

Running Head: Androgynous

The Androgynous Message for Educational Leaders

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Abstract

The evolving society of the 21st Century encourages a new wave of interest focusing on the need for developing the androgynous educational leader: a school administrator possessing the capability to blend the best of male and female characteristics. This article addresses ways that an effective leader can utilize both logic and intuition, recognize both facts and feeling, and be both technically competent and emotionally caring. Interested readers will also have an opportunity to measure their androgyny quotients (AQ) using an instrument designed for this specific purpose.

"What is Real?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

The Velveteen Rabbit
By Margery Williams

In *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams, a stuffed toy rabbit comes to life in the timeless tale of the transformative power generated by a positive relationship built on understanding and compassion. Simply put, the story's message is that relationship building is important.

In three-quarters of a century of our combined years of service as practitioners in the field of professional education, we have encountered the problem that when making transformational organizational change some principals experience success in their managerial roles, while others fail; some coordinators or directors experience success in their supervisory roles, while others fail; and some superintendents experience success in their executive roles, while others fail. None of the failures, however, appear to be connected to incompetence. Rather, the failures seem to be tied to an inability to build meaningful relationships with those who the particular administrator is responsible for supervising: faculty and support staff members.

We believe the evolving society of the 21st Century calls for educational administrators—superintendents, principals, directors, and coordinators—who have developed their leadership capability to the level necessary to transform school districts and schools for the better. Simply put, they transform the “way things are done” through relationship building: by creating an organizational culture that encourages and values the importance of developing positive relationships among those—administrators, teachers, and support staff—who are charged with the responsibility of providing children and youth with a quality education.

Our experience further leads us to believe that educators crave positive interactions: so it makes sense that the better our relationships are at work, the happier and more productive we're going to be. Work in a school setting is more enjoyable when we have good relationships with those around us. Also, faculty and support staff members are more likely to go along with transformational changes that the leader wants to implement.

The Role of Transformational Leadership

Transforming a school or school district for the better through change requires transformational leadership. According to Northouse (2013), transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people in an organization. Being a transformational leader requires assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Moreover, transformational leadership exerts an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them.

James MacGregor Burns—an American historian and political scientist, presidential biographer, and authority on leadership—is credited with developing the concept of transformational leadership in relation to business and industry. According to Burns, transformational leadership can be recognized when leaders (e.g., executives and managers) and followers (e.g., employees in a corporation) help each other to advance to higher levels of quality performance. Through the strength of developing ownership in a common vision, energized by their personality characteristics, transformational leaders inspire others to work towards achieving the organization's mission and goals (Burns, 1978).

An example of transformational leadership in an educational setting, such as a school, would be the principal who attempts to change his or her organizational culture to value a more humane standard of fairness and justice. In the process, both the principal and the teachers may emerge with a stronger and higher set of standards.

Northouse suggests that authentic transformational leadership is socialized leadership concerned with the collective good, causing leaders to transcend their own interests for the sake of others.

Northouse also believes that transformational leaders stimulate followers to be creative and innovative: for example, employees may be encouraged to try new approaches and develop innovative ways of dealing with organizational issues.

Transformational leaders provide a supportive environment in which they listen carefully to the individual needs of followers. Leaders act as coaches and advisers while trying to assist followers to reach their potential. An example of this type of leadership

is a manager who spends time treating each employee in a caring and unique way. To some employees, the leader may give strong affiliation; to others, the leader may give specific directives with a high degree of structure.

Trinidad and More (2005) further contend that transformational leaders utilize a variety of effective tools and means, ultimately convincing others that they should be followed for the benefit of themselves as well as of the institution as a whole. Also, they point out that the traits of transformational leadership often relate to female values. Developed throughout their careers, these characteristics include relationship building, consensus building, working together with a unified purpose, influential power, and communication.

Warrilow (2009) provides additional value to the discussion of transformational leadership by suggesting that such leaders create positive change in their supporters through ensuring that the group and individual interests and concerns are regularly met. Such leaders focus on values and escape short-term goals for higher order needs of the organization while simultaneously meeting the needs of individual employees.

Natural Allies: Transformational Leaders and Androgynous Managers

The late Alice Sargent, a longtime family friend of one of the article's co-authors, took the transformational concept developed by Burns a step further by proposing a definition of relationship-driven leadership that draws on the best in both men and women. She called her definition *androgynous*, having the characteristics of both genders. In 1981, Sargent published her managerial androgynous theory in the format

of a highly praised book titled *The Androgynous Manager*. Unfortunately, the book is presently out of print.

Both Burn's transformational leadership theory and Sargent's androgynous management approach appear to be natural allies in the quest to help leaders understand and make use of their masculine and feminine personality characteristics.

The key to understanding Sargent's use of androgynous in relation to managerial leadership is balanced coexistence, as in the Chinese concept of yin and yang: male and female forces acting equally within nature to build and sustain the world around us. Transformational leaders and managers need to use both logic and intuition, recognize both facts and feelings, and be both technically competent and emotionally caring.

Traditionally, the definition of managerial competence excluded most feminine characteristics. According to Maccoby (1976), who like Sargent studied personality traits influencing leadership, the respected leader in business and industry was seen as a highly competitive, power-driven person whose personal feelings were systematically submerged. Maccoby believed most corporate leaders were yang-driven and contended that managerial leadership, deprived of feminine character traits such as compassion and caring, was destructive to the human values that undergird successful corporations.

Remembering our years as classroom teachers, as well as our years as school administrators, helps us to better understand Sargent's principle of balanced coexistence in regard to examples highlighting masculine and feminine perspectives.

We recall times when a conflict occurred while supervising girls at play. The girls stopped the game and did not proceed until the relationships were mended. If the

conflict was too deep, the game was abandoned. It seemed that girls were more concerned about maintaining the relationships they had with one another than about playing the game. On the other hand, the boys we observed at play were more concerned about winning or losing. Their way of managing conflict was to have rules. If someone broke a rule, the game would be stopped, an appropriate judgment would be rendered, and the game would then continue. They appeared to have respected the rules more than they did their relationships.

Boys continue on to become adults and some become leaders in business, industry, government, education, and so forth. Their preference for reliance on rules in the form of developing policies and regulations, sometimes to the detriment of nourishing relationships, also continues on.

Corporate policies and government regulations, formal equivalents of children's rules, certainly have their place in organization (e.g., school districts). Chaos would surely ensue if we abandoned all policies or regulations and adjudicated every conflict in the context of the existing situation.

But proliferation of policy making in public education today has resulted in obsession with standardized achievement testing as the primary means of measuring student learning. Does this not suggest we are experiencing runaway yang (maleness preoccupation with rule making) in an attempt to solve educational problems (e.g., graduation rates) and make decisions? Equally, perhaps, taking a yin (feminine) approach calling for more thoughtfully examining the complex underlying relationships that hinder student progress in school might serve us better.

Sargent challenged us to look beyond our limitation as either male or female educational leaders, to break away from subconscious conditioning behaviors established during the childhood years, and to take an androgynous, more balanced, approach to leading and managing. Increased awareness that male and female educational leaders can come to better appreciate each other's personality characteristics and one another represents what her seminal work conveys.

Movement toward understanding the benefits of androgyny in educational leadership cannot come too soon. The androgynous approach holds significant promise for redressing the imbalance between aggressiveness and sensitivity to others' needs that marks our present approach to improving education in the 21st Century.

Leaders who care about improving schooling also need to care about the needs of those—male and female colleagues—who work in educational environments. Balances need to be struck so that harmony can be maintained.

Conclusion: The Androgynous Message

In the introduction to this article, we called attention to *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams: a story about a stuffed toy rabbit that comes to life in the timeless tale of the transformative power generated by a positive relationship built on understanding and compassion. The story's message is that relationship building is important.

In keeping with *The Velveteen Rabbit's* message, Sargent proposed a definition of relationship-driven leadership, drawing on the best in both men and women: an

approach she called *androgynous*. The androgynous message tells us to look beyond our limitation as either male or female educational leaders, to break away from subconscious conditioning behaviors established during the childhood years, and to take an androgynous, more balanced, approach to leading and managing.

We believe that every leader, male or female, can become more androgynous. Androgyny requires us to unlearn our negative behaviors and start learning how to become equally contributing human beings. In the last analysis, it means coming of age, shedding the excesses of both male and female child-like behaviors that in the past have limited our human experience.

So how does one start the first toward taking an androgynous approach to educational leadership? You start by getting to know yourself better taking the Androgynous Quotient (AQ) measurement instrument that follows the reference section. Personality traits identified by Sandra Bem (1977), a psychology professor at Stanford University who extensively explored gender-related behavior in the 1970s, provide the foundational material for our instrument.

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The Androgynous Quotient (AQ)

Developed by Jack Blendinger and Angela Farmer

The Androgynous Quotient (AQ) measurement instrument assists practicing or wannabe educational executives in taking a self-descriptive approach to measure the degree to which they endorse masculine and feminine personality characteristics in relation to their leadership. The characteristics highlighted in the instrument were originally identified by Sandra L. Bem in the 1970s during her tenure as a psychology professor at Stanford University.

We believe that changing educational expectations in the 21st Century call for androgynous school leaders who cultivate personal traits encompassing both compassion and assertiveness, both empathy and tough-mindedness. In brief, the androgynous leader is an executive who possesses the capability to blend personality traits that traditional custom prescribed as belonging almost exclusively to one gender or the other: masculine or feminine.

To measure your AQ please take the following inventory consisting of 60 personality characteristics. Indicate, on a scale of 1 to 7, how true each of the 60 various characteristics is for you personally.

- Circle a 1 if the characteristic is never or almost never true.
- Circle a 2 if the characteristic is usually not true.
- Circle a 3 if the characteristic is sometimes but infrequently true.
- Circle a 4 if the characteristic is occasionally true.
- Circle a 5 if the characteristic is often true.
- Circle a 6 if the characteristic is usually true.
- Circle a 7 if the characteristic is always or almost always true.

The 60 personality characteristics are listed below. Circle the number that you believe to be the most appropriate response for you regarding each of the characteristics.

Self-reliant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Makes decisions easily	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Yielding	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Compassionate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Helpful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Sincere	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Defends own beliefs	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Self-sufficient:	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Cheerful	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Soothes hurt feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Moody	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Conceited	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Independent	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Dominant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Shy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Soft-spoken	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Conscientious	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Likable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Athletic	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Masculine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Affectionate	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Warm	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Theatrical	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Solemn	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Willing to take a stand	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Flatterable	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Tender	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Happy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Friendly	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strong personality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Aggressive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Loyal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Gullible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unpredictable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inefficient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Forceful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Acts as a leader	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feminine	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Childlike	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Adaptable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Analytical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Individualistic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Avoids harsh language	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jealous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsystematic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has leadership abilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Competitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sensitive to others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Loves children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Truthful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Tactful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Willing to take risks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Gentle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Secretive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Conventional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

After you have scored each of the 60 characteristics (adjectives), by circling one of seven possible responses, transfer the numerical values you assigned to each of the 20 characteristics to its match listed below in either Column A or in Column B. After you have transferred the numerical values, sum the scores for each of the columns. Then add the scores computed for each of the two columns together to determine your overall masculine characteristics score or *M* score.

Columns A/B: Masculine Personality Characteristics

Column A		Column B	
Self-reliant	_____	Makes decisions easily	_____
Defends own beliefs	_____	Self-sufficient	_____
Independent	_____	Dominant	_____
Athletic	_____	Masculine	_____
Assertive	_____	Willing to take a stand	_____
Strong personality	_____	Aggressive	_____
Forceful	_____	Acts as a leader	_____
Analytical	_____	Individualistic	_____
Has leadership abilities	_____	Competitive	_____
Willing to take risks	_____	Ambitious	_____
Column A Total	_____	Column B Total	_____

Column A score + Column B score = _____ (Masculine characteristics or *M* score)

The highest possible *M* score is 140, while the lowest possible score is 20. A score of 70 represents the mean: the higher you score above 70, the more pronounced your self-described masculine personality characteristics.

Next, transfer the numerical values you assigned to 20 additional characteristics. The 20 characteristics are listed in either Column C or in Column D. After you have transferred

the numerical values, sum the scores for each of the columns. Then add the scores computed for each of the two columns together to determine your overall feminine characteristics score or *F* score.

Columns C/D: Feminine Personality Characteristics

Column C	_____	Column D	_____
Yielding	_____	Compassionate	_____
Cheerful	_____	Soothes hurt	_____
Shy	_____	Soft-spoken	_____
Affectionate	_____	Warm	_____
Flatterable	_____	Tender	_____
Loyal	_____	Gullible	_____
Feminine	_____	Childlike	_____
Sympathetic	_____	Avoids harsh language	_____
Sensitive to others' needs	_____	Loves children	_____
Understanding	_____	Gentle	_____
Column C Total	_____	Column D Total	_____

Column C score + Column D score = _____ (Feminine characteristics or *F* score)

The highest possible *F* score is 140, while the lowest possible score is 20. A score of 70 represents the mean: the higher you score above 70, the more pronounced your self-described feminine personality characteristics.

At this point, you should have transferred scores for 40 of the 60 characteristics and are wondering what to do about the scores for the 20 items you haven't yet transferred. The answer is: do nothing. Ignore the 20 characteristics because they are gender neutral and not germane to determining your AQ score.

The Androgynous Quotient (AQ) Continuum

To calculate your AQ, subtract your *F* (feminine) score from your *M* (masculine) score. See the following example:

<i>M</i> (masculine) score	_____
<i>F</i> (feminine) score	_____
Subtract	
AQ	_____

If your *M* (masculine) score is larger than your *F* (feminine) score, the AQ score will be a positive number. If the *F* (feminine) score is larger than the *M* (masculine) score, the AQ score will be a negative number. A person's AQ score should range from 0 to a

positive score of +150 or to a negative score of -150. Mark your AQ score on the continuum by placing an x at the approximate location.

-150	-125	-100	-75	-50	-25	0	+25	+50	+75	+100	+125	+150
	Feminine		Near Feminine			Androgynous		Near Masculine		Masculine		

Discussion of the score: The AQ score (computed as masculinity minus femininity) reflects the relative amounts of masculinity and femininity that the person includes in his or her self-description. As such, it best characterizes the person's innate leadership preferences. If an educational leader's AQ score is significantly skewed toward the positive end of the continuum (that is, if a person describes herself as being much more masculine than feminine), then it is very possible that person manages from a strong masculine perspective without being aware of it. Similarly, if an educational leader's AQ score is significantly skewed toward the negative end of the continuum (that is, if a person describes himself as being much more feminine than masculine), it is very possible that person manages from a strong feminine perspective without being aware of it.

In contrast, if a leader's AQ score approximates zero (that is, if there is really little difference in how masculine or feminine a person thinks he or she is), then we may think of that person as having an androgynous orientation toward managing an educational organization's operations (e.g., curriculum, instruction, employees, finances, etc.). An androgynous orientation represents equal endorsement of both masculine and feminine attributes.

Essentially, we believe that increasing gender-related awareness in relation to personality characteristics provides the key to being successful as an educational leader: the more aware, the more successful. As previously stated, changing educational expectations in the 21st Century call for androgynous leaders who cultivate personal traits encompassing both compassion and assertiveness, both empathy and tough-mindedness. The androgynous leader is a person possessing the capability to blend personality traits that traditional custom prescribed as belonging, almost exclusively, to one gender or the other.

End Note: The instrument we developed for educational leaders is based on the seminal works of two academic scholars—Alice G. Sargent and Sandra L. Bem—who pioneered exploration in gender-related personality characteristics, but are now, sad to say, deceased. Sargent provided insightful value into Bem's primary research by applying the findings to practical applications in her well-received book titled *The Androgynous Manager*, published in 1981. Jack Blending, co-author of this instrument designed for educational leaders, is a long-time friend of the late Dr. Sargent and her family.