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A New Way to Facilitate Discourse with School Leaders: Use a Video-Based Simulation

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Abstract

This study used a video-based educational leadership simulation to create a safe environment for professional discourse with school leaders. The researchers used a simulation about teacher-to-teacher bullying with actors of different genders as a prompt. Two simulations were used in this study, and both simulations followed the same script. However, the twist in this study is that one simulation was filmed with only male actors, and the other simulation was filmed with female actresses and male actors. Participants from both simulations were brought together after experiencing one of the two simulations. This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach and post-simulation focus groups revealed three themes: some school leaders would treat females differently than males, some school leaders believed the leadership style was a factor, and some believed that gender was less of a factor than the unique teacher-principal relationship. The first conclusion of this study is that the relationship between the principal and

the teacher is critical to how the principal responds to a scenario. The second conclusion is that facilitating simulations is an effective method to model a safe environment for discourse centered on sensitive topics.

Keywords

research methods, educational leadership, content analysis, video-based simulation

Introduction

Effective professional learning opportunities for school leaders can be challenging to provide (Fry et al., 2005; Jamison et al., 2018). School leaders face a lack of time, a depleted source of energy, and a nagging feeling of wondering what needs to be accomplished next (Poirel & Yvon, 2014). The professional learning must be rigorous, relevant, and able to overcome the current demands that a school leader is experiencing at the moment. Showanasai, et al. (2013) suggest that this professional learning environment must develop expertise in their professional context and also the ability to apply the knowledge in their field. Simulations can provide an opportunity to challenge the influence of personal biases, perceptions, and cultural norms in a safe setting before consequences of decision making are realized. Educational leadership simulations may help to overcome some of the barriers to practical professional learning for school leaders (Dentico, 1999).

Purpose of This Study – Start Here

The purpose of this study was to use simulations as a tool to compare how school leaders respond to teacher-to-teacher bullying allegations brought forward by male teachers versus female teachers and to encourage dialogue about how leaders might increase their awareness of how gender may influence their perception of a situation. Participants in this simulation began by being immersed in a first-person, multimedia simulation based on an authentic leadership problem. This simulation begins with a video of a female teacher sharing concerns that one of her peers is critical with students, demeaning, and rude. She then carries this behavior into a meeting with her colleagues.

After the video, participants in this demonstration session choose from the preloaded options on how to respond to this female teacher as the building leader. Should the teacher's concerns be dismissed? Should this teacher be allowed to continue sharing concerns? Should this teacher be asked to talk directly to the bully teacher? The simulation continues as a 1:1 conversation between the teacher and principal and later transitions into a collaborative group meeting with the principal as observer. Participants are shown the results that each of their decisions created. The same process is followed in a different room using a male teacher in the simulations. The principal is a male in both scenarios.

Impetus to the Rationale of this Study

The initially recorded educational leadership simulation used in this study utilized four female actresses and one male actor. This simulation is published by EdSims™ and is available to any educational organization wanting to provide professional learning for current or aspiring school leaders (Appendix A). However, a school in Saudi Arabia wanted to purchase this simulation to practice for professional learning in their country. This school requested that the recording of the

video-based simulation only include male actors. In the male-only version of this same simulation, Ken Compana replaces Kim Compana. Also, the pronoun *she* is replaced with *he*. The script is otherwise identical.

The researchers in this study wondered how the school leaders would respond if the concerns of the disruptive teacher were brought forward by Kim Compana compared to whether the concerns of the disruptive teacher were brought forward by Ken Compana. This curiosity was the impetus to the rationale for this study.

Review of Literature

The literature review includes three topics, including: (1) Use of Simulations for Educational Leadership Preparation, (2) Learning about Leadership in a Safe Environment, and (3) Computer-Based Simulation.

Use of Simulations for Educational Leadership Preparation

The expectations of school leaders continue to increase (Heffernan, 2018) and become increasingly complex. Often, school leaders report that they have busy, overscheduled days and expectations to attend a school concert, athletic event, or school fundraiser in the evening (Mestry, 2017). Many school leaders may ask themselves why they would devote any amount of time to professional learning because they already do not have enough time to work on the fundamental aspects of their jobs (Veelen et al., 2017).

The daily challenges of dealing with various school issues and competing interests for their attention causes school leaders to have a depleted source of energy (Bartz et al., 2017). For example, it requires emotional energy and strong listening skills to handle a situation where a teacher arrives unannounced to one's office to share an incident of alleged teacher bullying behavior. How much time should be spent listening to concerns? Are the concerns persistent, pervasive, and/or severe? Is this a case of harassment, bullying, or colleague conflict? How much background information does the school leader have on the teacher who is critical of and demeaning to teachers and students? Do other teachers or students have similar feelings or experiences that this teacher is mean and demeaning? Has the principal ever witnessed any of these concerns? Are any of these concerns documented by previous principals? There are so many questions that require a vast amount of energy if the situation is going to be handled well (Bartz et al., 2017).

When school leaders find themselves juggling various issues of great concern, there may be a constant urge to figure out what needs to be accomplished next to stay on top of things (Grissom et al., 2015). This internal feeling may cause consternation, leadership paralysis, or an inability to discontinue the mental process of determining what the next step is in the process. School leaders may wonder how to set aside the current problems and issues of the day to focus on professional learning (Grissom et al., 2015).

This balance of energy, time, and responsibilities of a school leader may be particularly challenging for early career principals. Leadership experiences are critical to the maturation process of leaders. Holloman and Novey (2018) go on to state that "the best indicator of what you

will do-is what you have done" (p. 4). However, it can be challenging to prepare educational leaders for the challenges that they will face each day while serving as an educational leader or provide ongoing support for practicing leaders. Written case studies have been a popular method of training leaders because a written case study may provide a real scenario of a leadership challenge (Kowalski, 2013; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016; Yin, 2017). However, it can be a challenge to provide enough context, which is helpful in making the case study real enough for the leaders reading the case study.

One method in educational leadership preparation programs is the use of video-based simulations. These simulations may have similar content to written case studies, yet they provide added layers such as non-verbal communication, a visualization of the context, and the tone of voice of the actors and actresses in the video. When leaders have the opportunity to connect nonverbal communication, a visualization of context, and the tone of voice used, they may be able to encode the information in a way that is remembered in their working memory (Author, 2018). These simulations also make it safe and possible to take a variety of task acquired skills and encourage flexibility in future responsibilities with similar characteristics (Wood et al., 2009). Denticio (1999) notes that "simulations provide a way in which human beings can experiment or play with processes or outcomes in hopes of creating effective approaches to the real or potential dilemmas they face" (p. 181). This may provide a deeper understanding of the scenario and prevent gaps in other aspects of a leadership preparation program.

Learning about Leadership in a Safe Environment

One benefit of educational leadership simulations compared to real life experiences is that simulations can provide learning opportunities in a safe environment (Denticio, 1999). A simulation is often facilitated in such a way that the participants can restart the simulation and make different choices, which will result in different endings to the simulation. These paths can be especially helpful when facilitated in such a way where poor decisions result in poor outcomes. Woods et al. (2009) state that simulations "allow trainees to explore, make mistakes and learn valuable lessons in virtual environments that are safe and do not impose real costs on the trainee or other parts of the system" (p. 492). For example, in a simulation where a teacher brings concerns to the principal, the principal could make choices that dismiss the concerns brought forth by the teacher. The choice to dismiss concerns could result in the resignation of the teacher. Another example of an educational leadership simulation is when a principal must address two different concerns with a teacher. Choices in the simulation could lead to the principal addressing both concerns at the same time and result in a video of the teacher becoming defensive and confused as to how the issues are related.

Some situations are more critical than others, and simulations can provide opportunities to address critical issues beforehand that may not have even occurred yet in that school setting (Hunsaker, 2007). Since simulations provide a safe environment for learning and discussions, leaders may come away with a deeper understanding of the ramifications that result in certain choices. Along with this safe environment, simulations can provide learning from these poor choices without the consequences. Hunsaker (2007) states that "personality and performance measures, administered

before, after, and during the simulation, provide data on how different types of people perform under varying degrees of environmental turbulence” (p. 348).

Computer-Based Simulations

Computer-based simulations provide an opportunity for school leaders to practice a scenario that was previously experienced by a school leader. Authors blinded for review (2018) explain that "simulations also have many features and cognitive demands that help lead trainees in an effective manner. The trainings need to meet the needs of the training purposes" (p. 3). Dentico (1999) suggests "by its very nature a learning organization requires a greater dependence on decentralized decision making and the power to implement such decisions in coordination with other organizational requirements" (p. 179). When computer-based simulations use videos, the experience is enhanced to create a sense of reality for the school leaders who are participating in the computer-based simulation. This environment can be complex and dynamic, which can be challenging for the participants (Berends & Romme, 1999). Computer-based simulations allow school leaders to consider how they would respond to the situation and also allow space for school leaders to consider the ramifications of the decision that they are about to make. This environment tends to stimulate participants' cognitive abilities through solving problems at a high level of thinking. Computer-based simulations also offer school leaders an opportunity to return to the start of the simulation and learn from the new ways to respond to simulations. Dentico (1999) also reported that "simulations go further than cases because they routinely offer double loop learning opportunities" (p. 180). Computer-based simulations can provide opportunities for fellow school leaders to have discussions post-simulation about their choices and effects of these decisions (Hunsaker, 2007). Through this collaborative discussion with other school leaders post-simulation, there is also a cognitive gain in human processing (Dentico, 1999).

Methodology

This study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach (Bowen et al, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2003). Sequential explanatory mixed methods involve two distinct phases, quantitative followed by qualitative (Bowen et al, 2017; Ivankova et al., 2003). Researchers decided that this approach would allow for collection of individual responses that were free from bias before participants were influenced by group social dynamics in subsequent discussions immediately after individual responses were completed.

The participants were educators from a rural state in the Midwest, and the data was collected in educational settings. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants could stop participating at any time. Research participants could also skip questions or not submit their paper survey at the conclusion of the simulation and group discussion.

Data Collection

For the quantitative phase, participants were provided a Simulation Response Form, and all data was collected from the Simulation Response Form (Appendix B). The research participants were asked to answer a few demographic questions. These questions included one's primary job title, the total years one has served as a school administrator, the total number of students under one's

leadership, and one's gender (binary-male/female). Next, participants watched a video-based simulation that provided context to the scenario. Throughout the simulation, the screen showed two to four options on how the participants could respond. After reviewing the video-based simulation scenario, participants wrote down how they would reply on the Simulation Response Form (Appendix B).

Participants then discussed their choice with the members of their small group. Each small group met around a circular table that included five participants. Then the large group, guided by one of the researchers, discussed the options and voted on which option they chose. The choice with the highest number of votes was to be chosen for the group response. Then the participants repeated this process until the simulation concluded. There was a group discussion after the simulation ended facilitated by three researchers: one Black man, one white woman, and one white man (all professors of educational leadership at a state university).

Pilot Study

A one-time pilot study was conducted with 35 practicing superintendents as the researchers were asked to present to a group of superintendents during one of their monthly meetings. The 35 participants in the pilot study were from a rural state in the Midwest. The student enrollments of the districts represented ranged from 155 students in K-12 to 24,835 students in K-12, which allowed for rich discussions and diverse viewpoints. The pilot study took place in 2018. Before the simulation began, each superintendent was assigned a number by numbering off 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, etc. The participants who were assigned number one experienced the simulation with the female as the main actor, and the participants who were assigned a number two experienced the simulation with the male as the main actor.

The first group was asked to stand up and follow a researcher into a different room. The first group then began the video-based simulation with a female as the main actor. After the first group left the room, the second group began the video-based simulation with a male as the main actor. The superintendents in both groups completed the Simulation Response Form, which was developed by the researchers and included four demographic questions and four questions to be completed while experiencing the simulation (Appendix B) independently and then were led through a small group discussion facilitated by the researcher. After approximately 45 minutes, both groups of superintendents completed the simulations and then were brought together into the same room. The researchers then showed clips of both simulations so that the superintendents could briefly experience the simulation that was shown to the other group.

We then discussed the simulations as a large group for approximately 20 minutes. These conversations quickly led to philosophical discussions on whether or not school leaders would or should treat a female teacher differently from a male teacher if that teacher brought forth concerns about an alleged bullying teacher.

Instrumentation

A Simulation Response Form (Appendix B) was utilized for the quantitative aspect of this study. The Simulation Response Form was developed by the researchers and included four demographic

questions and four questions to be completed while experiencing the simulation (Appendix B). The paper survey was handed to each research participant and was used to record his or her initial responses to the decision points within the simulation. Each survey was anonymous, so no identifiable information was collected on the survey, other than general demographic data. All survey responses we received were treated confidentially and stored on a secure server.

A group discussion was facilitated for the qualitative portion of this study. The group discussion was audio-recorded and was transcribed by a researcher who was not present at the group discussion, nor a part of the research study in any other aspect. This allowed the responses within the group discussion to ensure anonymity.

Participants

There were 77 participants in this study, and all 77 participants experienced the simulation, 65 completed the Simulation Response Form (Appendix B), and 77 participated in a focus group immediately following the simulation. The researchers collected data during three different presentations, which included participants who identified as teachers (N=18), school board members (N=7), assistant principals (N=17), central office administrators (N=4), superintendents (N=9), and other (N=20) (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Participant's Primary Job Title*

Job Title	<i>N</i>	Teacher	School Board	Assistant Principal	Principal	Central Office Administrator	Superintendent	Other
	77	18	7	2	17	4	9	20

Data Analysis

Results from the paper survey from the Simulation Response Form (Appendix B) were processed through IBM's SPSS 25 Software (IBM SPSS, 2018). Of the initial pool of 77 participants, 65 of the participants completed the three-question survey and were included in the analysis. A phi correlation was conducted between each question, the participant's response, and both the participant's gender and simulation gender.

After the simulations concluded, the group that experienced the simulation with the male actor as the teacher merged with the group that experienced the simulation with the female actor as the teacher. The researchers took a few minutes to show videos of the male teacher in the simulation as well as the female teacher in the simulation so that participants could gain a sense of the differences. This set the stage for a large group discussion, which was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded by two researchers, one male and one female.

Limitations

There were three limitations in this study. The first limitation was the delivery method, and future studies should use a method that includes private, individual responses instead of group responses. While the group computer-based simulation worked to form many of the underlying themes in the study, an individual, private simulation prior to the group interaction may have gleaned more diverse results. With the potential for peer pressure or supervisor influence, there were several participants who would have chosen a different route after their initial response but felt that they needed to go with the group as part of the discussion. This could also be said about the participants in the merged large group discussion for the focus group. While each focus group was divided between the male and female simulation, a prior group discussion with each focus group may have yielded additional themes before the larger focus group discussion.

The second limitation was the facilitator discussion. As this was a learning tool in addition to a research study, some facilitators would allow the conversation to formulate, while others would guide as a focus group. This led to discussions going one of two ways; either a structured, question by question discussion, or a conversation dominated by a few voices. Some participants were passionate about the topic and continued to share their opinions.

The third limitation was the design of the questionnaire. Due to the complexity of the simulation, any subsequent questions after question one could be different, with different choices leading to different results. This complexity made the questionnaire challenging to create, and in hindsight, the researchers should have pre-coded each question for validity. The complexity of the document resulted in 8% of our responses lacking the appropriate identifiers to code, causing that data to be thrown out. Also, this study may not be generalizable outside of the population, which consisted of teachers, school board members, principals, assistant principals, superintendents, and other educators in a rural, Midwest state.

Findings During the Simulation

Question 1

Almost all respondents chose, “Thanks so much for opening up about your concerns, Kim/Ken. What are your perceptions about what is going on?” (EdSims™, 2021, p. 4), regardless of simulation gender or participant gender. There was no significant correlation found in this question, as 95.3% of all respondents (62 out of 65) answered the same way.

Question 2

Responses indicated that the participant's gender played a role in the answer to the male simulation group for question two. A moderate, statistically significant correlation ($r = -.475$, $p < .01$) occurred between response choice and gender, with male participants choosing:

“Ken, this is really troubling. Your work is so important, and I’m concerned you aren’t being treated respectfully. You definitely aren’t taking too much of my time. Is there more?” (EdSims™, 2021, p. 4).

These findings were further supported in the qualitative data, with male simulation teachers’ concerns being taken more seriously than the female simulation teacher. The other two potential responses had small effect sizes, but no statistical significance.

Question 3

The final question did not find any significant effects, but it is worth noting that 33.8% of the participants (22 of 65) chose, "I know it would be hard, but I've found the best outcomes are when the parties who are directly involved try to work things out" (EdSims™, 2021, p. 4). This option leads to the simulation teacher requesting a transfer out of the school system, creating the teachable moment espoused by Woods et al. (2009) where participants are allowed to make mistakes in a risk-free environment (p. 492).

Findings After the Simulation

Two themes emerged from the recorded large group discussions after the simulation was complete (see Figure 1). The first theme was that the influence of gender of the teacher in the simulation was relevant. The second theme was that the individual teacher in the simulation mattered more than gender.

Significant Theme	Sub-Theme
Influence of Gender of the Teacher in the Simulation was Relevant	Female Teacher in the Simulation - Females are emotional - The principal should intervene Male Teacher in the Simulation - Males should just handle the situation - The principal takes the male's concerns more seriously
Teacher in the Simulation Mattered More than the Gender	Leaders would treat the male teacher and the female teacher the same - Leadership style - Personal relationship between the principal and the teacher

Figure 1. Themes and Sub-Themes of Professional Discourse After Experiencing a Simulation

Influence of Gender of the Teacher in the Simulation was Relevant

The influence of the gender of the teacher was relevant as the participants explained their reflections of whether they would treat the male teacher differently than the female teacher.

Female Teacher in the Simulation

Two sub-themes emerged from the large group discussion: females are emotional, and the principal should intervene and help the female teacher who brings forward the concerns about Diana.

Females are Emotional. One participant explained, “We talked a little bit about those gender stereotypes about how if you are an emotional woman and she’s just blowing things out of proportion.” Another participant added, “Girls are just so full of drama.” Another participant shared that they have experienced females and males shedding tears in their office: “Well, because if somebody comes in and they’re upset and emotional and they need to cry, I’ve had male teachers cry in my office (not as much as females), but they come in and cry too.” One of the group discussions led to a participant saying, “Does the woman seem like a whiner? Oh, she’s a woman. She must be.” A different group discussion led to another inappropriate comment by a participant: “...women are more catty in my opinion. They seem to be more nasty towards each other.”

The Principal Should Intervene. When the discussion led back to the female teacher bringing forth her concerns about Diana, there was a theme of intervening into the situation. One participant shared, “If a female comes in, I’m again probably going to be more like, ‘I’ll help you with this. I’ll take care of that.’” Another participant shared a curiosity on how the male or the female would respond if an intervention were offered: “I’d be interested to see if the men handle their own problems or if women say I’ll go with you.” One member of the group discussion came to the conclusion that “...you are going to help her.” One participant explained how Kim’s nonverbal actions would warrant a need for the principal to take control of the situation: “She’s not a leader. She looks down. She doesn’t look at the person talking to her...she’s not taking control of the situation.”

Male Teacher in the Simulation

Two sub-themes emerged from the large group discussion: males should just handle the situation, and the principal takes the male’s concerns more seriously.

Males Should Just Handle the Situation. Comments from the participants supported a sub-theme that could be summarized with the following statement: “Stereotypically you would expect a man to be able to handle this situation.” Another participant shared, “The professional side of me says, ‘Nope, I’ll sit there, and I’ll treat everybody equal’...but it’s like, ‘Come on, you’re a dude. Go handle this.’”

A few participants began reflecting on their belief that males should just handle the situation, yet they began questioning how they would handle this situation if a female shared the same concerns. For example, one participant reflected, “If the female comes in, I’m again probably going to be more like, ‘I’ll help you with this. I’ll take care of it.’ And that’s not right at all. I know what I just

said, but that's just how I look at it." Another added, "So that's my point. Between genders, I think with guys it's more of the 'I'll take care of it,' whereas with the women it's more of the 'I'll go with you.'" Another participant concluded a conversation with, "Our group decided to send him back to work and go work it out. I don't know if we would have done this if it were a woman."

The Principal Takes the Male's Concerns More Seriously. A few comments shed light on a sub-theme in that the principal may be inclined to take the male's concerns more seriously. One participant stated, "This is more urgent if coming from a guy, I think...this must be a huge problem." In an interesting exchange, one participant posed a question that led to laughter from the group: "So there's no one that would take the man's concerns more seriously than the woman's emotional concerns? {Participants begin laughing in the background}." This conversation continued with the participant reiterating the question: "I cannot believe there's not a person in the room that would take a man's concerns more seriously."

Teacher in the Simulation Mattered More than the Gender

The second major theme was that the teacher in the simulation mattered more than the gender. Put another way; participants made comments that demonstrated that their leadership style and their personal relationship with the teacher mattered more than the gender of the teacher in the simulation.

Leaders Would Treat the Male Teacher and the Female Teacher the Same

Leadership Style. Many participants made comments that provided evidence that their leadership style would impact their decision-making process more than the gender of the teacher in the simulation. One participant claimed, "It's less about you and more about you as a leader and how you handle situations." Another participant supported this comment with, "That's your leadership style in that you're a helper and you are going to help her." One large group participant explained that the principal in the simulation must know what to say when the teacher brought forth the concerns: "It's not a male/female issue. It's knowing what you are saying." Finally, a participant reflected, "I base mine {reaction} on the situation, so my first gut reaction after we went through, I was probably wrong. I went on policy, so policy would say chain of command...it would not have been a gender issue."

Personal Relationship Between the Principal and the Teacher. The personal relationship or history of the interactions between the principal and the teacher in the simulation would play a more important role than the gender of the teacher. For example, a participant summarized this concept by sharing, "It {the leader's response} wouldn't be based on gender but based on the personal relationship I have with them." Another participant wanted to dig deeper into the situation, no matter if the teacher was a male or female: "This guy is disturbed at a deep level...and so what I wanted to see was a little more discussion to get a little more information...I would have done that with a guy or gal." Yet another participant commented, "A problem is a problem. I don't think I'd treat them any differently."

The history of the interactions also played a role in how the principal would respond to the teacher in the simulation. One participant responded with, "We don't know how many times this person

has been complaining.” Another participant explained, “Any teacher that comes in that door brings in history...if there is a history of wild accusations and this is an everyday event, I would take this a lot less seriously.”

Conclusions

Our findings suggest two conclusions for preparing educational leaders in the 21st Century. The first conclusion of this study is that the relationship between the principal and the teacher is critical to how a principal responds to a scenario. The second conclusion is that facilitating simulations is an effective method for professors or professional development facilitators to model a safe environment for discourse including issues on sensitive topics.

The Relationship Between Principal and Teacher is Important

The first implication is that gender can play a role in the way principals perceive information, and this is mitigated by leader-teacher relationships. Through the second simulation question, along with the focus group discussion, it was clear that the male teacher’s concerns were taken more seriously than the female teacher’s concerns in the situation. The disregard toward the female teacher resulted in the teacher requesting to transfer districts. While this led to a teachable moment, it also gives rise to a critical conversation regarding ways that gender may influence leaders’ perceptions and interpretations (Diehl & Dzubinski, 2016). Because of this conclusion, it is vital that principal preparation programs reform their coursework, projects, and/or internships to include gender bias training. It is essential that principals understand that their own gender identity may influence their perceptions and interpretations within their relationships with teachers.

One important subtheme that can counterbalance bias was the teacher-principal relationship, which was a major subtheme for several leaders as they explained how they would have responded if they could go *off script* by responding to the situation with a different response than the options provided in the video-based educational leadership simulation. These relationships may help leaders who may be initially biased to respond with more awareness to the potential bullying situations.

Facilitating Simulations: Allows Professors to Model a Safe Environment for Discourse

The second conclusion was the power of utilizing leadership simulations to create a safe environment for principals to critically engage sensitive topics, which is supported by the literature (Fry et al., 2005; Jamison et al., 2018). The first moment that many principals engaged in critical dialogue was after Question 3, where a third of our respondents (33.8%) chose a path that led to the teacher transferring out of the district. Through this process, the small group discussion led to several constructive conversations that engaged leaders with varying backgrounds and experience. Utilizing this strategy would prove invaluable for professional development, allowing critical conversations in a safe space before the consequences of decisions are realized. Because of this conclusion, principal preparation programs must reform their programs to ensure that safe learning environments are created to safely discuss sensitive topics such as gender bias and teacher to teacher bullying. The researchers in this study have found that simulations may be one way to implement this reform.

Implications to the Field

While one can never replicate real life situations, even during an internship, the researchers found the simulations to be an excellent tool for leadership preparation and professional development. As a result, we have reformed our educational leadership preparation program to implement simulations in place of written case studies. Our aim is to support an increased awareness of how our own biases, often influenced by gender identification, may impact our decision-making. This reform has led to richer and deeper online discussions with students and richer and deeper discussions among our colleagues in public and higher education.

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Appendix A

Simulation Script

The formal description of this first-person, multimedia simulation is as follows:

This simulation utilizes a collaborative teaching team. There is one teacher on the team, newer to the school but a mid-career teacher, who is ‘not a team player.’ The simulation begins with another teacher on the team coming to the school leader and expressing concern over the way the disruptive teacher is behaving. The school leader ultimately ends up at a team meeting and witnesses the described behavior first hand that is inappropriate and over-the-top. The simulation goals relate to school culture and climate, conflict management, and responding to teacher concerns. (EdSims™, 2021, p. 1)

The simulation begins with the following script:

In this scenario, you are the principal of Brookside Elementary School. At Brookside, the less experienced faculty members tend to be special educators, and there is a divide between the veterans and the newer faculty. You were concerned about the progress of students with diverse learning needs, so during your first two years at the school, you successfully established collaborative groups amongst teachers with the intention of increasing student achievement. You have also initiated a co-teaching model where special education and regular education teachers are teaming in classrooms. Though still in the early stages, the collaborative groups have developed norms such as: treat colleagues respectfully, make positive presuppositions, notice your impact on others, and so on. Establishing norms seems to have helped the school climate, but more effort is needed. You are concerned that the staff still does not always treat one another in a professional manner. Your goal is to create a more positive tone in the school. It is now late spring and state test results indicate students in disaggregated groups are failing to

make adequate progress. One of your ‘go to’ teachers, Kim Compana, a Special Education teacher, is assigned to co-teach with sixth grade teacher, Diana Welsch, who is particularly unpleasant. Kim is a teacher-leader who seems well-grounded, highly professional, and someone who ‘gets it.’ Moments before she is scheduled to facilitate the sixth grade collaborative team meeting, she asks to speak with you, and then arrives in your office. (EdSims™, 2021, p. 2)

The video-based simulation continues with Kim Compana sitting across the desk of the principal explaining,

“Thank you for meeting with me. I’m sorry I’m so upset. I’ve been trying to decide if I should even come to you about this. Now I think I’ve waited too long, but you must know, Diana is very tough on the kids. She has her favorites, but with some kids, she has such an attitude. She’s sarcastic and she calls them lazy, and she’s making some of them really shut down. I do all I can to build the kids up. We’re supposed to be teaming in her classroom, but she’s making that impossibly hard. On top of that, she’s just so rude to some kids and to me.” (EdSims™, 2021, p. 3)

The video concludes, and participants are asked to choose one of the preloaded options on how to respond to this female teacher as the principal. The options include:

1. “Thanks so much for opening up about your concerns, Kim. What are your perceptions about what is going on?”
2. “I’ve seen some of the same issues with Diana. I’m glad you felt comfortable coming forward. Tell me more about what you’ve been seeing.”
3. “Kim, you need to understand that she’s trying to motivate kids that are falling through the cracks. Some of those kids just need the kind of tough love she’s delivering.”

4. “I hear your concerns. The problem is, if it is just you, it is a she* said/she* said situation.

I haven’t heard from others who share your same concerns.”

Should the teacher’s concerns be dismissed? Should this teacher be allowed to continue sharing concerns? Should this teacher be asked to go back and solve the issue at the teacher level? The simulation continues as a 1:1 conversation and later transitions into a collaborative group meeting where the audience will continue to be forced to make difficult decisions about how to address the problem.

Appendix B

Simulation Response Form

1. What is your primary job title? _____ Teacher _____ Dean of Students _____ Assistant Principal _____ Principal _____ Central Office Administrator _____ Assistant Superintendent _____ Superintendent _____ Other _____ I'm not in education	2. How many total years have you been a school administrator? _____ I'm not an administrator _____ 0 – 5 years _____ 6 – 10 years _____ 11 – 20 years _____ 21 – 30 years _____ 31 – 40 years _____ 40+ years	3. How many students are under your leadership? _____ 1 – 100 students _____ 101 – 500 students _____ 501 – 1,000 students _____ 1,001 – 5,000 students _____ 5,001 – 10,000 students _____ 10,001 – 20,000 students _____ More than 20,000 students	4. What is your gender? _____ Male _____ Female _____ I prefer not to answer this question
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Simulation Questions. You must mark your answer before you discuss with the person next to you.

- How would you respond to the first decision point? (Since the simulation randomizes the letters and choices, please answer the following questions from your perspective.)
 - Which letter would you choose? _____
 - Please print the words that follow the letter that you would choose: _____
 - Thoughts? (It is optional on whether or not you want to share your thoughts): _____
- How would you respond to the second decision point? (Since the simulation randomizes the letters and choices, please answer the following questions from your perspective.)
 - Which letter would you choose? _____
 - Please print the words that follow the letter that you would choose: _____
 - Thoughts? (It is optional on whether or not you want to share your thoughts): _____
- How would you respond to the third decision point? (Since the simulation randomizes the letters and choices, please answer the following questions from your perspective.)
 - Which letter would you choose? _____
 - Please print the words that follow the letter that you would choose: _____
 - Thoughts? (It is optional on whether or not you want to share your thoughts): _____
- How would you respond to the fourth decision point? (Since the simulation randomizes the letters and choices, please answer the following questions from your perspective.)
 - Which letter would you choose? _____
 - Please print the words that follow the letter that you would choose: _____
 - Thoughts? (It is optional on whether or not you want to share your thoughts): _____