

---

5-15-2017

## Always Loved but Never Entitled: Professor Intentions to Promote Leadership in Women

Daniel R. Conn

*Minot State University*, [daniel.conn@minotstateu.edu](mailto:daniel.conn@minotstateu.edu)

Roslyn J.F. Billy

*Grand View University*, [drrozbilly@gmail.com](mailto:drrozbilly@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Methods Commons](#), and the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

---

### Recommended APA Citation

Conn, D. R., & Billy, R. J. (2017). Always Loved but Never Entitled: Professor Intentions to Promote Leadership in Women. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(5), 1315-1329. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2669>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

---



**THE QUALITATIVE REPORT**  
DISCOVER ONE OF OUR VIRTUAL  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WORKSHOPS  
WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS.

**JOIN US ONLINE. LIMITED SPOTS AVAILABLE. BOOK YOURS NOW!**

**TQR**  
THE QUALITATIVE REPORT  
WHERE THE WORLD COMES TO LEARN  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

## Always Loved but Never Entitled: Professor Intentions to Promote Leadership in Women

### Abstract

This article focuses on three professors from Midwestern University and how their intentions to encourage women to see themselves as leaders play out in their respective classrooms. Through educational connoisseurship and criticism we describe and interpret the ecological impacts of professor intentions in promoting women as leaders. To this end, we find the professors realize these intentions by the way in which they care for their students. In caring for their students, the professors take an “always loved by never entitled” approach, where they balance building a sense of support and confidence among their students with an understanding that leaders are forged through dedication and a willingness to speak up. It is recommended for professors and high education institutions to consider how implicit curricula could help in developing leadership qualities in women and other historically underrepresented populations.

### Keywords

Women in Leadership, Implicit Curriculum, School Ecology

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

## **Always Loved but Never Entitled: Professor Intentions to Promote Leadership in Women**

Daniel R. Conn

Minot State University, Minot, North Dakota, USA

Roslyn J. F. Billy

Grand View University, Des Moines, Iowa, USA

---

*This article focuses on three professors from Midwestern University and how their intentions to encourage women to see themselves as leaders play out in their respective classrooms. Through educational connoisseurship and criticism we describe and interpret the ecological impacts of professor intentions in promoting women as leaders. To this end, we find the professors realize these intentions by the way in which they care for their students. In caring for their students, the professors take an “always loved by never entitled” approach, where they balance building a sense of support and confidence among their students with an understanding that leaders are forged through dedication and a willingness to speak up. It is recommended for professors and high education institutions to consider how implicit curricula could help in developing leadership qualities in women and other historically underrepresented populations. Keywords: Women in Leadership, Implicit Curriculum, School Ecology*

---

The roles of women in society, the workplace, the home, and even the classroom have changed significantly over the last century. According Chin (2011), social rules of etiquette and gender roles are now more flexible and equity within the marital relationship more common. Women are more able to navigate life in and outside the home easily and freely (Chin, 2011). With regards to the new role that women have, it has given women the opportunity to explore leadership roles. However, the question still remains as to what role do educators have in influencing women to become leaders? Does the curriculum at the elementary and secondary level of education influence girls to become class leaders? Does course content at higher education encourage women to seek leadership positions later in life? We examine how professor intentions to promote women as leaders plays out in their classrooms.

### **Review of the Literature**

Women have no doubt made significant gains in the roles of leadership; however, a gap still remains as to women taking on leadership roles with society. In many counties, religious, political and cultural barriers continue to prevent decision-makers from acknowledging women’s potential, especially in leadership (as cited in Steyn & White, 2011). According to Sperandio (2011), in order to empower women these elements must be present: resources, agency, and achievement. The three elements resources, agency, and achievement are defined as the following, resources defined broadly to include not only access, but also future claims to both material and human and social resources, agency defined as decision-making, as well as less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception manipulation, and achievements defined as well-being outcomes (Sperandio, 2011).

Educators must then embrace these elements mentioned to empower women within their courses and classrooms. According to Weidenfeller (2012) themes emerge among women that are considered empowered and leaders in various aspects of life, whether in the home, work place, or community. These women aspire to the following: (1) driven by a desire to control their destiny, (2) aspire to leadership positions with impact, (3) achieve influence through a connect-and-collaborate style, (4) initiate culture change while staying focused on results, and (5) apply self-knowledge and resiliency to address challenges (Weidenfeller, 2012). If these themes are common elements among empowered women, then the question that evolves is, whether college professors foster these themes within their courses? The course material chosen by these professors may have an influence upon the way women in these courses are empowered.

Women are still underrepresented in leadership roles in corporations, institutions of higher education, and the political sector especially in light of the changing population (Chin, 2011). Gender can in itself be considered as symbolic capital and in most cases it creates an order where female gender is negative and male gender is positive capital (Zuiderveld, 2011). Hence, there is underrepresentation of course material reflecting the female persona. If course professors underrepresent the female gender within the course material, they choose to embark knowledge upon their course participants, it may influence whether the female course participants are empowered to take on roles of leadership. Building on Moroye's (2009) description of complimentary curriculum, this study examines how teacher intentions to promote women as leaders plays out in the curriculum and classroom environment. Our overarching question is as follows: How do professor intentions to encourage women to see themselves as leaders play out in the classroom?

## **Researchers' Backgrounds**

During the time of the study, we both served as full-time faculty in teacher education at the same university. In an effort to work collaboratively, we noticed intersections within our respective research agendas. I, Daniel, have an interest in studying classroom environments through the theoretical framework of Eisner's (1988) ecology of school improvement, which is the interaction of intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions within educational settings. I have studied the ecology of school improvement at the "worst school" in New Mexico (Conn, 2015) and in rural elementary schools in Colorado (Conn, 2016). In these previous studies, I found the pressures of accountability through standardized assessments to enable the evaluative dimension within the ecology of school improvement (Eisner, 1988) to take over the other dimensions of the ecology (Conn, 2016). Realizing the influence one dimension can have over other dimensions, I wanted to know how teacher intentions to promote positive qualities influence structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative decisions.

While my research interests focus on the ecology of school improvement (Eisner, 1988), Roslyn, the second author, is interested in how societal factors, like race and gender, affect learning opportunities (Billy-Mohamed, 2014). With offices next to each other, one day Roslyn and I discussed an invitation from our Vice President of Academic Affairs to attend the Women's Leadership Conference. While we both were unable to attend the conference, we thought it would be interesting to study how professor intentions to promote women as leaders affected the ecology of the participating professors' classrooms. This conversation engendered the conception of the study.

## Methodology

To answer the research question, this study turns to educational connoisseurship and criticism (Eisner, 1998), which is a qualitative form of inquiry aimed at appreciating aesthetic details in educational environments. Educational connoisseurship and criticism is a well-established form of qualitative inquiry with representation throughout the field of education. This methodology has two main elements: connoisseurship and criticism. Connoisseurship, when applied to education, requires complex understandings of curricular frameworks, instructional practices, learning environments, and other qualities within the educational realm (Eisner, 1998). Drawing from a refined sense of what learning looks like, connoisseurship is shaped from both classroom training and experience. Educational criticism, then, offers an evaluative appraisal based on the insights of the connoisseurship phase (Eisner, 2002). There are four aspects in the criticism phase: the descriptive, the interpretative, the evaluative, and the thematic (Eisner, 1998). These aspects work together to form a system of inquiry.

### Design of the Study

To answer our research question, How do professor intentions to encourage women to see themselves as leaders play out in the classroom?, we drew from three main sources: semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and a collection of artifacts. Three local professors recently attended the Women's Leadership Conference. These were the only local professors attending the Conference, and we, the researchers, obtained permission from both the Institutional Review Board and Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs to contact them about participating in the study (See Appendix A). Educational connoisseurship and criticism often calls for three to four participants (Eisner, 2002), so this seemed like the ideal number of participants given the nature of the study.

I interviewed the participants individually about their intentions to promote women as leaders using a semi-structured format (see Appendix B). The interview questions are grounded in Eisner's (1988) ecology of school improvement, which functioned as our theoretical framework for the study. Thus, the questions focused on the interactions of their intentions to promote women as leaders with the structure of the course and classroom environment, the course curriculum, the professors' pedagogical practices, and the way in which they evaluated the course. I used an audio-recorder to capture what was said. The electronic recordings were then transcribed for the purpose of data analysis. I also collected course syllabi to provide structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative context.

Following the interviews, I observed each professor's classroom four times to make observations about how intentions to promote women as leaders affect the individual classroom environments. We recorded observations in our research journals. Upon reviewing the transcriptions and notes in the research journals, I contacted the participants with follow up questions. Roslyn observed one of the class sessions with me; however, her teaching schedule seemed always be at conflict with our participants teaching schedules. Thus, I acted as the primary investigator, while Roslyn wrote the literature review and offered insights when we were ready to begin looking for themes across the data. We looked for themes across the interviews, observations, artifacts collected, and follow-up interviews. As we noticed themes, we recorded them and coded pieces of the data according the appropriate theme. As in consistent with educational criticism (Eisner, 1988), we ensured the themes had consensual validation, structural corroboration, and referential adequacy. Consensual validation is a form of member checking, where we shared our transcriptions from each interview with each corresponding participant to ensure that we accurately recorded what

they said and what they meant to say. Structural corroboration is similar to triangulation, where the data from more than one source is supported by data from another source. For example, structural corroboration occurred when statements made in the interviews were consistent with what was observed in the classroom. To have referential adequacy means that we illuminated a new appreciation or understanding of educational realities (Eisner, 2002). As with other forms of connoisseurship and criticism, educational criticism aims to illuminate what might otherwise go unnoticed (Eisner, 1998).

### **Findings**

Through the use of vignettes, we describe and interpret the ecological impacts of professor intentions. The vignettes are grounded in the aforementioned structural corroboration and the following two conceptual questions: “What does the situation mean to those involved? How does this classroom operate?” (Eisner, 2002, p. 229). In answering these two questions, each vignette offers a glimpse into the classroom realities of the three participants. This section reveals the findings of the study.

#### **Patty Olson**

When the study began, Dr. Patty Olson was a veteran professor and chair of the Math Department at Midwestern University. Today, Patty serves as dean to the College of Education and Health Sciences. As the only woman in the fulltime dean role at Midwestern University, Patty continues on a career path forged in rural North Dakota during 8<sup>th</sup> grade, where she taught her classmates “new math” in support of their unsupported teacher.

They (the school) really didn't provide much help for the teachers, so another eighth grade student and I basically helped her through that (math) course. We read it (the math textbook) and understood what it was saying, and she (the teacher) did not. So that was a really interesting experience, but it was very...it was one of those things that was empowering...for me. Because I knew I could do it. And it was kinda cool be able to read it and figure it out. It was basically notation things and concepts that the teacher did not have...it was sad what they (the school) did to the teachers. I felt bad for the teacher.

Patty went to high school in a near-by city, where she continued to feel empowered. After serving as a chemistry lab assistant for two years, Patty became the head lab assistant for the chemistry department, “a very empowering thing.” Patty also tutored her classmates in science and math. Her senior math teacher saw Patty's teaching potential and encouraged her to go into math education professionally.

Patty went to college to become a high school math teacher.

I viewed college as an opportunity to really stretch myself...and to try lots of different things at once and see how many things I could do at once and still succeed before I failed. I had an opportunity to do a lot of exciting things that were innovative. Working in the theater as well as working with physics...I was working as a lab assistant for the physics department; that was my major. It was an interesting experience because it was a growth experience, and I really viewed it as a growth experience. Again, very empowering... I was a student that time in a major that was typically not for women. It was very

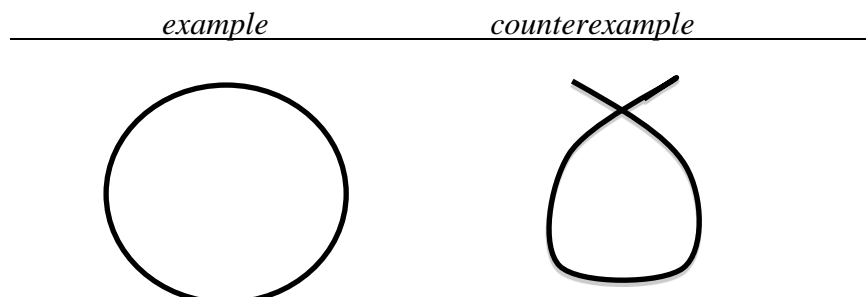
frustrating to come home, and people didn't ask me about my schooling; they asked if I had a boyfriend.

As the only female lab assistant in the university until her senior year, Patty's grasp of math and science empowered her throughout school. When Patty became a teacher, she especially looked for bright female students to encourage considering a career in math and science. She even organized a workshop for parents to discuss ways to encourage girls in mathematics. "Mathematics is a gatekeeper for a lot careers." At least two of Patty's female high school students later became high school math teachers, and countless more were at least encouraged to consider a career in math and science.

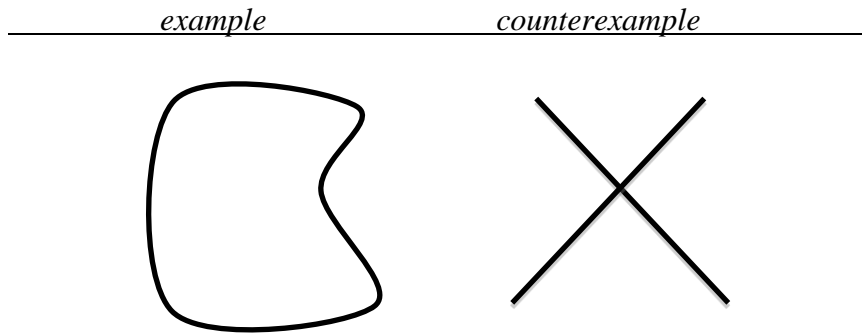
On four occasions, I observed Patty teaching mathematics for elementary teachers courses. As mentioned earlier, Roslyn came with me the first day to observe Patty's class, but due to scheduling conflicts, I, Daniel, made all other observations alone. Patty's class sits at round tables, where they can work together through conceptual mathematical problems aimed to help them teach math at the elementary level. Behind the tables are shelves filled with tubes storing math manipulative materials. Most of Patty's students are female, but each class had at least two male students. The following vignette, *Simple Closed Curves*, describes one of Patty's class sessions. Notice how Patty attempts to empower her students through building their confidence in conceptual math.

***Simple Closed Curves.*** *The students quietly talk, waiting for Patty to arrive. As the department chair, Patty often goes to from meetings and committee work straight to class with little time to spare. I counted twenty students in the room, each with a spot at one of the seven tables. Two of the students are male. One male student sits at a left front table, near Patty's desk. With his hair parted down the middle of his head, he methodically prepares his notebook, pencils, and class supplies. He does not talk with the other students, focused instead on framing his workspace. The other male student, wearing a long beard and baseball hat backwards, is in the back right side of the classroom, far from Patty's desk. A continuation of the contrast, the second male student has not taken out his supplies; instead, he is talking with his classmates at the table. The females in the class represent a range on fashion and style, some wearing sweats and others wearing jeans tucked inside Uggs®. At the table where I sat, the students discuss a range of topics including their homework assignment and an upcoming party. As the social energy of room begins growing, Dr. Patty Olson walks through the doorway with her arms full of books and papers. "You're going to need Tub #1 today," Patty directs the class as she sets her books and papers on a desk in the front left side of the classroom. "You are also each going to need some paper, a few pieces for each person." The students move around the classroom. A person from each table picks up a Tub #1 and carries it back to the group. The tub includes many crayons, loose markers, scissors, a ruler, and a protractor. "I have your tests for you, and I will hand those back at the end of class," Patty announces as she turns on the document camera and projector.*

*The students appear ready to begin, as directed with the tub and pieces of paper. "We are going to be doing a couple of things today...examples and counterexamples," Patty says as she draws a circle under the example heading and a curving line with two points crossing under the counterexample heading:*



“What makes the shape on the left an example and this curving line a counterexample?” One of the female students sitting the same table offers an answer to Patty question, “Because one is an actual shape we know and the other is not.” Patty smiles and then pauses a moment, raising her eyebrows, “You’re close but not quite correct. Let me give you another example.” Patty draws the following on the overhead projector:



The class collectively looks puzzled at the new examples. Patty responds to their confusion, “What do the two examples have in common that is not shared by the counter examples?” pointing her pen under the document camera at the new example and counterexample. One of the female students at another table slightly jumps up out her seat exclaiming with excitement, “The examples are all closed. The lines are closed on the examples and not closed on the counterexamples!” Patty stands up, tilting her chin down and looking over her glasses, “What do you all think? Could that be it?” The class appears to be in agreement with the new answer. “That’s pretty cool!” Patty cheers as she smiles at the student offering the answer, “What else do we notice?” One of the female students sitting by us offers an idea, “We could teach students about different shape properties. They can color in the examples, but they cannot color in the counterexamples. Another student added, “Either there isn’t an interior region or there were too many, or if there was one, the ends didn’t meet.” Patty leaning forward from her desk, hovering over it like a podium. Again, tilting her chin down and peering over his glasses, “What do you think? Is she right?” Several students respond with “Yes,” as the class agreed with the proposed strategy.

**Simple Closed Curves Discussion.** While Patty does not adjust the curriculum or her teaching to explicitly promote women as leaders, Patty does intentionally make an effort to build her students’ confidence in math:

I’m teaching a lot of math for elementary teachers, which tends to be primarily women. I don’t look at them by gender so much as I look at it like the students that tend to be in there tend to be weaker at their mathematics. So, it is about helping them to be skilled...but also very confident in what they know...and confident that they’re actually learning the mathematics as they go along.

Patty developed an activities based curriculum to build mathematical skills and confidence in her students. The curriculum uses both the student perspective and teacher perspective to provide a conceptual understanding of mathematics and pedagogical strategies in math instruction. When the lesson described in *Simple Closed Curves* ended, Patty’s students had four strategies for teaching simple and closed curves to elementary students. Eventually Patty’s students cut out exterior angles from the scrap papers she asked them get out at the



beginning of the lesson. Together the class formed triangles from the scrap paper, from which they learned about angles. In the process, they also took in four conceptual discussions, with visual examples and manipulates, designed to model developmentally appropriate mathematical concepts. For Patty, math has been empowering, and she wants her students, future elementary teachers, to feel empowered too.

### **Samantha Greene**

With a class of 25 students all typing notes at once, Dr. Samantha Greene's fluency disorders graduate level course sounds like an orchestra of keyboarding. During the time of the study, Samantha was a faculty member in the Speech-Communication Disorders Department at Midwestern University. She has since left her faculty position for a leadership position with a charity organization in another state. Samantha's students are in a highly competitive speech pathology track, where a single B grade could jeopardize a spot in the program. They hang on Samantha's every word. Their grades might depend on it. Moreover, Samantha has a distinguished career as in speech pathology, special education, school administration, and academia.

Samantha is respected across campus as well. Recognized as a leader, Samantha was asked by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to attend the Women's Leadership Conference. Samantha considers it important to promote women as leaders.

I think it is important to promote women, and I think it is important to instill a sense of bravery and courage. I've been through it in the K-12 world. Sitting in (educational leadership) conferences, I can remember being one of two women against this sea of men. And you're really not listened to. You know I think you have to be better at your job than men.

Samantha especially focuses her intentions on encouraging her students, almost all female, to see themselves as leaders. Samantha has high expectations for her students to know the content of the speech pathology. She wants her students to be taken seriously and respected professionally. While the speech pathology field is comprised of "75-80% women," Samantha hopes to inspire her students to see themselves as leaders beyond speech pathology. She brings in articles about leadership and encourages her students to be knowledgeable about a wide variety of topics. "Leaders have to be well rounded, not just experts of their field." Not only is Samantha preparing her students to be speech pathologists, she is also trying to inspire them to one day take on leadership roles.

In the following vignette *Who Has Not Spoken?* I describe how Samantha's class operates. This was my fourth and final observation of Samantha's class, and I try to capture the way in which she makes everyone in the class talk.

***Who Has Not Spoken?*** *Samantha and most of the students have arrived early to class. The class of 25 students is seated in rows, facing Samantha. They seem to always sit in the same seats. There is a clear expectation for everyone to be ready to go at 8:00 a.m.—on time. Only one person appeared to be missing. The semester is almost over, and Samantha has a spring in her step today. "Would you like some doughnuts?" Samantha asks holding up a bag of powdered sugar doughnut holes. It is not clear where the doughnuts came from, but members Communication Disorders Department often share snacks with their students. The students almost always have clementine mandarin oranges sitting on their desks, which they slowly eat during class. This was the first time I noticed doughnuts, but it was not surprising. "No takers?" Samantha asks, again holding up the bag of doughnuts. She smiles, surprised by the lack of response. Finally, one of the students*

accepts the offer. Everyone laughs at once. Soon others are taking doughnuts as well. They pass the doughnut bag around the room, and about a third of the class now has a doughnut hole next to their clementine mandarins.

Samantha notices the clock...8:02. "We better get started," she says and walks to the front of the classroom. Just then, the missing student walks in the room. "Hi, Kelly," Samantha says in a lower voice than normal. "Sorry!" Kelly responds and sheepishly take her seat in the rows. "That's okay," Samantha says in a disappointed tone.

Samantha refocuses the class. "Okay, we are going to review how to count stutters. We are also going to study secondary characteristics of stuttering...compassion, not being a speech cop." Samantha began by reading a stuttering case from the textbook and directed the students to discuss the case in their teams. The students turned to each other and the room instantly filled with chatter. Samantha paced back in forth in front of the class, asking the same questions I heard every day I observed her class "What did you notice? Who has not spoken? Make sure everyone speaks. Write it down. Someone should be taking notes." The class continued to discuss the case, and, from what I could notice, they seemed to be all engaged in a sophisticated conversation. Samantha continued to walk around the room, occasionally reminding the class to make sure everyone talked.

After about 10 minutes of discussion, Samantha went to the front of the room, as if to say their discussion time was now over. "Okay, what were some of things you discussed?" The class was quite for a few seconds, and then Samantha grabbed a jar of Popsicle sticks. The jar was full of Popsicle sticks, and each stick had a different name from someone in the class on it. Samantha would often pull out a stick and randomly call on names to answer questions as a regular classroom routine. As the semester advances, she expects the students to answer voluntarily. Finally, just as Samantha is about to pull out a Popsicle stick, one of the students speaks up. "We wondered about how to deal with parents skeptical about using voluntary stuttering strategy with child. "How will you talk to a parent about why you use volunteer stuttering?" Samantha asks the whole class. No one answers right away, and Samantha reaches for the Popsicle stick jar. "Because when children stutter on purpose, they learn to control their speech," Kelly utters just before Samantha touches the jar. "Very good, Kelly," Samantha says with a smile.

Samantha is not satisfied with a single response. She wants more. "Why else, what did you come up with in your teams?" One of the students in the back answers, right on cue, "It is a way to get out the fact that someone stutters." Samantha says with a reassuring smile, "Yes, and why is this helpful?" "It builds confidence," another student responds. "And courage, it gives them courage," yet another student chimes in. "When parents aren't ashamed of stuttering, their children are less likely to be ashamed," the answers to the question are now flowing. "You cannot be afraid of stuttering yourself." The discussion goes on until well over half of the class has contributed to the whole group instruction. Finally, Samantha seems satisfied; "You have to get comfortable with stuttering...both parent and child." Samantha's point is clear, with everyone contributing to a team discussion and a majority of students contributing to the whole group discussion. In less than 15 minutes, Samantha makes sure everyone has spoken.

**Who Has Not Spoken? Discussion.** After the lesson, I spoke with Samantha about her decision to make sure everyone speaks in class. Samantha explained, "I want them to be confident. When they are speaking to parents, teachers, or school officials, our students need to be experts in speech language pathology." I followed up her answer with another question, "Does speaking in class help them to be leaders?" Samantha smiled, like when one of her students says something smart in class, and said:

I want them to have the confidence to speak up. This is important in communication disorders, but it is also important life. In a class of all women, I'm preparing them to be leaders. I want them to speak up.

For Samantha, empowering women as leaders means making all of her students speak.

### **Kristen Pouteaux**

A contrast with Patty and Samantha, Ms. Kristen Pouteaux's criminal justice classes have many male students. In fact, in each of the four classes of Kristen's I observed there were a vast majority of male students. Kristen first came to Midwestern University as a student athlete, a member of the volleyball team. After graduating with an undergraduate degree in criminal justice, Kristen enrolled in the master's program at Midwestern University and eventually accepted some teaching responsibilities as a graduate student in 2002. While Kristen had other career aspirations, she "fell in love with teaching" and eventually accepted a faculty position at Midwestern University. Kristen is now an assistant professor and hopes to finish her doctorate degree in criminal justice in the near future.

During her time at Midwestern University, Kristen has taught a variety of courses, ranging from freshmen level to senior seminar criminal justice. I observed Kristen teach the senior seminar course and three Criminal Justice 380 Corrections class sessions. Kristen does not focus on promoting women as leaders specifically; instead, she focuses on promoting leadership qualities in all of her students, "I want it to be the best candidates for positions, and, guess what, we just need to find the right females and get them interested." As a woman, however, Kristen realizes she does have a guiding influence over females in the criminal justice program:

My ability, my confidence, and my commitment to my employment...definitely resonates with them (female students). You know that, Dan, in the classroom you can see when kids are really getting it, they admire you...and that is something I take very seriously. So, how I carry myself every day, really does impact every student in the classroom. I think me being female, yes, impacts the females more than the male professors would impact the females. But, there are also instances where that might be the opposite. Right, like I might impact male students more than my male colleagues would...and my male colleagues might impact some female students. But, for a majority, I think that is a HUGE responsibly, and I take it seriously, and I love it.

While Kristen does not exclusively promote women as leaders, she understands that, as a woman, she has an opportunity to inspire women as leaders.

The following vignette, *Lesser Sentences*, details how Kristen's 380 Criminal Justice Corrections classroom operates. Notice how the topic of gender surfaces in the course. Moreover, notice how Kristen addresses discrimination both explicitly and implicitly.

***Lesser Sentences.*** *Class is about to begin, and loquacious energy covers the room as students talk about weekend plans and the recent trend of cold weather. Sitting in rows of desks, I can especially hear students discuss how many credits they plan to take in the upcoming summer semester. "I just need to graduate, so I can get on with my life," says the young man to my right. The conversations continue as Kristen enters the classroom. "Hi all! Put your phones away...obviously you will still get to use them later," Kristen says as she drops the course text book and a pad of paper on the podium in the front, left-hand side*

of the classroom. After greeting the class with a friendly smile, she continues with her “Today we will be working on group projects and clarifying material for the upcoming test. First though, does anyone have an article to share?” In all the classes I observed from Kristen, she begins with students sharing a news article about criminal justice.

One of the female students, Alice, sitting to the left side of the room volunteers to share an article she found:

*A mother was convicted of killing her seven children over the span of 18 years. Investigators found her dead babies stored in bags...they're bodies decomposed in bags. When the police investigated, there were skeletons of her babies, in plastic bags. She was sentenced to 30 years in prison.*

One of the male students to my right interrupts Alice, “A male would have got life.” Kristen acknowledges the comment, “You’re probably right. The U.S. legal system does generally give women lesser sentences than males.” The class seems to already be aware of this claim, as several students nod in agreement. Another male student to my right offers his analysis to the discussion, “If a guy did it, he would have been shot right away.” A male student in the front left side of the room chimes in, “A guy would probably get the gas chamber.” The room erupts with conversation and even laughter about how biased the judicial toward women. While Kristen seems to broadly agree with the comments, she also notices Alice is still trying to speak, “Okay, let her finish.” The majority of the class is still talking. “Okay, let her finish!” Kristen commands in a louder tone of voice and silence envelopes the room.

Alice continues discussing the details of the article to a quiet class. After she finishes sharing, another female student offers some possible context, “When the father is in prison, usually the mother takes care of the kids. When the mother is in prison, usually another woman, like a grandma, takes care of the kids.” The class collectively looks to Kristen as the authority on such a statement in the room. “It’s true,” Kristen responds. Then she walks to the center of the room, pauses for a moment, furrows her brow, and says:

*One of my pet peeves is when females receive lesser sentences than males for the same crime. If I remember right, is the lady in the article from Utah? Utah does have the death penalty. I’m trying to understand why she didn’t get the death penalty.*

The class silently waits for several seconds, taken back by Kristen’s passion for equal treatment of criminals.

**Lesser Sentences Discussion.** As a criminal justice professor, Kristen has a difficult job in making sure her female students are heard and even protected. Yet, she also does not want to give female students special treatment. As detailed in *Lesser Sentences*, in the Criminal Justice 380 Corrections course I especially noticed the male students would interrupt the female students during class discussion, and, when this happened, Kristen would confront the interrupter and insist on silence until the interrupted student finished speaking. There were also times where it was difficult to distinguish whether a group of male students were joking with Alice and another girl in the class, or if they were bullying them to some degree. On my last visit to Kristen’s class the students were working on a project in cooperative groups. A group of male students sitting by us began teasing Alice, “You know you are going to get an A...teachers pet.” “Why don’t you take it down a notch and quit screwing up the curve,” another student in the group said. “What do you guys have so far?” Kristen asked as she walked over to check their progress on the project. While she insisted

her female students should be not be given special treatment, Kristen also regularly insisted that everyone in the class be treated with respect.

### **Evaluations, Thematic, and Implications**

From the descriptions and interpretations revealed in the vignettes, we draw from the literature to help explain the larger implications of being intentional about encouraging women as leaders in the university classroom.

**How do professor intentions to encourage women to see themselves as leaders play out in the classroom?** In an effort to render an evaluative understanding of how intending to empower women plays out in the classroom, we employ the ecology of school improvement (Eisner, 1988) as a theoretical framework. This educationally based framework of ecology is defined by interactions of intentional, structural, curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative dimensions within educational settings. Intentions establish direction and priorities, structure is defined as the organizational framework, curriculum is the specific areas of study, and pedagogy provides the means through which the curriculum is mediated (Eisner, 1988). Finally, evaluation which is defined as the community for administrators, for teachers, and for students creating a system of evaluation or assessments, which informs teachers what and how to teach, and what their priorities should be (Eisner, 1988).

After reflecting on the interviews, observations, and collected artifacts, we noticed professor intentions especially playing out in the implicit curriculum. The implicit curriculum is the unofficial curriculum and establishes a classroom culture:

Each teacher creates a mini-culture in his or her classroom with rules for students, ceremonies, activities, and behavioral and academic expectations quietly and informally expressed. Each classroom, like each individual, becomes a distinctive personality because each teacher's experiences, beliefs, and values vary. (Cuban, 1995, p. 9)

As these professor's taught, it was evident they cared about their students. In a follow up interview, I asked them about caring for their students. Patty called it "enabling success and fostering confidence building":

In mathematics, probably more than any other subject area, there are so many places where students develop fear. You have to manage that and help them to overcome it. And there are people that are going to be teaching mathematics, and they have this fear with mathematics...you can't bring that into the classroom. So, how do we help you to become more confident? And not by making things easier...but by making you see you can be successful. That requires giving them the things they will need. Not spoon feeding them, but making sure they have the supporting knowledge in order to make the next connection they need in order to get be a successful problem solver.

Patty feels her parental instincts also affect the way she nurtures her students, "You have to let them go to struggle sometimes, but, at the same time, you also have to know when to step in." Patty went on to describe how these instincts play out in her classes:

In my classes there are times I want them to struggle, just so they can see what it is like. And they have to struggle, or at least persist. For building the persistence in your students, you have to do it yourself to see the value.

Patty's approach to education reminded us of Noddings (2013) notions of care in the classroom. Noddings' (2013) description of mathematics instruction sheds light on Patty's approach, "A difficulty in mathematics teachings is that we too rarely share our mathematical thinking with our students. We present everything ready-made as it were, as if it springs from our foreheads in formal perfection" (p. 8). Similarly, Noddings (2013) goes on to discuss the importance modeling the intentions behind the morals teachers present to their students. As Patty nurtures her students, she hopes they will one-day nurture their own students.

We can see this theme of care in the implicit curriculum evident in Samantha and Kristen's classes as well. In our research journals, I noted that all three professors seemed to treat their students as if they were "always loved, but never entitled." Kristen confirmed this observation, "Absolutely, that is a wonderful compliment, and I do feel this way." Kristen recalled learning these values from her parents and the way she was raised:

I think if you show that you care, they will respect you back, and then they will respect others. And if I do stop the whole class and say, "you need to listen to this person" that is teaching mutual respect.

As Noddings (2013) articulated care in the classroom, she described care as something that is reciprocated. In this framework, we can see the professors' intentions to care for their students and nurture leadership qualities as a reciprocal quality of the implicit curriculum. Through her leadership, Samantha summed up this point, "I think I can affect my students in being leaders wherever they are."

## **Recommendations**

To offer recommendations and further explore the implications professor intentions to promote teachers as leaders, we turn to Eisner's thematic question, "What does it all add up to?" (Eisner, 2002, p. 233). In noticing way the professors' intentions interacted with curriculum, both explicit and implicit, Callejo Perez, Breault, and White (2014) articulate an interesting way to conceptualize curriculum—as spaces grounded in aesthetics, community, politics, and transactional pedagogies. When viewing curriculum as a three-dimensional space, rather than a linear progression of content, we find a helpful way to imagine how the classroom might nurture leadership qualities in all students, particularly women. Moreover, as women continue to deconstruct, even shatter, longstanding limitations in whom can be leaders, there is potential for college professors aid in these efforts. By providing a space where women can be nurtured as leaders, complimentary (Moroye, 2009), implicit curricula take shape and provide opportunities for professor intentions to affect more than their field of study. We recommend for college professors to consider how their intentions can interact with curricular spaces in an effort to help students imagine themselves as leaders, particularly women and other historically disenfranchised populations of students. Additionally, we recommend higher education institutions, as well as colleges and departments within those institutions, support professors in their efforts to help historically marginalized groups realize their potential as leaders.

## **Limitations**

This study was limited to a single university and only included the perspectives of three professors. While we can draw insights from their experiences and the way in which

their classrooms operate, further research with regard to professor intentions in promoting women as leaders is needed to draw broader conclusions.

### Future Research

While the present study does not focus on students, we have often felt in analyzing the data that it would also be interesting to examine the students' perspectives. How did they perceive or interpret these intentions from their professors? Did they actually feel empowered to view themselves as leaders? We believe that a similar study examining the perceptions of students would be well worthwhile. We also hope to see more research with regard to nurturing women as leaders in the classroom, including how this dynamic plays out at other universities and in K-12 education settings. Furthermore, we hope to encourage research regarding women as leaders on a global scale.

### References

- Billy-Mohamed, R. (2014). *The lost boys of an urban elementary school*. Deutschland, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Chin, J. (2011). Women and leadership: Transforming visions and current contexts. *Forum On Public Policy: A Journal Of The Oxford Round Table*, 2011(2), 1-12.
- Conn, D. R. (2015). Juxtaposition: The coexistence of traditional Navajo and standards based curricula. *The Qualitative Report* 20(5), 618-635. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss5/7>
- Conn, D. R. (2016). What are we doing to kids here. *Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 18(1-2), 25-40.
- Cuban, L. (1995). The hidden variable: How organizations influence teacher responses to secondary science curriculum reform. *Theory into Practice*, 34(1), 4-11.
- Eisner, E. W. (1988). The ecology of school improvement. *Educational Leadership*, 45(5), 24-24.
- Eisner, E. W. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Eisner, E. W. (2002). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of educational programs* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Moroye, C. M. (2009). Complementary curriculum: The work of ecologically minded teachers. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 41(6), 789-811.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Callego Perez, D. M., Breault, D. A., & White, W. L. (2014). *Curriculum as spaces: Aesthetics, community, and the politics of place*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Steyn, E., & White, K. (2011). Navigating the "invisible nets": Challenges and opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated South Asian newsrooms. *Asian Journal Of Communication*, 21(4), 409-426. doi:10.1080/01292986.2011.574712
- Sperandio, J. (2011). Context and the gendered status of teachers: Women's empowerment through leadership of non-formal schooling in rural Bangladesh. *Gender & Education*, 23(2), 121-135. doi:10.1080/09540251003674097
- Weidenfeller, N. K. (2012). Breaking through the glass wall: The experience of being a woman enterprise leader. *Human Resource Development International*, 15(3), 365-374. doi:10.1080/13678868.2012.688361
- Zuiderveld, M. (2011). "Hitting the glass ceiling" - Gender and media management in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 3(3), 401-415.

doi:10.1386/jams.3.3.401\_1

## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board Approval



**Minot State  
UNIVERSITY**

**Institutional Review Board**

### **Notice of IRB Approval**

*Name of Principal Investigator: Daniel Conn*

*University Address: Teacher Education and Human Performance*

*Title of Project: Empowering Women as Leaders: The Effect of Professors Intentions*

*Protocol Number: 1397*

---

October 29, 2014

The above project has been reviewed and approved by the IRB under the provisions of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46.

This approval is based on the following conditions:

1. The materials you submitted to the IRB provide a complete and accurate account of how human subjects are involved in your project.
2. You will carry on your research strictly according to the procedures as described in materials presented to the IRB.
3. You will report to the chair of the Institutional Review Board any changes in procedures that may have a bearing on this approval and require another IRB review.
4. If any changes are made, you will submit the modified project for IRB review.
5. You will immediately report to the IRB Chair any problems that you encounter while using human subjects in your research.

---

Dr. Bryan Schmidt

Chair, Minot State University's IRB



## Appendix B

### Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Tell us a little bit about your educational background...
2. Tell us about the courses you teach...
3. What made you interested in attending the Women's Leadership Conference?
4. Please discuss your intentions to promote women as leaders at MSU...
5. How do your intentions to promote women as leaders affect the way you structure/prioritize your faculty position?
6. How do your intentions to promote women as leaders affect the way you structure your courses?
7. How do your intentions to promote women as leaders affect your course curricula?
8. How do your intentions to promote women as leaders affect your pedagogy?
9. How do your intentions to promote women as leaders have an affect on your course evaluations?

### Author Note

After 10 years as a teacher in K-12 education in rural Colorado, Dan Conn is now in his third year at Minot State University in the Teacher Education Program. When Dan is not teaching, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Linda, two children, Virginia and Miles, and their six pets. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: [daniel.conn@minotstateu.edu](mailto:daniel.conn@minotstateu.edu).

Roslyn Billy has taught a variety of ages and subjects all around the world. Her educational background consists of a BA in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Philosophy and Religion, MA.Ed in TESOL, and a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction. Roslyn recently accepted an assistant professor position at Grand View University. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: [drrozbilly@gmail.com](mailto:drrozbilly@gmail.com).

Copyright 2017: Daniel R. Conn, Roslyn J. F. Billy, and Nova Southeastern University.

### Article Citation

Conn, D. R., & Billy, R. J. F. (2017). Always loved but never entitled: Professor intentions to promote leadership in women. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(5), 1315-1329. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol22/iss5/10>

---