

Female+Male Student Leadership in Band

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When it comes to nurturing future student leaders in our programs (helping them learn, grow and develop the insight and experience necessary to lead effectively) there's something many directors may never realize: *What if some of our "traditions of leadership" actually hinder the "future of leadership?"*

Over the past three decades, I've had the privilege of working with students as well as the many people and professionals who work with students. Interestingly, when I share time with junior high and high school student leadership groups, student government associations, student council retreats, and student leadership summer camps, there's a majority of female participants to a minority of male participants. Yet whenever I share time with collegiate students, corporate and association leadership events, conferences and organizational strategic planning retreats of various types; there's a majority of male participants to a minority of female participants. Granted, this isn't a statistically accurate representative sample. Simply an anecdotal, random, non-scientific observation that caused me to look more and more into "where do all the female student leaders go?"

Certainly many generational and societal changes are shaping the way students interact with each other and the world today versus yesterday. Given all the progressive and forward-thinking attempts in education to equal the opportunity for women to step up, lean in, and take the lead, we're still plagued with the over-dominance of men in organizational, corporate,

and elected-leadership positions. Multitudes of reasons can be used to rationalize and explain why we have fewer female band directors than male band directors in music education. Some might even be valid. However, what if the things we do in high school band are influencing this discrepancy more than we realize? What if we're unintentionally reinforcing the past practices of a male-dominated, command-and-control, approach to leadership? Perhaps we don't even see how what we do today is still largely based on the past, and limits the future leadership potential of ALL our students regardless of gender?

Riane Eisler conducted a huge multidisciplinary study analyzing how key components of any society throughout history relate to one another to maintain the larger whole. This method of analysis, called "the study of relational dynamics," examined data from a wide range of times and places. Her research looked at many fields, including cross-cultural anthropological and sociological studies; writings by historians analyzing laws, moral codes, art, literature; scholarship from psychology, economics, education, political science, philosophy, religious, western and eastern archeological studies; as well as data from more recently developed fields such as chaos theory, neuroscience, nonlinear dynamics, primatology systems, self-organizing theory, gender studies, women's studies, and men's studies.

Riane Eisler's multi-disciplinary systemic research approach made it possible for her to see social patterns

that are not normally visible using the more customary single-disciplinary approach. "It revealed that underneath the huge diversity of human societies—transcending such differences as time, place, technological development, ethnic origin, and religious orientation—are two underlying configurations: the **domination system** and the **partnership system.**"

Certainly we want our student leaders to be working in partnership with each other versus dominating each other. Perhaps there's an easy solution to help build more student leaders—both male and female—in our bands. Simply select a minimum of two leaders for every section: one boy and one girl. That way, you have two people working together offering a fantastic example of collaboration within each section of your band. A pair of partners working together rather than individuals dominating. Let's start some new "traditions of leadership" that'll help the "future of leadership" not just in band, but in the world we all live in!

"Our emerging workforce is not interested in command-and-control leadership. They don't want to do things because I said so; they want to do things because they want to do them."

—Irene Rosenfeld,
Chairwoman and CEO of Mondelēz International

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References:

Eisler, R (2016) *Reframing Organizational and Social Change: From Domination to Partnership*. In *Creative Social Change: Leadership for a Healthy World*. (pp. 101-118) A volume in the International Leadership Association series *Building Leadership Bridges*. Emerald Publishing Ltd. ISBN 9781786351456