline? When I went back to Winston's transcript and thought about the landscape that he created as well as his contrapuntal voices, I found something that appeared to me that I did not hear initially and that was that Winston was a highly relational person.

Even in the quote earlier, he opens by talking about how much he values collaborating with other people, and he loves working closely with teachers.

Education is a highly relational occupation. Within patriarchy, prioritizing emotion and relationships is seen as a feminine trait (Gilligan, 2021), but one does not have to be a woman to live feminized values or feminized behaviors. Winston's voice and story put him in the category of someone who values emotion and relationships over reason and self. Except where the two identities cross is that, to preserve his self, he got out of education. The part of him that valued emotion and relationships was dying, and he had to cover his voice to survive in school leadership. Winston also got more and more animated when he talked with me about working with teachers and students. His hands would appear on the screen, and he would gesticulate when he talked about building community and how much he enjoyed working with others. When Winston talked about leaving education, his voice got much quieter, and there was a sense of shame about leaving the profession.

Winston shared with me that he had even been in the head of school searches in the last few years. It is clear that he thought staying in education and, by extension, educational leadership was going to be his life's calling.

Yeah and as you know we talked about that often in the School Leadership Program, like the further away, the further up you go up the ladder or whatever you want to call it, the more you get away from students, you know the more you get away from the curriculum. But you know it depends on the school, right? You know small school, medium school, big school, public, private, independent, um I think it depends so that's maybe an unfair blanket. But you're right, yeah, I applied to a handful of the head of school positions you know over the last five years and varied from not getting an interview to being a finalist. But you're right, I think you just said, it kind of got less attractive to me, probably for those reasons. You know it kind of gets back to also how important community, culture, and your environment is. You know I'll give another example of that: when I first got here in my new position there was a board chair that hired me, the board hired me, it's a small board, but at that time the leadership and it was all me because maybe I didn't dig or ask enough questions—my first six weeks I was like what did I do. It was miserable. And I was like because it was such a negative vibe and being in Covid. We were a young non-profit, we still are, but we were struggling mightily when I came on board and just this vibe was negative and[sic] now the leadership changed about two months after I got here and we have this small board of six people and I'm the only staff-member here and we have this awesome chemistry. And the board chair is great and it works. So you see the value of what kind of setting or environment you are in and it's so important.

Toward the end of this quote, Winston is talking about the new position that he has taken as a director of a non-profit that manages a park near where he lives. I am struck again by what he focuses on, which is relationships. That is what makes him tick. He talks about community, culture, and environment.

Taylor

Taylor is a genderqueer director of equity and inclusion at an urban independent K12 school. He was a theater major as an undergraduate but had always cared about issues of equity and inclusion. Taylor is white and goes by he/him pronouns, but he performs his gender in unexpected and dissonant ways. He has a beard, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, but he always makes sure to wear something that is visibly feminine. I interviewed Taylor two times: once over the summer and once in the winter, when I followed up with him on a question that came up regarding mentoring. When I met with Taylor in the summer, he had long, hot pink fingernails. He is incredibly expressive with his hands, even when speaking on Zoom, so I could see his fingernails throughout the interview. The second time that I interviewed Taylor, his fingernails were not painted, but he was wearing a soft, baby-pink sweater. It was fuzzy and had a high neck.

Taylor is incredibly thoughtful. It is clear, when he speaks, that he carefully considers multiple perspectives. Taylor conceptualizes a framework for leadership unlike anyone else I have ever met. He told me that his dream was eventually to become a co-head of the school.

He told me:

When I got this job, I let them know that this was my last DE and I position. Like title in some official capacity. Um my trajectory for me right now is an associate head and then a head of school. The only reason I really want to become a head of school is to disrupt the structure. In my whole whatever I guess entrance essay for Education University was about um developing a more consistent co-head of school model. Like having two people model shared leadership at the apex of a community, and hopefully have different identities to be able to show cross racial leadership, cross gender leadership, to show the fact that these roles are too big for a singular person right.

The position of head of school, much like that of the superintendent, is conceptualized as being a position for an individual. That person will often have a team that works for them, advising on specific areas of school life, but there is no school model that supports having more than one person as the leader at the top. In Taylor's explanation of a co-head model, I hear him voicing that this is a true way to encourage diverse leadership, in terms of perspectives, the material body, and also having more than one voice embodying the school as an institution. He is also voicing that the way the position is currently constructed, people are burning out from the responsibility. It is not sustainable as a construction of leadership. Taylor thinks that a co-head of school model would enable leaders to lean into their strengths, as opposed to continually trying to over-compensate for them.

Taylor is also unique in that he thinks outside of traditional educational leadership structures about how to construct leadership. He has a pretty fleshed-out idea of what the co-head of school model could be, and this has come from his lived experience and what he has observed in the headship. As he said earlier, he wants to change what the headship looks like and create a more sustainable model.

In the following conversation between myself and Taylor, he also talked about the importance of building relationships in the work that he does:

Taylor: So if a child shows up and goes, "I am George and my pronouns are he, him, his." And their trans identity is not a part of their story, that is the reality of their experience and (garbled). But like for you all to think that a liberal environment means everybody is out or has to come out or be seen in this particular way, is actually sort of the crux of this issue is that the burden still lies on the young person to do the work of making something visible. And so my piece here is, you should teach as if everybody is in your classroom. You have queer children, you have trans children, you have all of these children in front of you whether you know it or not. Each of them are[sic] already in the room. Because y'all like this liberal oh you just want them to be out and proud, I'm like I don't owe you my story. You do the work so that people's stories come out naturally or you do the work so they don't have to tell the story—

Sarah: Because they're included.

Taylor: Included. They're seen. The wisdom and knowledge of the community is[sic] that all of these people exist in our community. And so we do the work to make sure that we affirm and highlight that.

Taylor approaches his work with students the same way that he approaches work with adults—emotion and relationship lead first.

What is interesting to consider in Taylor's career journey is that he has only worked in diversity, equity, and inclusion leadership positions. He told me that this would be his final role in that lane and that after this, he wants to be an associate head of school or an upper school division head. A question for me as he starts to apply for jobs like this is how his orientation as someone for whom relationships with others really matter, coupled with his gender performance, will impact his ability to move into a traditional administrative role in independent schools. I did get the chance to ask Taylor about this in my follow-up interview. He said that it was also a question for him—how would his gender identity and performance become salient in a more traditional leadership role?

As someone supporting equity and community life, one can assume that Taylor has a certain amount of latitude in how he can show up and that same latitude might not be afforded to someone who is a division head or even a head of school. Taylor himself mentioned in our interview that we have only elected tall men as president in modern history, and he himself wondered whether administrative roles were like that—would a hiring body be able to see all that he could offer, or would they be paralyzed by how Taylor looks and what he values. Obviously, school context matters a great deal, but for now, it is an open question.

Charlie

Charlie is a Black woman who is a director of teaching and learning at a small independent K-8 school in the suburb of a large city. Charlie's parents both work in public schools but sent Charlie and her sister to an all-girls independent school. Charlie started working in marketing and communications, H but around the time

of 9/11, Charlie decided that she wanted to live a life of service. She left her position to teach English at an all-girls K-12 school. Charlie shared with me that, in her 13 years at Girls Prep, she held almost every position. She worked in admissions, she worked in curriculum development, and she taught both high school and middle school English. After completing her master's degree at Education University, Charlie moved into a director of curriculum and instruction role at another independent school soon thereafter.

Charlie is immaculately coiffed and incredibly poised. There are those people who just look as though they are always put together and sound thoughtful without sounding rehearsed. There is something about Charlie where she is super polished and, at the same time, genuine and thoughtful without feeling in any way rehearsed. In other words, Charlie seems like the perfect administrator. You feel safe and cared for while you talk with Charlie.

Charlie values relationships the most in her work. When I spoke with her, we were collectively starting to pick our heads up from COVID. Almost all of Charlie's time working as an administrator was during the pandemic. What this clarified for Charlie was that she loved supporting faculty:

I think one of the things I've really enjoyed is being able to put my arms around faculty and support them, particularly in this time, and thinking about what is it that they need[sic] what are the resources[sic] they need to be able to be effective in their work to be able to support their students so I think that one piece of my job it has a lot of different tentacles to it but one piece is professional development. And really think through that piece for teachers and honoring what their needs are and so I really enjoyed doing that. That's something I've found just so fun and I like the collaboration to be able to work with the rest of the admin team and teachers and committees etcetera.

Charlie uses the word support to talk about leadership. I found myself listening for a covered voice here—a voice that was forcing her into caring for others, particularly as a Black woman in a white patriarchal system. As I listened to Charlie, what I heard was an uncovered voice—she really sees herself as service oriented, and I went back to Charlie talking about leaving a career in communications to go into education. I tried to push Charlie at different points in the interview to talk about her intersectional identity or to see whether I could pull out more difficult experiences, but she resisted that. I do not know whether any of that is my own positionality, as a white woman doing research, Charlie may not have trusted me. Honestly, it never felt that way to me. Charlie is open and warm, and she has since reached out to me to ask about the results of my work.

I asked Charlie whether she was considering becoming a head of school at some point. Charlie was considering it, but she worried that the way the position is constructed now would make it impossible for her to be vested in relationships with faculty and students the way she wanted to be. Charlie told me about the first time she walked into a room of faculty as an administrator, and they immediately stopped talking because she was in the room. Charlie said to me:

It's funny one of the moments that I realized I was in a different space was when I walked into a classroom and they're like oh gosh Ryann is here and we can't say that. And I thought oh whoah, am I that person? Um so I think that's another piece of leadership, I think um that there can be that loneliness that I don't know that everyone always talks about so that's why it's nice to have that leadership team I can see people who work in a smaller school where there's not really a leadership team um that can be challenging. You're also walking this line of trying to be to build those relationships but sometimes you're going to have to say or do things that compromise that, right?

Charlie's voice is often the voice of an educator. She still sees herself as someone in the classroom and someone who is close to her colleagues. The word that comes to mind is the one that was weaponized against Rachel—affiliative. Charlie often talks about herself on the same level as teachers, as though they are literally working side by side. Charlie's undervoice suggested that she remembered what it was like to teach, and she wanted to make that job easier for those who come after her.

Charlie also talked to me about how she has often been the only Black woman on the teaching teams she has served on. She shared a story with me about a student whose parents voiced how grateful they were to have Charlie serve as a mirror to their daughter:

Yeah I think you're navigating I[sic] quite frankly at every institution I have been at throughout my career I have often been the maybe the only or among a very small group um but I also attended these schools right so I understand that piece as well. But I do think you know one of the things that I will never forget this I had a parent say to me it was parent of an African American student in my classroom and she said, "I felt so ecstatic when I walked into this classroom and I saw you, I heard you speak eloquently, I heard you address this group and I just felt this just this incredible pride that my daughter would get to see you everyday and experience you." And I think that just really anchored a lot of different feelings that I may have had, right, around my role both as a woman but also I think as a Black woman, right, those two are very much together.

This story is very powerful because it was the only time Charlie really talked about herself as a leader in a more traditional sense. The girls' school where Charlie worked is a primarily white institution, venerated and with a rich tradition. She sees herself as depicting for her students what a Black woman can be. Charlie feels fortunate to be a role model for girls like her, and I also took her to mean that she also feels it is important for all of her students and families to see her as a strong leader and example.

Charlie recently accepted a division head position at an all-girls independent school. She continues to move up in the ranks, and I am eager to see how she enacts her leadership and whether she is still able to hold onto her emotions and relationships with others. That was something I believe she articulated as something she was concerned about as she moved further away from students in her leadership. Charlie is still able to have close relationships with faculty as an administrator, which is easy to see as one of the many assets that she has in the role.

Discussion

All four of my interviewees—Winston, Rachel, Taylor, and Charlie—led with emotion and relationships. Winston was successful in attaining leadership and having people to support him in that work. Ultimately, he could not stay in the position because it forced him to sever his relationships with himself. Winston seemingly had a lot of advantages to be successful in school leadership—if he found the position so difficult, as someone who leads with connection to others, how are marginalized people who lead this way supposed to be successful? Because of Winston's feminine (Gilligan and Snider, 2018) performance of leadership, he struggled in his role. Winston, Rachel, Charlie, and Taylor all work in independent schools, but the fact that the four of them work in independent schools is mostly a coincidence. This theme is not endemic to independent schools—rather, these four stories represent the finding around relational leaders that held true in both independent and public schools. This study also showed that many of the social issues in public schools also held true in independent schools. Racism, sexism, and heteronormativity were pervasive frameworks in both settings.

The Listening Guide played a key role in my understanding of how feminized leadership behaviors impacted my interviewee's experiences. Rather than trying to figure out how the women were behaving, *vs.* the men, I was forced to just *listen* to my participant's voices and stories without categorizing them. The psychological landscape of my participant's voices showed that a feminine orientation toward leadership—one that valued relationships and being in a relationship—suffered both in the pipeline and once the leader was in their role. What was absent from the landscape of the interviews was a clear articulation of leadership as individual, lonely, and hierarchical. It was talked around by all of the participants, but the framework mostly existed in omissions and absences. The feminized leadership voice, most clearly articulated by Rachel and Winston, was a sort of contrapuntal voice within the pipeline. It echoes the *different voices* (1982) that Gilligan discovered in her understanding of women's psychological development. Both Rachel and Winston talked about their leadership as a relationship with others, as did Taylor. Their leadership was a web of relationships and mirrored more of a network than a hierarchy. Taylor, perhaps the most dissonant voice in the study, talked at one point about wanting to co-lead a school. That model is almost about the relationship as leadership. It is a completely feminine-oriented leadership.

Rachel was discouraged by the school leadership program director from leading with relationships and emotion. However, we know from Weiner and Burton (2016) that if Rachel behaved in more masculine ways, she would not have been viewed as successful either. Winston led in a way similar to Rachel, but he was never given outright feedback to cease his feminine performance of leadership. Rachel was told outright to cease behaving in a relational way. Weiner and Burton (2016) work echoes Winston's experience in the story about the male leadership candidate who was congratulated for “butching up” his performance by the end of his leadership program.

Rachel's care for her colleagues seems to also be at the heart of what put her at odds with the administrators in her former job. Taylor and Charlie do not seem to be penalized for leading from

a relational space, but they both possess intersectional identities that complicate how they may be viewed as school leaders. Taylor is also a director of equity and inclusion, and one would think that if he was not relational, that would present a problem for his position within the school. Charlie does not have to lead in a relational way, but she does. Her voice is inherently relational, and that style of leadership feels authentic to who she is. As much of the literature echoes (Marshall, 2000; Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011; Weiner and Burton, 2016; Weiner et al., 2022), those of minoritized identities are given more and more narrow lanes in which their gender performance is considered acceptable.

Under patriarchy, as Gilligan (1982; 2011) and Gilligan and Snider (2018) has documented, the different voice that she heard in her early work was a relational one. That voice is thought of as feminine because women were the ones who embodied that relational voice. I found in my interviews that there were men who led with a relational, feminine voice. That feminine voice did not preclude the men from getting through the pipeline, but it made leadership difficult. Winston left education entirely because he found the white patriarchal construction antithetical to how he wanted to be in a relationship with others.

Conclusion

In writing about queer futures in educational leadership, O'Malley (2021) writes, “In what ways and for what purposes and for whose interests is a ‘normal’ created and maintained?” Feminine leadership, rooted in relationships, is queer leadership. It is pushing against what educational leadership sees as normal and calling into question what values education leaders and scholars hold up as normal and pushing us to think about what other versions of leadership look like. How would schools be different if relationships between school leaders and care, values that we understand as feminine (Gilligan and Snider, 2018), were centered in school leadership?

What might *queering* (O'Malley, 2021) the future of educational leadership look like? By queering, I mean a framework that stopped perpetuating oppressive binary structures of leadership rooted in whiteness, patriarchy, and capitalism (Ferguson, 2004, 2019; Manalansan, 2014). As K-12 school leadership is currently constructed, a feminine performance of leadership will make navigating the pipeline and leading a school very difficult. In her 1993 introduction to her 1982 work, in a different voice, Gilligan articulated that the voice she learned about in psychology was a male one. The “different voice” that she heard was a relational one, which came to be associated with femininity. In that 1993 note, she says

I find the question of whether gender differences are biologically determined or socially constructed to be deeply disturbing. This way of posing the question implies that people, women and men alike, are either genetically determined or a product of socialization—that there is no voice—and without voice, there is no possibility for resistance, for[sic] creativity, or for[sic] a change whose wellsprings are psychological. (Gilligan, 1982, p. xix)

Rachel and Winston represent that different voice in educational leadership. They both connect their decisions and have a clear leadership epistemology that is situated in their relationships with others. Winston was perhaps the hardest voice for me to hear in this study because of his privilege. He is a white, heterosexual man who was tapped into school leadership. When he told me that he had gotten out of education altogether because he constantly had to deal with people who were angry with him, I thought to myself, this guy has had every advantage, and he is upset because people are mad at him. Welcome to leadership. However, when I did the steps of the Listening Guide and really tried to replace judgment with curiosity, I realized that Winston was relational in his orientation to leadership. He has a feminine approach. With all of his privilege, he still found the way educational leadership was structured to be incompatible with his desire to be in a relationship with others. What Winston's story told me was that anyone with a feminine orientation toward leadership was doomed—Winston made it through the pipeline, but he was not successful either. How can women, queer women, and Black women have any hope of making it through the pipeline if feminine leadership is so oppositional to K12 educational leadership?

The K12 school leadership pipeline is a white patriarchal system, but the ways in which that system works are more sophisticated than simply saying women will be fair in one particular way in the pipeline. One cannot even make that proclamation about men in the pipeline, either. Gender norms and socialization will ultimately sort people out in the pipeline sooner or later. Those who are most successful take a masculine approach: individual and non-caring. What we have to ask ourselves is if this is what we want in school leaders.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary

material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Wisconsin-Madison. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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